



- Educator
- Missionary

## Laura Askew Haygood

1845–1900

### **Inducted 2000**

Laura Askew Haygood was a foreign missionary and educator. She was a quiet but strong proponent of equal education for women, a devotion fostered during her years of study at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, the first college in the world chartered to grant degrees to women.

Laura Haygood graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wesleyan in 1865 and began her education career by opening her own high school in Atlanta the same year, which later merged with Girls' High School, where she served as teacher and principal. She organized home mission societies that provided food and shelter to the disadvantaged in Atlanta. Her work with the poor included establishing an industrial school to train people in the skills needed to hold self-supporting jobs.

It was at this time that Laura was asked many times to take a leadership role in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a request which was unprecedented for women in the Methodist church at the time. However, she declined the invitations because she felt she was needed too much in the home mission work of her church, Trinity Methodist Church, as well as in her education activities in Atlanta.

***"I do not think I am going to leave China...I have tried to live for duty these many years. I cannot turn away from it now...If I had a hundred other lives to give...I would count it all joy to give them every one to Him for China."***

– Laura Askew Haygood to her

Her dedication to her ministry with the church was so strong that she chose not to marry. In 1884, she answered the church's call to serve in China, after being

inspired by an Atlanta preacher's sermon. She worked in China for 17 years, until her death in 1900. As the first female sent into the foreign mission field by the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, she founded the McTyeire Home and School in Shanghai, which represented the crowning achievement of her career.

Her example paved the way for thousands of women to devote their lives to foreign missions. She was also responsible for educating some of the most influential women China would see in the early 20th century.

Laura Haygood's service in China was not without many challenges. She faced the Chinese attitude of the late 1800's, that women were not as deserving of an education as men. She overcame a wide range of adversities, from political riots to a painful sciatica condition that sometimes forced her to travel by wheelbarrow, houseboat or launch.

A recipient of many awards in her lifetime, Laura Haygood's memory continued to be honored after her death in 1900. One of the greatest memorials came in 1926, when Haygood Memorial United Methodist Church was founded in the Morningside neighborhood of Atlanta in honor of Laura Haygood and her brother Bishop Atticus Green Haygood. Another tribute was when the Women's Board of the Methodist Church, South, founded the Laura A. Haygood Home and School in Soochow.

It is a fitting tribute that Laura Askew Haygood, pioneer educator and foreign missionary, is inducted into the Georgia Women of Achievement.

### **Additional Resources**

**Wesleyan College Story of the Soong Sisters**  
(800) 447-6610