

CHINA

EXPLORING
THE INTERIOR
1903-1904



A travelling exhibit of photographs

Starboard Watch
Sargentville, ME
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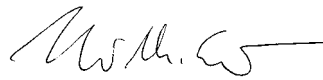
From the Curator:

The travelling exhibit *China: Exploring the Interior, 1903-04* evolved from the simple album of photographs compiled by R. Harvey Sargent on completion of his first adventure abroad. Years later his son, Clyde Sargent, prepared the collection for publication as a book, a project interrupted by Clyde's death in 1981. In 1991, aware of this unusual photographic record of life in the interior of China at the end of the Qing Dynasty, Professor Jerome Holloway, a member of the Newport (RI) Public Library's Chinese Room Committee, urged the Sargent family to produce the collection as a travelling exhibit. Prompt discovery of the photographic negatives in the attic of the Sargent home enabled the project to move forward.

The publication of this catalogue coincides with the centennial of the Carnegie Institution exploration it records, and with the tenth anniversary of the first public sharing of the exhibit *China: Exploring the Interior, 1903-04*. Since then, the exhibit has hung in 29 venues in Colorado, Florida, Maine, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia where it has been shared with an estimated 55,000 viewers. Its internet presence, www.chinaexhibit.org, has served the interests of researchers in countless places around the world.

The production and sharing of the exhibit has been a team effort from the start. Material and moral support have come from the Chinese Program Committee of the Newport (RI) Public Library and the many organizations and individuals listed elsewhere in this catalogue. None of it would be possible without the consistently caring and competent work of my friend and associate, Cynthia Reilly.

It is undeniable that China is rapidly assuming an ever larger role in the international community. For observers and participants in this evolution, increased awareness of the history of China and its people surely is important indeed. Our hope is that *China: Exploring the Interior, 1903-04* may continue to contribute to deepening that awareness.



Robert M. Sargent

CHINA

EXPLORING THE INTERIOR
1903-1904

A travelling exhibit of photographs

Photos by R. Harvey Sargent
Captions and text by R. Harvey Sargent and Craig Dietrich

Photographs & the Carnegie Expedition to China

Photographic documentation of China began in 1846 with the opening of a Hong Kong daguerreotype studio. The earliest surviving China photograph was taken in 1851. Beginning in 1858, the number of photographers—European and Chinese, professionals and amateurs—grew. Although most of the activity was in coastal city studios, a few intrepid men undertook to document the vast countryside. The best known of these, John Thompson, worked between 1868 and 1872. From 1907 to 1911 botanist E. H. Wilson took photographs of the interior while collecting specimens.

Now a cache of photographs, earlier than Wilson's but, like his, taken coincidentally to professional pursuits, has come to public attention. Taken by Maine native R. Harvey Sargent, of the US Geological Survey, during a scientific expedition in 1903-04 which was funded by the Carnegie Institution, they capture the character and environment of rural China, and reflect the wonder and enthusiasm of an amateur photographer. The expedition, searching for early trilobite fossils, was headed by prominent geologist and seismologist Bailey Willis, who was aided by Sargent, a topographer, and geologist Eliot Blackwelder.

The explorers first crossed Shandong Province, trekked west from Beijing into Shanxi, then south to the Yellow River. Crossing the river, they moved west to ancient Xian, south across the Qinling Mountains, and finally down tributary rivers to the Yangzi.

From Willis' memoir, *Friendly China* (1948), it appears that the American scientists met a warm welcome, despite the recent Boxer troubles and the blatant imperialism of certain other foreign expeditions. Willis published a report on his geological discoveries, while Sargent's maps won acclaim for their accuracy.



R. Harvey Sargent (left) with Bailey Willis

Bailey Willis was an internationally prominent geologist and seismologist. His home on the Stanford University campus was a model of quakeproofing and his studies formed the basis for early California building codes. Personally and professionally active until just before his death at the age of 91, Willis was an explorer, author, painter, and lecturer whose studies and projects took him repeatedly to Europe, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. Formal recognition of Willis' many accomplishments included honorary doctorates from the University of Berlin and Columbia University, the Geological Society of America's Penrose Medal, the Order of Leopold II, and the Belgian Legion of Honor.



