

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

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 6

Finding Aid for

**Miner Searle Bates Papers, 1927 - 1984**



Image Credit: UTS Archives, Series 12 Box 13:  
*Union Seminary Tower*, October 1960, p. 4

Finding Aid prepared by: Gregory Adam Scott, February 2010  
Reviewed and Updated by Brigette C. Kamsler, March 2014 with financial support from the  
Henry Luce Foundation

**Summary Information**

Creator: Miner Searle Bates (貝德士), 1897 - 1978  
Title: Miner Searle Bates Papers  
Inclusive dates: 1927 - 1984  
Bulk dates: 1935 - 1956  
Abstract: Miner Searle Bates taught history at Nanking University 南京大學 was member of International Committee for Nanking Safety Zone in Second Sino-Japanese War and Professor of Missions at Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1950-1965. Contains papers, articles, reports regarding missions in 20<sup>th</sup> century China.  
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@libraries.cul.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@libraries.cul.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance:** These records were donated to the Burke Library in 1979 by Mell Williams, while the publication in folder 7 was donated by the China Program Director of the NCCC USA in 1984.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to [burkearchives@libraries.cul.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@libraries.cul.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: Miner Searle Bates Papers, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

### Biography

Miner Searle Bates was born on May 28, 1897 in Newark, Ohio, the son of Miner Lee Bates, a Disciples of Christ minister who later became president of Hiram College. M.S. Bates received a Rhodes scholarship to study at Oxford University, where he earned his A.B. and M.A. degrees. When the United States entered World War I, he volunteered with the YMCA and served in Mesopotamia. In 1920 he was commissioned by the United Christian Missionary Society to teach history at the University of Nanking in China.<sup>1</sup> He married Lilliath Robbins, a teacher at Ginling College, in 1923, and received a Ph.D. in Chinese history from Yale University in 1935. At some point he began to use the Chinese name Bei Deshi 貝德士.

Bates was one of the key figures in the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone, which sought to protect Chinese from the Japanese soldiers who invaded and occupied the capital city in late 1937. He was appointed Vice President of Nanking University in January 1938 in order to enhance his standing with the Japanese and help his efforts to protect the Chinese. Bates remained in the city from 1937 to 1941, and after the war was summoned as a witness to the Tokyo War Crimes trials.

Bates was active in many missionary organizations, including the International Missionary Council, the China Council of Higher Education, the Nanking International Relief Committee, and the executive committee of the National Christian Council of China. From 1950 to 1965, Bates was Professor of Missions at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and after his retirement worked on a research project devoted to the history of Protestant missions in twentieth-century China. He died in 1978 in New York City.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the now-standard Pinyin system, Nanking (南京) is romanized as “Nanjing”.

**Collection Scope and Content Note**

The papers in this collection all appear to be connected to the research project on which Bates was working after his retirement, and which remained incomplete at the time of his death. The publication in folder 7 was an attempt to collect his scattered notes and drafts from this project.

The Hunan 湖南 Synod of the Church of Christ in China is well represented in the collection, as is Bates' experience in Nanjing 南京 in the late 1930s dealing with the Japanese occupation force. While his service to the National Christian Council of China is not reflected here, interested researchers may want to consult the main collection of NCC China papers, also in MRL series 6.

**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.

In 2014, the collection and finding aid were updated as part of the Henry Luce Foundation grant. Unprocessed material was integrated at this time.

**Further Sources**

The main collection of Bates' archival papers (55 linear feet) is located at Yale University Libraries, Divinity Library Special Collections. The section on Bates in the online Nanking Massacre Project can found at the following link:

<<http://www.library.yale.edu/div/Nanking/Bates.html>>

The Burke Library contains other collections on missions in China that may be of interest to researchers. For more information, please see the Burke Archives website:

<http://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke/archives.html>.

**Contents list**

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	Collected Publications and Pamphlets, 1927, 1949, 1950, 1963
1	2	Japan and China Reports by M.S. Bates, 1935-1937
1	3	Articles on Narcotics by M.S. Bates, 1938, 1940
1	4	Hunan Synod: Reports, 1941, 1947 Delegates Second Meeting Minutes, 1949
1	5	Reports on Missionary Activities, [194?] - 1950
1	6	Missionary Work in China Project Draft Papers, 1956, [195?]
1	7	<i>Gleanings Manuscripts of M. Searle Bates: Protestant Endeavor in Chinese Society, 1890-1950</i> , 1984
1	8	Provenance Notes and Signature Cards
1	9	Excerpts from Communications by Bates, 1932-1936