

**WESLEY WILLINGHAM LAWTON, SR.
PAPERS**

AR 787



W.W. Lawton and his new bride Ida, 1897

Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives

By Howard Gallimore

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Wesley Willingham Lawton, Sr. Papers

AR 787

Summary

Main Entry: Wesley Willingham Lawton, Sr. Papers

Date Span: 1891 - 1954

Abstract: The Lawton papers are a collection of personal diaries beginning when Wesley Lawton was a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and continue until his death in 1943. The collection covers his service in central China as a missionary and includes the diaries as well as correspondence, photographs, and clippings.

Size: 3 linear ft.

Collection #: AR 787

Historical, Biographical Sketch

Wesley Willingham Lawton was born October 31, 1869 in Allendale, South Carolina, the son of Thomas Oregon and Mary Phoebe (Willingham) Lawton. Lawton attended Allendale and Cawtonville schools and Patrick Military Institute. He graduated from Furman University and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1894.

On February 23, 1894, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention appointed Lawton to work in China. He arrived in China December 2, 1894 and immediately began work in Soochow. His activities centered on Chenkiang in central China and Kaifeng in interior China. In association with W. Eugene Sallee, he started the Southern Baptist Interior China Mission.

October 14, 1897, he married Ida Carey Deaver, a native of Pennsylvania and a Methodist foreign missionary serving in China. Four of their children: Mary Elizabeth, Olive Allene, Wesley Willingham Jr., and Deaver Monroe Lawton served the Southern Baptist Convention as foreign missionaries in China. Reverend Lawton retired January 1, 1936 and eventually moved to North Carolina. He died at his home in Ridgecrest March 3, 1943. Mrs. Lawton died in 1954.

Scope and Content Notes

The W. W. Lawton Papers are primarily a collection of personal diaries beginning when he was a student at Southern Seminary awaiting appointment to the foreign mission field and culminating in early 1943, just before his death. His diaries span 42 years of missionary service. Lawton's

sensitive, accurate, and sometimes tedious descriptions from the field reveal firsthand the sacrificial life of a foreign missionary and the often volatile nature of China during this period. The diaries contain daily happenings, notes on scenery, travel, customs of the country, his readings, and observations of the times. The collection also contains two of Mrs. Lawton's diaries.

Materials in the collection were donated by members of the Lawton family. The collection comprises three linear feet in three boxes and is arranged in alphabetical order by folder title. The diaries are arranged chronologically.

References

Greer, Genevieve. More than Conquerors. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1956, pages 105-122.

Holloway, Sadie Lawton. Ida Deaver Lawton: Happily Ever After. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954.

Johnston, Coy K. Two Centuries of Lawtonville Baptists, 1775 – 1975, Lawtonville, SC: Historical Committee of Lawtonville Baptist Church, 1975.

Salee, Annie Jenkins. W. Eugene Salee: Christ's Ambassador. Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1933.

Arrangement

Papers are arranged in alphabetical order by folder title and diaries are in chronological order.

Provenance

Donated by the Lawton family

Preferred Citation

Wesley Willingham Lawton, Sr. Papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee

Access Restrictions

None

Subject Terms

Southern Baptist Convention. Foreign Mission Board.

Southern Baptist theological Seminary.

Missions – China.

Diaries

Missionaries – Correspondence, reminiscences, etc.

China – Religion

Related Materials

Lawton, Wesley Willingham- Correspondence, Southern Baptist Convention. Foreign Mission Board. Missionary Correspondence Files, AR 551-2

