

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

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 6

Finding Aid for

**William Edward Smith Diaries, 1897 - 1936**



Image Credit: Edward Wilson Wallace, *The Heart of Sz-Chuan*  
(Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms, 1903), p. 44.

Finding Aid prepared by: Gregory Adam Scott, March 2010

**Summary Information**

Creator: Rev. Dr. William Edward Smith 王爲霖, 1864 - 1944  
Title: William Edward Smith Diaries, 1897 - 1936  
Inclusive dates: 1897 - 1936  
Bulk dates: 1897 - 1936  
Abstract: Diaries and notebooks written by Dr. William Edward Smith while living in Sichuan, China as a medical missionary for the Canadian Methodist Mission, later known as the West China Mission. Includes correspondence and ephemera inserted into diaries.  
Size: 6 boxes, 2.75 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 formerly 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: William Edward Smith Diaries, box # and folder #, The Burke Library Archives (Columbia University Libraries) at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

### Biography<sup>1</sup>

William Edward Smith was born in Kendall, in what was then the Province of Canada in 1864. He attended Albert College in Belleville and later received his ministerial and medical degrees at the University of Toronto. In 1895 he married a longtime acquaintance and fellow missionary, Grace Olivia Young, and a year later they went to China as missionaries under the auspices of the Canadian Methodist (Episcopal) Mission 英美會.<sup>2</sup> The CMM was notable for establishing the Canadian Mission Press in Chengdu 成都 in 1905, which remained the only Christian press in China west of Hankou 漢口. Smith arrived in Shanghai on October 1, 1896.

In 1901 and 1902 Smith traveled to Rong county 榮縣 in Sichuan 四川, and in 1905 was appointed there when the CMM opened it as a new mission station. The mission obtained property in the northwest of the walled city, and in the following years opened a church and a boarding school, as well as the Junghsien (Rong county) General Hospital, completed in 1914. In May, 1922 he and his wife were appointed as delegates to the National Christian Conference of China. Later that year she died in Toronto, having been ill for many years. In 1927 Smith married Dr. Ada B. Speers of the Western Methodist Mission hospital in Chengdu.

In 1936 Smith retired from mission work and returned to Canada, where he wrote an account of his experiences entitled *The Canadian Doctor in West China: Forty Years under Three Flags* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1939). The book was compiled from material recorded in the diaries now preserved in this collection.<sup>3</sup> He also served on the senate of Victoria College in Toronto and Albert College. He passed away in 1944, survived by his wife Dr. Ada B. Speers Smith, a son and two daughters.

<sup>1</sup> This information is based in part on Smith's obituary in *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, Vol. 50 (April, 1944): 392.

<sup>2</sup> In 1925 the CMM was merged with the United Church of Canada, and its field became the West China Mission.

<sup>3</sup> See page ix of the preface to the book.

### Collection Scope and Content Note

The bulk of the collection consists of diaries and notebooks written by Smith during his time in China. Several of the books contained ephemera inserted into the pages; these have been unfolded and are separately contained in folders. These inserts include correspondence, clippings, notes, and pamphlets. While many of the diaries have long blank sections, the entries and notes detail his experience working as a missionary and a medical practitioner in west China.

### Processing

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Acidic items were separated from one another by interleaving with acid-free paper as needed.

### Contents list

| Series | Box | Folder | Contents                         |
|--------|-----|--------|----------------------------------|
| 1      | 1   | 1      | Diaries, 1897, 1898              |
| 1      | 1   | 2      | Diary, Notebook, 1899            |
| 1      | 1   | 3      | Diary, 1899; Notebook, 1900      |
| 1      | 1   | 4      | Letter Record, 1901; Diary, 1902 |
| 1      | 1   | 5      | Inserts from 1901 Letter Record  |
| 1      | 1   | 6      | Insert from 1902 Diary           |
| 1      | 2   | 1      | Diaries, 1903, 1904              |
| 1      | 2   | 2      | Diaries, 1905, 1906              |
| 1      | 2   | 3      | Diary, Notebook, 1907            |
| 1      | 2   | 4      | Diaries, 1908, 1909              |
| 1      | 2   | 5      | Diaries, 1910, 1911              |
| 1      | 2   | 6      | Inserts from 1903 Diary          |
| 1      | 2   | 7      | Insert from 1904 Diary           |
| 1      | 2   | 8      | Insert from 1907 Notebook        |
| 1      | 3   | 1      | Diaries, 1912, 1914              |
| 1      | 3   | 2      | Diaries, 1915, 1916              |
| 1      | 3   | 3      | Notebook, 1916; Diary, 1917      |
| 1      | 3   | 4      | Notebook, 1917; Diary, 1918      |
| 1      | 3   | 5      | Inserts from 1912 Diary          |
| 1      | 3   | 6      | Inserts from 1914 Diary          |
| 1      | 3   | 7      | Inserts from 1916 Diary          |
| 1      | 3   | 8      | Inserts from 1917 Diary          |
| 1      | 3   | 9      | Inserts from 1917 Notebook       |
| 1      | 3   | 10     | Inserts from 1918 Diary          |
| 1      | 4   | 1      | Diaries, 1919, 1920              |
| 1      | 4   | 2      | Diaries, 1921, 1922              |
| 1      | 4   | 3      | Diaries, 1923, 1924              |

| Series | Box | Folder | Contents                    |
|--------|-----|--------|-----------------------------|
| 1      | 4   | 4      | Diaries, 1925, 1927         |
| 1      | 4   | 5      | Inserts from 1919 Diary     |
| 1      | 4   | 6      | Inserts from 1920 Diary     |
| 1      | 4   | 7      | Inserts from 1921 Diary     |
| 1      | 4   | 8      | Inserts from 1922 Diary     |
| 1      | 4   | 9      | Inserts from 1923 Diary     |
| 1      | 4   | 10     | Inserts from 1924 Diary     |
| 1      | 4   | 11     | Inserts from 1925 Diary     |
| 1      | 4   | 12     | Inserts from 1927 Diary     |
| 1      | 5   | 1      | Diaries, 1928, 1929         |
| 1      | 5   | 2      | Diary, Notebook, 1930       |
| 1      | 5   | 3      | Diaries, 1931, 1932         |
| 1      | 5   | 4      | Diaries, 1933, 1934         |
| 1      | 5   | 5      | Inserts from 1928 Diary     |
| 1      | 5   | 6      | Inserts from 1929 Diary     |
| 1      | 5   | 7      | Inserts from 1930 Diary     |
| 1      | 5   | 8      | Inserts from 1931 Diary     |
| 1      | 5   | 9      | Inserts from 1932 Diary     |
| 1      | 5   | 10     | Inserts from 1933 Diary     |
| 1      | 5   | 11     | Inserts from 1934 Diary     |
| 1      | 6   | 1      | Diaries, 1935, 1936         |
| 1      | 6   | 2      | Inserts from 1935 Diary     |
| 1      | 6   | 3      | Inserts from 1936 Diary     |
| 1      | 6   | 4      | Correspondence, 1912 - 1936 |
| 1      | 6   | 5      | Notes, Drafts, 1912 - 1934  |