

DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives: China Mission Photographs

China Mission Photographs

Date Span: 1923-c.1951

Quantity: 15 binder boxes (1,281 photographic prints)

Scope and Content Note

The China Mission Photograph Collection documents the Vincentian missionary presence in the province of Kiangsi, China in the first half of the twentieth century. The collection dates from 1923 to c.1951. The earliest photos show the experiences of the first American missionaries from the Western Province: Rev. Harry W. Altenburg, Rev. Paul B. Misner, and Rev. Edward T. Sheehan. The Vincentians' missionary work ended abruptly when all foreign religious were expelled from China in 1951. The majority of the photographs in the collection are from the late 1930's through the 1940's. This is perhaps due to an increased missionary presence as well as advances in photographic technology (and the increasing affordability of cameras and film), and also possibly because the Vincentian Foreign Mission Society, established in 1938, needed photographic material for fundraising. It was also during these two decades when the missionaries began utilizing photography to document the violence and destruction of World War II and the Communist/Nationalist struggle within China, of which they were so often made victims.

There was constant contact between the missionaries in China and the priests' in the United States, due in part to the Stephen Vincent Ryan Unit (a branch of the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade) which established a correspondence guild at Saint Mary's of the Barrens Seminary, Perryville, Missouri. Many of these photographs were originally on display at the Edward T. Sheehan Memorial Museum, which was established by the Stephen Vincent Ryan Unit in 1935. This sharing of letters and photographs was a crucial part of spreading awareness of the China missions in the seminary and the United States. Since most of these photographs were used to demonstrate the need for more funds and an increased missionary presence in China, one can sense that the priests were trying to portray the missions in a certain light. Thus we have in the content of the photographs a combination of missionary successes (schools, churches, Chinese converts) and setbacks (destruction, murder, etc). All of which are able testimonies to missionary humility and heroism.

Description of the Collection

The China Mission photographs are arranged in fifteen binder boxes and are separated into the following categories: Geographic Location, Hideout Photos, Missionary Travel Photos, and Miscellaneous.

Photographs organized by Geographic Location (Boxes 1-7) are arranged alphabetically by place name, and then are separated by content within each section. Photographs without people are presented first, and are further separated into pictures of churches, other buildings/structures, and landscape shots (in that order). The photographs with people are presented next, and are separated into photographs with missionary priests (first) and without missionaries. Due to the large quantity of Yukiang photographs, the Yukiang binder is divided according to areas within the compound (church, orphanage, primary school, etc.), and the photographs within those sections follow the organizational scheme outlined above.

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The first box contains photographs of the missions in Hokow, Ihwang, Iyang, Kintehchen, Kweiki, Likiatu and Linchwan. In the Hokow section there are two photographs of a smiling young boy with an armful of umbrellas. The photograph of this boy in the upper-left hand corner of the page was used as an emblem by the Vincentian Foreign Mission Society and can be found on VFMS pamphlets, stationary, pins and other memorabilia. In the Iyang section there is a photograph of the finding of the body of Fr. Esteban, who was killed by communist soldiers. One of the two men viewing the body is Rev. John G. Meijer, who was pastor at Iyang at the time. At the end of the Linchwan section there are photographs taken of Chinese government soldiers while they were occupying the mission.

Box 2 contains photographs of Nancheng and Peking. The Nancheng section contains some earlier photographs taken of European Vincentians including Rev. Louis Clerc-Renaud who was Bishop of the Yukiang Vicariate before it was handed over to American Priests of the Western Province. The Nancheng mission was run by Irish Columbian Missionary Priests, and it is these priests, rather than Vincentians, who are featured in most of the photographs. Many of the photographs in the Peking section feature a group of five priests, Rev. Wilfrid DesLauriers, Rev. William C. Stein, Rev. Clarence Murphy, Rev. Frank J. Kunz, Rev. Thomas Mahoney and Rev. William J. Glynn, who went to China in 1939. It is interesting to note here the various modes of transportation documented in the photographs, including rickshaws, donkeys, motorcycles and bicycles. There is also a series of posed photographs, seemingly taken for the priests' amusement, of them drinking and reading "Pic" magazine in someone's bedroom.

Box 3 contains photographs from Poyang. Within this section are photographs of the Poyang residence before and after a major flood that occurred in 1934. There is a picture of an elderly village woman who, as it is noted on the back of the photograph, has bound feet (a declining custom in China at the time). Towards the end of the binder there is a series of photographs documenting Bishop Edward T. Sheehan's funeral in 1933. The first photographs show the boat that was carrying his body from Nancheng to Poyang, which almost sunk after scraping some rocks. We are able to follow the funeral through the streets of Poyang and into the church where services were held.

Box 4 contains photographs of Sanfungkai, Shanghai, Shangtuntu, Suwan, Tengkiapu, Tsungjen and Tungshiang. Sanfungkai was located in between Yukiang and Yingtan and was home to St. Vincent's seminary where newly arrived missionaries were often sent to study Chinese and receive instruction about missionary work. Many of these photographs were labeled "before the Japs came" and "after the Japs came," presumably intending to document the destruction caused to the mission during Japanese occupation. The Shanghai section includes pictures of the actual city of Shanghai (including a few of the city flooded) as well as inside the Vincentian procure. Shanghai had long been the headquarters of the European (especially French) missionary activity and is where the American Vincentians would retreat in times of increased violence and instability.