Container List

Box 1

- 1.1 Collection Inventory
- 1.2 Notebook: Statistics, Articles, and Accounts of the Augusta Street Property – Clippings, Correspondence, Notes
- 1.3 Correspondence Book – begins February 25, 1915 – Chengchow, Honan (Province), China.
- 1.4 Deaver, Ida Carey, (Wife) Diaries
March 14, 1897 – Sept. 30, 1898 – first diary
Oct. 1, 1898 – May 28, 1898 – second diary
- 1.5 Deaver, Ida C. (Wife) School Notes, 1894 – 1895 – notes from school lectures in teaching methods, constitutional government, and geography.
- 1.6 Diaries, 1891 – 1994
Diary #1, October 31, 1891 – missionary meetings at SBTS, memorial service, Lottie Moon visit, everyday occurrences.
Diary #2, July 20, 1893 – Dec. 8, 1894 – Soochow, China activities
- 1.7 Diaries, 1894 – 1897
Diary #3, Dec. 13, 1894 – Oct. 11, 1895 – Soochow, China – sales of Bibles and tracts, resolutions, policy statements for mission, associational meeting in Shanghai, accounts of his travels, missionary visits, baptisms, world events.
Diary #4, Oct. 13, 1895 – Oct. 2, 1896 – Shanghai, China – personal letters and travels
- 1.8 Diaries, 1896 – 1898
Diary #5, Oct. 3, 1896 – Sept. 12, 1897 – in Chinkiang, China, steamer “S. S. Pechi” bound for Shanghai, books read, health issues, personal relationships.
Diary #6, Sept. 16, 1897 – July 27, 1898 in Shanghai and Chinkiang – copy of the British National, mast head of Foreign Mission Board, names of members and missionaries , travels, wedding, famine, unrest, birth of child.
- 1.9 Diaries, 1898 – 1900
Diary #7, Aug. 2, 1898 – Feb. 5, 1899 – family travels, illness, chapel dedication, readings, country-wide famine and drug addiction.
Diary #8, Feb. 8, 1899 – Feb. 26, 1900 – starvation at Pai Wan school, family illness, meetings, church dedication, pastoral duties, travel.
- 1.10 Diaries, 1900 – 1902
Diary # 9, Feb. 28, 1900 – March 15, 1901 at Shing Fong, Yangchow, China – missionary work during drought-induced famine and atrocities of Boxer Rebellion. Landslides, civil violence, smallpox, death, murder. Lawton family leaves. Child is born.
Diary # 10, March 22, 1901 – May, 1902 – furlough to America, travel back to Kuling, the death of Dr. F. H. Kerfoot, president of the Home Mission Board. U.S. President William McKinley shot and died. Malaria, readings, travel.

- 1.11 Diaries, 1902 – 1905
Diary # 11, May 18, 1902 – 1905 – Activities and schedules while in the U.S. Death of local Chinese Christians and missionary colleagues and friends.
Diary # 12 begins January 5, 1905 and ends December, 31 all in Chengchow, China. Used pre-printed form of diary with expenses, pastoral duties, and missionary activities. Birthdays, illness, dust storms, deaths, house guests, dinner guests, letting of contracts for building and repairs, services with speaker and number in attendance, travels.
- 1.12 Diaries, 1906, 1907
Diary # 13 for 1906 begins January 1 and ends December 31. Comings and goings of missionaries and visitors, services, and travel. Birth of son, Deaver Lawton. Children are Mary, Sadie, Wesley, Olive, and Deaver.
Diary # 14 begins January 1, 1907 and ends December 31, 1907, Chengchow, China.
Writing letters, new school plans, illness, building plans, D.W. Herring's appointment as missionary of the Board, birthdays, first Christian Marriage Ceremony in city, travel, visitors, Christmas.
- 1.13 Diaries, 1908, 1909
Diary #15 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1908 in Chengchow, China. Plans for Hospital and Dispensary and Woman's home, travel, visitors, birthdays, meeting of school shareholders, plans for American school, Thanksgiving, Christmas Dinner December 23, The Dalai Lama visit.
Diary # 16 begins January 1, 1909 in Chengchow with an observation for the new year, Week of Prayer for Missions, and very cold, bad weather. It ends December 31. Memorial for his mother, birth of child, William H. Taft new President, typhoid fever, Lawton's heart condition is very precarious, Christmas.
Diary # 18 begins January 1 in Chengchow, Honan, China and ends December 30, 1911 at Chinkiang. Marriage, illness, child's death and grieving, birthdays, revolution breaks out, thousands of soldiers, Americans advised to leave.
- 1.15 Diaries, 1912, 1913
Diary #19 begins January 1, 1912 with the family at Chinkiang, having fled the effects of the revolution. Furlough to South Carolina, last of Manchu Dynasty, new China – new Republic, birthday, Taft nominated by Convention, first ride in automobile, Christmas in America.
Diary # 20 begins at home in Greenville, SC January 1, 1913 and ends December 31 with the family back home in China. Furlough ends, travel to China, birthdays, illness. Remainder of year spent in getting things back to order. Memories of year filled with blessed experiences of love. Hope for new year.
- 1.16 Diaries, 1914, 1915
Diary # 21 begins January 1, 1914 in Chengchow, China and ends December 31. Administration of schools, maintaining preaching points, selling books, witnessing, and travel.
Birthdays, illnesses, deaths, funerals, war in Europe imminent – the biggest War in the World for years – unless God intervenes. Millions are being slain.

