

**The Burke Library Archives (Columbia University Libraries)  
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

**Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 6**

Finding Aid for

**Nathan Sites Papers, 1861 - 1899**



Image Credit: M. Geraldine Guinness, *The Story of the China Inland Mission*, Vol. 1 (London: Morgan & Scott, 1893).

Finding Aid prepared by: Gregory Adam Scott, June 2010

**Summary Information**

Creator: Nathan Sites 薛承恩, 1830 - 1895  
Title: Nathan Sites Papers  
Inclusive dates: 1861 - 1899  
Bulk dates: 1864 - 1880  
Abstract: Sites was a missionary in Fuzhou, southeast China, under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and an early proponent of a stronger, Chinese-led church in China.  
Size: 1 box, 0.25 linear feet  
Storage: Onsite storage  
Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Phone: 212-851-5612  
Fax: 212-851-5613  
Email: [archives@uts.columbia.edu](mailto:archives@uts.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance: These records were part of the independent Missionary Research Library prior to its closure in 1976, when the records were accessioned to The Burke Library.
- Access: Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by phone, fax or email [archives@uts.columbia.edu](mailto:archives@uts.columbia.edu), as far in advance as possible.
- Access Restrictions: The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation: Item description, MRL 6: Nathan Sites Papers, box # and folder #, The Burke Library Archives (Columbia University Libraries) at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

### Biography

Nathan Sites was born on November 6, 1830 in Bellville, Ohio to Robert and Sarah Sites. He graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1859, and the next year became a missionary under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He married Sarah Moore on March 6, 1861 and they left for China in June of that year.

Sites worked as a missionary in Fuzhou, Fujian province for the rest of his life, joining the movement for a stronger, Chinese-led church and ordaining some of the earliest Chinese protestant ministers. In 1895 he contracted a fever after an active day of preaching and baptizing, and died some days later on February 10. He was buried in the Mission Cemetery in Fuzhou, and a hospital was named in his honor.

His journals were compiled into a biography by his wife, and published as [\*Nathan Sites: An Epic of the East\*](#) in 1912.

### Collection Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of the journals and clippings, which Sites collected while in China. The bulk of the material covers his early years in China. This was a foundational period among Protestant missions in China because they were given new access to mission fields, and important mission organizations such as the China Inland Mission were being founded. The fact that Sites supported the indigenization of the church in China during this early period is significant, as this movement only gained widespread support among missionaries decades later.

The manuscript journals describe his life in Fuzhou as well as trips through the surrounding countryside. Many of the clippings collected in the scrapbook are from articles and published letters written by Sites' wife, Sarah Moore Sites. Others deal with aspects of Chinese culture or Christian religious life.

**Processing**

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes.

**Contents list**

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	1	Journal, Volume 1, 1864 - 1869
1	1	2	Journal, Volume 2, 1864 - 1869
1	1	3	Clippings - <i>1911 Among Men in the Middle Kingdom</i> , 1912; <i>Gospel in All Lands</i> , March 1899
1	1	4	Scrapbook of Journal and Magazine Articles, 1861 - 1880