



General William T. Sherman with his generals. L-r: Oliver O. Howard, John Logan, William Hazen, Sherman, Jefferson C. Davis, Henry Slocum, Joseph Mower.

On June 1, 1862, Brigadier General Oliver O. Howard earned the Medal of Honor at the Battle of Fair Pines in Virginia. He also lost his right arm, which was shot twice. But by September, he was commanding troops at Antietam, and would go on to lead Union troops at Gettysburg, Chancellorsville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and the Carolina's campaign. He was there during Sherman's March to the Sea.

Howard was never United Brethren. Yet, he played a role in our history. A simple act — giving a Chinese-language Bible to a young Chinese immigrant named Moy Ling — would take the United Brethren Church to China...twice.

Howard, an 1854 West Point graduate, became a Christian around 1857 while fighting in Florida during the Seminole War. In the years ahead, he considered leaving the military to become a minister. When the Civil War broke out, he opted to stay in the army. He became known as “the Christian general,” because his faith heavily influenced his decisions.

In 1865, after the war, Howard was placed in charge of the Freedmen's Bureau, which sought to protect former slaves and integrate them into Southern society. During the next nine years, he played a major role in Reconstruction, launching programs which helped freed slaves in education, employment, the courts, food, medical care, political organization, voting rights, and other areas. He also promoted

higher education for former slaves. He founded Howard University in 1867 with that in mind and served as its president for the first seven years.

In 1872, Howard was sent to Arizona to negotiate the surrender of Apache chief Cochise. He was then sent to the Pacific Northwest to subdue the Nez Perce tribe. Chief Joseph surrendered to Howard on October 5, 1877.

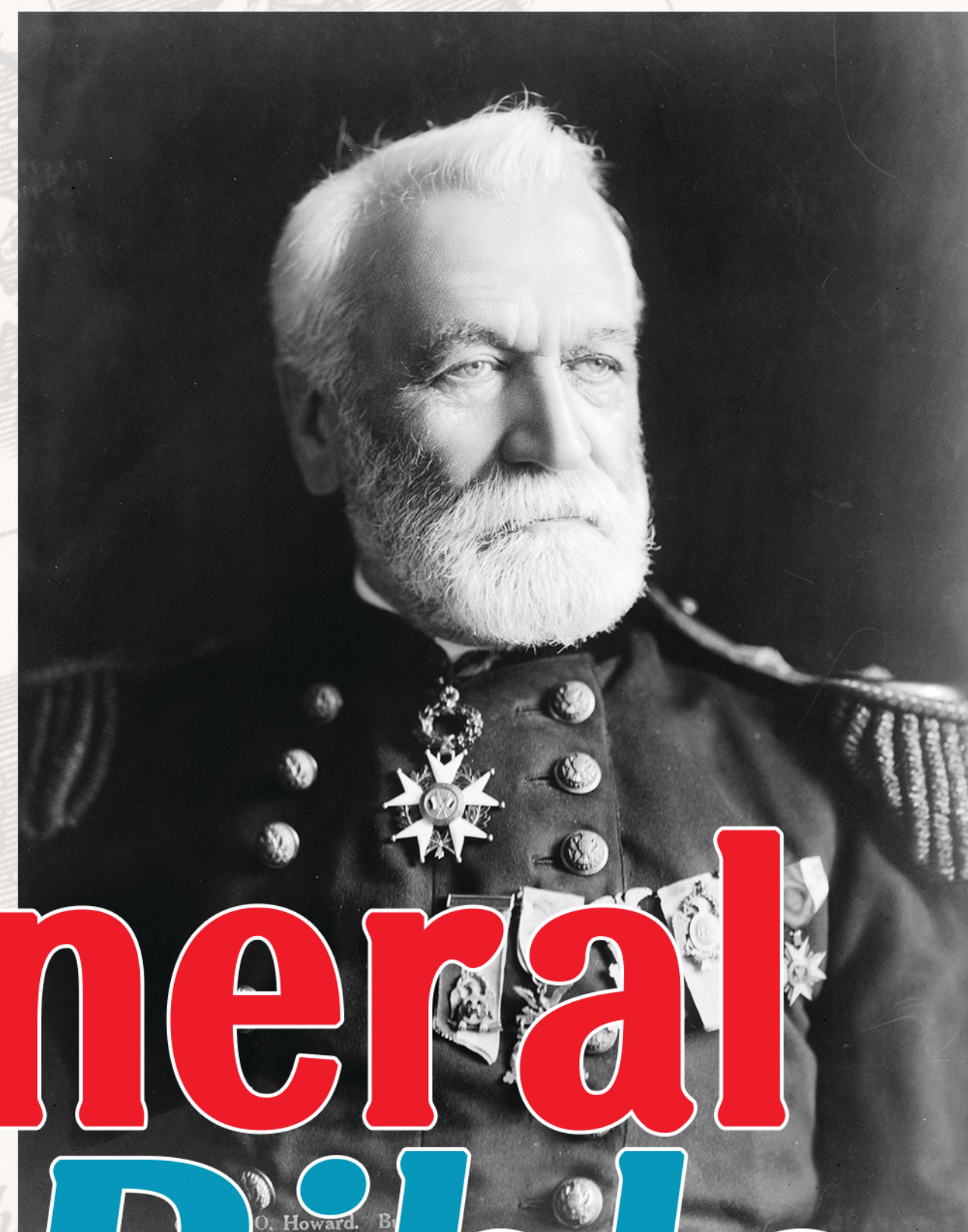
The United Brethren connection came in 1874.

Howard seems to have made Portland, Oregon, his base of operations. Howard's daughter lived there, and Moy Ling was apparently employed in his daughter's household. From Howard's autobiography:

I had not been in the city of Portland long before the active people in the different churches combined to form a union mission with a view to doing something for the Chinamen, who had already come in large numbers to that part of the Pacific Coast.

In my family, there was a young Chinaman of slender build, very dignified, and apparently independent. His name was Moy Yu Ling. One day I gave him a Bible printed in Chinese. He read it quietly without remark, but soon he joined the mission, became deeply interested, and united with one of the churches, and for over 25

Upon retiring in 1894, Oliver Howard moved to Portland to write his memoirs. This no doubt gave him regular contact with the Moy Ling family. Howard died in 1909 at his home in Vermont.



The General and the Bible



Moy Ling (right) and family.

years has been a consistent Christian and a local missionary to his own people in Portland.

A little later, he opened up a store filled with Chinese goods of various descriptions. As a merchant and as a Christian teacher, for he continued in both capacities, he has been remarkably successful. His children speak good English, and we always say when we meet them: “What a beautiful family!” The last time I was in Portland, every child remembered me, took me by the hand, and called me by name.

In 1882, the Women's Missionary Association decided to open a school somewhere on the West Coast for Chinese immigrants. Bishop Nicholas Castle came across Moy Ling's school, which had grown too large for him to handle. The WMA took charge in July 1883, and Moy Ling became a United Brethren member.

This school provided a bridge to China. We sent missionaries to Canton in 1889, and in the years ahead, a flourishing ministry developed — in education, medicine, and church work. All of which stayed with the “liberals” after the division of 1889.

In 1899, Moy Ling became associated with the WMA of our group, and in the 1920s, his influence led us to begin a school in Canton, China. In the decades ahead, a chain of events led the United Brethren church from China to Hong Kong, Macau, Thailand, Myanmar, Poland, and even back to the United States and Canada. And it started with a gift of a Bible.