- Diary # 22** begins January 1 in Chengchow, Honan China and ends December 31, 1915. Each day's entry begins with prayer, scripture, poetry, significant quotations. Year of European War, Yuan Shih Kai takes title and power of Emperor, opening of the Panama Canal, turning over Baptist work in Hanyang to the London Mission.
- 1.17 Diaries, 1916, 1917
Diary # 23 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1916 Chengchow, Honan, China. "Let me try to learn this year how to Pray and Preach." The state of the Country is such that it does not seem wise for me to leave my family. Work in and around Chengchow is not easy. A year of New Experiences. Mary went to America, Olive Allene left for Shanghai American School. The Fielders move into house.
Diary # 24 begins January 1, and ends December 31. The weather very cold. Ida teaches children – no teacher. Money exchange rate low. Wedding, birthdays. Breaking off diplomatic relations between the United States and Germany. China broke off diplomatic relations with Germany . Revolution in Russia. Tsar is deposed. The French Ministry resigned. English Ministry resigned. April Sixth Congress declared and President proclaimed State of War between United States and Imperial German Government. China declared War on Germany and Austria. War in Europe increases in intensity.
- 1.18 Diaries, 1918, 1919
Diary # 24 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1918 in Chengchow, Honan, China. The Mission Meeting elects officers. Putting work on more permanent basis in school and Evangelistic work. Asked to build new church. U.S. Gold is in hand. Lawton's Father's death.
War in Europe gets worse. Birthdays, illnesses. Service in New Church. November 11, German delegates accepted peace terms. Armistice began –Peace! Many sad deaths from influenza. Christmas.
- 1.19 Diaries, 1920, 1921
Diary # 26 begins January 1 and ends December 31, in Chengchow, Honan, China. Heights and weights of Lawton family recorded: Sadie, 5-3 and 137#; Wesley, 5-3 3/4, 103#; Deaver, 4-7 1/4, 74#; W.W.L, 5-6 1/2, 133#; I.C.L 5-2 1/2, 129#. Membership for Chengchow church and six surrounding chapels, 268. Birthdays. Organization of Honan Anjui Baptist Association. 460 in four days die of cholera. Executive committee meets – \$7,500 – Interior China is to raise for Seventy-Five Million Campaign going on in Southern Baptist churches. 22nd anniversary Lawton's wedding. Price of gold falls – hard on Foreign Mission Board which sends gold and pays in Silver. Twenty five years since Lawton left America. Schools closed because of scarlet fever and influenza. Lawtons move back to Chengchow. Christmas.
Diary # 27, begins January 1 in Chengchow, Honan Province, China and ends December 31 in Greenville South Carolina. Death, funeral, birthdays. Leave Chengchow for America in May. June 17, reach Greenville. Family is given new car. Mr. Harding is Republican Nominee for Presidency of the U.S.
Diary # 28 begins January 1 in Greenville, South Carolina and ends December 31, 1921 in Chengchow, Honan, China. Country is passing through terrible financial panic. Warren G.

Harding is inaugurated. Illness, death, birthdays. Lawtons set sail from Seattle, reach Shanghai September 14, and Chengchow on Sept. 18. Christmas.

1.20 Diaries, 1922, 1923

Diary # 29 begins January 1, and ends December 31, 1922 in Chengchow, Honan, China. Fifty boys and eighteen girls in Winter School. Seventy-five on waiting list. Illness, surgery, deaths.

Diary # 30 Begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1923 in Chengchow, Honan, China. Lawton is hospitalized in Peking November 15 – chronic appendicitis and an ulcer. December 24, Lawton leaves the hospital and goes home.

1.21 Diaries, 1924, 1925

Diaries # 31 and # 32 cover the years 1924 and 1925.

Diaries # 31 through # 40 cover the years 1924 through 1933. The Lawtons reside in Chengchow and later Kuling, China. Normal activities – maintaining household, managing family, boys go to high school (Shanghai) and college, girls go to college and seminary or graduate school, and boys go to seminary. Four children – Mary, Olive, Wesley, and Deaver become missionaries to China appointed by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Box 2

2.1 Diaries, 1926, 1927

Diaries #33 and #34 cover the years 1926 and 1927.

2.2 Diaries, 1928, 1929

Diaries #35 and #36 cover the years 1928 and 1929.

2.3 Diaries, 1930, 1931

Diaries #37 and #38 cover the years 1930 and 1931.

2.4 Diaries 1932, 1933

Diaries #39 and #40 cover the years 1932 and 1933.

2.5 Diaries, 1934, 1935

Diary # 41 begins January 1, and ends December 31, 1934 in Kuling, China.

Ida's 65th birthday. March 21, Lawton's stroke. Deaver wrote diary entry. Notes by Dr. Murray, October 10, 1935. "Rather sudden onset of cerebral excitement with partial loss of memory and coordination of thought and speech. August, 1935 – internal obstruction and hemotypsis set in. Mentally and physically he is unfit for the strain of preaching or administrative work." Lawton's 65th birthday.

