

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

Missionary Research Library Archives

Finding Aid for

Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, 1902 – 1958

Chinese name: Madam Debenkang (德本康夫人)



Photo Credit: The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Original Processing by Lynn A. Grove, 1988

Finding Aid by Ruth Tonkiss Cameron, Patricia LaRosa, Gregory Adam Scott, 2009

Reviewed and Updated by Brigette C. Kamsler, March 2014, Updated March 2017 by Rebecca Nieto with financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

Summary Information

Creator: Matilda Calder Thurston, 1875-1958
Title: Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, 1902-1956
Inclusive dates: 1902 – 1958
Bulk dates: 1905 – 1945
Abstract: Matilda Calder Thurston, 德本康, founder of Ginling College 金陵女子學院, Nanjing 南京, the first college for female students in China. Contains correspondence, bulletins, reports, newsletters, maps of Nanjing, Lantern Slides of Missionary Work.
Size: 14 boxes, 1 oversize horizontal box, 1 slide box, 1 tube, 12 linear feet
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Email: burkearchives@library.columbia.edu

Administrative Information

- Provenance:** The bulk of this collection was donated to the Missionary Research Library before 1961 by Thurston's sister, Helen Calder. In 1976 the records were accessioned to the Burke Library Archives with the closure of the MRL. Typewritten correspondence extracts in Series 2, Box 3 were donated by Frank P. Piskor in August 1986. Rosalinda Xiong's paper about Ginling's connection to the University of Michigan, "The Seven Sisters and Ginling College", was donated to the Burke in 2016 and added to the collection in 2017.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to 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:** For preservation reasons series 7, boxes 2 and 3 are **RESTRICTED**. The remainder of the collection is unrestricted to researchers.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, MRL 6: Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, series #, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

Thurston was born Matilda Smyrell Calder, daughter of George Calder and Margery Calder (nee Patterson) in Hartford, CT on May 16, 1875. She graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 1896 and taught in Connecticut for four years before teaching for the American Board at the Central Turkey College for Girls in Marash for two years. In 1902 she married John Lawrence Thurston, Lalunsi Debenkang 勞倫斯·德本康 and travelled with him to work for the Yale Foreign Missionary Society at Changsha 長沙, Hunan 湖南 province in China. Rev. Thurston's ill health from tuberculosis caused them to return to Claremont, California the following year, where he died in 1904.

She served as traveling secretary of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions from 1904 until 1906, when she returned to the Yale Mission at Changsha to teach and to do volunteer work in hospitals. In 1913 the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in the U.S.A. appointed her to Nanjing 南京, where she founded Ginling College 金陵女子學院, the first four-year college for women in China. She served as the first president of the college.

Under nationalist pressure to change the school to Chinese leadership, in 1928 she resigned as president of Ginling College in favor of Dr. Wu Yi-fang 吳貽芳, a Chinese alumna from the first graduating class of Ginling College. Thurston remained as an advisor and financial officer until 1936, when she returned to the United States. She again returned to Nanjing in 1939 to help with war relief, and was interned during the Japanese occupation of Nanjing before being repatriated in 1943.

In 1925 she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Literature Degree from Mount Holyoke College.

From 1943 she lived in Auburndale, Massachusetts with her sister Helen Calder until her death on April 18, 1958. In 1955 she published a history of Ginling College with Ruth M. Chester.

