

## Laos Mission



FIRST CHURCH IN CHIENGMAI

The Laos Mission (also, North Laos Mission, North Siam Mission) was founded by the Rev. [Daniel](#) and [Sophia](#) McGilvary in April 1867 as a mission of the Board of Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church U.S.A. The original vision for the mission, however, came from [Dr. Dan Beach Bradley](#), who himself once proposed starting a mission in the North. The Laos Mission included, at one time or another, six stations in northern Siam: Chiang Mai (founded 1867); Lampang (founded in 1885 and originally known as the Lakawn Station); Lamphun (founded 1891 and made a sub-station of Chiang Mai in 1897); Phrae (1893); Nan (1895); and Chiang Rai (1896). In addition, the mission founded a station in 1903 to work with the "Tai" peoples of eastern Burma in Kengtung, which was closed in 1907; and if founded another station, the Chiang Rung Station, in Yunnan Province, southern China in 1917.

The mission founded its first church, Chiang Mai Church, now known simply as [First Church, Chiang Mai](#), in 1868. After a brief period of evangelistic success, the mission underwent a time of persecution in 1869, during which two converts were martyred. The mission did not fully recover until the late 1870s. In 1880, it founded three congregations including the Mae Dok Daeng Church, known today as the [Suwanduangrit Church](#), Ban Dok Daeng. By the 1890s, the mission increasingly emphasized medical and educational institutional work, founding boarding schools, hospitals, and dispensaries in each of the stations. The churches, meanwhile, numbered 37 by 1920, the last year of the mission, and communicate membership numbered 6,649 that same year. In 1885, the mission sponsored the founding of the Presbytery of North Laos, officially under the Synod of New York, to give oversight to the churches. The presbytery continued in existence until 1934, when it was incorporated into the [Church of Christ in Thailand](#). Beginning in the 1890s, the majority of the mission's members campaigned for mission expansion into the Shan States of Burma, which brought it into a protracted, time-consuming territorial dispute with the American Baptists in Burma. For a brief period from 1911 to 1914, the mission's church grew rapidly in the wake of malaria and small pox epidemics in various parts of northern Siam.

Beginning as early as 1910, discussions began concerning closer cooperation and an eventual merger with the Presbyterian Siam Mission, located in central and southern Siam. Improved transportation rendered it unnecessary to have two separate missions, and in 1920, the Board voted to merge the missions, then known as the North Siam and South Siam Missions; the process was not completed until 1921, when the Laos Mission ceased to exist.