

〈研究ノート〉

Searching for the Lambuths in California*

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Introduction

Walter Russell Thornton Lambuth, who founded Kwansei Gakuin in 1889, was born in Shanghai, China to missionary parents belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS). Although his eventual work as a medical missionary, mission director, and Bishop took him to countries around the world, most of his homes while in the United States were located in the South. His father's home and family church were in Madison County, Mississippi. His *alma mater*, Vanderbilt University, and the MECS headquarters where Lambuth served later in his life were in Nashville, Tennessee.

Because of these strong family and church ties to the American South, it is curious that Lambuth and his wife Daisy Kelley Lambuth spent the last years of their lives in Oakdale, California. Still traveling and working on mission projects, he passed away at the age of 66 in Yokohama, Japan in 1921. Daisy died two years later in Oakdale after spending most of her time at home there due to health problems.

The objective of this research is to examine the life of Walter Lambuth and his family just preceding and during their residence in California from about 1913. Because I have not been able to find any account, including in the Bishop's biography by Pinson (1924), which discusses his move to California or the significance of that new location on his work, this project will focus on the following questions:

1. Why did Walter and Daisy Lambuth move away from their long-time home in Nashville to Oakdale, California?
2. How did living in Oakdale affect Lambuth's work?
3. What was the impact of Walter Lambuth's presence in the Pacific Conference of the MECS, especially as Bishop between 1915 and 1917? Did it influence the future development of the United Methodist Church?

As a work in progress, these Research Notes describe the resources available for analysis and the findings made to date, primarily from an initial on-site visit made to Oakdale, California in August 2016. To provide the background for this inquiry, I will begin with a brief introduction of the Lambuth family members who resided in California.

*Key words: Walter R. Lambuth, Daisy Lambuth, Mary C. Lambuth, Methodism in California, Methodist Episcopal Church, South

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Profiles of the Lambuths Who Lived in California

Walter Russell Lambuth

After receiving a medical degree from Vanderbilt University, Walter Russell Lambuth was ordained as an elder in the Tennessee Conference of the MECS in 1877. He married Daisy Kelley on August 2nd of that year, and the couple was sent to China where he worked initially in the Shanghai area. Other than a year taken for furlough and further medical study in New York, they stayed in China, where Walter expanded the scope of his work to improve medical services in Suzhou and Beijing.

However, in 1886, the MECS Board of Missions decided to initiate work in Japan, so Walter and Daisy Lambuth, as well as Walter's parents, James and Mary Isabella Lambuth, were transferred there from China, where they had spent so many years. In spite of his youth (35 years old), Walter was designated as the superintendent of the Japan Mission, and in 1889, he was given the responsibility of founding and leading a young men's school to train ministers and provide secondary education, "based on the principles of Christianity." This was Kwansei Gakuin, which began with five teachers and nineteen students on a campus just outside the eastern city limits of Kobe. In addition to Kwansei Gakuin, the MECS missionaries established other schools, churches, and social projects in various sites around Western Japan.

At the end of 1890, just over one year after the birth of Kwansei Gakuin, Daisy Lambuth's health had deteriorated to the point that the couple decided to leave Japan and go to the U.S. with their three children. Soon, the Board of Missions appointed Walter as a field secretary, and in 1894, he was elected as the General Secretary of the Board, which was headquartered in Nashville. In 1910, Walter Lambuth was elected as a bishop of the MECS and assigned to Brazil, but the following year, he made a long journey through Africa and began preparations for a mission program in the Belgian Congo. He made another trip to the Congo in 1913, taking missionaries to support the work there. Because of his extensive travels in Africa, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society in London.

After the First World War began, Walter Lambuth visited the front in Europe and established MECS relief projects in Belgium, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. As a representative of the Church, he attended many ecumenical conferences around the world and gave a series of lectures at Vanderbilt University in 1915 (The Cole Lectures: "Winning the World for Christ").

It was on such a mission trip in response to needs in East Asia that a chronic ailment suddenly turned dire, and Walter Lambuth passed away in Yokohama, Japan on September 26th, 1921. According to his wishes, his ashes were taken to Shanghai, where they were buried in a grave near his mother's.

Daisy Kelley Lambuth

Born in Huntsville, Alabama in 1858, Daisy's father was D.C. Kelley, one of the leading figures in the MECS and a former China missionary. Lambuth and she had grown close when he stayed at the Kelley home during part of his education in the U.S., and they were married on August 2nd, 1877 in Nashville. Daisy was eager to participate with him in his work after their marriage, and they began their life together in China. Unfortunately, she did not have very robust health, so she was limited in

her activities during most of her life.