**Establishing
a station on the
Great Wall.**

*R. Harvey Sargent
(probably near
Wutaishan, Shanxi
Province)*

The 1903-04 mission to China was Maine native R. Harvey Sargent's first adventure abroad. He went on to a productive career as explorer, mapmaker, author, educator, and lecturer. Sargent spent 25 mapping seasons in Alaska, returned to China in 1917 to lecture at the Military Mapping Institute, and conducted early topographic map-making operations in South America. His many accomplishments include discovery of the Aniakchak Crater (the world's largest extinct volcano, now the Aniakchak National Monument), discovery of the largest ice cap on U.S. territory, and collaboration with the U.S. Navy in 1929 on pioneer aerial mapping operations. Son of a Downeast mariner and a product of the best traditions and value systems of rural Maine, Harvey Sargent became a model for three succeeding generations of public servants.



Clockwise, from top, left:

This bell, opposite the Astor House in Tianjin, was tolled to warn people of danger during the Boxer uprising in 1900.

Hauling freight to the Tianjin docks.

Barbers, carrying chair and tools, roamed the streets seeking customers. (probably Tianjin)

Compound of the American Legation in Beijing. These buildings were later replaced.



Traditional Chinese Visiting Card

Distinguished Chinese officials of the day carried these over-sized visiting cards. Consistent with that tradition, foreign visitors frequently used such cards, usually composed of Chinese characters that corresponded phonetically to the foreigner's surname. Accordingly, this card used by R. Harvey Sargent bears the Chinese characters *sa-er-zhen*.

A main thoroughfare in Beijing viewed from the top of the city wall.





Clockwise, from top, left:

Gentleman in a Shandong village.
October 1903.

The inclined ramp to the Beijing city wall which U.S. Marines ascended to defend the wall in 1900. Bricks were removed to make a barricade against the fire of the Boxers from down the long street.

The Beijing city wall.
It was dismantled in 1959 during the Great Leap Forward.

Men wearing mandarin robes and hats on the railroad station platform at Weixian, Shandong.





Above, top to bottom:

“Louisa, our mascot.” *Luzi* means donkey in Chinese. She was the mount of the expedition’s principal translator and guide, Li San.

A military escort. Because of the dangers of travel in the interior, the expedition was provided with escorts between cities. The soldiers’ jackets read, “Fenzhou Military Guard.” On the right is American missionary R. Brownhall.

“A company of soldiers with trumpets and banners...received our expedition and escorted us through town.” (Shanxi Province)



Escort of soldiers and carriers from Huazhou. Messrs. Willis and Blackwelder (left) are in the lead.



Clockwise from top, left:

Central street in Wutaishan, Shanxi Province. The town's main streets intersect at the tower in back.

Tibetan Lamaist Pagoda on the summit of Nantai Mountain, 10 miles south of Wutaishan, Shanxi Province.

Buddhist carvings located a few miles below Wutai Mountain. The script is Tibetan.





From the left:

An inquisitive Mongol. The Wutai area, with its Lamaist temples, was a popular pilgrimage destination for Mongols, who practiced Tibetan Buddhism.

Small shrine to popular deities in a home in Shanxi. Incense is burned in the small bowl at the corner of the small icon.

China in 1903

Early in the 20th century, China was an empire in crisis. At that time, the fading Qing Dynasty was humbled by the great powers; the wisdom of Confucius and the skill of artisans seemed powerless in the face of Western science and industrialism. Britain, Russia, Japan, Germany, France, and the United States had been extracting “spheres of influence,” territory, and war indemnities. Only their mutual suspicion kept them from carving China up “like a melon.”

The most sensational recent event had been the Boxer uprising. In 1900, a folk sect known for martial arts rituals, the Boxers, vented its hostility toward foreigners and Christians. Boxers instigated sometimes deadly attacks on Chinese Christians and Western missionaries in several northern provinces. The dramatic climax was the Boxer siege of the foreign legations in Beijing. This brought down upon China international retaliation and a huge indemnity.

