

Missionary Friends of Sarah C. Smith

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Introduction

Previous articles in this publication have introduced numerous missionaries who worked with Sarah C. Smith, founder of the Hokusei Gakuen school system, during her years in Japan. In addition to these colleagues, various others were friends of Smith who did not work directly with her but served simultaneously inside the same organization, the Japan Mission of the Board of Foreign Missions (BFM) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA).

As the number of PCUSA missionaries in Japan grew from 7 in Smith's first year in Japan (1880) to 65 in her last (1931), there was an increasing number with whom Smith had connections. They

thus met her regularly at the annual Mission Meeting, had many of the same acquaintances, and in many cases worked in mission girls' schools, as Smith did.¹ Presbyterian missionary teachers would from time to time give or receive training and send or receive missionary staff members between these schools as circumstances required. Of the 28 PCUSA missionaries who served at Hokusei during Sarah Smith's years in Sapporo, at least 16 either before, during, or after their time at this school taught in one of the other Japan Mission-affiliated schools (Allison, 2009).² Others with experience working at Hokusei served with members of Smith's Japan Mission community in contexts other than educational ones, as well.

At least a few of these missionaries knew Smith both before and after her retirement and return to the United States in 1931. The following will introduce those of these individuals whom records indicate Smith knew. It is a brief list and not an exhaustive one. As friends and in a broad sense colleagues, these missionaries each impacted Smith's life to some degree. Thus an understanding of their friendships with her is necessary in gaining as complete a knowledge as possible of the process,

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

meaning, and relevance of the foundation of this institution.

Gertrude S. Bigelow



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Gertrude Sara Bigelow was born in Batavia, New York, in 1860. She was educated at Hamilton Female Seminary in Hamilton, New York, and worked as a teacher for three years. Her service as a PCUSA missionary in Japan began in 1886, when she was 26 years old. In terms of her age, the place she was raised, where she was educated, and her first professional experience, Bigelow's background was quite similar to Smith's.

After arriving in Japan, likewise, her life's path resembled Smith's at several significant points. Her early experience focused on teaching in the same girls' school in Tokyo which Smith did (Shinsakae Jo Gakko). After four years there, she was assigned to service in Kanazawa, where she served for two years, becoming

principal of her school in 1891. Beginning in 1892, she served at the PCUSA mission school in Yamaguchi, Kojo Jo Gakuin, and the kindergarten there, Myojo Yochien (明星幼稚園). When the girls' school was relocated to Shimonoseki in 1914, she moved along with it and ministered at the new school there, Shimonoseki Baiko Jo Gakuin, until 1926. After returning to teach in Yamaguchi for one year at Myojo Kindergarten, she again located in Shimonoseki, where she remained until her retirement from PCUSA mission service in 1930 at age 70.

Even the number of years Miss Bigelow served at these schools (4 in Tokyo, 2 in Kanazawa, 38 in Yamaguchi/Shimonoseki) is remarkably close to Smith's (4 in Tokyo, 3 in Hakodate, and 35 in

Sapporo, plus her post-retirement years there). Also like Smith, her work consisted not only of Christian ministry teaching and supervising in the context of an academic organization but also involved holding children's evangelistic meetings, visiting former pupils, and working with local churches, for example in Sunday schools.

Gertrude Bigelow's personal reports and published writing reveal "a nature that was responsive, poetic, and charming. Her intellectual capacity was exceptional and her energetic spirit made every opportunity for service of vital importance" (PCUSA, BFM, November 17, 1941, p. 1). After teaching at Kojo Jo Gakuin, working as superintendent of Myojo Kindergarten, and serving at Baiko Jo Gakuin, she was honored with an award for meritorious service by the Governor of Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Returning to her home country 44 years after first going to Japan, Miss Bigelow made her home in Pasadena, California. She lived at Monte Vista Grove Homes, along with other retired ministers, including missionaries from various countries. When Sarah Smith moved to Pasadena in 1931, one year after Bigelow, she began living in the first of at least four locations at which she would reside. Each was quite close geographically to Bigelow's home. This made it relatively easy for the two friends to meet, and they no doubt enjoyed each other's companionship.