Their first child, David Kelley, was born on the 20th of February 1879 in Shanghai and their daughter, Mary Cleveland was born seven years later, on March 15th of 1885 in Suzhou when Daisy was 27 years old. After the family moved to Japan, one more child, Walter William, was born in Kobe on May 9th, 1889. Tragically, Walter William's life was cut short by typhoid in 1905 while he was still a student in Nashville.

During her short 3-year stay in Japan, Daisy Lambuth was able to establish a school in Kobe for Eurasian children who had few other options to receive an education in those days. She also was active in writing to the churches in America, describing the need for more missionaries and funds to support the work in Asia. In 1890, their last year in Japan, the Lambuth family was joined by Miss Kate Harlan, who spent the rest of her life living with them in Nashville, and finally in California. Because of Daisy Lambuth's fragile health, it can be assumed that Kate Harlan's presence was necessary, especially when Walter Lambuth was absent for church-related travel.

Because of those extended absences, it can be posited that Daisy Lambuth wanted to be closer to her daughter, who appears to have moved to California before 1910. Until more evidence can be found in letters and official documents, we do not know exactly why Mary Lambuth moved there initially, nor why her parents joined her several years later.

After the death of her husband in 1921, Daisy Lambuth continued to live in Oakdale, California with her daughter until she succumbed to a cerebral hemorrhage on May 24th, 1923. The funeral services were held on May 26th at what is now the Park View Funeral Home in Manteca nearby. Her ashes were then sent to Tennessee, where they were buried beside her son, Walter William, in Nashville.

The Park View Cemetery and Funeral Home was established in 1917, and the building used for Daisy Lambuth's funeral services is still in excellent condition. When I visited the facility on August 27th, 2016, a funeral was being held, so I was not able to see the interior, but I had corresponded with the Funeral Director, David Massey, and he confirmed that Daisy Lambuth's services had been held in that chapel.



Park View Funeral Chapel, Manteca, CA. Photo by author, 27 August 2016.



Park View Cemetery & Funeral Home. Photo by author, 27 August 2016.

Mary Cleveland Lambuth

As mentioned earlier, Walter and Daisy Lambuth’s only daughter, Mary (probably named after her paternal grandmother, Mary Isabella McClellan Lambuth) was born in Suzhou, China on the 15th of March 1885. She went to Japan with her family the following year and stayed there until December of 1890 when the five Lambuths left for the United States. It would be interesting to know if Mary remembered anything about Japan, but she certainly must have heard many stories from her parents and grandparents about both China and Japan.

I have not been able to find much information about Mary Lambuth’s life in Tennessee after she left Japan. Through Ancestry.com, I was able to find the 1900 United States Federal Census report listing the members of the Walter Lambreth [sic] household in Davidson, Tennessee. (Because the original hand-written census records were difficult to read, the transcription misspelled the family name.) This was ten years after they had arrived in America, and the members were listed as follows:

Name	Age
Walter Lambuth	44
Daisy Lambuth	42
Mary Lambuth	15
Walter Lambuth	11
Kate Harlan	41
Allen D Harlan	5

We can see that by this time, Mary’s older brother, David was not living with the family. He graduated in 1900 from Vanderbilt University, and on June 5th of the following year, he was married to Myrtle Ayres Spindle in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Although David was not included among the household members in 1900, Kate Harlan, who had joined the family in Kobe, continued to live with

them, now with a young relative, Allen D (Dorset) Harlan.

Allen (called by his middle name, Dorset) Harlan, proved to be an important person in the later life of Mary Lambuth, but I wondered what relationship he was to Kate Harlan. From the Georgia death records, it appears that Dorset was an only child whose mother died when he was 3 years old. His father was twenty years older than his mother, so it may be that his paternal aunt, Kate Harlan, agreed to care for Dorset, her nephew, while she was living with the Lambuths in Tennessee.

The next record I found for Mary Lambuth was from the 1910 Census, which locates her in Oakdale California. By this time, she was 25 years old, but the head of the household is indicated to be her brother, David. He is listed as a journalist for a magazine, but his wife is not included among the household members. The home is identified as a farm, which is owned, free of any mortgage. In addition to David and Mary, the only other member of the household was 20-year old James F. Bratton, recorded as a “servant.” I cannot find additional information linking David Lambuth to residences in California, but in the “Guide to the Papers of the Robinson/Lambuth Family, 1592-1993,” at Dartmouth College, the comments on David Campbell Kelley Lambuth indicate that he began his career as an English instructor at that institution in 1913.

By the next U.S. Census in 1920, Mary Lambuth was part of a four-person household in Oakdale, California. The head of the household was Walter Lambuth and Mary is recorded as the daughter. Her occupation is noted as “farmer,” and we know from letters written during that time, that she was directly involved in running the farm. In a letter written to a friend of the family, Mrs. J.V. John of Nashville, Tennessee on March 30, 1916, Walter Lambuth made the following comments about Mary’s work:

Mary gets deeper into her farming interests every day. She has just painted the alfalfa rake, is adding another team of horses and looking about for two more hands and a third to cook for the gang during the summer months. Mary is very proud of her cows as they are yielding more than a pound of butter fat each per day, but spends the evenings, figuring whether she is making or losing.