Ironically, many signs of national revival soon followed. The Dynasty introduced major reforms, even as revolutionary groups expanded. Increasingly, young people travelled abroad to see and learn. Many observers, even American missionary Arthur H. Smith, whose views of Chinese ways had been disapproving, detected a new day dawning.

These improvements affected mainly coastal cities; villagers and townspeople in the interior provinces remained mired in poverty. In 1903, an American scientific expedition, financed by the Carnegie Institution, received permission to trek across the interior provinces of north China to search for marine fossils. The expedition's young topographer, R. Harvey Sargent, brought along a camera and used it to capture these images of a fading age. His photographs fix before us the faces of those durable people whose ancestors had seen greatness and whose descendants would be citizens of a strong, modern China fifty short years later.



Clockwise from top, left:

Terraced fields, resembling the southern rice terraces, but here planted in dryland crops. (probably Shanxi Province)

Bronze pagoda, gift of a former emperor, in a courtyard at Wutai Mountain, Shanxi Province.

At Dadao (Shanxi), the head of an executed criminal has been returned to the scene of the crime and is exhibited in the cage hanging upon a tree, as a warning to others. "These displays are frequently seen at gateways to cities."



Brushwood carriers. "The mountaineers and their families cut and bundle it, and it is carried to the valleys for fuel...(for) about ten pounds for a cent." The man on left carries a typical long peasant tobacco pipe.



Left to right:

Children and women with bound feet gather to view the foreigners in Fenzhou, Shanxi Province. Nearby was a spot where seven missionaries were killed by Boxers in 1900.

A Chinese house in the course of construction, demonstrating typical roof structure.



Left: Curious men and boys watch a photograph being taken. The 'spirit screen' seen here was placed in front of the town gateway to block the approach of evil spirits, which were believed to be able to travel only in a straight line. The (apparently new) screen is decorated with a mythical creature, called *qilin*, the moon (*yang and yin*), and various auspicious symbols. (probably Shanxi Province)



Above: “A crowd of former Boxers gathers to view the foreigners at work. There was not a person on the hill before we arrived twenty minutes earlier.” (RHS may have been using the term “Boxers” figuratively)



Left: A curious crowd. (Shanxi Province)



Clockwise from top, left:

Missionaries R. Brownhall and Dr. Edwards (1st and 2nd from left) with Chinese Christians at Fenzhou, Shanxi Province.

The man 2nd from right, at great risk to his life, had carried news to Tianjin of the massacre of seven missionaries at Fenzhou.

Locals gather to inspect R. Harvey Sargent's plane table. Man (r) carries long tobacco pipe.

Carts, animals, and drivers of the expedition crossing the Yellow River by ferry at Tongguan, Shaanxi Province. At maximum, the expedition included about eighty persons, plus animals and vehicles.



Sargent, Willis, and the USGS

December 21, 1903, 10:00 p.m. "Our party is strongly and most happily reinforced by the arrival of Harvey Sargent... In China, officials either ride or are carried in a sedan chair. We would lose face and be liable to insult or worse if we walked. (However) on counting up the cost of horses and grooms I found it equal to the salary and expenses of a topographer and, being convinced that good maps are well worth the expense and possible risk, I cabled for Sargent to come. I knew him as one of the most skillful topographers of the United States Geological Survey, but I knew him also as a tried explorer and a staunch reliance in emergency. He is a New England man, one of that fine stock that has manned our schooners and clipper ships for several generations. He adds good fellowship as well as strength to our little party."

*(from Friendly China/Two Thousand Miles Afoot Among the Chinese,
by Bailey Willis, Stanford University Press, 1949.)*

So wrote Bailey Willis in his journal about the addition of Sargent to the Carnegie expedition, which relieved Willis of all map-making duties and allowed him to concentrate on his geological search.

R. Harvey Sargent joined the USGS in 1898 as a traverseman, working in the Black Hills and the Rockies before being appointed an assistant topographer in 1900. Willis and Sargent had family connections, but professionally they probably met during these years. Sargent's long career with the USGS after the expedition to China included many field seasons with the Alaskan Branch before 1937, when he became Chief of the Topographic Branch's (now the National Mapping Division) Section of Inspection and Editing. *(Information courtesy of USGS)*

Sargent's maps collectively received the recognition of the Soci t  de G ographie de France in 1910, when the gold medal prize of Conrad Malte-Brun was conferred upon the Carnegie Institution Expedition to China.