One pleasure they shared was travel.

Both ladies had traveled extensively both inside and outside Japan. Bigelow recalled one trip on which she and her companions traveled in rural Japan by palanquin (*kago*), horse-drawn carriage (*basha*), pack-horse, and ricksha (*jinrikisha*). She noted, "I have always been sorry I turned down the opportunity of riding a cow" (1937). She also apparently journeyed to Jerusalem and London during her furlough in 1923 and 1924.

Even in advancing age, Miss Bigelow retained a youthful attitude, writing, "It is fine to be old." After climbing Mt. Fuji at age 61, she wrote, "I pray that the Giver of life may allow me to do other things which I have longed to do but have not as yet been able to accomplish" (*Woman's Work*, 1921). She apparently took this hopeful, forward-looking spirit with her even after returning to the United States. At age 74, she, Smith, and four other ladies took an automobile trip from the Los Angeles area to Victoria, Canada, in 1934. The 20-day journey covered a distance of 3,500 *ri* (Tajima, 1934).

As she grew older and her health began to decline, she became less able to enjoy such adventures. Eventually, complications brought on by advanced age led to her death in 1941 at age 81. Gertrude Bigelow was buried in Mountain View Cemetery in Altadena, California. Her grave is adjacent to that of her good friend, Sarah Smith.

Florence J. Bigelow



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Florence Julia Bigelow, like her older sister Gertrude, came from Batavia, New York. Born in 1867, she began her life of faith as a student, joining a Presbyterian church in Batavia in 1882. Bigelow was educated in New York, concluding her studies at Geneseo State Normal School in Geneseo, New York, in 1889. She gained extensive experience in teaching while still in the United States, serving four years at the Union School in Stamford, New York, then a grammar school in Plainfield, New Jersey, for three years, and finally the State School for the Blind in Batavia, New York, for 11 years.

Florence Bigelow had maintained an active interest in doing overseas mission work since her early years as a teacher; however, she did not apply to the Board of Foreign Missions until 1907. Being in the United States allowed her to be with her parents as they grew older (G. S.

Bigelow, 1929). When the need for this care was no longer there, Florence sought appointment to mission service in Japan.

She was accepted and commissioned, arriving in Japan in the fall of 1907. There she served in educational mission work in the city Yamaguchi from 1907 to 1913 alongside her older sister Gertrude. In addition to her teaching duties, she had charge of a Sunday school program. When the high school moved to Shimonoseki, she continued her work in that location until 1917.

Bigelow was married in 1917 to Dr. Thomas C. Winn, a veteran PCUSA missionary considerably older than Florence, who had done pioneer evangelistic work since arriving in Japan in 1877. Winn's wife had died in 1912. His son later wrote that Winn "after five lonely years married Miss Florence Bigelow" He contin-

ued, "She was of inestimable help and what a blessing. . . !" She came to be known to the family's children as "Mother Florence" (Winn & Winn, 1959).

The couple relocated after their marriage, being sent to do evangelistic work among the Japanese people living in Korea (referred to as Chosen at that time). They continued their work there for one year, from 1917 to 1918. The Winns next were assigned to gospel ministry in Dairen, Manchuria (often called Port Arthur by Westerners in those days). They served primarily Japanese people in that context from 1918 to 1923, establishing at least eight churches there.

Thomas Winn then retired, after which he and Florence returned to the United States. The couple planned to serve again in Japan after retiring; however, illness and the deaths of a son and daughter of Dr. Winn prevented them from leaving for five years. They finally were able to make the journey in 1929, continuing the work they had done in Japan earlier. During these years, Florence lent valuable support to the work of the girls' school in Shimonoseki where she had ministered before, and the couple spent time in Kanazawa and Manchuria, where they had labored previously.

