

**Hokusei Jo Gakko-Related Matters in the Minutes  
of the Meetings of the Japan Mission  
of the Presbyterian Church  
in the USA, 1932-1940**

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## [Abstract]

After Sarah C. Smith, founder of today's Hokusei Gakuen, retired and returned to the United States, the school continued its work under the direction of Alice M. Monk and began transitioning from missionary to Japanese leadership with Dr. Yoshinao Niijima as principal. During this time, the sponsoring organization of Hokusei Gakuen's missionaries held regular business meetings where matters relevant to the school were decided. The minutes of the Annual Mission Meeting of the Japan Mission of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America reveal the values, traditions, policies, allegiances, and individual personalities that guided the group's decision-making; this guidance also directly or indirectly influenced Hokusei's continued formation and development. This article presents an overview of the historical and organizational context of the records. It also provides year-by-year summaries and analysis and discussion of the contents for the years 1932 to 1940.

## Introduction

Articles in Volumes 52, 53, and 54 of this publication covered the 1887 through 1931 minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Japan Mission of the Board of Foreign Missions (BFM) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA). Each contains information on Hokusei Jo Gakko (North Star Girls' School, 北星女学校). The following continues from 1932 to 1940. It covers the several dozen pages of each year's proceedings but deals only with the portions relating directly to the life and work of Hokusei Jo Gakko. As in past years, the Annual Meeting was held in one of the warmer months of the year, so the activity recorded runs from the previous year's Mission Meeting to the current one. The reports are available in book form, for example at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. (*Minutes of Annual Meeting, Japan Mission*).

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Key words : Board of Foreign Missions, Japan Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Hokusei Gakuen, Sarah C. Smith

As in the case of records of previous years' meetings, these give the reader a clearer view of the organization which gave birth to Hokusei Jo Gakko and thus today's Hokusei Gakuen system of schools. They make apparent the place Hokusei held within Hokkaido Station, the Japan Mission, the Board of Foreign Missions, the PCUSA, Christianity in Japan, and society as a whole. These records of the Japan Mission's decisions about the way forward it chose year by year supply some information on happenings inside Hokusei; however, they reveal much more about the school's external connections and how the Mission, its sponsors in the U.S., and partner organizations in the Christian church in Japan formed, supported, guided, and avoidably or unavoidably in some instances hindered or limited the school's development. They demonstrate the significant challenges which economic and social turmoil presented and how these organizations responded. In these various ways, the records provide tools for forming a deeper understanding of a crucial period of Hokusei Jo Gakko's historical journey.

## Historical Background

The reader may refer to Volume 52 of *Hokusei Review, The School of Social Welfare* for more information on how Hokusei Jo Gakko was established and developed from its earliest years up to the point of 1911. It was then that Hokusei's missionaries became part of Hokkaido Station, which had grown strong enough to separate from Tokyo Station. The Volume 53 continuation of the account of Hokusei's formation shows how the school sustained its development in the next decade under Sarah Smith and as she passed leadership over to Alice Monk. The Volume 54 article describes the slow movement toward reliance on local leadership and support, as well as the struggle to provide a new campus in the midst of a financial crisis and growing tensions internationally.

This article describes how Hokusei continued its work throughout the 1930s even while the nation moved toward the catastrophe of World War II. As the school endeavored to develop into a more grounded institution with deeper roots and a sustainable future, it encountered the stiff headwinds of the economic conditions of the Great Depression. The specific difficulties this occasioned were trouble receiving funding for appointing workers and to pay off the debt it had incurred throughout the 1920s for its relocated and rebuilt campus. The Depression was damaging U.S. churches' ability to provide financial backing necessary to keep institutions such as girls' high schools running efficiently. Financial conditions in Japan were also wreaking havoc on the efforts of local Japanese churches and families to be able to support these same organizations.

As the period under consideration here was nearing its end in 1940, the members of the PCUSA's Japan Mission were under considerable stress due to current political and social conditions. Major wars had already broken out in Asia and Europe, and tensions mounted

between their native country and the one they were making their home.

