

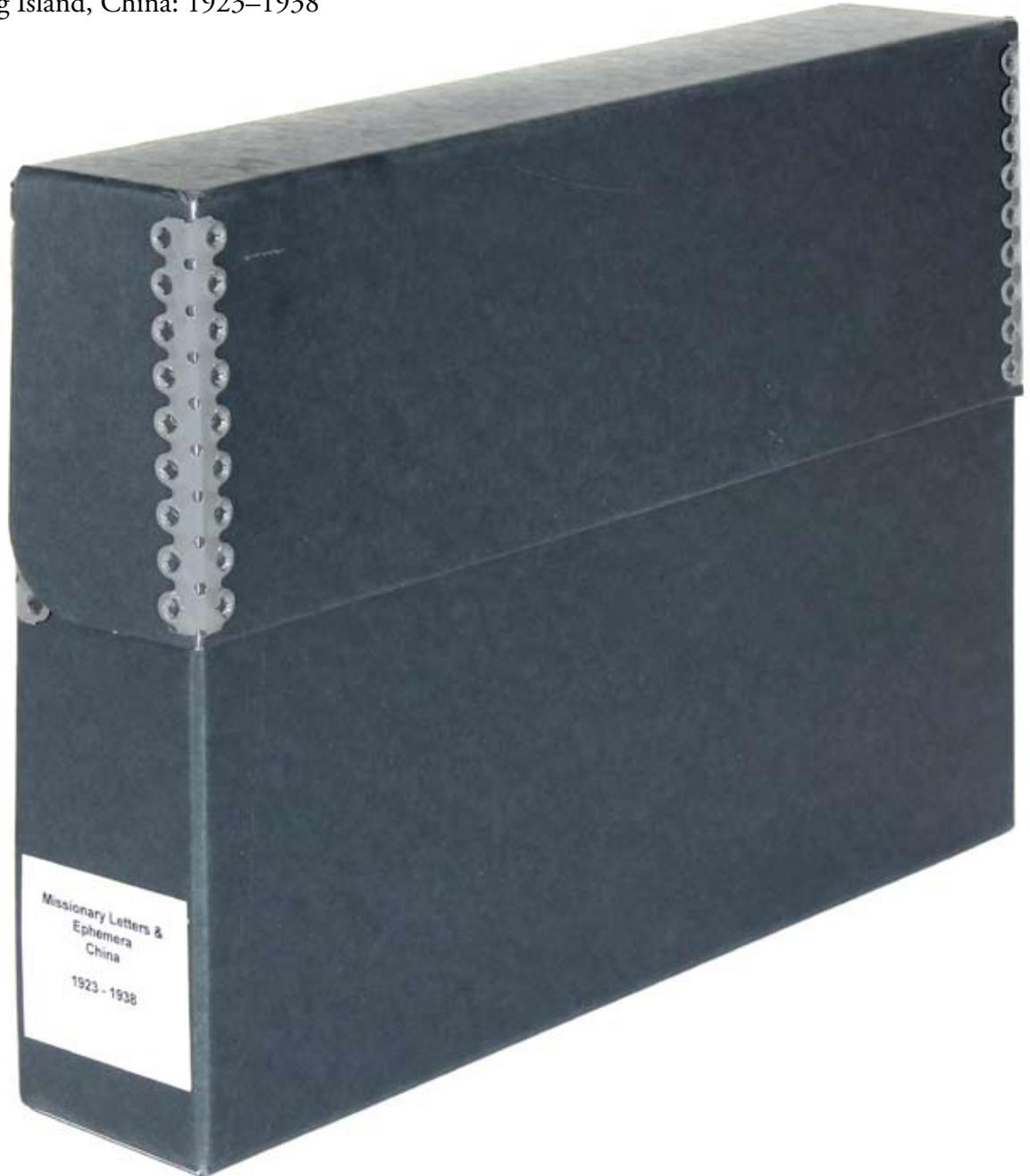
BETWEEN THE COVERS RARE BOOKS

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(Eva Sprunger)

Archive of Letters Documenting the Experiences of Several Female American Mennonite Missionaries in Kutien, China during the Chinese Civil War

Kutien, Foochow, and Haitang Island, China: 1923–1938



An archive of 36 very detailed letters to missionary Eva Sprunger documenting the experiences of several American female missionaries in China between 1923 and 1938. Included with the letters are printed circulars, two maps, a photo portrait of Eva Sprunger, an American Missionary, and a rare pamphlet by Chang Tung Yang entitled “Impressions of the Killing Summer Institute.”