Sources

Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity: Matilda Calder Thurston.
<http://www.bdconline.net/en/stories/t/thurston-matilda-calder.php>

Thurston, Matilda C. and Chester, Ruth M. Ginling College, New York: United Board for Christian Colleges in China, 1955

Collection Scope and Content Note

The collection is organized in 7 series:

- **Series 1: Personal Correspondence, 1902 – 1942 (4 boxes, 1.75 linear ft.)**
 This series contains a diary form correspondence of a personal nature. Most of the letters are addressed to the Calder family or to Helen B. Calder and may have been circulated among family and friends.
- **Series 2: General Correspondence, 1902 – 1956 (3 boxes, 1.25 linear ft.)**
 This series contains more general correspondence, including official letters related to Thurston's work at Ginling College. Box 3 contains typewritten copies of the manuscript correspondence.
- **Series 3: Ginling College, 1907 – 1950 (6 boxes, 2.75 linear ft.)**
 In this series are collected papers directly related to Ginling College, including reports, correspondence with faculty, school publications and meeting minutes. Also included is a publication donated to the Burke by Rosalinda Xiong, a scholar of Ginling and the college's connection to the University of Michigan and the Barbour Scholarship, researched and written in 2014. This essay was added to the Thurston Papers in 2017.
- **Series 4: Conferences and Organizations, 1917 – 1938 (9 folders of 1 box, 0.50 lin. ft)**
Please note: Series 4-6 are contained in the same single document box.
 This series contains papers related to conferences and organizations associated with either Ginling College or Thurston herself.
- **Series 5: General, 1910 – 1958 (19 folders of 1 box, 0.50 linear ft)**
 This series includes varied notes, clippings, correspondence and essays related to Thurston .
- **Series 6: Images of Ginling, [19??] (10 folders of 1 box, 0.50 linear ft)**
 This series is comprised of early postcards and drawings depicting the Ginling campus and grounds possibly covering the time of initial building development and first class graduation.
- **Series 7: Oversized Documents and Slides, 192? – 1938 (1 horizontal oversized box, 1 slide box, 1 tube box, 5.75 linear ft)**

This series contains documents too large to be stored in standard boxes. The first oversized horizontal box of clippings, newspapers issues and a circular letter is accessible.

Two further boxes remain **RESTRICTED** for preservation reasons:

One contains lantern slides depicting missionary programs and aspects of life in China, Japan and India. The second is a tube containing fragile maps and building plans.

Further Sources

Ginling College Records, 1920 to 1993, Smith College Archives, Northampton, MA, Collection number RG 70

<http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/smitharchives/manosca16.html>

United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia Records, Yale University Library, Divinity Library Special Collections contains 15 feet of documents relating to Ginling College.

<http://webtext.library.yale.edu/xml2html/divinity.011.con.html>.

Ginling College documents Record group 279, Philadelphia office of the Presbyterian Historical Society <http://history.pcusa.org/finding/phs%20279.xml>.

John Lawrence Thurston Papers, Series 2 Box 2, Yale University Library

Contains some correspondence from Matilda Thurston concerning the death of her husband.

<http://orbis.library.yale.edu/vwebv/holdingsInfo?searchId=4157&recCount=50&recPointer=4&bibId=614089>

The Burke Library contains a number of other sources which could be useful for researchers. For more information, please see the website at:

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

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. Any items in an advanced state of deterioration were placed in Mylar envelopes.

The number of series in the collection was reorganized in September 2009.

Series 1 is unchanged. For Series 2 - 6 the former box numbers are as follows:

Current Series and Box Number	Former Designation
Series 1 - unchanged	Boxes 1-4
Series 2 Box 1	Box 5
Series 2 Box 2	Box 6
Series 2 Box 3	Box 6A
Series 3 Box 1	Box 7
Series 3 Box 2	Box 8
Series 3 Box 3	Box 9
Series 3 Box 4	Box 10

Series 4, 5, 6	Box 11
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In series 5 and 6 the known former folder numbers are noted at the end of the contents description entry for each folder, e.g. [f11].

In 2014, the collection and finding aid were updated as part of the Henry Luce Foundation grant.

