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Hokusei Jo Gakko Reports
in the Christian Mission Magazine,
Woman's Work for Woman

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I. Introduction

Of the several sets of English language historical records which describe life at Hokusei Jo Gakko (North Star Girls' School, 北星女学校) in its early years, perhaps the one most appealing today to the general reader interested in Christian mission work is the monthly magazine, *Woman's Work for Woman*. This article examines Hokusei updates published there from the school's establishment in 1887 to the return of its founder, Sarah C. Smith, to her home country in 1931.

Taken as a whole, the various sections related specifically to Hokusei Jo Gakko comprise approximately 39 pages. The magazine presents its readers with a wide variety of features and updates on individual missionaries, Japanese people they know, and the churches, schools, and other organizations to which they belong. Beyond the Hokusei-specific parts, the approximately 20 to 40 total pages of each month's issue supply the reader with considerable data on the mission activities of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) throughout Japan and around the world.¹ They also from time to time provide information on the Japanese partner organizations with which Sarah Smith's school cooperated, including the Church of Christ in Japan (日本基督教会) and the Association of Christian Schools in Japan (キリスト教学校教育同盟). They thus facilitate an understanding

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

of the context in which Hokusei Jo Gakko developed and today's Hokusei Gakuen has its roots.

In comparison with other Hokusei-related historical materials, *Woman's Work for Woman* is unique in two key respects. First, the publication was primarily intended for the women of the PCUSA. In particular, the readership consisted of members of this Christian denomination's several women's mission societies. Whereas Hokusei updates in the annual reports to the Board of Foreign Missions (BFM) of the PCUSA's General Assembly, like the Hokkaido Station reports to the Japan Mission of the BFM, were addressed to the group of PCUSA churches as a whole, this magazine had the specific orientation and character of being designed for mission-minded Presbyterian women.

Second, it differs from both these sets of reports and *Sumisu Koumu Nenshi*² in that its authors were seeking not so much circumspect and thorough reporting as giving a colorful and interesting representation of the work missionaries were doing from day to day. They did not tell their stories in preset intervals, providing objective facts and figures. Rather, they often presented more subjective information such as episodes from their experiences or introductions to specific individuals, which captured the spirit of the work in a more organic way.

The key purposes of *Woman's Work for Woman* appear to center on providing a vehicle for missionaries to stay in firm contact with their base of support. Authors sought not only to educate but also to encourage and inspire readers to support the mission cause. The communication the magazine afforded between missionaries and their backers also served to form, deepen, and maintain personal relationships. It provided missionaries serving in far-flung corners of the world with a degree of social and spiritual support. *Woman's Work for Woman* was designed to sustain them with the knowledge that sisters in Christ sympathetic to their endeavors were praying, fund-raising, and recruiting at home while they were ministering around the world. The publication likewise helped provide a common base of knowledge on which they could build further when they met directly with women's missionary society members while in the US on furlough.

A variety of authors submitted the reports from year to year. They included Sarah C. Smith in most of Hokusei's earliest years, Clara H. (Carrie) Rose from time to time, Isabelle M. Ward on a few occasions, Alice M. Monk relatively often, and less frequently Ida G. Pierson, Mary B. Sherman, Carrie H. McCrory, Elizabeth M. Evans, Katherine A. Chapman, and Frances E. Davidson.³ With only a few exceptions, these were all single missionary ladies assigned primarily to Hokusei Jo Gakko when reporting.⁴

The following discussion deals with the articles and other brief reports recorded by and about Hokusei Jo Gakko teachers and the students and community they served. They make possible a more complete and accurate understanding of the historical roots from which today's Hokusei Gakuen has grown. These portions of the magazine and many more which are less directly related to Hokusei Jo Gakko may be accessed in the Gale Cengage Learning (Primary Source Media, formerly Scholarly Resources) microfilm sets at Hokusei Gakuen University and other locations. In connection with the 125th anniversary of Hokusei Gakuen and the 50th anniversaries of Hokusei Gakuen University and Hokusei Gakuen University High School, the

University's Smith Mission Center Steering Committee has transcribed a series of historical data sets including Hokusei-relevant sections of *Woman's Work for Woman*. They can be accessed through Hokusei Gakuen University's Web site at www.hokusei.ac.jp by clicking on the [学校法人北星学園](#) link, then on [北星学園アーカイブズ](#) and [創立者たちの残した記録](#).

