

# Lingnan University

## Ling nan da xue

## 嶺南大學

[Guangzhou](#) (Guangdong Sheng, China)

Andrew C. Happer was among the earliest proponents of establishing a Christian college in China. He and his wife taught classes in rented temporary quarters on the south side of the Pearl River beginning in March 1888, but he had difficulty finding land to buy for a campus and was not convinced that the Canton area was the best location for a Christian college. In 1890 the illness of Happer and his wife caused their school to close, but in 1892 Canton was approved as the preferred location of a Presbyterian college in China, and the Rev. Benjamin C. Henry of the Canton Presbyterian Mission was appointed President of the institution for a term of two years.

In 1904 the College took possession of land on Honam Island, on the south side of the Pearl River close to the village of Honglok - 2 ½ miles from the eastern part of the city of Canton. Two large wooden bungalows were erected to house the institution, one bungalow housing the students and Chinese faculty, and the other housing the Western faculty and classrooms. Visitors stayed in a hired houseboat anchored in the river.

The first permanent building was completed in 1907, a three storey structure novel in the area for its red brick facade and reinforced concrete floors. This building was originally called East Hall but the name was later changed to Martin Hall to honor Henry Martin of Cincinnati.

When Charles K Edmunds became president in 1908, there was an acute need for additional dormitories. Funds for these building were raised primarily in China, with innovative fundraising techniques. A system of subscription books was inaugurated, each headed by a donor. President Edmunds and a Chinese professor at the school made calls on parents and high officials accompanied by Mr. Kong Ha, the father of one of the boys, who had a wide acquaintance and was highly respected because he had won the third literary degree. They issued invitations to come to a public meeting at the College, to be conducted by the students. The response was so great that a dozen steam launches, four large houseboats, and many smaller craft were needed to convey the hundreds of parents and other guests, among who were twenty-three high officials.

Completed in 1912, the main administration building on the campus was named Grant Hall after William Henry Grant, a member of the Board of Trustees since 1895. A bachelor of independent means, Grant was based in New York, but was responsible for raising many of the funds that made the continued operation of the college possible.

Swasey Hall, named for American tycoon Ambrose Swasey, was designated for religious activities, but became the site of a variety of ceremonial events over the years. The day following Sun Yat-sen's death on March 13, 1925, saw Swasey Hall as the setting for a memorial service for Dr. Sun. The auditorium was draped in black and white streamers, with Dr. Sun's portrait at center stage, surrounded by scrolls containing quotations from his works.

With the Japanese occupation of Canton in October 1938, Lingnan made arrangements to share space with the University of Hong Kong, which lasted until the Japanese attack on Hong Kong in December 1941. Lingnan then moved to Taitsoen, north of Kukong, where more than forty temporary buildings were erected to house the university. Another move became necessary when the Japanese captured Kukong in January 1945. Students and faculty scattered in various directions and preparations were being made to offer classes in Meih sien, 175 miles east of Kukong, when news of the Japanese surrender was received. Lingnan was able to return to its home campus and begin classes in October 1945.

Communist forces entered Canton in October 1949. On November 13, a Workmen's Beneficial Association was inaugurated on the Lingnan campus. Band music, a dramatic skit, and a demonstration of the "yang ko", a dance depicting the setting out of rice seedlings, were included in the program. Lingnan carried on its work with some degree of normality, but with the start of the Korean war in 1950, Americans were no longer welcome on the campus. The University continued as a private institution through 1951, but was then merged into the government's Chung Shan Ta Hsueh or Sun Yat-sen University.

---

### Further reading

Corbett, Charles Hodge. [Lingnan University: A Short History Based Primarily on the Records of the University's American Trustees](#). New York, Trustees of Lingnan University, 1963.

Wang, Dong. [Managing God's Higher Learning: U.S.-China Cultural Encounter and Canton Christian College \(Lingnan University\), 1888-1952](#). Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007.