Box 5 contains photographs of Yingtan and Wannien. The photographs of Yingtan are almost all destruction photographs, with the exception of a few photos of the priests' house. One of these photographs seems to have been double exposed. The three somewhat transparent figures in the foreground are Bishop Charles Quinn, Rev. William J. Glynn and Rev. Thomas Smith. In the

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background are American aviators from Doolittle's air raid on Tokyo. A few of the destruction photographs have pieces of paper glued to the back of the photographs labeled "Associated Press Photograph" and explain that the photograph was taken by a Vincentian missionary after the Japanese occupation of Yingtian in 1942. The large white cross on the roof of the Priests' residence was used to notify Japanese planes that that particular building housed missionaries and therefore should be considered neutral and left unharmed. Wannien was one of the smaller missions that had a large garden and a school for women and children. The only American missionary we have records of being assigned to Wannien is Rev. Louis Bereswill, who was pastor there from 1943-1949.

Box 6 is the first of two binders containing photographs of the mission compound in Yukiang: the main church, the primary and middle schools and the priests' residence. The Yukiang binders have a variety of images depicting the compound and its inhabitants during the 1930s and 1940s. Of particular interest are images showing the impact of the Japanese invasion of the Kiangsi Province. There is a picture of the American flag atop the Yukiang church, which was used during WWII (before the United States entered the war) to signal planes overhead that the building housed Americans. There are a few photographs of the Daughters of Charity leaving the Yukiang church for the countryside, where they hid from Japanese invaders during the autumn of 1942. There are many photographs of the girls' school including Bishop Charles Quinn blessing the building, Rev. Thomas Smith teaching English, and the Girl Scout troop performing drills. There are also many photographs of the porch of the priests' residence, a seemingly popular place for the priests to congregate, where we see them getting haircuts, fixing/riding bicycles and playing with dogs.

Box 7 also contains photographs of Yukiang, including the orphanage, cemetery, photos around the compound and destruction photographs. Within this album are two photos of a brick wall surrounded by grass and trees documenting the place where Rev. Humbert Verdini, and thirty orphans and refugees were killed during the Japanese invasion of the compound in 1942. The Yukiang cemetery is where Bishop Misner was buried, and the photos of Bishop Quinn on All Souls Day show Bishop Misner's large tomb in the center of the cemetery. Within the section of photographs taken around the Yukiang compound is the only image we have of the large straw huts built by Bishop Misner to house refugees fleeing from communist troops. In the destruction section there is a series of photos of Rev. William C. Stein and Rev. Thomas Smith searching through the remains of an air-raid shelter where, as the caption says, "bodies were found."

Box 8 contains photographs of the group of priests, Daughters of Charity, orphans, students and workers from the Yukiang mission (120 people total), who were forced to flee the Yukiang compound for the surrounding countryside in 1942 in order to evade approaching Japanese troops. They stayed in old bandit hideouts for over four months, until they learned that the Japanese troops had left the compound. There is a photograph of Bishop Quinn wearing plaid knickers and a white safari hat standing with a group of people. The man in the back to the right is Rev. Thomas Smith who had just returned from the Yukiang compound where he discovered the bodies of Rev. Humbert Verdini and 30 of the younger orphans, whom the Japanese troops had killed. In this photograph they are determining when and how to go back to bury the bodies. This photo is further expounded upon by Rev. William C. Stein in an interview with Rev. John Rybolt, which can be found in Fr. Stein's personnel files in the DRMA.

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Boxes 9 and 10 document the journey of five priests from San Francisco to Peking. Rev. Wilfrid DesLauriers, Rev. William C. Stein, Rev. Thomas Mahoney, Rev. Clarence Murphy, Rev. Frank J. Kunz and Rev. William J. Glynn all met in San Francisco where they awaited news of their departure date. In early August, 1939, they flew from San Francisco to Klamath Falls, Oregon, and then took a train up to Vancouver. In Vancouver they boarded a ship called "The Empress of Japan" and set sail for China, stopping once in Hawaii and then again in Japan. From Japan they sailed to Shanghai where they met with the French priests stationed there. From Shanghai, they went to Peking (note the photographs of them visiting the Forbidden City) and eventually were sent to their mission sites. Binder 9 documents this voyage from San Francisco to Vancouver and Binder 10 documents their journey from Hawaii to Peking.

Box 11 contains photographs of Rev. Marshall T. Winne's provincial visitation in 1946. It appears that within the missions various parades and routines were prepared for this visit and signs in English saying "Welcome to" with the mission name following seem to have been put up for Fr. Winne. There are also other photographs of departing priests, including an interesting publicity shot of Rev. Vincent Smith and Rev. Herbert Vandenberg looking at destruction photos of Yingtian (which can be found in the Yingtian binder). Also in this binder are tourism photos of China (perhaps collected by the priests), labeled in both English and Chinese.