II. Historical Background

During the years of Hokusei Jo Gakko's formation and development, the missionaries who led in founding it were backed not only generally by the PCUSA and its world mission agency (the BFM) but specifically by several women's mission societies. Sometimes referred to as boards, these groups existed inside the denomination's organizational structure. Just as local churches had their own women's mission societies, these organizations were similarly active at the national level. By Sarah Smith's retirement as missionary in 1922, they had increased in number and strength to include six associations centered in Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Portland, Oregon.⁵ The women who constituted their membership were indispensable to whatever success the PCUSA mission enterprise can claim.

The first two PCUSA women's mission societies were formed in 1870 in Philadelphia and New York "with the pious determination to assume the support of every woman, called by God and commissioned by the Board, in the foreign field" (PCUSA General Assembly, 1871, p. 536). Their functions included (a) securing property for mission ventures, (b) bolstering the budgets of PCUSA world mission work at all levels, (c) supporting mission education through the work of local church women's mission societies, and (d) gaining as many women candidates as possible for appointment as missionaries. As of 1923, there existed over 5,500 local women's missionary societies, not to mention the 8,499 organizations of Presbyterian young people and children, which were often led by the women of the church and included teaching about world missions (PCUSA General Assembly, 1923, Vol. 2, p. 11). All these mission-related activities were actively and consistently sustained through the support of *Woman's Work for Woman*.

Maintaining these women's societies within the BFM itself was apparently seen as necessary or desirable in light of women's status in the larger US society. Operating to a great degree separately from the male-dominated Board in effect afforded women a measure of freedom which may not have been available otherwise. As the movement toward equality of the sexes proceeded, the perception of the need to operate a gender-specific organization lessened.

Beginning in 1921, the various regional societies were consolidated into one, the Women's Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The change was made to increase convenience and efficiency while maintaining for these female leaders the role of setting plans and policies for the work of ladies serving in foreign missions. They continued to work under the leadership of and in cooperation with the BFM management. However, whereas Board membership had been entirely male up to that time, under the new organization women had 15 positions as voting members and considerable authority in administering the budget of the BFM as a whole, including women's board contributions

(PCUSA General Assembly, 1923, Vol. 2, p. 13).

The magazine, *Our Mission Field*, was published by the Ladies' Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. from 1871 through 1885. After this time, it was combined with *Woman's Work for Woman* and continued with the unified title of *Woman's Work for Woman and Our Mission Field: A Union Illustrated Magazine* from 1886 through 1890. The title, *Woman's Work for Woman*, was also altered in other ways from time to time during the years Sarah Smith was in Sapporo. Various subtitles were added or the title shortened occasionally, as the bibliographical information below indicates, to express certain aspects of its mission, nature, or sponsorship. Beginning in 1924, it was consolidated once again, this time with the magazine, *Home Mission*. The title was changed to *Women and Missions*, which it remained throughout the time under consideration. The focus of the content shifted from foreign missions alone to include cross-cultural work inside the US, as well.

III. Format

Direct references to Hokusei Jo Gakko's activities do not appear in each month's issue of *Woman's Work for Woman*, or even in that of every year. When they are included, they are sometimes in the form of a one- or two-page article with its own title and Hokusei missionary listed as author. In other cases, a small information cluster of several lines is inserted, without a writer named, among other widely varying groupings of information about the ministry activities of different BFM women missionaries throughout the world. Several years' issues have at the beginning of the publication a roster of the missionaries currently serving. It typically goes by the title of "Our Missionaries in Japan" and contains information such as the country and local area where they serve. Updates from Hokusei also frequently appear in the section entitled "Letters from the Front" or the one often given the title, "Changes in the Missionary Force."