Contents list

Series 1: Personal Correspondence, 1902 – 1942

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	1-12	Calder Family, 1902-1914
1	2	1-14	Calder Family, 1915-1928; 1930-1931; 1933-1934; 1939-1941
1	3	1	Helen B. Calder, [19??] fragment
1	3	2-13	Helen B. Calder, 1902-1940; 1942
1	4	1	George P. Calder, 1903-1926
1	4	2	Mrs. George P. Calder, 1905-1912
1	4	3	William Calder, 1907-1928
1	4	4	Mattie Dans, 1927
1	4	5	Gilman Frost, 1935
1	4	6	Ginling Family, 1919
1	4	7	Caroline Savage, 1903-1927
1	4	8	Thurston Family, 1902-1903
1	4	9	Mrs. John Thurston, 1903
1	4	10	Isabel Thurston, 1904-1931
1	4	11	John Lawrence Thurston, September 1902-April 1904
1	4	12	Margaret [Thurston?], 1936-1940

Series 2: General Correspondence, 1902 – 1956

2	1	1	Minnie Vautrin, [19??] -1938
2	1	2-3	Wu Yi-fang, 1927-1931; 1938-1950
2	1	4-9	1904; 1907-1908; 1910-1911; 1913-1919; 1921-1927
2	2	1-11	1928-1956, [19??]

Typewritten Extracts [Copies]

2	3	1	1902-1904
2	3	2	October 1906-September 1911
2	3	3	September 1913-June 1919
2	3	4	August-December 1934

Series 3: Ginling College, 1907 – 1950

3	1	1	Notes, Correspondence, Clippings, Campus Map, 1923-1928; 1931-1950
3	1	2	Farewell Address, Thurston, 1928; Pamphlet, 1943
3	1	3	Advisory Committee Minutes, 1926-1927
3	1	4	Alumnae Reports, 1937-1947
3	1	5	Report: Biology Experiment, 1938
3	1	6	Report: Board of Control, 1928
3	1	7	Reports: Board of Founders, 1940-1941
3	1	8	News Bulletin, March 1927
3	1	9	Business Manager Correspondence, 1924-1927
3	1	10	Candidate Committee Minutes, February 1925
3	1	11	Child Guidance Service Outline, 1950
3	1	12	Reports and Pamphlet, Christmas 1921-1939
3	1	13	Memo to Advisory and Curriculum Committees, 1927
3	1	14	Conference Committee Informal Minutes, 1927
3	1	15	Commencement: Reports, Clippings, Invitation, 1919-1950
3	1	16	Cooperation Committee for the Women's Union Christian Colleges in Foreign Fields Correspondence, 1927-1928
3	1	17	Correspondence, 1924-1945
3	1	18	Curriculum Outline, [192?]; Course Reports, 1938
3	1	19	Easter Note, 1927
3	1	20	Department of Education Report, October 1950
3	1	21	Executive Committee Report, November 1950
3	1	22	Experimental School: Extract from <i>China Mission Newsletter</i> , July 1940
3	1	23	Extra-Curricular Activities Committee Report, [19??]
			Faculty Correspondence
3	1	24	1927-1946
3	1	25	Jane Thomas Bowles, 1931-1932
3	1	26	Alice Seymour Browne, 1909
3	1	27	Alice L. Butler, 1922
3	1	28	Emily I. Case, [19??]
3	1	29	Ruth Chester, 1938-1946
3	1	30	C. Deng, 1927
3	1	31	Ada A. Grabill, 1923-1925
3	1	32	Stella Marie Graves, 1939-1944; 1946-1948
3	1	33	Rebecca Griest, 1926-1940
3	1	34	Edith C. Haight, [1947?]
3	1	35	Henry T. Hodgkin, 1922-1923
3	1	36	Phoebe Hoh, 1939-1946
3	1	37	Ming-sin Tan Hsueh, 1950
3	2	1	Florence Kirk, 1937-1944; 1946-1950
3	2	2	Ellen T. Y. Koo, 1927
3	2	3	Chen Hwang Li-ming, November 1939
3	2	4	Helen M. Loomis, December 1936
3	2	5	Liu En-lan, 1927-1948