On the organizational side of their work, they were also going through significant transition in their relationship with their Japanese counterparts. Although the missionaries were increasingly active in cooperating and entrusting to them leadership of the church, educational, and other work they were conducting, this change was a slow, not always friction-free process which had been taking place gradually particularly since the early 1900s. Some degree of division of opinion and struggle to form coherent, equitable policies continued to be part of their experience during the 1930s.

In all the years under consideration here, the Annual Meeting was held in Ninooka, Gotemba, with the exceptions of 1934 and 1935, when it was in Karuizawa, as it had been in previous years. Mission members gathered sometime in the second half of July from 1933 to 1935, in early May in 1937, then late May from 1938 to 1939, and early June in 1940. Mission Meetings took from two to four days from start to finish.

With the yearly schedule arranged in this way, the business conducted actually related to parts of the previous calendar year and the current one. For this reason, though the years listed in the preceding are 1932 to 1940 because the Mission Meetings being discussed cover sections of these years, the dates on the summaries below reflect the year in which the Meetings were in fact held, as they have in past articles in this series. The 1932 Annual Meeting was included in Volume 54 article, so it does not appear here.

## Overview of Contents

Reports of the Annual Meeting, as noted in earlier articles, grew in length over the years as the size of the Mission increased, contracted to a more streamlined form with its reorganization in 1922, then became longer again, surpassing 150 pages by 1929. Between 1932 and 1940 they ranged from 70 to 80 typically. The only notable exception was 1937, when the organization gathered after holding no meeting the year before. With more business to conduct, the length of the report reached 103 pages.

As past years' editions of this article have noted, although the order and proportionate length of the various sections of these minutes differ considerably from year to year, the basic types of information recorded in them remains generally consistent. They include (a) preliminary items (a title page[s] and list of contents), (b) a list of members present, as well as those honorably retired and not attending (mailing addresses noted), (c) a list of guests and/or corresponding members, (d) a list of committee members, officers, delegates, and directors/trustees, (e) names of people introduced as new members of the Mission, (f) explanations of business items and decisions the Mission reached (appearing after the

general committee reports in 1933, 1934, and 1940, before them in other years), (g) reports, often with recommendations, from the treasurer, various committees, and other bodies, (h) an appendix containing announcements of activities and business conducted by the Executive Committee since the last Annual Meeting (placed after the list of committee and other members near the beginning of the publication in 1933 and 1934 and as an appendix after that, following the reports on business conducted), (i) an appendix of announcements of decisions reached by the Joint Central Committee (appearing beginning in 1935),<sup>1</sup> and (j) an appendix of statistics on the Church of Christ in Japan. The 1933 and 1934 reports include statistics sheets on the Japan Mission as the final pages. From 1935 through 1940, these data are not in one location at the end but at relevant places throughout the body of the report. The minutes conclude with (k) an index. As the above indicates, during these years there are no reports from individual missionaries or schools about their work in these annual publications, as they were handled elsewhere.

Apart from these recurring categories, some relatively minor items appear which are omitted from the summaries below. Among them are (a) updates on the progress of each new missionary's language studies, (b) the various assignments given to Hokusei missionaries in their work before and after they are sent to Hokusei, (c) specific amounts of budget allocated to particular programs and activities, and (d) the mechanics of the decision-making process (adopting proposals from various committees, etc.).

The following describes the specifically Hokusei-related matters appearing in the records.

**1933.** Margaret Barr,<sup>2</sup> Viola Christianson, and Nannie Hereford are introduced before the Mission and welcomed as new members (p. 17).<sup>3</sup>

Interest payments are still being required for the loan made necessary by Hokusei's recent campus relocation. (Celebrations of the opening of the new facilities were held in 1930). The Board asks the Mission about paying the interest. The Mission replies that it has no funds beyond what the Board provides and asks what it expects the Mission to do (p. 9). The Mission later agrees to pay not in cash but in gold (p. 13). Meanwhile, the Committee on Hokusei Girls' School Land Sales continues to meet. Members include three missionaries: Leo Lake, Alice Monk, and William Hereford (p. vi). The Hokusei debt remaining totals over \$42,000. Relieving it is now placed as the Mission's second highest priority on the Preferred Property List (p. 24).