There is relatively little in the way of a consistent pattern in organizing the contents of *Woman's Work for Woman* from year to year. Though the types of writings described above (see pp. 91-92) are included in some form or fashion, there is a great amount of variation in the organization of the magazine's constituent parts.

IV. Overview of Contents

The following summarizes the material related to Hokusei Jo Gakko for the years in which it appears in *Woman's Work for Woman*. As it makes clear, some authors report on their individual work, while others write describing the work of their school or other organization as a whole.

1888. Miss Smith announces that she has begun a new work in Sapporo. She provides numerical information on programs and participants.

1890. Smith relates various episodes in her missionary life, including how (a) her ministry team began its first Sunday school, (b) an American baby was mistaken by some local people

at Sapporo Festival for a god, and (c) a parent changed from being hostile toward her child's participation in Sunday school to accepting of it. She also describes how students from her Sunday school hold worship services and work to help local prison inmates.

1893. Miss Smith introduces two current Hokusei enrollees and encourages readers to provide more support for such students. She also reports on efforts to collect funds for building a church in Sapporo, a project for which girls at the school are actively working to raise money. Finally, she cites examples of her pupils who have fervently prayed to God for help at times of crisis and transition in their lives.

1894. Miss Rose writes describing her voyage to Sapporo via Hawaii, the current situation at Hokusei (including its growth and Miss Smith's bout with influenza), a Japanese church building as it is used on a typical Sunday, and her new English Bible class for young men from Sapporo Agricultural College. She also reports on her obtaining a "resident passport" authorizing her to continue her work, reconstructs the scene of the school's annual Sunday school picnic, and notes the significance and social prestige attached to graduating from this academic institution.

1895. Miss Smith tells the stories of the journeys to Christian faith of two students who have recently joined the church, along with the parents of one, after a period of fierce opposition. She asks readers to pray for Hokusei pupils, then concludes with an update on political conditions and their effect on enrollment.

1896. Smith recounts the story of a student whose sister was sold as a dancing girl. The Hokusei pupil set about the task of purchasing her sister's freedom and with help finally succeeded in doing so. Rose reports on the weekly prayer meeting held by teachers, the new post-graduate curriculum, the Bible classes she teaches in the school, and the new educational work she has begun in Otaru.

1898. A brief note by Smith presents statistical information on the school, including numbers of students in regular attendance at a local church. She also tells of some teachers who serve at the school largely on a volunteer basis and young pupils who hold prayer meetings and collect money to give in supporting the school.

1899. Mrs. Ida Pierson, substituting for Sarah Smith, supplies a few facts and figures on the school's financial and spiritual health. She also mentions the students' great love for playing on a snow hill on campus at recreation time.

1900. A report by Miss Rose on her school in Otaru includes a note that Hokusei is doing well. She lists respects in which, despite agitations in the Japanese educational system as a whole, the way seems clear for girls' education to continue developing.

1903. Miss Sherman urges her readers to provide support so that more missionary teachers can be sent, particularly those who can sing and teach music. She recounts how 29 Hokusei students made decisions to become followers of Christ.

1904. Miss Smith writes a brief note that there is at Hokusei a pervasive and continuing interest in Christianity. In addition, Miss Sherman compares the joys and trials of her missionary work as compared with those in teaching and mission work she has done

previously in the US.

1905. Miss Ward reports on her first impressions of life in Sapporo and Hokusei Jo Gakko and the struggles of learning the language and culture. She describes the singing which Hokusei students performed for soldiers preparing to be sent to the Russo-Japanese War. A separate note recognizes the gift of an organ through the New York Women's Board.

1906. Miss Ward recounts the patriotic feeling and excitement in Sapporo when soldiers returned from the Russo-Japanese War. One was the father of a Hokusei student.

