

# MARY A. BURNETT



**1837-1905**

Born: 1837 in Southampton, Suffolk, NY

Died: Jun. 24, 1905 in Shanghai, China

Buried: Flying Point Cemetery  
Southampton, Suffolk, NY

Appointment(s):  
American Missionary Association  
(AMA)

Beaufort, SC  
Fall 1867 & 1869

Mitchelville - Hilton Head, SC  
Abt. Jan. 1868 – Jun. 1868

Mary was born 1837 in Southampton, Suffolk County, Long Island, New York to Stephen Burnett (d 1873) and Sophia Bishop (1813-1888). She entered Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1863 and graduated in 1866.<sup>1</sup> Mary was first appointed by the American Missionary Association in the fall of 1867 to Beaufort where she wrote a letter on January 7, 1868 to Rev. Smith describing the conditions of the area and school when she arrived. Miss Burnett felt the burden of giving her students a solid basic education. "I feel that a great responsibility rests on me in laying the foundation of all their future knowledge."<sup>2</sup> Mary was a teacher to the freedmen on Hilton Head Island in 1868 as shown in a letter written by her to Mr. David Ripley on July 13, 1868 telling him that she had no more financial support and that "I am dependent upon myself alone and

<sup>1</sup> Mount Holyoke Seminary Student Name Index Project. 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Catalogs of the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, 1863, p 14; 1864, p 11; 1865, p 9; 1866, p 14.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Janel Janiczek, From A Northern Home to a Southern School: Cultural Imperialists or Just Stubborn Yankees, pp 273. Statesboro, GA: Georgia Southern University, Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies, electronic theses and dissertations 2013, accessed Sep 12, 2018.

- Burnett, Mary A. American Missionary Archives, New Orleans, LA: Tulane University, Amistad Research Center. Item # H6901 [Letter Jan 7, 1868 to Rev Mr Smith from Beaufort, SC].

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shall be glad if you can allow me something extra.”<sup>3</sup> Finally, she wrote to Mr. Whiting on May 11, 1868 requesting transportation back North for her and co-teacher Charlotte M. Keith at Mitchelville before the schools closed in June 1868.<sup>4</sup> However, the AMA list of teachers for 1869 shows her teaching in Beaufort again.<sup>5</sup>

Mary was a missionary in China when General Ulysses S. Grant visited in 1879 on his world tour after the Civil War.<sup>6</sup> She died June 24, 1905 in Shanghai, China but is buried in Flying Point Cemetery in Southampton, NY.<sup>7</sup> The tombstone states that she was originally buried in Shanghai but the body reinterred at home. The inscription on Mary’s tombstone reads: “A missionary to the freedmen in the South, to the Indians and Chinese in California and finally, thirty years a missionary in Peking and Shanghai, China.”<sup>8</sup> Mary’s brother Henry was declared insane and incompetent by the courts in 1902. Her will was probated November 19, 1906 in Kings County, NY by her brother Theodore. Her personal estate was valued at \$700.

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<sup>3</sup> ----- Item #H7132: [Letter July 13, 1868 from Hilton Head to Mr. David Ripley].

<sup>4</sup> ----- Item #H7132: [Letter July 13, 1868 from Hilton Head to Mr. David Ripley].

----- Item # H7082: [Letter May 11, 1868 from Hilton Head to Mr. Whiting].

<sup>5</sup> *American Missionary*, Vol XIII, No 5, May 1869, p 100.

<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012370656/cite>.

<sup>6</sup> Butchart, Ronald E. *Pedagogica Historica*, Vol 40 (1-2), April 2004.

“Secondary Education and Emancipation: Secondary Schools for Freed Slaves in the American South, 1862-1875”.

<sup>7</sup> Mary A Burnett. Findagrave.com Memorial # 17470633. Created 15 Jan 2007 by Saar. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/17470633mary-ann-burnett>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.