The Mission recognizes a need for a major project in preparing for an uncertain future. It is given the title of "Rethinking Missions." An Appraisal Committee is formed, which includes Miss Monk, who is designated to lead the discussion of education. Miss Evans is

placed on the Findings Committee of this endeavor.

1934. Miss Viola Christianson is asked by the Board to resign because of the financial conditions it faces. Miss Dena Nettinga, who has served at Hokusei in the past and is now in Kanazawa, is also released. The Mission expresses appreciation for their work and fellowship (p. 14).

Alice M. Monk resigns as Hokusei principal. The decision is made with the agreement of the Hokusei Board of Directors and nomination by the Mission's Committee on Education to appoint Dr. Yoshinao Nijima (recently of Hokkaido Imperial University) principal for a five-year term (pp. viii, 13). Hokusei is the last of the Mission-affiliated schools<sup>4</sup> to name a Japanese principal. The Mission's Executive Committee expresses (p. 13) its

. . . deepest appreciation for the splendid service Miss Monk has given in building up this important school and our confidence that, although no longer principal, she will continue to render equally valuable service to Hokusei and to the women of Hokkaido.

The Mission votes to charge back to the BFM the roughly \$2,000 required as payment on the loan for Hokusei for 1931-1932. The Board has twice given the bill to the Mission, and the Mission here again states that it cannot pay the amount except with funds the Board would provide. The best the Mission can see to do now is seek to locate leftover budget and direct the it to this use. But it cannot guarantee that any funds will remain (pp. 4-5).

The missionaries reach a decision to authorize the sale of the former Hokusei Girls' School property in Sapporo, for which the Mission and Hokusei have been seeking a buyer for so long. This must be accompanied by some measure of disappointment, as the organization authorized the sale in 1924—before the Depression hit and various possibilities of the sale proved fruitless—for not less than ¥250,000. Yet now accepting the price of ¥90,000 appears unavoidable. “Although the amount to be realized is less than anticipated for these 1,800 tsubo, it seems advantageous to sell at the present time” (p. 8). This sale still does not repay the entire debt, so surplus budget has to be directed toward its relief. Money is borrowed from the building fund for another school (Wilmina), and the question of how to cover the still outstanding debt is brought to the Mission as a whole (pp. 13-14).

In recognition of the need for closer ties with its Japanese partner churches, the Mission proposes a joint-committee with the Church of Christ in Japan (日本基督教会). If the proposal is accepted by the Japanese churches, Miss Monk will serve as a representative of the Mission. It is shifting toward a policy of supporting the arrangement of schools' boards of trustees so that the majority of their members belong to the Church of Christ

in Japan rather than the Mission. However, regarding Hokusei the Mission recommends the following: “Continue the support [from the Mission] on approximately the present level. Recommend to the directors to organize themselves into a Zaidan Hojin [a legally incorporated foundation] and raise in Japan the required ¥30,000” (pp. 28-34).

**1935.** The only staffing change for this year is the return of Janet Smith to Hokusei after one year back in the U.S. The Mission welcomes her, shows appreciation for her service, and requests the Board to reinstate her as one of its affiliated members (p. 26).

A debt of over \$13,000 remains from the loan for Hokusei’s campus relocation several years ago, after the sale of the old campus property to the Sango Kumiai was finalized as agreed upon (p. 20). This is the top item on the Preferred Property List (p. 6). To move toward a conclusion of this matter, the Mission requests permission from the Board to use proceeds of a land sale in Tokyo (Tsunohazu) to pay what it owes (pp. 41-42).