This archive represents a series of correspondence kept between several female missionaries primarily serving in Fukien and Foochow, China. Among the correspondents are Ruth Jayne, Martha A. Graf, Mabel Marion Holmes, Myrtle A. Smith, Edith McBee, Stella Bissonnette, Carrie Bartlett, and Pauline Westcott. All the letters are directed to Eva Sprunger, who served with these women in China from approximately 1910 through the 1920s, but returned to her home in Berne, Indiana sometime after 1929. In her journal from 1929 she writes, “Six pupils have unbound their feet the past year. Girls here took exams more seriously than I’ve seen for a long time. One girl wept bitterly because she had failed to memorize a hymn, but she stuck at it throughout the afternoon and finally mastered it. The girls here love to sing.”

敬啟者本年為敝社第五週紀念定於十月
興工重建三保新社所一俟工程完竣即行
訂期開歡祝大會至本社創辦事業頗蒙各
界贊成唯前此所有關於管理與經濟上之
責任統由教會負擔殊為缺憾茲蒙軍政長
官樂與贊助並願各界諸君羣策羣力共襄
盛舉幸甚盼甚
古田美以美書報社同人謹啟
十三年 月 日

民國十三年書報社徵求社員簡章

- 凡品行端正之男子年在十六歲以上無論屬何宗教明認本社宗旨經會員介紹者均
可填名入社
- 一 時間 本年第一屆徵求會定期以陽曆十二月一號起至卅一號止
 - 二 目的 本屆徵求社員數以四百人錢款二千一百元為目的
 - 三 類別 (甲)經常會員年納會費一元 (乙)維持會員年納會費三元 特別會員
五元以上 終身會員五十元以上
 - 四 捐款 週年以來本會經費概由美以美會擔負維持所費之數有限所辦各種事業
亦因之限制故再擴充徵求維持及特別終身各會員外更加向國外募捐不
於徵求期間內舉行之所得捐款不算為份數
 - 五 收據 凡會員一經應徵其應付之會費或特別捐款至遲不得過十四年四月交納
並請隨時經手收據人取索收條以昭確實
 - 六 給證 凡人會手續完竣者本會贈與會員證一枚以便隨時帶照章享用各種權利此
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 - 七 組織 此屆徵求辦法設總隊長一人隊長五人分爲五隊每隊由隊長選出隊員八
人計每隊應徵八十人為滿額其隊名以中國五色旗命名之 紅隊 黃隊
藍隊 白隊 黑隊
 - 八 積份 徵求隊中有能介紹一經常員者算得五份一維持員者算得三十份一終身
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份數
 - 九
 - 首次報告截止時間
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 - 三次報告截止時間
 - 十 獎品
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 - 第三次報告得人數最多者贈
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(二)徵求法或用個人交誼或用演劇售券均聽各隊長磋商

Eva Sprunger descended from a Mennonite family in Indiana. Her father, Samuel Ferdinand, was born in Switzerland, and came to the U.S. in 1852, settling in Berne, Indiana, where he eventually became a minister in the Mennonite Church, serving for over thirty years. Eva was one of nine siblings, and was influenced by her father, taking up the call to serve abroad. She would eventually go on to publish a history of the Mennonite Church in 1938 entitled: *The First Hundred Years: A History of the Mennonite Church in Adams County, Indiana, 1838 -1938*.

The letters to Eva provide in candid, and at times riveting detail an account of missionary life in China during the civil war which was tearing the country apart. There are descriptions of bombings, night attacks, Communist invasions, and growing anti-western sentiment throughout the country. Severe poverty was common and only made worse by the expanding conflict. In many areas of the country people resorted to banditry, and there are several fine descriptions of missionaries being kidnapped by these predators and the actions taken on the part of the ministry and the Chinese government to save their lives.

In a letter dating from 1930 Martha Graf writes, “It is impossible to give you a true picture of our work and conditions here, unless I mention the terrible bandit situation. I hardly think it is possible to put yourself in the position of these helpless country people who are entirely at the mercy of these lawless citizens and no matter how terribly they suffer from their cruelties, there is absolutely no one to appeal to.”

A letter dated January 4, 1932 by Myrtle A. Smith details the abduction of missionary Harriet Halverstadt: “She was taken from the launch along with thirteen Chinese men. They went part way up the mountain out of sight of the main road, stopped and were given supper, searched and were kept there several hours. Later they went over the mountain and went into a si-dong to stay. Harriet sat up all night that first night... Communists were really at the head of the group and these she feared more than the ordinary bandits.”