Left: “Home of Dr. Price at Fenzhou Fu, Shanxi. During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, the missionaries were kept here for ten days, then taken out with a guard of soldiers and murdered by the guard seven miles from here.”



Above: Monument at Fenzhou, Shanxi Province, marking the place where seven missionaries were killed by Boxers in 1900. The upper plaques read, “Memorial to saints.” Such monuments were mandated by the international agreements which settled the Boxer uprisings.



Left: The Nestorian Tablet

Located at the Chongren Monastery, a mile west of the old Xi’an city walls.

This tablet is an important relic of medieval religion and of early East-West contacts. It was erected by Nestorian Christians in 718 AD near Changan (present day Xi’an), which was then the cosmopolitan capital of the great Tang Dynasty (618-907). Nestorian missionaries had arrived in China in 635. The inscription summarizes Nestorian doctrine and gives an account of the sect in China. The tablet disappeared, probably during religious persecutions in 845. It was unearthed eight hundred years later, in 1625. This discovery caused a sensation among the Jesuits, who just then were active in China, and among their Chinese converts. It has remained well-known to scholars since that time. In 1907 the stone was removed to the “Forest of Steles” in Xian where it can be seen today.



Nestorian baptismal fount near the Nestorian Tablet. This fount is hewn from white limestone. It is about four feet high.



“Our youthful soldier in (Shaanxi). This twelve year old lad wished to go with the foreigners. He was outfitted with appropriate coat (labeled ‘soldier’), and came as one of our ‘protectors.’ The ruins are those of a temple destroyed during the Moslem Rebellion. The table holds an idol. Also an offering by a priest. Passers-by are invited to contribute money.” The late nineteenth century witnessed many rebellions and disturbances. They included ethnic strife between Muslims and non-Muslims.



Clockwise from top, left:

Shops in a Chinese city.

Temporary stage for a theater erected
across the street of a busy city.

“A hard pull. Thirteen horses on
one wagon.”

Groom loading mule pack frames.



Above: Observations with the theodolite to determine time.

Right: RHS making an observation with a sextant.





Clockwise from top, left:

Salt carriers. "These men often carry burdens of 200 pounds, sometimes as heavy as 325 pounds."

A walking stick doubled as a rest for the heavy load.

The salt came from interior Yangzi River ports.

(location unknown)

Coolie carrying household goods. The coolie pole is in use more on the plains than on rough mountain roads.

Wealthy woman travelling by muleback. Note her bound feet.



Above, from top to bottom:

A mule litter. A common mode of travel for rich merchants when taking long journeys.

“A Peking cart. An instrument of torture since there are no springs and the roads are none too smooth.”

Right, from top to bottom:

Wheelbarrows—for passengers and ‘luggage.’

A heavy load of bamboo.





Gentleman in spectacles travelling by 'cock's-comb vehicle'—a low wheel barrow for one passenger. Common in Sichuan.



Clockwise from top, left:

Inn and innkeeper at Liu Ye He, Shaanxi Province.

A poppy field, Shiquan Xian, Shaanxi Province. Opium was widely produced as a cash crop.

One of several methods of raising water for irrigation.
(Shaanxi Province)



Clockwise from top, left:

An official courtyard.

Most common type of flour mill, as seen in every little town and on many farms. (Shaanxi Province)

Covered bridge. (location uncertain)





A main rural road passing through a village in Sichuan Province.



Above: Washing laundry in an irrigation canal. (location unknown)

Left: Group in a village in Sichuan Province. Goitre, as seen on two individuals (center) was very prevalent.



Left: Returning down the Yangzi River. “All hands man the oars.”



Above: River boat. Passengers and cargo.

Right: On the Yangzi River





Clockwise from left:

Boatman at mealtime.

On the Yangzi River. When wind direction permitted, a sail was used. This junk also has a line for being tracked up river. It was said that 300,000 were employed as Yangzi boatmen. Their daily pay equalled about one and one-half cents, plus rice. A meat supplement was provided once every three months.

Yangzi River craft.

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