

**CANADIAN SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
OF
THE CANADIAN SCHOOL IN WEST CHINA**

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Editor: Patricia Brown

Definition: If your parents were missionaries in China and/or if you attended the Canadian School in Chengdu, you are a Mish Kid-1. Mish Kids 2 & 3 are related to Mish Kids-1, child of, or grandchild of.....etc.

Website Information: Please visit our website established by the Canadian School Association, just click on the address below. Website managers are Yingming Zhang and David Walmsley.

www.cschengdu.ca

Greetings from the Editor

It is hard to believe that we are already into another year, and the second newsletter as your new editor. Congratulations to all on getting through another winter! Well done!

This edition will continue on with the presentations from last fall, with focus on Sandra Anderson's story of her great grandparents, Dr. Omar Kilborn and his wife, Dr. Retta Kilborn.

We have not been able to get the presentation by George Hartwell III, but if at some future point it becomes available, it most certainly will be included.

I have also included a short biography of a Dr. Florence O'Donnell, located in a small book in the archives here in Ottawa. It was a great find, and I am hoping to locate more of these gems to include in other CS Newsletter's.

Please continue to send in your stories and memories, your pictures and ideas to include in YOUR newsletter!

As always, a reminder that putting the newsletter together can be costly, so we invite you to consider donations to help offset the cost of materials such as paper, stamps, printing etc. Also, receiving the newsletter by way of an email address is a perfect way of helping to reduce costs, and the easiest one. Please, if you can provide us with an email address it would be really appreciated. Thanking you in advance!

Blessings,

Pat Brown

Meet the Executive Continuing on where we left off.....

Dorothea (Hoffman) Smale, Associate Member

Oldest granddaughter of Rev. A.C. & Minnie Hoffman, who in 1903 travelled up the Yangtze River with Dr. C.W. and Robina Service to Chengtu. "A.C." retired after 41 years in China. His son Dr. Cecil and Marie Hoffman returned to China in 1932, both in the medical field, for 12 years. Cecil and (his) sister, Mabel, were the first boarders at the first CS School in Chengdu, under Miss Kerr in 1914. Dorothea, their daughter, born in China was in Jenshow in 1943. Dorothea, married Ted Smale, grandson of Dr. C.W. Service – only children of Canadian Schoolers to marry?

Ted (C. Fred) Smale, Associate Member

Oldest grandson of Dr. C.W. and Robina Service. They went out to China in 1903 going up the Yangtze with Rev. A.C. and Minnie Hoffman to Chengdu. Both served in the medical field. He died in China in 1930. Margaret, daughter of Dr. C.W., was born in China, one of the earliest students of the Canadian School in 1914, along with Cecil Hoffman. In 1953, Ted, son of Margaret and Fred Smale, and Dorothea Hoffman married. Together with their daughter, Dawne (Smale) Janes, they annually help at the Canadian School Reunion meal in Toronto.

Executive Report:

Your executive met in mid May of this year to continue planning towards the Reunion Meal, the highlight of the year. The meeting involves a lot of work in organizing the meal, the program, the venue, updates from other members of executive, special guests and their needs. We are so very grateful for their efforts on our behalf!

The date and place of the Reunion has been confirmed, so mark your calendars for Saturday, October 15, 2016, 11:30-2:30pm at the Dragon Legend Restaurant, Lanark Road, Richmond Hill. This is the same location as last year. Invitations will be sent out the middle of August. Also, there is a Comfort Inn right across the street from the venue for those coming in from out of town, with arrangements to reserve rooms for participants being undertaken.

Progress on the new CS Museum, housed in the former CS building in the Hua Xi Medical campus (formerly the WCUU) is continuing to move forward. The museum will be on the third floor of the building in two rooms. Many items have been shipped to China for display and include such things as an original Chin Yu lamp from Neil Bell, a CS pennant that Glenn Walmsley owned, given by Gail Walmsley, as well as Omar Kilborn's personal copy of "Heal the Sick", given by his daughter Marion. Opening day is scheduled for November 2016. You might want to consider bringing donations to the meal in October, for either display or to give away for inclusion in the new museum.

You may remember back in early January, a call went out for people to send in quotes of 15 words or less that were going to be translated into Chinese as part of a calligraphy project. They were hoping to receive at least 25. In April of this year, Suzhen was in Beijing for the "Calligraphy Event" where our submissions were written by calligraphers to be included in a new book.

“How It All Began”

In last fall’s edition, I shared with you some of the stories presented at the 2015 Reunion Meal. In this edition, I am sharing the presentation given by Sandra Anderson, Great Granddaughter of Dr. Omar Leslie Kilborn and Retta Gifford. Due to space constraints we are unable to print complete presentations however the full text is available upon request and as well is available on the website, www.cschengdu.ca

In 1889, the young Dr. Omar Kilborn wrote a letter from Heidelberg to Rev. Sutherland, the chair of the Canadian Methodist Missionary Society, challenging the church if not his young country of Canada to start a mission in West China. He wrote “should our church go forward, not backward in her foreign mission work, should she not step boldly in and take her place alongside the rest in the conquest of this greatest heathen nation for Christ?” And so a small group was sent to plant the seed for what was to become one of the largest foreign missions in the world, and one of the largest single site hospitals, the present West China Hospital.