3	2	6	Eleanor W. McCurdy, 1950
3	2	7	Frederica R. Mead, 1915-1940
3	2	8	Esther Pederson, 1926
3	2	9	Helen M. Planum, 1948
3	2	10	Cora D. Reeves, 1938

Series 3: Ginling College, 1907 – 1950 (Cont'd)**Series Box Folder Contents**

Faculty Correspondence (cont'd)			
3	2	11	Katherine Schutze, 1940
3	2	12	Alice Settlemyer, 1941
3	2	13	Mary B. Shipley, [19??]
3	2	14	Djang Siao-sung, [193?]
3	2	15	Eva D. Spicer, 1924-1939
3	2	16	Florence Sprague, 1925-1926
3	2	17	Catherine Sutherland, 1937-1938
3	2	18	Esther Tappert, [1937?]
3	2	19	Mary U. Thayer, 1925
3	2	20	Eunice T. Thomas, 1927
3	2	21	Mary B. Treudley, 1926-1928
3	2	22-23	Minnie Vautrin, [1921?]-1941, includes Travel Certificates
3	3	1	Minnie Vautrin: Death and Memorial, 1941
3	3	2-3	Minnie Vautrin: Diary, November 1927-November 1937
3	3	4-5	Wu Yi-fang, 1927-1934; 1936-1950
3	3	6	Wu Yi-fang: Report on Visit to Hartford, November 1943; Schedules, June - July 1943; Biographical Material, [1939?] - 1940
Ginling College Administration and Correspondence			
3	3	7	Faculty: Executive Committee Minutes, May 1941; Lists, 1924-1940; Meeting Minutes, 1927; Retreat Program, September 1925
3	3	8	Cablegram Financial Request, 1934
3	3	9	Founders' Day Addresses, 1918-1948
3	3	10	Correspondence: Georgia Grace Thomas Memorial Book Fund, 1953
3	3	11	Correspondence: Incorporation, January 1926
3	3	12	Invitation from Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, Nanjing, 1927
3	3	13	Joint Council Decision re Miss Yu En-Mäi, 1926
3	3	14	Notes and Lists Re Library Holdings, 1931
3	3	15	Newsletter, 1927-1946; 1948-1950
3	4	1	Physical Education Demonstration Program, March 1936
3	4	2	Practice School Meeting Minutes, November 1948
3	4	3	Publicity Committee Report, January 1928
3	4	4	Notes Re Red Cross Work, March 1927
3	4	5-7	Report Correspondence, 1907-1942; 1945-1950
3	4	8	Rural Service Program Reports, [1943?] - 1950
3	4	9	Schedule, Spring 1947
3	4	10	Newsletter, February 1930

3	4	11	Tabulated Statistics, 1916-1947
3	4	12	Student Government Association Minutes, March 1927
3	4	13	Student Reports, 1925-1933
3	4	14	Notes and Correspondence re Treasurer, 1928
3	4	15	Twenty-fifth Anniversary Publications, 1940 - 1941

Series 3: Ginling College, 1907 – 1950 (Cont'd)

Series Box Folder Contents

Ginling College Administration and Correspondence (cont'd)

3	4	16	Twenty-fifth Anniversary Program and Addresses, December 1940
3	4	17	Twenty-fifth Anniversary Notes and Pamphlet, 1940 -1941
3	4	18	Christmas Vesper Service Schedule, December 1940
3	4	19	Undated Fragments, [19??]
3	5	1	Newsletters, 1935-1950
3	5	2-3	Board of Control Minutes, 1916-1928
3	5	4-5	Board of Directors Minutes, 1929-1932, 1934-1937
3	5	6-7	Bulletin, 1915, 1925, 1928, 1931, 1933-1935
3	5	8	<i>Ginling College Letter</i> , November 1924-June 1926
3	5	9	"Ginling College" Pamphlet [1919]
3	5	10-11	Published Reports, 1915-1928
3	5	12	Reports to Trustees and Donors, 1918-1936
3	5	13	Pamphlets, 1912-1940
3	5	14	Directory of Alumnae, 1947 [in Chinese]
3	5	15	Chinese Christian Universities Pamphlets, 1935, 1938, 1942
3	6	1	Ginling College Pamphlets, 1915-1918
3	6	2	<i>Ginling College Magazine</i> , December 1925
3	6	3	Essay – The Seven Sisters and Ginling College (by Rosalinda Xiong) [2014]