Agreement is reached with leaders of Japanese churches to cooperate more closely in the key areas of deciding mission work locations, types of ministry to undertake, where to station workers (including missionaries), and budgets, among other matters (pp. 28-29). Turning the work of education over to the control of Japanese churches is a more complicated matter in some respects, and less specific agreement is reached. However, the Mission sets the standards it would like affiliated girls’ high schools to follow in forming their boards of directors/trustees. It asks that 4 members be appointed by the Mission, 2 by the school alumni, 2 by Christian churches, and 2 by the board of directors/trustees, for a total of 10 (pp. 29-31).

**1936.** No Annual Meeting is held this year. The one held the following year will cover two years’ business matters.

**1937.** Miss Monk gives a thoughtfully-worded, touching memorial to Ida Goepf Pierson, who has died. It contains an overview of her life and work. Mrs. Goepf supported Hokusei in its early years in various ways, including teaching as a substitute for Sarah Smith when she was on furlough in the 1890s (pp. 42-43).

The urgent request from Hokusei for an English teacher cannot be granted now, but approval is given for funds to pay Miss Jane Dunlop, sister of late former Mission member Dr. J. G. Dunlop, to do the work on temporary basis (pp. 58-59). The Mission is to provide part of the funding and Hokkaido Station will supply another equal portion (p. 69).

Plans remain in place to sell the Tsunohazu property in Tokyo to relieve the still-outstanding debt on the Hokusei property acquired in the recent campus relocation (pp. 40-

41). The Board, however, has not yet given authorization. The Mission is continuing to pay interest fees on the debt (p. 77). This item is still at the top of the Mission's list of property items it wishes to buy or sell (p. 68). The land on which the house that Sarah Smith built sits, is also recommended by the Mission as one which may be sold, with the understanding that the house will be given to Hokusei's Alumnae Association and moved elsewhere (p. 76). Though the use to which these proceeds would be put is not stated, repaying the Hokusei debt is an obvious possibility.

The Central Joint Committee has asked that the Mission put on its Preferred Property List a request to the Board for ¥5,000 to use in building a dorm for students in Sapporo. The Mission replies that it is unable to agree because Hokkaido already has one large item on that List, and the Board is in financial stress at this point (pp. 81-82).

Funds are given to spend at Hokusei to repair damage caused by an April 12, 1937, tornado (p. 57). Other budget is designated as a gift to Janet Smith for her medical expenses (¥100, p. 77).

The Mission reconfirms its intention to transfer responsibility for educational organizations from itself to Japanese schools themselves and churches. It repeats its recommendation that each of its high schools set up a *zaidan hojin* to operate the organization (pp. 29-30). It again sets the specific numbers of representatives from various sectors to be appointed to the governing board (see 1935 report). Specifically regarding Hokusei, it once more recommends a plan of operation by which the Mission will appoint and fund four staff positions. It intends to contribute ¥4,000 per year to the school (p. 31).

1938. Miss Dorothy L. Schmidt is welcomed to the Mission as the only member to be added to the organization's number this year (p. 4). She is to be located in Sapporo for work at Hokusei (p. 28).

Mr. and Mrs. Lake, who have supported Hokusei's work in various capacities, have gone to the U.S. due to a family emergency (p. 49). Mr. and Mrs. Tremain's move to Sapporo is approved by the Mission (pp. 52-53). She is now a Hokusei trustee.

H. D. Hannaford is chosen to represent the Mission at the celebration of Hokusei Jo Gakko's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary (p. 41). He also is now a Hokusei trustee.

In reviewing the year past, the Education Committee refers to Mission-affiliated schools, their steady work, and "the troubled seas in which they have been sailing" (p. 18). Part of the adversity they face is the cost of household necessities, which has risen 35% this fiscal year already. The Mission asks for the Board's help (p. 46).

Continued efforts to sell the Tsunohazu property in Tokyo have not born fruit, so using the proceeds to pay off the debt for Hokusei's campus relocation loan is not now possible. The Mission elects to keep the property for the time being (pp. 33-34). Retiring the Hokusei debt still tops the list of property-related actions the organization hopes to take (p. 9).