In another letter to Mrs. John in 1920, Walter Lambuth mentioned that the family would probably be living in “this dry country” (California) for several more years, so encouraged her to visit them by tempting her with some of the fruits being harvested on the farm:

Pears, and apricots are just ripe, and figs will be ready next week. Such luscious figs and two big trees full. We will give you a different kind of fruit each meal and plenty of cream to eat it with.

The other two members of the household in Oakdale in 1920 were Daisy Lambuth and Kate Harlan. The above letter to Mrs. John in June of that year mentioned that the family had taken a trip to the East Coast, where they had visited David and Myrtle at Dartmouth, and to Nashville, where the Lambuth home had been sold.

Daisy and Miss Harlan are busy unpacking a lot of things we sent from Nashville when we sold the house. Miss Harlan does most of the work, but really since the visit home Daisy has taken on new life, and I hope it will give her a good start for the winter.

It is evident that in spite of the attractive fruits available, California was not quite “home” to Walter and Daisy Lambuth.

After the death of her parents in 1921 and 1923, Mary sold her property in Oakdale and moved to Oakland, California. Although I cannot find an official marriage record, Mary Lambuth was married for the first time in her late thirties. A letter written by Rita Park Sherertz (niece of Walter Lambuth) explained some of the later events in Mary Lambuth’s life. Unfortunately, her husband, Harry Leech passed away within a few years, so at the time of the 1930 Census, Mary Lambuth Leech was recorded as a widow living in Oakland. However, in 1933 at the age of 48, she married Harold Burch. According to Mrs. Sherertz’s letter, Mary and Harold Burch lived in California for many years until they became frail. Dorset Harlan, who lived in Decatur, Georgia, became concerned about their situation, and paid for them to move to his own home. After Harold Burch passed away, Mary was cared for in a nursing home, due to declining health, and she died several years later in Georgia in 1963. She is buried in the same Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Nashville as her mother and brother Walter.

Searching for Evidence in Oakdale

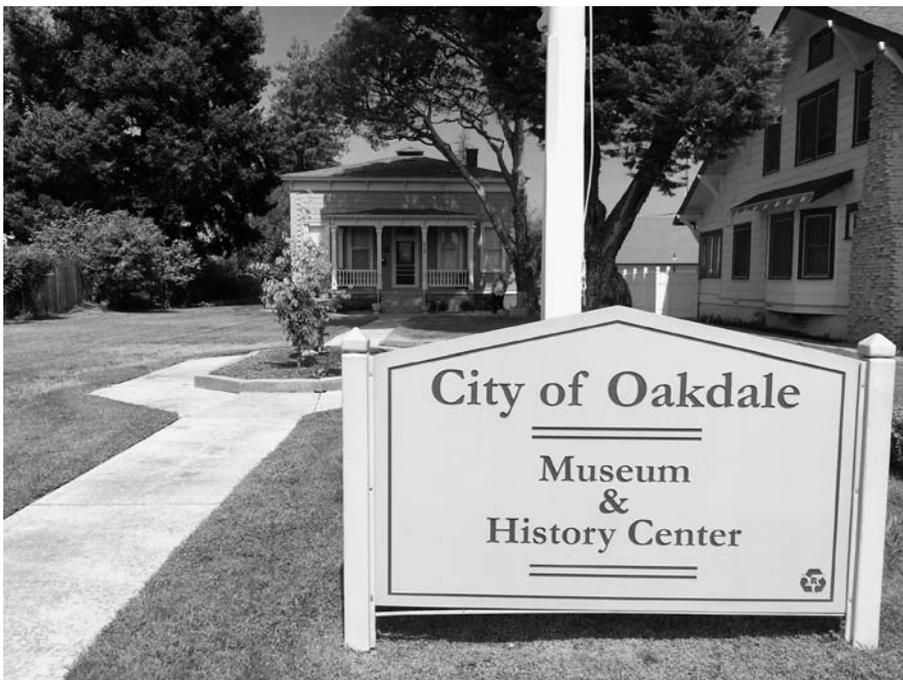


Photo by author, 27 August 2016.

Before driving to the city of Oakdale, which is in Central California, between San Francisco and Yosemite National Park, I contacted Ms. Barbara Torres at the Museum and History Center there. Ms. Torres was introduced to me by Mr. David Sherertz, whose great-great uncle was Walter Lambuth. Mr. Sherertz and his wife, Roz Hardy live in Berkeley, California, and had visited Japan earlier in 2016. They were also involved in searching for information about the Lambuth relatives, so had made some contacts in Oakdale.