Box 12 contains photographs of children most likely taken at orphanages run by the Vincentians or Daughters of Charity. However, the exact locations of these photographs are not identified.

Box 13 contains photographs of various unidentified urban and rural scenes. The first section of this binder contains photos of the Daughters of Charity in which the location could not be identified. After this section there are photographs of churches that could not be identified. Note in the many photos there is a large church with pointed arches. Different captions identified the church as being in Yukiang and Peking but by comparing photos the processor determined neither location was correct and suggests that it may be in Shanghai.

Box 14 contains a collection of Vincentian Foreign Mission Society publicity shots as well as WWII stock photographs. The VFMS publicity photographs (identified by the VFMS stamp on the back of the photos) portray Chinese people (mostly children) either engaging in Christian practices or looking very destitute and in need of aid. Most of the stock photographs are labeled "Wide World of Photographs, San Francisco Bureau" and contain captions explaining the photo's origins. Note the photographs of Chiang Kai-Shek and his wife.

Box 15 (Oversize) contains formal photographs of American Vincentians with Chinese confreres and pupils. In addition to several loose photographs, there are also two oversized albums from the Edward T. Sheehan Memorial Museum. Most of these photographs were taken to mark a certain occasion such as a retreat, consecration, graduation, etc. Within the larger Sheehan Museum album are two photographs of the Chinese soldiers that occupied the Linchwan mission in 1932.

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Processing Notes

The photographs in this collection were originally housed in a number of envelopes labeled “China Missions” and five binders compiled for the Edward T. Sheehan Memorial Museum at Saint Mary’s of the Barrens in Perryville, Missouri. The photographs in the binders were attached to black paper using photo corners with captions typed on white paper underneath each photograph. The albums were deteriorating considerably and most of the pages were loose. Stacked together within these albums were pages of black paper with city names written in white paint which corresponded to the city names written on the captions underneath the photographs. This indicated that these were at one point dividers within one or more of the albums and that some of the albums were originally divided geographically.

However, three of the five albums were more intact, having most of their pages still in the binding, and did not seem to be divided geographically. One of these albums contained photos of a group of five priests, documenting their journey from the United States to Shanghai, China in 1939. Another album contained photos of the hideout of a group of priests that were forced to flee Yukiang in 1942 from approaching Japanese soldiers. The last album, which was slightly smaller with a different color and texture (but contained the same Museum stamp), contained only photos of Bishop Sheehan. These photographs were arranged chronologically spanning from Sheehan’s days as a student in Perryville in the 1910’s to his funeral in Poyang in 1933. Most of the photographs extracted from these binders had captions written on the back identical to the captions typed below them. In the instances where there was no caption on the back of the photograph, the caption that was typed under it was written onto the back. Any place names and dates that were easily discernible were written on the backs of the photographs in pencil.

In addition to the Sheehan Memorial Museum binders there was a small album of black paper bound with yellow string which contained photographs of Provincial Marshall T. Winne’s visit to China in 1946. These photographs had been glued directly to the paper and had neither captions nor any information written on the back of the photographs. The rest of the photographs in this collection were originally gathered in envelopes labeled “China Missions.”

The photographs that seemed to be documenting a specific voyage of a certain person(s) were placed in separate binders in their original order (see Missionary Travel). Any of the “unidentifiable” photographs that could be identified were placed in their correct category. Photographs such as the biographical images of Sheehan and other snapshots of individual priests were separated from this collection and placed in the priests’ personnel files.

Restrictions

Permission to publish these photographs must be obtained from the delegate of the provincial superior of the Midwest Province for archival matters. Please ask the DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archivist for the delegate’s contact information.

Processed

January – March 2006, Molly Beard

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Box	Category and Section Title	Number of Photos
1	Geographic Location	
	Hokow	15
	Ihwang	21
	Iyang	3
	Kintehchen	6
	Kweiki	4
	Likiatu	3
	Linchwan	61
2	Nancheng	29
	Peking	70
3	Poyang	92
4	Sanfungkai (St. Vincent's Seminary)	29
	Shanghai	32
	Shangtuntu	2
	Suwan	8
	Tengkiapu	2
	Tsunjen	4
	Tungshiang	1
5	Yingtang	29
	Wannien	13
6	Yukiang	
	1. Compound overview	4
	2. Church	23
	3. Primary school	8
	4. Middle school	32
5. Priest residence	14	
7	Yukiang	
	1. Orphanage	42
	2. Cemetery	10
	3. Yukiang unspecified (around compound)	9
4. Destruction	21	
8	Hideout photos	
	Hideout photos – near Yukiang	49
	Missionary Travel	
9	1939 group (U.S. to Hawaii)	95
10	1939 group (Japan to Shanghai)	91

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Box	Category and Section Title	Number of Photos
11	Missionary Travel, continued	
	Various departure photos	7
	Tourist photos	7
	1946 Winne provincial visitation	52
	Miscellaneous	
12	Children, unknown location	168
13	Daughters of Charity (unknown location)	10
	Unidentified churches	16
	Unidentified rural/urban scenes	114
14	VFMS publicity shots	18
	World Wide News photos, WWII	33
15	Oversized formal photos	34