Omar was born in 1867, in Frankville, Ontario near Kingston. He grew up with Methodist religion, which held evangelization as its core. He likely attended the social gospel sermons at Greenbush Church, near Athens Ontario where he went to high school. But it was his friends James Hall, who brought Omar into religion one evening at his home. He writes “I was so fortunate as to have this man’s influence thrown about me before he had been many months at school, and I shall praise God for it as long as I live.” His deep personal experience with Christ had begun, and this would guide Omar for the rest of his life.

Omar had lost both parents by the time he was 14, so he had to learn many life lessons on his own. Support from his brother Roland, a physician and his own work as a self taught telegrapher, allowed him to go to Queens University where he engaged his mind in arts and medicine. He earned his BA, MA, and MD by age 21.

Kilborn had done much travel prior to going to China. Telegraph work and post graduate studies took him to major cities in Canada, Great Britain and Europe. He was aware that more doctors were being produced than were needed, and the profession was becoming a bit over glorified, in his opinion. Although worthy of esteem, due to his having earned academic medals in chemistry and ophthalmology, his studies in Edinburgh and Heidelberg and work in London hospitals, he wanted no special recognition for himself. He had been offered a teaching position at Queens shortly after his graduation. But, he was trained to **heal the sick**, and there were parts of the world that had no medical care at all. When he signed up for the Student Volunteer Movement at Queens, along with his friends James Hall and George Hartwell, he was determined to provide care to where it was most needed. Not many

volunteers wanted to go to remote West China. But for Omar, this was where he chose to work. Not once did he waver from the challenge he set out for himself. He always looked forward to what he thought were the best interests of the people of Szechwan. The first group set sail on October 4, 1891, and after 3 months in Shanghai they continued their journey up the Yangtze to Chengdu, arriving May 21, 1892.

He soon became aware of the inhumane living conditions of the people of Chengdu. Beneath the misery of rampant diseases, opium addiction, the terrible treatment of women and girls, the unsanitary conditions and the anti foreign riots, Omar saw people who were eager to learn and who wanted to be helped. He faced a severe personal challenge himself not shortly after his arrival, the devastating loss of his dear wife, Jennie Fowler to cholera. As the small group of missionaries gathered for the burial, the reverence emitted from Jennies' service drew interest from the locals and they wondered what was in the book read at the service. This was the first glimpse of the Chinese interest in the gospel.

In response to Omar's plea, a second group of missionaries was sent to Chengdu in 1893. With Omar as their escort, the journey up the Yangtze was dangerous. Their boat hit some rocks close to shore and began sinking within minutes. Stranded on the sandy bank, the group retrieved what they could from the sinking boat. For four days they dried their clothing, books and bedding by a coal fire. This shared activity brought Omar together with one of the new recruits. He and Dr. Retta Gifford were soon engaged and married by May of the same year.

As the mission expanded so did Omar's push for increasing medical care. He stressed the ability of the medical missionary. He felt strongly that reducing prejudices and superstitions were essential in bringing people to Christ.

Chengdu became the centre for education and medicine and two new large hospitals, men's and women's and children's were built by 1914. Omar played a key role to make sure plans were based on the needs of the physicians and patients and that the highest quality was supported. After the building of the hospitals, Omar was finally able to take the lead in creating the Medical College for the University. His goal of bringing western medicine to China had now come to the final requirement, to train Chinese doctors. It was a small enrollment of 9 students and only 4 did graduate in 1918. Retta and Omar were among the first teachers at the college.

Two months after receiving an Honorary Doctorate from Victoria College, Omar succumbed to pneumonia and passed away in Toronto in August of 1920. In China, large numbers of Chinese friends and missionaries attended a Buddhist memorial service of great magnitude in a gloriously bannered Confucian temple. Never before or since, had a missionary been honoured in this way. In his book "Heal the Sick" Dr. Kilborn included the following poem;

Lord help me live from day to day

In such a self-forgetful way

That even when I kneel to pray

My prayer may be for others.

At the end of this same book, Omar writes, “what a privilege to be a part of the uplift and in the moulding of what has been in the past and destined to be again, one of the greatest nations on earth”



Recently, I came across a book entitled, “**Petticoat Doctors: The First Forty Years of Women in Medicine At Dalhousie University**”, published in 1990 Each chapter is about the individual graduates of those 40 years, and one caught my eye. Her name was Florence Maud O’Donnell. I want to share her story with you, and am indebted to the author, **Enid Johnson MacLeod**.

Born in Halifax NS in 1877, Florence O’Donnell was the daughter of an orphan from Ireland who came to Canada during the potato famine, her mother a direct descendant of John Christopher Laurilliard who came to Halifax with Cornwallis in 1749.