1907. Miss Monk provides an update on life at Hokusei, including a description of the campus facilities and the natural beauty of the area. She describes the conversion of six members of the senior class and asks for prayer for others who are not yet believers, as well as for Japanese Christians and missionaries. Her report tells of a series of evangelistic services held in a park, which attracted thousands of people from around the city. A separate note indicates that 19 Hokusei students and two alumni became members of Christian churches during the previous year, and four more wished to do so but had not yet received permission.

1908. This year's report, by an unnamed author, indicates that recently over 80 Hokusei students at an evangelistic service stated their intention to become Christians. Miss Ward writes in another section about the meaning and high value of graduation ceremonies in the life and ministry of Christian girls' schools in Japan. Finally, a separate note says that (a) 2,900 bouquets with Bible words attached had been presented by Hokusei Jo Gakko to hospital patients in the past year and (b) the school had been censured for failing to celebrate the Japanese Emperor's birthday on the Sunday it fell that year.

1909. Miss Monk gives information on staffing changes, the student population, the Christian population, new Christians, and government inspections. Smith is reported as returning from furlough.

1910. Miss Monk describes the staffing changes the school is currently undergoing. She also discusses challenges involving keeping teachers, maintaining programs, and meeting the expectations of the government, students, and students' families for high-quality education.

1912. Miss Smith reports that dozens of Hokusei students have expressed a desire to be baptized or have people pray for them, following a series of after-school prayer and worship meetings. An unnamed author reports the great appreciation and affection felt by those at Hokusei for the help rendered by Miss Monk's mother during her stay in Sapporo. The editor also notes (a) the increased competition Hokusei faces due to the opening of new schools in Sapporo and (b) Hokusei Jo Gakko's 25th anniversary celebration. Smith also provides an account of the festivities.

1914. Smith details the woeful state of the school's buildings and the severe financial difficulties it faces. She describes the flooding which has brought great suffering to the Hokkaido area in general.

1916. Miss McCrory announces that Hokusei students have saved money and sent it to help women and children in Belgium, the school's first volunteer project to help people overseas. Miss Monk reports the death of Miss Rose in Otaru, the closing of her school, and

the transfer of current students to Hokusei Jo Gakko.

1919. After a list of missionaries currently serving, this edition includes a note by Miss Monk that Hokusei has celebrated its 30th anniversary. It is followed with an account by Miss Evans of the work of the Y. W. C. A., which she helps lead.

1921. The year's reporting from Hokusei consists of a list of the missionaries assigned to the school and a defense of Japan and Japanese Christians. It is a response to criticism of the nation's aggression in Korea.

1922. Following the list of current missionaries is a set of reflections by Mrs. Chapman on her brief time in Hokkaido. She mentions the eager spirit of Hokusei students, the independent local church she recently visited, a Sunday school run by Miss Smith, and the opportunities for mission work which Hokkaido in general and girls' schools like Hokusei in particular afford.

1924. Miss Davidson comments on the recent major earthquake in the Kanto region, Hokusei's contributions to the relief effort, and Japan's need for salvation through the Gospel of Christ, to which she sees the disaster as bringing attention. A list of missionaries concludes the Hokusei-related sections of the year's issues.

1929. Miss Evans describes the Christian influence Hokusei has in Hokkaido through students' singing in a radio broadcast and alumni's undertaking various forms of Christian ministry where they relocate after graduating. She also notes progress in developing the curriculum and campus facilities.

V. Analysis of Contents

Though the facts and figures regarding Hokusei Jo Gakko's development, as noted above, are reported only sporadically in *Woman's Work for Woman*, where they do appear, they lend support to the representations of the school's formation and growth presented in other historical records. Statistics on such matters as student population and numbers of graduates and baptisms are in harmony with other data sets. Details do vary on occasion, no doubt due in large measure to differing points during the year when things like attendance and enrollment were counted and reported, the fact that a certain percentage of students regularly dropped out along the way, and imprecise language (unclear distinctions between enrollment and actual average attendance, for instance). Despite this, the figures which are recorded tell a story essentially consistent with the accounts of events appearing in reports to the PCUSA General Assembly, *Sumisu Koumu Nenshi*, reports to the BFM's Japan Mission, and elsewhere.