Series 4: Conferences and Organizations, 1917 – 1938

4	1	1	Conference of Christian Colleges and Universities, 1924-1926
4	1	2	Conference on Church and Mission Administration Report, 1927
4	1	3	Yangtze Valley Student Conference Program, 1917
4	1	4	Chinese Women's Club of Shanghai: Speech by Way Sing New, 1937
4	1	5	Council of Higher Education: Executive Committee Meeting Notes, 1927
4	1	6	Kiangnan Mission Executive Committee Correspondence, April 1926
4	1	7	Nanking Woman's Club, <i>Sketches of Nanking</i> , 1933
4	1	8	National Christian Council of China- Clipping, 1926, Note, [1926?]
4	1	9	United Christian Missionary Society Newsletters, 1927; 1938

Series 5: General, 1910 – 1958

5	1	1	Notes, Pamphlet, Map, [19??] [f11]
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5	1	2	Notes, Clippings, 1910-1925 [f12]
5	1	3	Meeting Minutes, Reports, 1926 [f13]
5	1	4	Notes, Clippings, Correspondence, 1927 [f14]
5	1	5-7	Essays, 1927 [f15-f16; f18]
5	1	8	Clippings, Correspondence, January-March 1927 [f17]
5	1	9	Essays, Correspondence, April 1927 [f19]
5	1	10	Clippings, Essays, May 1927 [f20]
5	1	11	Essays, Correspondence, June-August 1927 [f21]

Series 5: General, 1910 – 1958 (Cont'd)

5	1	12	Clippings, Correspondence, September-December 1927 [f22]
5	1	13	Essays, Addresses, 1928-1932 [f23]
5	1	14	Essays, Correspondence, 1937 [f24]
5	1	15	Essays, Correspondence, December 1937-January 1938 [f25]
5	1	16-17	Essays, Correspondence, January- December 1938 [f26-f27]
5	1	18	Clippings, Essays, Correspondence, 1940-1955 [f28]
5	1	19	Thurston Obituaries, 1958 [f10]
5	1	20	Correspondence Duplicates, 1928-1941

Series 6: Images of Ginling, [19??]

Postcards

6	1	1	Ginling College, [19??] [f29]
6	1	2	Student, [19??] [f30]
6	1	3	Central Building of Ginling College, [19??] [f31]
6	1	4-7	College Architectural Details, [19??] [f32-f35]

Drawings

6	1	8-10	College Architectural Details, [19??] [f36-f38]
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Series 7: Oversized Documents and Slides, [192?] – 1938

7	1 OS	1	Letter from Ming-teh Middle School for Girls [in Chinese] [1927?]
7	1	2-3	China Press Weekly Clipping, November 10, 1935
7	1	4	Notes From a Nanking Diary Parts 1 and 2, 1938
7	1	5	North China Herald, April 2, 1927
7	2 OS		[RESTRICTED] 69 Magic Lantern Color Glass Slides, 3 ¼" x 4"
7	3 Tube		[RESTRICTED] Floor plan: Library-Admin Building, Ginling College, 1932
7	3 Tube		[RESTRICTED] Floor plan: Auditorium-Music Building, Ginling College, 1932
7	3 Tube		[RESTRICTED] <i>Zuixin shoudu chengshi quantu</i> 最新首都城市全圖 [Map of Nanjing, 1928]
7	3 Tube		[RESTRICTED] "Map of Nanking to Accompany Sketches," 1935