Marth Graf describes the Communist invasion in a letter from August 31, 1934: “Between all the days of enjoyment there were also sandwiched in some rather excited and anxious days, due to the communist invasion. For days and nights we heard the bombing and shooting, some of it we saw with our own eyes, as they got so near Foochow. The whole mountain had to be in readiness to evacuate within one hours time.” A letter from four years later, January 16 – 22, 1938, by Pauline E. Westcott discusses the ongoing struggles the women faced . She says, “we appreciate the sympathy and prayers you are giving us. Certainly it is hard to understand WHY - WHY - things must go on this way but we must keep up our courage knowing that ‘there comes an end, to all things’ and that in the end ‘right will win’.” It continues, “This time of the year it is bitterly cold in North and Central China so I am sure many of the refugees will die from exposure and cold. Innocent people driven out of their own homes, losing all their possessions, living in mat sheds or on the road sides, with no warm clothing and insufficient food makes me shiver just to think about them.”

Despite these difficult obstacles, the missionaries continued their efforts to bring education and Christian religion to the local people. They describe making excursions out to country villages, visiting and setting up schools, providing food and clothing to the indigent, and providing accounts of local customs such as foot binding and arranged marriages. Altogether, these letters and related ephemera provide an enormously interesting view of the tireless efforts of these missionaries in the face of oppressive and sometimes violent adversity.

Overall a compelling, detailed, and fascinating account of women serving as missionaries in China during the most perilous time of it’s modern history. Rare primary source material. [BTC#399175]

Kutien, Fukien, China
June 7, 1930

Dear Friends:

It has been a great privilege this past year to preach the Gospel out in the villages to help the pastors, Bible women and teachers and to get better acquainted with their joys and sorrows. Helen Li has continued as school supervisor, Miss Sprunger has served as treasurer and general manager, Clara Ding and I, together with Mr. Bissonnette and Dr. and Mrs. Sites, General Board missionaries and several Bible women and preachers, have been active in evangelistic campaigns out in the villages as well as here in the city.

As I have been traveling up and down the narrow mountain paths sometimes walking and sometimes riding in a sedan chair, I have been greatly impressed by the contrast of God's beautiful out-of-doors and the wretchedness of man's existence. Whatever our Creator has made, the stately mountains, the broad, quiet streams of water, the murmuring brooks, the magnificently colored birds and especially in the spring-time the gorgeous wild flowers as for instance the fiery red and lavender azalias, the rhododendrons, the white roses and the bridal veils just make one happy to be alive; but as soon as one enters into a village a certain depression comes over one as one sees the unsanitary dwelling-places of these neglected country people, who share their living quarters with chickens, pigs, dogs and other live stock and as a consequence cannot keep their houses clean. So many of their rooms are as dark as night, never a ray of sunshine falls into them and yet many spend weeks and months in them on beds of pain trying to get well. Then too there is so much poverty, the struggle for existence takes up most of their thoughts so that it sometimes almost looks hopeless to make them see beyond the material into the spiritual realm, and yet wherever we have been we could not help but sense that deep longing in their hearts for something that is beyond the power of men, that will comfort them in time of sorrow, that will help them to bear their hardships of life patiently and that will bring peace to their troubled hearts.

We have an army of about twenty-two teachers and thirty-six Bible women to fight idolatry and superstition and to bring to these country people the peace, which only Jesus Christ can give. Last February during vacation we called in all the teachers for a spiritual as well as an intellectual retreat. Besides their devotional hour they studied the Bible, Mandarin, religious education, they also had a class in singing everyday. In the evenings opportunity was given for discussing various problems and means and methods to solve them. As an outcome of these sessions the teachers, before school opened went two by two from house to house visiting the parents and telling them about the value of education, this has not only increased our attendance, but has also helped the pupils to be more regular this past term. The teachers are also visiting each other's schools in order that they might profit by each other's plans and methods. While they are gone the students come to school just the same and study by themselves; they too are learning the principles of self-government. Everyday the various classes are watching each other very carefully in regard to noise, keeping their desks clean and in being tidy, then at the end of each day they vote among themselves which

feel very rich. One day I went some round-about-worked for two weeks. Our did not seem quite as sure the supper table that she and really had expected friends, was one of the became just as ardent as she would hardly let me some time she followed me my pockets with dried por off with a live chicken. me enough how "hot-hearted" ever she comes to Church all the Lord had done for

stopped at the Church long enough to see how our workers were getting along, but before I had a chance to take off my hat and drink a cup of tea, one of our school girls mother came who evidently had seen me walking through the street and taking me by the hand she said, "Come to my house, your dinner is ready". Although it was only ten o'clock she would not accept any excuse for not dining with her. What a privilege it is to belong to Christ's spiritual family, which extends beyond all national and racial boundaries and makes us all one before the throne of God.