As the key point in the whole enterprise of the Christian education which Hokusei missionaries had undertaken was to lead students to knowledge which ideally included the knowledge of God, it is worthwhile to examine briefly the nature and character of this God as the Hokusei missionaries present Him in this magazine.⁶ For instance, the names they use in referring to God include "the One God, our Father," "the true God" (Smith, 1890, p. 236), and "the Lord" (Smith, 1912, p. 55). The various identifying terms the writers employ draw a

clear distinction between the Christian God and the great number of gods in the polytheistic worldview which Hokusei students had in their cultural background.

This God's characteristics include His being worthy of praise and pleased when children obey their parents (Smith, 1890, p. 237). He is faithful (Rose, 1900, p. 221) and loving (Evans, 1919, p. 59).

The personality and spirit of this God are revealed in the things He does. Hokusei missionaries note Him as leading a person to take interest in helping certain groups of students (Rose, 1896, pp. 47-48). Rose quotes the Bible (II Thessalonians 3:3) in picturing God as someone who "will establish⁷ you and keep you from evil" (1900, p. 221). God saves people, forgiving the sins of those who confess them and enabling them to believe in Him (Sherman, 1903, p. 213). He blesses His work, which He does through people like those at Hokusei Jo Gakko. This blessing is, for example, by leading students to mature, including growing to have faith in Him (Ward, 1905, p. 72). He teaches, as Christ trained His disciples to continue His work after He was gone (Davidson, 1924, p. 58).

If God is this type of being, active in the daily lives of ordinary people, as Hokusei's leaders conceived Him to be, then it was only logical in their minds to present Christian faith to the students not as merely a set of doctrines to be believed or a list of prescribed (or proscribed) behaviors to be adhered to (or avoided). Rather, it was reasonable to them that they would teach Christianity as a faith based on a relationship with God, a living being, available for them and anyone to know personally through faith. Given that they held this view of God, it is not surprising that they would expect Him to provide for the needs of the school, the students, their families, and all who turned to Him to guide their lives.

One particular way of relating to this God receives special attention in the writings of Hokusei missionaries: prayer. Smith reminds her readers that God answers prayer, and theirs have combined with their gifts and labor to educate Hokusei students (1893, p. 243). Earnest prayer is what the school needs more than anything, she writes in 1895 (p. 246). It provides an inner warmth which outward prosperity (such as increased enrollment and an expanded curriculum) does not (Rose, 1896, p. 47). Those at Hokusei give prayers of thanksgiving for spiritual things such as the gift of salvation (Sherman, 1903, p. 213), but also for visible blessings, for example safety during the disaster of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 (Davidson, 1924, p. 58). Missionaries report enjoying praying with God privately (Sherman, 1904, p. 207) and seeing the effectiveness of praying corporately for things such as students' salvation and their own ability to overcome temptation (Monk, 1907, p. 42).

If prayer is a type of communication which students can realistically be expected to learn, then it holds logically that Hokusei's founders would seek to teach it to their students. Particularly as a school offering a curriculum with a strong focus on communication skills (Japanese, Chinese, and English classes among the relatively small number of classes offered), including communication of a spiritual type fit with the educational goals of the institution.

If God could be known in these various ways, then there was no student for whom Christianity was irrelevant, whether she was from a Christian or non-Christian background.

There was no subject in the curriculum which did not connect on the most fundamental level with a knowledge of God. Hokusei Jo Gakko's educational philosophy, ideal, and objectives, as well as practical matters such as financial planning and policies regarding hiring, made sense only in light of the understandings of God expressed in *Woman's Work for Woman*.

To summarize, the authors reporting from Hokusei, taken as a whole, present a certain view of the character and spirit of the school, the objectives it pursued, and the programs it operated to achieve them. Judging from the manner in which they present these key aspects of the life of the institution, it is clear that they expect the administration, faculty, and other staff to actually believe in Hokusei's mission of Christian education. They act according to the expectation that a considerable number of students will in theory and practice come to a personal faith in Christ both before and after they complete their education here. The mission-focused nature of the school is undeniable, both in the realm of ideals, principles, and policies and in that of operating the school according to them from day to day.

