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Union Theological Seminary, New York

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 6

Finding Aid for

**Nathan Sites Papers, 1861 - 1899**

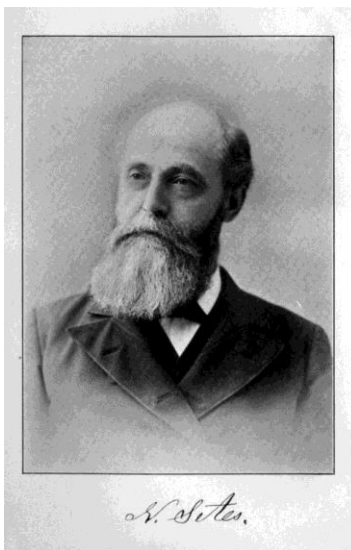


Image Credit: M. Geraldine Guinness, *The Story of the China Inland Mission*, Vol. 1 (London: Morgan & Scott, 1893).

Finding Aid prepared by: Gregory Adam Scott, June 2010

Reviewed and Updated by Brigette C. Kamsler, February 2014 with financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

**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. Collection contains journals, clippings and a scrapbook.

Size: 1 box, 0.25 linear feet

Storage: Onsite storage

Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027

Email: [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.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 email to [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu), or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. [Burke Library staff](#) is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- 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 #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of 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 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. In 2014, the collection and finding aid were updated as part of the Henry Luce Foundation grant.

### Contents list

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