Dr. Winn died in Japan in 1931 in Kanazawa, perhaps fittingly, in a worship service just before standing to preach. Following his death, Florence returned to the United States after 14 years of marriage and work together with her husband. She

located in Pasadena, California, again following her sister Gertrude, who had been living in retirement there from the previous year. Part of her motivation for choosing this location may well have been the presence there of numerous retired missionaries from Japan and other countries. Along with her sister, Florence engaged in active Christian ministry after her second retirement, with much of the same energetic spirit she had demonstrated before. She focused much of her energy on serving as the Secretary of Literature for her church's Women's Society.

Florence Bigelow Winn had plans to build a cottage at Monte Vista Grove Homes (see p. 41 above), where she and her sister could enjoy their twilight years. However, an accident in 1934 prevented her from realizing this dream. She broke an arm in a fall, complications developed quickly, and it was not possible to save her. She died at the age of 67.

Her death may be indicative of the way she lived her life. The accident occurred while she was visiting the home of an aged friend, a blind woman unable to leave her home. Mrs. Winn, who had worked with visually-challenged people before beginning her mission work in Japan, maintained a compassion for these individuals and many others with special difficulties who could benefit from her help. After completing her visit, Florence fell while descending the stairway from the friend's room. This unfortunate accident brought an abrupt end to a life which had been characterized by faithful service in

Christ's name.

In addition to the approximately 18 years she had spent in the PCUSA Japan Mission with Sarah Smith, Winn lived nearby her in Pasadena for 3 years. Though Smith was 16 years older, she would go on to outlive her younger friend by 13 years. Exactly how close they were or how much they interacted in their professional and personal lives is not known. However, no doubt these women's cooperation and mutual support over a span of many years served to encourage and strengthen them both, particularly as they faced advancing age without spouses or children on whom to depend. When Florence Bigelow Winn was buried, her grave was located not with her husband's in Japan but next to the spot where Sarah Smith's and her sister's graves later would be placed in Mountain View Cemetery in Altadena, California.

Mary H. Ransom

Mary Henry Ransom was another PCUSA Japan missionary whose career and personal life overlapped significantly with Sarah Smith's. Born in Tennessee in 1868, she began her mission work in Japan after gaining teaching experience in Florida and Tennessee. She was appointed by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church⁴ in 1901 at age 32.

She served as principal of Wilmina Girls' School in Osaka until 1917. Her ministry, typical of PCUSA educational missionaries, had two focal points. First was

Christian education, including Bible, music, and English classes. Second was more direct evangelical work outside the academic context. At her request, the mission later relocated Ransom to Wakayama. There she began a ministry which built on her interest in working with hearing- and sight-challenged people. Though she continued teaching, she broadened the scope of her service to include an emphasis on helping women and people from Korea living in Wakayama. Miss Ransom continued this work for approximately 19 years.

By this time she had begun to battle with colon cancer. Forced by her condition to resign, Ransom returned to her home country in 1936, much to her regret, after 35 years of mission service. She moved to Pasadena, California, where by then Sarah Smith and Gertrude Bigelow, among other ex-missionaries to Japan, were living. Part of that time she resided in Monte Vista Grove Homes. Ransom no doubt had occasion to meet her former colleagues and keep up with the events of their lives. One note on a personal data card in Sarah Smith's BFM personnel file states that a message had reached their offices from Miss Ransom in 1936, indicating that Smith was in the hospital for cataract surgery (PCUSA, BFM, n.d.).

Mary Ransom lived in Pasadena for over two years; however, she ultimately lost her battle with cancer, passing away in 1939. She was remembered by those who knew her as "a devoted missionary, one who greatly loved the people among

whom she worked and in turn was greatly loved by the people” (PCUSA, BFM, memorial sketch, 1939).



Presbyterian Historical Society, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Philadelphia, PA)

John C. and Florence C. Worley

John Cobb Worley, the minister who was later to conduct Sarah Smith’s funeral, was born in Missouri in 1872 and educated there and in New York. Florence Clemens Worley, his senior by three years, was likewise born and educated in Missouri. The two were married in 1894, then appointed in 1899 as missionaries by the mission board of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, working in Japan six years. After returning to the United States and serving a few years in a church in Colorado, they were re-appointed as PCUSA missionaries in 1909. The Worleys ministered in this capacity for another six years. They conducted evangelical work, based in Matsuyama.