It is impossible to give you a true picture of our work and conditions here, unless I mention the terrible bandit situation. I hardly think it is possible to put yourself in the position of these helpless country people who are entirely at the mercy of these lawless citizens and no matter how terribly they suffer from their cruelties, there is absolutely no one to appeal to. The government and soldiers are constantly engaged in fighting and have no time to look after bandits, which in turn get bolder all the time. These last few weeks they have

eyes and noses which were anxious to find out what was going on in the outside world.

I do hope I am not making you too anxious about us here in China. We are all in God's hands and He alone is able to help and protect His children. We are so thankful for the privilege of being here and we want to thank you more than we can express in words for all you are doing to make the work here possible.

Most sincerely yours,
Martha Leaf

country school is indeed a city built for the teacher and her pupils are the seeds that are sown into the hearts of the people again in their homes and often bring forth a harvest. I have become so interested in the children and in the songs they sing that in the whole family profits by the education. I passed through a village a long way from the road, one girl yelled out her name to all the mothers, aunts and grandmothers. I stopped and talked to these girls just as happy as they could be to see me in their old age. If parents have any "doctrine" as they call it, they get it from the teacher and not from me, but one time it didn't. Upon a occasion the teacher explained to her children why they should believe, but that He was right with God on Him. This answer greatly puzzled me. I counted up all her internal organs and I think the more bewildered she got. I asked myself with the question, "How in the world could she do all that is within me already?"

At our evangelistic meetings the teachers have been busy with the children and the Bible women. Their efforts to get the people to attend during the services and in carrying out their evangelistic work for many of the new converts are so poor and they need someone to stand up for them. I have been greatly impressed with the workers of the Cross have been able to do. I have often asked myself, why do the ten commandments, the Lord's Prayer and hymns to women, who never before in their lives had learned anything and who could not memorize anything, "I am so stupid I cannot do anything." The untiring efforts of the Bible women have acquired a wonderful understanding of the Bible of some of them is almost surprising. These are the opportunities that life has

villages cool, lowered ago re is ed in ared arents nd is c was ay; but cap- e. The moun- y and and came

ny been name, all e the day- y their

cause I get very little or no pay and very often I am not paid. Now as the soldiers have been using their usual method of catching men up their shops and houses. The last time I was not able to get all they wanted. I have even captured them at night. They have even captured all strong men of their families. I have seen victims who attempted to run away but were caught. The conditions none of the men have seen. Also the men from the country have been consequently the supplies of the soldiers. We know we only had enough rice to last for a few days yet there were almost a hundred men. So Mr. Bissonnette and I went down to help them out, fortunately we were never before had we seen such a desolation. The streets were dogs and flies everywhere. The houses we could see many

Rural Work Conference

Place: Lacy Memorial

Time: Tuesday morning

I

8-8:30 Prayer meeting

8:30 - 10 a. m. Presentation and Discussion of the Rural Work

- a. Intro. and Report by Tiang Cu Gi
- b. Rural Reconstruction by Francis Chen
- c. Report of the Tour to Formosa and Rural Reconstruction of Fukien Province Paul Lee
- d. General Discussion of Rural Work.

10-10:15 Folk Singing.

II

Rural Evangelism and Training of Member.

10:15-11: Brief Presentation of Work on
Bing-hu District
Mintsing District
Futsing, Lungtien, and Nguka, Districts

Prayer

Haitang District
Foochow District
Kutien District

11-11:30 Presentation of the Program for 1935 by
Bishop Gowdy

單 名 簽

予願贊助古田農村青年事業
茲送上
大洋 元 角 正
到請檢收賜給收證為荷
民國 年 月 日

介紹人
捐助人

WISHING YOU A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS
AND ALL HAPPINESS IN THE NEW YEAR



鞠躬
Tea

Miss Eva Springer

WISHING YOU A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS
AND ALL HAPPINESS IN THE NEW YEAR



新 聖 恭
並 禧

鞠躬

From Mrs. Y

Kira

Miss Eva Springer
of Board of Missions
150 Fifth Avenue
New York, U. S. A.
420 W Main Street
Searle, Indiana



With best wishes
for the Christmas day and
coming New Year.
From

Mr and Mrs. Liang Lu &
Children

恭賀
新禧
進步

程子琦 鞠躬

Jones meeting in Goodhart 1308
Misses Gref & Grace Day are
here. Hoping you pray for us
all here. Wish to know your
present condition & your address
at home. Yours
Liang Lu & Children

