Missionary Family Dynasty

Few families have contributed more energy and personnel to global Christian mission than the Lambuths of Madison County, Mississippi. Five generations of missionaries went out from 1800, when Francis Asbury sent William Lambuth to work among Native Americans, into the 1950s with the service of Margarita Lambuth Sherertz, his great great granddaughter and her husband, in Africa and China.

William’s son, John Russell, also served among Native Americans and the Creoles of bayou country, and planted the family in the Pearl River Church and community of Madison Country. His son, James William (J.W.), a physician, was raised in Mississippi but he and his wife, Mary Isabella McClellan, a teacher from New York, spent most of their lives in China and Japan, setting sail in 1854 for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Two of James William’s brothers were pastors in Mississippi.

Walter Russell Lambuth, the son of J.W. and Mary Isabella, was born in China, coming to the United States for study and receiving degrees in theology and medicine. He married Daisy Kelley, whose parents were missionaries in China. In 1885, the mission board of the MECS reassigned both Lambuth families in China to open work in Japan. Walter Russell would found Kwansei Gakuin School, now a major university, and his mother started what is today Hiroshima Jogakuin.

Walter would return to the United States to lead the MECS mission agency, be elected a bishop and plant churches in South America, Africa, Siberia, Korea, Manchuria and Cuba, among other locations. His sister, Nora Lambuth Park, and her husband, Dr. W.H. Park, were missionaries in China. Their daughter was Margarita, who married Dwight L. Sherertz, and the couple served in both China and Africa.

The Lambuth family church in Pearl River was declared a United Methodist Heritage Landmark by the 2016 General Conference.