

Hwa Nan College

Hua nan nü zi wen li xue yuan

华南女子文理学院

[Fuzhou Shi](#) (Fujian Sheng, China)

Hwa Nan was a college for women founded by the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Its campus on Nantai Island, across the Min River from the city of Foochow (today Fuzhou), offered lovely views north and south. Hwa Nan evolved from a preparatory school into a four-year college, graduating its first class in 1921. The number of students remained small initially, numbering nine in the graduating class in 1925, and twelve graduates by 1928.

Marian Payne Hall, the main administrative building of Hwa Nan, and Cranston Hall were completed in 1915. Payne Hall was the first building in the Foochow area to use a Chinese style roof on otherwise Western architecture, and as such caused quite a sensation. For the teachers of Hwa Nan, the new buildings were the source of much delight. Elsie Clark wrote in her diary on March 25, 1914: "This afternoon I went into the new buildings for the first time and thoroughly enjoyed it, even tho the entrance was up a steep incline into the second storey. The woodwork is artistic and everything promises to be beautiful. The blackboards will be a never-failing incentive to write. Happy day when we move out; and happy day when the classrooms are full of students..."

Trimble Hall, built in 1925, was named after Hwa Nan's first president, Lydia Trimble, who served from the beginning of the school until 1925. She was succeeded by Dr. Ida Belle Lewis, who was president for three years before turning the school over to the Chinese leadership of Lucy C. Wang. Lucy Wang, president of Hwa Nan for the next two decades, was from an illustrious family; her grandfather was the scholar Wang Jun Keng, an official at the court of the Empress Dowager. The 1930 inauguration of President Wang was a notable event in the history of the college. As Hwa Nan historian L. Ethel Wallace recounts: "On the morning of January eighteenth, the massive temple bell that hangs on the south balcony of Payne Hall pealed out its summons and the formal procession of the college Board of Directors, representative guests, college faculty and alumnae slowly advanced through the hall to the large auditorium while friends and guests assembled sang 'A Mighty Fortress is Our God.'" An inaugural banquet followed in Trimble Hall.

Throughout the winter of 1937 Hwa Nan was subject to the disruption of air raid alerts. With the fall of Amoy to the Japanese in May 1938, it was decided to relocate to Nanping, 120 miles up the Min River. Conditions were crowded on the refugee campus, with twelve students per room and a porch for a biology lab. Back at the home campus, Payne Hall was

destroyed by an unexplained fire in February 1941. Foochow was occupied by the Japanese in April 1941 and again from October 1944 to May 1945. In March 1946 Hwa Nan was able to return to its devastated home campus, all the buildings little more than empty shells with no floors or windows. Temporary structures were erected to allow classes to begin again and the restoration of Payne Hall was completed in 1948.

In 1951 the new Chinese government merged Fukien Christian University and Hwa Nan College with two other institutions to form the National Fukien University. The Hwa Nan campus was designated the college of science of this new institution.

Further reading

Wallace, L. Ethel. [*Hwa Nan College: The Woman's College of South China*](#). New York: United Board for Christian Colleges in China, 1956.