

Soochow University

Dong Wu da xue

东吴大学

Suzhou (Jiangsu Sheng, China)

Dong Wu da xue developed from three institutions supported by the Southern Methodist Church. In 1899, Buffington Institute, a successful primary and middle school in Suzhou (Jiangsu Province), merged with the Anglo-Chinese College in Shanghai, a secondary school that attracted many students who wanted to learn English for business purposes. This freed the campus in Suzhou for the Kung Hung School, which in turn became the foundation for a new institution called Tungwu College. In 1911 the Anglo-Chinese College merged with Tungwu to form what became known in English as Soochow University.

After the Soochow University Board of Trustees was organized in November 1900, additional land was sought adjacent to what had been the Buffington Institute campus. Contributions from Chinese friends were used in acquiring land and removing hundreds of graves, mostly of victims of the Taiping Rebellion half a century before. Often it was very difficult to acquire land on which there were graves; but this area, thickly dotted with grave mounds, became the heart of Soochow University campus without trouble, thanks to cooperation of the authorities and the Jen Chi T'ang ("Benevolent Help Hall"), which was high in popular esteem.

In 1901 the Southern Methodist Church began a campaign to raise \$100,000 for the development of the campus. Plans were drawn by a British architect in Shanghai and work started in December on the Main Building. This building was named Allen Hall after the death of Dr. Young J. Allen in 1907.

Between 1901 and 1911, several buildings were added to the Suzhou campus, including six residences on the campus and five nearby, three "temporary" dormitories, (one of them was still in use in September 1949), a dining hall, kitchen, and servants' quarters. A second large academic building was in course of construction when David L. Anderson, Soochow's first president, died in 1911 so the donors, Court Street Church of Lynchburg, Virginia, named it Anderson Hall, as a memorial.

Lacking money for a full-fledged gymnasium in its early years, Soochow erected a semi-open low-cost structure, a design subsequently replicated by various educational institutions throughout China. Although unheated and open to the weather along the upper walls, the structure was a great improvement over the outdoors, providing a good basketball and gymnasium floor, and allowing for winter class work and the intramural and intercollegiate games. Funds were found for a permanent gymnasium in the 1930s. Soochow held the first basketball tournament in China and volleyball, tennis, soccer, and track were also popular sports. Baseball was attempted but as Soochow's historian has noted, "it was found to be the

least enjoyed, possibly due to the lack of any previous training in the necessary skills. The rules were far too complex for inexperienced spectators to understand, as may be judged from the name of "wild ball" which the translators gave it."

With its network of canals and surrounding fields for rice and other aquatic crops, Suzhou was an ideal location for the study of freshwater biology. Nathaniel Gist Gee, noted biologist on the faculty, studied freshwater sponges and other organisms in the environment. In 1919, a new science building was authorized, with funding provided by the Celebration of Centenary of Missions of the American Methodist Churches (Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Episcopal Church South). This reinforced concrete structure was designed and constructed by the architectural bureau maintained by the Methodist Churches for Centenary building projects and named in honor of the Rev. James Madison Cline, who was the father of Soochow's second President, and a member of the Little Rock Methodist Conference.

Following the Japanese attack on Shanghai in August 1937, it was decided to move the Soochow Colleges of Arts and Science to Huchow. Only four weeks later Huchow was in danger of invasion, so Soochow University was again in refugee mode. While some groups made their way to Chengdu (Sichuan), Yunnan, or Guizhou, the majority of faculty and students took refuge in the International Settlement of Shanghai. There Soochow joined with St. John's University, the University of Shanghai, Hangchow University, and a portion of Ginling College to share library and laboratory space. They offered classes with open enrolment to students from all the participating schools and had joint commencements in 1939, 1940, and 1941. With the expansion of the war in December 1941 some Soochow activities, including its renowned Law School, continued "underground" in Shanghai, but many students and faculty scattered to West China.

Soochow was finally able to return to its home campus in 1946. Following the war, proposals were made to merge Soochow University, Hangchow University and St. John's University into an East China Union University. For various reasons, not the least of which was the disintegrating economic and political atmosphere, this plan did not succeed. By the spring of 1949 the Communists occupied Soochow and the path of the institution was set in a different direction.

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