A partner for them in their ministry

was Mary B. Sherman, who had taught with Sarah Smith at Hokusei Jo Gakko several years earlier. The team apparently enjoyed some success in their endeavors. The church with which they were connected was thriving, and they were able to present the message of Christ to thousands of people, particularly through the use of a modern audio-visual tool called the stereopticon. Being able to travel on a motorcycle with a sidecar aided their work, as well.

The Worleys served in Japan through 1915, which proved to be a major turning point in their life. Around this time, Mr. Worley experienced what he later termed a “nervous breakdown” (1915, p. 1). He received treatment for this condition in Livermore, California, during this year, he and Mrs. Worley having returned to the

US by this time. In the wake of these difficulties, the Worleys resigned as PCUSA missionaries with John at age 43 and Florence at 46.

This year also marked the birth of their only child, a daughter. Records reveal, however, that no children were born to Mr. Worley (PCUSA, Board of Ministerial Relief and Sustentation, 1922). Therefore, it is unclear whether they adopted their daughter or when she joined the family.

Subsequent to their return to the United States, Mr. Worley served as Secretary for the Missionary Education Movement, covering the Pacific Southwest on and off for approximately 11 years (1916–1927). The various disruptions in their employment worked a hardship on the Worleys financially, and they found it necessary to apply for and receive assistance from the PCUSA's Board of Ministerial Relief and Sustentation to obtain adequate income.

The Worleys had located in Pasadena, California, where they lived until 1950. In the early 1920s, John began including in his work tour conducting, taking some 22 groups around the globe to observe mission work and life in many cultures. He and Florence combined this with more typical church ministry, particularly through Pasadena Presbyterian Church, where John served on the pastoral staff for a time.

Thus, they lived in close proximity to Sarah Smith during her years in the same

city from 1931 to 1947, no doubt in contact with her at least from time to time and sharing many of the same acquaintances or friends, just as they had in Japan. The Worleys' long-time contacts with Sarah Smith made Mr. Worley an obvious choice as a minister to perform her funeral when the time for it came in 1947.

J. C. Worley died in 1951 after a brief illness at age 78. Records reveal few details of Mrs. Worley's life after her return to the United States from Japan.

Other Friends of Sarah Smith

Besides the individuals in the preceding discussion, other missionary friends of Sarah Smith included Isabelle M. Ward⁵ and Janet F. Smith. Both PCUSA appointees who had served at Hokusei Jo Gakko while Smith lived in Sapporo, they also lived near her in her retirement years in the United States. Overviews of their lives and ministries appear in previous issues of this publication (Allison, 2008, 2009).

There may well have been other missionaries who befriended Sarah Smith during her years in Japan, in the United States, or both. These may have included those who served in other denominations and mission agencies. Also, among Smith's many Japanese Christian friends were those who served people outside their home culture and were, in that sense, missionaries. In addition, the Japanese church to which Sarah Smith belonged in Pasadena was supported by a number of local Caucasian churches, from which vari-

ous Sunday school teachers and others came to serve the congregation as a type of “home missionary.” Ada C. Elston apparently befriended Smith in the years they were in Pasadena, California. She provided the information recorded on Sarah Smith’s death certificate and was the recipient of the possessions bequeathed in her will. The two are buried in graves next to each other’s. It is not clear whether she was a Christian or engaged in any type of mission work as such. Beyond the possible missionary friends listed here, accessible remaining records reveal few of Smith’s compatriots.

Conclusion

The missionaries who were friends of Sarah Smith after her return to live in the United States, on whom this article has focused, were by and large, like Smith, single Presbyterian lady missionary educators, all Caucasians from the United States.

No doubt there were both professional and personal aspects to many of the relationships between Smith and these colleagues. It is not possible to determine exactly how close she was with them, particularly the women significantly younger than she, though at least some did maintain communication with her. She clearly was close to Gertrude Bigelow of her own generation. However, given the type of independent, pioneer spirit Smith apparently possessed throughout her life, it is difficult to conclude with certainty the depth of her friendships.