1939. There are no significant personnel changes during this year. Reduced funding from overseas is a widespread problem now and largely explains why additional staffing is not possible, despite what the missionaries see as the need for it (p. 13). Financial hardships abound and general stress is growing as Japan has already entered a major war in Asia and the possibility of war with the West looms. Despite this, there are no specific restrictions on conducting Christian education, and by most measures, Mission-affiliated schools are prospering (p. 12).

Dr. Yoshinao Niijima is reelected by vote of the Mission as Hokusei principal (p. 32). Despite the increasingly interdependent relationship between the Mission and its Japanese partners, in crucial matters such as employment for key positions, the missionary organization maintains a considerable amount of control.

Mission representatives are still working hard on the sale of the Tsunohazu property, on which they are hanging hopes for repaying Hokusei's debt. There are live prospects, but no deal has materialized (p. 27). Enough budget remains at the end of the fiscal year to pay interest on the debt (p. 45). This obligation still is the Mission's top priority property transaction item (p. 28).

1940. No personnel changes are made this year. G. P. Pierson, long-time supporter of Hokusei Jo Gakko and evangelist in Hokkaido, has died July 31, 1939. Miss Monk is chosen to write a memorial to his life and work (p. 56).

After 10 years have passed since the celebration of Hokusei's opening its new campus, the debt incurred can now be liquidated. The Mission decides to request permission from the Board to pay what it owes by selling the property in Asahigawa which the Mission agreed last year to sell, as well as property in Hiroshima (pp. 59-60).

The Mission agrees to request the Board to approve the proposed forming of a *zaidan hojin* for Hokusei Girls' School. It is also agreed that when the formation of this legal entity is finalized, the Mission will give to Hokusei Jo Gakko the property at the school site, except for the residence which the teachers now occupy. That will also go to the school at the time in the future that the missionaries no longer need it (p. 68).

Likewise, it is decided by vote of the Mission to request the Board to approve that the

house Miss Smith lived in before returning to the U.S. be moved from its current location to the Hokusei campus and given to school. Though the house belongs to the Mission, it recognizes the connection the school has felt with it, as the residence of its founder and built in cooperation between her and the Alumnae Association (p. 68).

## Analysis and Discussion of Contents

The Japan Mission's Committee on Education in its 1937 report (p. 26) made a statement which touches on a few key issues of this period of its life and Hokusei's.

In general the Mission expects to press more vigorously its policy of transferring to the Japanese Christian constituency the responsibility for the educational institutions with which it is connected, just as rapidly as is consistent with safeguarding Christian character and educational efficiency.

As for the combination of both the spiritual and educational elements of their work, the records from the years under consideration here make it clear that the Japan Mission and schools under its care kept both of these crucial goals before their eyes throughout. Taken as a whole, records of the Annual Meeting demonstrate that the missionaries and their Japanese partners did a remarkable job of maintaining in both major areas, particularly in light of the stressful circumstances under which they labored.

For instance, regarding keeping their Christian identity and commitment, statistics show significant numbers of students being baptized during the 1930s. At Hokusei Jo Gakko, from 30 to 68 per year were recorded as making this significant public commitment of faith. In the key area of hiring, as well, Hokusei kept a full-time teaching staff composed almost completely of Christians. Except for 1938-1939 and 1939-1940, 100% were followers of Christ. Viewing their experiences from this type of vantage point, missionaries were able to report (1938, p. 18) things such as:

The year has brought sorrow, worry, and annoyance in many ways, felt only dimly by our girls' schools in comparison to the more acute difficulties of boys' schools, but they still stand staunchly as Christian institutions ready to breast the waves of whatever storms may be ahead of us.

Throughout the 1930s the missionaries and their partners were also able to maintain in a generally effective fashion the organizations with which they were connected. This included the Mission itself, the Church of Christ in Japan churches, and their affiliated girls' schools. Hokusei Jo Gakko, for example, despite consistent staffing and financial struggles, kept a student population that ranged from an average enrollment of 371 in 1932-1933 to

557 in 1939-1940. The number increased every year reported. This reflected to a degree quite difficult to measure in detail here a level of academic quality which families in the local community considered high enough that they would continue to send their daughters to be educated there. This was occurring during a period when the presence of Fuji Girls' High School (opened 1925) and other schools offered parents and their daughters a significantly larger number of options than they had in the past.

