

Mary Lambuth, “Faithful Missionary and Dauntless Soul”

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The founder of Kwansei Gakuin, Walter R. Lambuth became known as a “World Citizen,” but his parents were also active missionaries for most of their lives. His mother, Mary Isabella McClellan Lambuth was an extraordinary woman, even by today’s standards. Born into a wealthy family in the state of New York (USA), she was a close relative of President Cleveland. However, there was a big fire at her father’s business, and he lost much of his income, so his remaining wealth was used to educate the children to ensure their future. Mary was trained as a teacher, and at the age of 19, she decided to move to Mississippi where her sister was living. There, she got a job as a tutor for the Lambuth family, which included sixteen children! James, one of the oldest children was already a university student, but when he decided that he would go abroad as a missionary, he must have been deeply impressed by the young woman who offered herself and five dollars for world missions at a church meeting. Mary was the young woman, and soon the couple was married and on their way to China from New York harbor. The journey took nearly half a year, and Mary was pregnant with Walter who would be born soon after they arrived in Shanghai. Later, the family moved to Japan, and Mary would be instrumental in the efforts that would become Palmore Institute, Keimei, and even one of the schools that merged into Seiwa College.

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