Nevertheless, the presence of friends

may have helped provide the encouragement which Smith needed at times such as when health issues threatened to end her mission work in Japan before she founded Hokusei Jo Gakko. In the early years of her school, when the Japan Mission did not consider it wise to invest significant funds in the development of Smith’s school, perhaps a well-timed word of support, spoken in a conversation or written in a letter, provided her with the measure of determination she needed to persist in her labors.

Also, for a person who lived to a great degree isolated from her own culture for a large portion of her life in the remote location which Sapporo was in Smith’s era, these relationships with friends may have had a very significant influence on her ability to cope with the stresses of life outside her own country. Knowing that there were other single women from the United States in Japan struggling yet succeeding at developing mission schools similar to her own no doubt was a source of strength for her.

In her early years in Sapporo, Smith wrote an emotional letter to her supervisor pouring out her frustration at having to deal by herself with the stresses of living in a remote area in a culture not her own. She wrote, “I had . . . borne inexpressible loneliness [sic] and unmentionable trials and sorrows” She described the tremendous load of responsibility which came with her job and implored her director to help send someone to join in the work. Without this partner, she at that

point felt unwilling to continue her labors in Sapporo, writing, “I feel that I can do but little more, alone.” She concluded that while she did not regret her choice to come to Hokkaido and labor alone for the years she had, “yet from my experience I feel it is not wise to do so longer, nor do I feel now, as I once did, that there is a call for it” (1893).

In light of the burden which her solitude appears to have been for her at times in her life’s journey, not solely the knowledge through faith of God’s constant presence but also the horizontal connections with her mission friends and colleagues no doubt had a stabilizing and sustaining influence on her life. Likewise, during the times interpersonal conflict with a colleague cast a cloud over her work, friends willing to lend an understanding ear may have provided vital emotional strength for Smith.

In each of these contexts, Smith’s friendships with mission colleagues not only supported her personally but also contributed indirectly to the formation of Hokusei Gakuen and the development of the lives of people in Hokkaido and beyond. It may likewise be fairly said that Smith’s friendship lent support to these missionaries themselves and, through them, the schools, churches, and other components of the ministries these colleagues and friends were developing across Japan.

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Notes

- (1) The six girls' high schools affiliated with the PCUSA included 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], or Graham Seminary) in Tokyo
 - D. Seishu Jo Gakko (静修女学校, closed after Clara Rose's death in 1914) in Otaru
 - E. 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 (the city) and later Shimonoseki
 - F. 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

In addition, there were kindergartens including Rose Yochien (ローズ幼稚園) in Otaru, the Meiji Gakuin (明治学院) school system, and two interdenominational institutions in Tokyo, the university Tokyo Joshi Daigaku (東京女子大学, founded in 1918), and the theological seminary Nihon Shingakko (日本神学校, part of what later became Tokyo Shingaku Daigaku [東京神学大学]).

- (2) These numbers refer to missionaries who served at Hokusei Jo Gakko at least six months.
- (3) The pictures appearing in this article are now either public domain material or, in cases in which they are not, permission to publish has been received from the copyright owner or a good-faith but unsuccessful effort made to locate the owner.
- (4) The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was organizationally separate from the PCUSA at the time Ransom was appointed; however, the two merged several years later.
- (5) Though some documents refer to her as "Isabella," when she wrote it, Miss Ward's name appeared as "Isabelle."
- (6) Where space considerations have made it impossible to list information sources in notes and the reference list, the data derive from missionaries' personnel files, located in Philadelphia in the Presbyterian Historical Society, RG 360.

[Abstract]

Missionary Friends of Sarah C. Smith

James E. ALLISON

This article presents a brief introduction of several friends of Sarah Smith, focusing on individuals who did not work with her directly at Hokusei Jo Gakko, but whom she knew both before and after her return to the United States in 1931. Through their friendships with its founder, these co-missionaries each gave some degree of support to today's Hokusei Gakuen in its early years of development, as well as to Smith, particularly in the twilight years of her life. This overview of their connections with her makes possible a fuller understanding of both Sarah C. Smith and the historical roots of the institution she led in establishing.

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