VI. Conclusion

Not surprisingly in view of *Woman's Work for Woman's* readership and purposes for existence, the information reported on Hokusei Jo Gakko is presented in an appealing and positive light. The negative aspects which appear are typically demonstrations of the financial, social, or other conditions calling for greater support from the home churches. Though they do not appear to deliberately hide the unflattering and troubling aspects of life which existed at this school as in perhaps any human organization, the magazine's authors certainly do not go out of their way to bring problems to light. In this sense, the material here is less frank and transparent in reflecting the full range of happenings at Hokusei Jo Gakko than, for instance, *Sumisu Koumu Nenshi*.

Nevertheless, this publication provides an irreplaceable account of the development of the school Sarah Smith founded and today's Hokusei Gakuen in its early days. Its accounts of specific people and events provide engaging personal expressions of how Hokusei Jo Gakko was planted and nourished to growth. As such, they are necessary in gaining a thorough understanding the school system's history.

Woman's Work for Woman is especially valuable in demonstrating the energy, determination, and faith which drove the women who played vital roles in Presbyterian mission work. The ladies writing regarding Hokusei Jo Gakko serve as vivid representations of the many others of their gender who made possible much of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Christian mission effort worldwide. They also provide specific examples of Presbyterian work in women's education throughout Japan.

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VIII. Notes

- (1) The PCUSA today maintains an ecumenical partnership with Hokusei Gakuen through the school system's affiliation with the United Church of Christ in Japan (日本基督教団).
- (2) This journal written primarily by Smith contains a year-by-year account of the school's formation and development in its early years. See the reference list above for further information.
- (3) Further information on these individuals is available in Volumes 45 and 46 of this publication in Parts I and II of the article by the author, "Missionaries Who Worked with Sarah C. Smith."
- (4) Mrs. Pierson wrote when covering for Smith during a furlough, and Mrs. Chapman's comments were impressions recorded after a visit to Hokkaido. She and her husband, Ernest N. Chapman, served in the Wakayama Station of the PCUSA Japan Mission. Leo C. Lake included Hokusei in a report on Sapporo Station in 1931.
- (5) The 1923 PCUSA General Assembly minutes (Vol. 1, p. 87) name these women's missionary societies as follows: (a) The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church (incorporated in the State of Pennsylvania), (b) The Woman's Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church (incorporated in the State of New York), (c) The Woman's Presbyterian Board of Missions of the Northwest (incorporated in the State of Illinois), (d) The Women's Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions of the Southwest (incorporated in the State of Missouri), (e) The Woman's Occidental Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church (incorporated in the State of California), and (f) Woman's North Pacific Presbyterian Board of Missions (incorporated in the State of Oregon).
- (6) Surnames in parentheses in this section refer to Hokusei missionaries who use these terms in referring to God.
- (7) The wording she uses is identical to the King James Version, except where she substitutes *establish* for *stablish*.

IX. Acknowledgment

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[Abstract]

Hokusei Jo Gakko Reports in the Christian Mission Magazine, *Woman's Work for Woman*

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In Christian church life generally and more particularly the eighteenth and nineteenth century Christian mission effort and the segment of it led by Presbyterian missionaries in Japan, much of the organizational authority lay in the hands of men. Yet women served as an indispensable and driving force in every phase of the work. Of the groupings of historical records of the years Sarah Smith and her partners were establishing the school which became today's Hokusei Gakuen, the set most focused on women's roles in this process is the mission magazine, *Woman's Work for Woman*. This article introduces the Hokusei-related portions of the publication, with attention paid to the background of the magazine itself and the authors' objectives, readership, and main themes. It also describes how their ideas demonstrate the character and spirit of the school. Transcriptions of the sections dealing with Hokusei have been made available online in the 学校法人北星学園 (北星学園アーカイブズ) section of the University's Web site as part of a University-funded Smith Mission Center research project.

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