Diary # 42 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1935 in Kuling, China.

Olive left for Chengchow – class work. Sadie left for Shanghai, then America – hoping to enter Nurses Training School in Dallas, Texas. Deaver ordained for Ministry at Kaifeng. October 31 – 66th birthday. November 12, Mary married Rev. Eph Wisenhunt.

Box 3

3.1 Diaries, 1936, 1937

Diary # 43 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1936 in Kaifeng, Honan, China.

Death of England's King George V – 70 years old. Ida's 67th birthday. Marriage.

Wesley's 32 birthday. He and Muriel due in New York. September 5, wedding day of

Deaver

and Dorothy. October 31, 67th birthday.

Diary # 44 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1937 in Kaifeng, Honan, China.

Grandchildren born. Lawton's 68th birthday. Members of family are: Mary, Eph and Edith Edair; Sadie; Dorothy; Carol; Olive; Wesley, Muriel and Inabelle.

3.2 Diaries, 1938, 1939

Diary # 45 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1938 at Kuling, China.

January 12, Baptist Mission in Tsining, Sung bombed. February 12, Air Raid at Hwai Hui

Sze

and Hsing Tseh Hsien. Thomas T. Holloway of Dallas proposes to Sadie Miller.

Germany annexed Austria. Jews and Catholics severely persecuted by the Nazis. May 22, Sadie Miller's Wedding. Heavy bombing – all villages have been destroyed by airplane bombs.

Lawtons in area of heavy fighting and isolated.

Diary # 46 begins January 1, in Kuling, China and ends December 31, 1939 in Elkin, North Carolina. More war. Lawtons leave China for last time. Visit in Texas with relatives and friends. Lawtons settle temporarily in Elkin, North Carolina near daughter, Mary, and son-in-law, Eph Wisenhunt, a local pastor. November 29, Muriel dies from heart attack.

Lawtons arrive in Lena, South Carolina.

3.3 Diaries, 1940, 1941

Diary # 47 begins January 1 in Elkin, North Carolina and ends December 31, 1940 in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. Muriel's memorial. Bertha Smith arrives in China. Sarah Lawton

Holloway – new grandchild. Wendell Willkie nominated by Republicans. Birthdays.

Christmas.

Diary # 48 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1941 in Ridgecrest, North Carolina.

Family is divided – Deaver is in Laichow fu in Shantung, China; Olive is in Shanghai teaching in girls school; Dorothy and Carol are in Dallas, Texas; Sadie, Tom, and Sarah Lawton are in Texas; Mary, Eph, and Edair are in Norton, Virginia where Eph is Pastor of First Baptist Church; Ida, Wesley, and Inabelle are visiting Mary, Eph, and Edair in Virginia. Japanese bomb Philippines. Deaths. Birth.

3.4 Diaries, 1942, 1943

Diary # 49 begins January 1 and ends December 31, 1942 in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. W. W. and Ida retire in Ridgecrest. War is increasing in intensity. Japan is making initial progress. Germany is losing ground in Russia. Birthdays.

Diary # 50 begins January 1 and ends February 21, 1943 in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, ten days before Lawton's death at the age of 73. Entries continue through March 8. In later years he was in the habit of writing a scripture verse or quotation at the beginning of each day's entry, and he normally wrote these several days ahead. January 1, "We face a New Year – a troubled world, terribly stricken, terribly confused, terribly wicked, terribly needy. If this year is to be truly a New Year for us we must make it so by getting an understanding heart, by drawing near to God and being so filled with His Spirit that we may be given over entirely to His Service. If the year is really to be a New Year to us we must make it so by deliberate choice and earnest application to the things of God."

The last entry – February 21: “No Christian truth is merely abstract least of all the truth of Christ’s transforming power. Temptation is one of the things we cannot escape. Whoever and wherever a man may be, he cannot escape it. We cannot understand temptation, but we need not fear it. No one fully understands electricity but men are not afraid of it. They have learned to harness this vast power to wheels of industry to lines of communication, to means of transportation. We can learn to control temptation until it serves rather than harries

us. Instead of allowing it to crush our lives we can turn it into a stepping stone to higher living for God.”

3.5 Notebook: Statistics, Articles, and Accounts of the Augusta Street Property

The notebook contains miscellaneous population statistics of the United States (copied from B.

W. Spillman) and of South Carolina; three articles, “Chinkiang, China,” “China Inland Mission in Chinkiang,” copies from a paper by Mr. Mills; and some notes from “A Short History of Chinkiang” by Rev. S. I Woodbridge, 1898; account records and plat map of personal property known as the “Augusta Street Property.”

3.5 Poetry

3.6 Tracts

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