

## Yates, Matthew Tyson <sup>[1]</sup>

### Yates, Matthew Tyson

by John R. Woodard, 1996

**8 Jan. 1819–17 Mar. 1888**



The Reverend Matthew Tyson Yates at the age of 66. Image from Archive.org.

<sup>[2]</sup>Matthew Tyson Yates, Baptist <sup>[3]</sup>missionary to China, was born in Wake County <sup>[4]</sup>, the second of ten children of William and Delilah Booth Yates. He grew up in the Mount Pisgah community and attended the Mount Pisgah Baptist Church, where he was baptized on 23 Oct. 1835. Yates attended the Hilliard School near his home. After studying for a year under G. W. Thompson at Forest Hill Academy, he began teaching school at the Mount Pisgah Baptist Church as well as helping on his father's plantation. Yates returned to Forest Hill Academy, and on the advice of his teacher visited Dr. Samuel Wait <sup>[5]</sup>, president of Wake Forest College. Wait talked Yates into attending the next session even though he was twenty-one years old, and the young man entered Wake Forest College <sup>[6]</sup> in August 1840. In October 1841 the North Carolina Baptist State Convention elected him one of their beneficiaries and paid his tuition to Wake Forest, from which he was graduated with an A.B. degree in 1846. In 1869 the college awarded him an honorary D.D. degree.

Yates had decided that he wanted to become a missionary. He had some debts to settle first and in this effort was assisted by Professor John Brown White <sup>[7]</sup>, who took up a collection from the faculty and remaining students. On 3 Aug. 1846 he was accepted by the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board as a candidate for service in China, and on 18 October he was ordained at the meeting of the Baptist State Convention.

Arriving in Shanghai on 13 Sept. 1847, Yates and his wife served under difficult conditions due to the Taiping Rebellion, isolation from America during the Civil War <sup>[8]</sup>, occasional cholera scourges, and Yates's bad health. They began Sunday schools, churches, outstations, and chapels throughout the Shanghai area. Yates was constantly traveling, preaching, and baptizing converts. During the Civil War, when funds were cut off from the United States, he served as interpreter of the Shanghai Municipal Council and superintendent of Chinese taxes. For a short time he studied in Paris, France. In 1868 he was interpreter for the U.S. consul general.

Yates wrote a number of tracts. His letters and reminiscences appeared in the *Biblical Recorder* and other publications.

He edited an enlarged edition of the Chinese Hymn Book and at his death had just finished translating the New Testament into the Shanghai dialect. Several of his lectures were published in pamphlet form.

On 27 Sept. 1846 at the Mount Pisgah Baptist Church Yates married Eliza Emmeline Moring, the daughter of John, Jr., and Anne Vorlander Moring of Chatham County [9]. They had one daughter, Annie-James, who married John F. Seaman, a Shanghai merchant.

Yates was in Chinkiang on a preaching mission when he suffered a second paralytic stroke. D. W. Herring, a coworker, took him home to Shanghai, where he died. He and his wife were buried in the Eight Fairies Bridge Cemetery in Shanghai. Yates Academy, a boys' school in Soochow, China, and the Yates Baptist Association in North Carolina were named in his honor.

## References:

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*Yates Baptist Association Minutes, 1953*.

Matthew Tyson Yates Papers (Baptist Historical Collection, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem [portraits]).

## Additional Resources:

Taylor, Charles Elisha. *The story of Yates the missionary : as told in his letters and reminiscences*. Nashville, Tenn. : Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention. 1898. <https://archive.org/details/storyofyatesmiss00tayl> [10] (accessed August 16, 2013).

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## Origin - location:

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