Records from the 1933 to 1940 Annual Meetings also reveal how difficult it was becoming for the Mission to sustain foreign leadership of the organizations to which it was linked, as well as foreign funding. Annual Meeting minutes reveal that a remarkable amount of prolonged pain and anguish was necessary to complete payment for the upgrade to even one school's campus (Hokusei's). Having to struggle to pay the interest on the Hokusei debt over a number of years made it impossible on a practical level for the Mission to fund other projects which it felt were more than worthy of its effort. The Committee on Education wrote the following about the general condition of the girls' schools under its care (1939, pp. 12-13).

The Committee wishes to reiterate that, because of the long history of insufficient appropriations for property needs, the condition of many of the school buildings is disgraceful and in some cases actually dangerous. This long neglect has resulted in a critical situation in four of our schools. . . .

Even in comparison with those sponsored by other Christian missions, the condition of schools under PCUSA care was poor, they asserted (1937, p. 27).

More money was being raised from inside Japan, they noted. "These valiant efforts on the field, however, cannot realize the amounts necessary to provide our schools with adequate buildings" (1939, pp. 12-13).

These and other comments on current conditions seem to demonstrate how compelling the need was for local support of the endeavors the Japan Mission and Japanese churches were undertaking. Reports note from time to time how unrealistic it is to count on this support at present, yet there is a growing realization that empowering the Japanese side of organizations is the path forward in accomplishing their larger mission. The extent to which their local supporters inside and outside the church can take leadership in their work will be a key factor in determining their success or failure, missionaries are increasingly aware. In the case of schools, to what degree they can follow Japanese leadership without losing their Christian commitment or quality of education will indicate how well they are achieving the mission for which the Japan Mission-affiliated organizations were founded.

## Conclusion

Not long after the final Annual Meeting report of the years being considered here was filed, the tragic events of World War II began to unfold in ways that brought to an end, at least temporarily, many of the endeavors in which the Japan Mission had invested itself for over 80 years. Yet after the destruction ended and the organizations the Mission had founded received the opportunity to make a fresh start, they had a relatively firm set of beliefs, values, customs, policies, and practices to which they could return. These, along with their partner organizations, became the means of their rebuilding and seeking to grow beyond what they had achieved in earlier years.

A significant portion of this foundation which remained after the War was laid and protected during the years considered in this article. The extent to which organizations founded by the Japan Mission continue to choose this as the base on which to build going forward will be a key consideration in forming their future, as well.

### [Notes]

- (1) This committee handles decisions made cooperatively by the Mission and representatives of its counterpart, the Church of Christ in Japan.
- (2) She has already been introduced as a new member in the previous year, according to the 1932 Annual Meeting report. No explanation is provided.
- (3) Except where otherwise noted, page numbers in parentheses refer to the minutes of the Mission Meeting of the year being discussed.
- (4) The five girls' high schools affiliated with the PCUSA between 1933 and 1940 include the following.
  - A. Hokuriku Jo Gakko (北陸女学校) in Kanazawa
  - B. Hokusei Jo Gakko (北星女学校) in Sapporo
  - C. Joshi Gakuin (女子学院, formerly Shinsakae Jo Gakko [新栄女学校], formerly Graham Seminary) in Tokyo
  - D. Shimonoseki Baiko Jo Gakuin (下関梅光女学院, former names of its components including Kojo Jo Gakuin [光城女学院], Sturges Seminary, and Umegasaki Jo Gakko [梅香崎女学校]) earlier in Yamaguchi and later Shimonoseki. Its foreign mission support comes not only from the PCUSA but the Reformed Church in America (RCA), as well.
  - E. Wilmina Jo Gakko (ウキルミナ女学校, which formerly included Naniwa Jo Gakko [浪華女学校], the union of the schools later to be called Osaka Jogakuin Koto Gakko [大阪女学院高等学校]) in Osaka

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