The city of Oakdale was founded in 1871 when a railroad was finished to connect it to Stockton

after gold was discovered at the Stanislaus River nearby. According to the Chamber of Commerce, the railroad was the impetus for development of transport-related businesses such as blacksmiths, wagon shops, and stables, as well as hotels, and general stores, medical offices, and churches. By the time Mary and David Lambuth arrived there, the population was over 1,000 residents. Today, Oakdale's economy is based both on agriculture and industry, and the population is over 22,000.

On August 27, 2016, Ms. Torres met me at the Museum & History Center and spent several hours providing documents, maps, and photos that were related to the Lambuth family. Although she introduced many aspects of Oakdale life in the early 20th Century, we were not able to pinpoint the exact location of any home or farm owned by the Lambuths.



Barbara Torres inside the Museum & History Center. Photo by author, 27 August 2016.

It should be possible to locate the places in Oakdale where the Lambuth family lived because records of land purchases and sales still exist, and the city records have partial addresses for residents in those years. Unfortunately, even after having visited the Stanislaus County Records Office in Modesto, I have not been able to find maps to pinpoint the address locations. However, there are two streets named “Lambuth” in greater Oakdale, so they may give some clues as to where the family lived, or at least their roles in the community.

Ms. Torres informed me that Lambuth Avenue appears on the Oakdale maps in 1913, so she wondered if that were significant, but we were not able to find any further explanation for the naming or the timing.

While Lambuth Avenue is located in a residential area in the middle of Oakdale, Lambuth Road is in a rural area outside of the city. Ms. Torres indicated that there had been a diverse selection of fruits and vegetables grown in the area in the past, but that more and more land was being used for almond production recently because they require less labor and water, and there was a growing market



Lambuth Avenue sign in Oakdale, CA. Photo by author, 27 August 2016.

for them in China. In the photo of the sign for Lambuth Road, young almond trees can be seen in the new orchard behind.



Lambuth Road sign with new almond orchard in background. Photo by author, 27 Aug. 2016.

Next Steps in the Search for the California Lambuths

Although the actual locations of the Lambuth home and farm can probably be found with a more detailed examination of records at the Stanislaus County Department of Public Works, Survey Division, the search for answers to the three questions I posed at the outset will require access to more personal correspondence and MECS records for the first two decades of the twentieth century.

So far, I have not been able to find much correspondence related to the Lambuths in California at the Kwansei Gakuin Archives other than the two letters cited above from Walter Lambuth to Mrs. John, and one which he sent to Mrs. J.C.C. Newton in Kobe, Japan in March of 1920. He ended the typed letter to Mrs. Newton with a handwritten note: “The California golden poppies are in full bloom – like a carpet of glorious sunshine.”

The J. B. Cain Archives of Mississippi Methodism, Millsaps-Wilson Library, Millsaps College in Jackson Mississippi has many Lambuth-related papers, including Walter Lambuth’s journals, but the main collection of Methodist mission history can be found at the United Methodist Church’s General Commission on Archives and History in Madison, New Jersey. I hope to be able to read the correspondence available there to find information of significance to the family’s sojourn in California. Walter R. Lambuth played an important role in the development of the MECS on the Pacific Coast. The complex relationship between California and immigrants from both China and Japan during the last two centuries is a backdrop to the efforts he made in building bridges between the United States and Asia. It is my goal to discover what actual impact he may have made.

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ABSTRACT

Walter Russell Lambuth, the founder of Kwansei Gakuin, was born in Shanghai, China in 1854 and worked both in China and Japan during his early career as a missionary. As a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS), Walter Lambuth's ties in the United States were to the southern states – Mississippi, where his father's home church was located, and Tennessee, where the MECS headquarters were located. However, soon after he was elected Bishop in 1910, he and his wife Daisy moved from their longtime home in Tennessee to Oakdale, California, where their daughter Mary had a farm. Although he was away on mission-related travel around the world much of the time, Walter and Mary Lambuth lived in California until their deaths. Because little has been written about the life of the Lambuths in California, this research note gives a brief background for each of the three members of the family with some supplemental information from original sources and descriptions from an on-site visit to Oakdale in August, 2016. Much more information from correspondence and church publications must be analyzed in order to assess why the Lambuths moved to California, and what impact their presence had on the Pacific Conference of the MECS. By accessing the Lambuth collections of archives in Japan, Mississippi, California, and New Jersey, I hope to see how this move to California may have influenced the future development of the United Methodist Church.

Key Words: Walter R. Lambuth, Daisy Lambuth, Mary C. Lambuth, Methodism in California, Methodist Episcopal Church, South