Entering Dalhousie in 1894, she graduated with her MD, as well as Master of Surgery in 1901, at which point, she went on to intern in a Halifax hospital for one year. This is where it became interesting reading for me.....

In 1902 Miss O’Donnell went to Chengdu in Szechwan province in central China to be a doctor “in the hospital training school and orphanage which were supported by the WMS of the Canadian Methodist Church.”

After arriving by ocean liner in Shanghai, getting to Chengdu was an astonishing adventure. Small steamers could navigate the Yangtze River to Nanking, Hankow, and as far as Ichang. At

this point passengers transferred to houseboats which had to be towed by 75 “trackers” on the river bank. They pulled all the way upriver with long ropes, always against the current and against rushing torrents in the gorges.

It took travelers two months to reach Chungking, and a further two months to get to Loshan, at which point the Ming River made for easier passage northwards to Chengdu. The last two weeks of this incredible journey were made by sedan chair, sleeping at inns where they were available, and under the watch of hired armed guards for protection against bandits. The whole trip from Shanghai to Chengdu took over six months, and could be done only in winter in the low-water period.

Once in Chengdu, Dr. O’Donnell took charge of the women’s hospital, which she later had enlarged, and she also organized a training school. Her colleagues in Chengdu were the staff members of the university which was built at that time by Canadian, French, German and English joint efforts, all under the auspices of the Methodist Church.

Very few details are known of young Dr. O’Donnell’s day to day life in Chengdu, however after six years in China, Dr. O’Donnell took the long and hazardous trip back to Canada and to Halifax to get married. She had been in Montreal on her way to China when she met her fiancé, William Harrington Piers of Halifax. He had followed her to Toronto and proposed marriage to her instead of many years of duty in China, but to no avail. Young Dr. O’Donnell was committed to go as a medical missionary to the hospital in Chengdu. After seven long years of patient waiting, she and Mr. Piers were wed in October 1908. Following her marriage, she ceased to practice medicine and dropped her medical appellation.

Dr. Florence Maud O’Donnell Piers died on September 28, 1958, twenty years after the death of her husband.

Although no records of her six years in China are known to exist, all of her children inherited many Chinese artifacts. One such legacy was an attractive scroll of Chinese characters which Commodore Piers hung in the library of the Commandant’s House at the Royal Military College, located in Kingston Ontario. One evening the Dean of Oriental Studies from the University of Toronto asked if the scroll pertained to a family member. When informed that no one knew the significance of the scroll, the learned professor then translated. It was a most laudatory tribute from a high ranking mandarin lady “to the wonderful white lady who came from far away across the oceans to heal all our illnesses. She saved the life of our daughter, and when asked what reward she would accept, the lady doctor humbly requested that our daughter’s foot should be unbound and never be bound again.” The ornamental cloven foot shoes removed from the feet of this child for a reward, as requested by Dr. O’Donnell, are still proudly held in the family’s possession.

Dr. Florence O’Donnell is listed on page 475 of “Our West China Mission” under the heading of Woman’s Missionary Society, serving from 1902-1908. In his book, “Heal the Sick”, pg. 253, Dr

Kilborn writes: "Dr. Florence O'Donnell left Canada for China in the autumn of 1902, reaching Chengtu in the spring of 1903. She was therefore ready to take up the medical work when Dr. Henry left for furlough in 1904. Dr. O'Donnell had continuous charge of the WMS hospital until she left for furlough in February, 1908, not to return to China"

Memories:

Enjoy this submission from Bill Willmott, on his bike trip in 1949 to Renshou!

"The Renshou days of the Canadian School in Western China were the days we loved the best! I always felt cheated that I missed most of them when I got TB and was sent back to Chengdu for three years. Paul Smith and I biked to Renshou in the Easter break in 1949, nostalgia for me, new adventure for him! I took down the main (only) street to buy some Renshou Special...do you remember that delicious semasea candy?? We each bought two pieces in the shop and then went back to the kitchen where a man was making it. He was sieving the raw sugar into the mixture and when there was nothing but dirt left on the sieve, he put that in too...and then began kneading the mixture with his bare hands with dirty long black fingernails. By this time I had eaten my two pieces but Paul was still holding one piece in the palm of his hand. Having seen how it was made, he held out his hand to me with the piece sitting on it and said, "Here, you eat it!" The next day (Saturday) we started back to Chengdu, but on the Big Hill, Paul's bike chain broke. We coasted the hill and walked to Jiedianpu, where there was not a single bike shop left, so we booked into a scungy inn for the night. Around 2am Paul woke me and said he had been bitten by flea's and couldn't sleep. So we woke the innkeeper at 2am, paid for the room and set off walking in the dark to the outskirts of Chengdu where we found a bike shop who could fix the chain, and we rode to Chengdu, arriving the WCUU campus just as the community was gathered for an outside dawn service on the front lawn of Hart College. I cycled home and fell into bed! What a weekend!! I remember another weekend when I was still in Chengdu with TB, when Omar Kilborn biked from Renshou to Chengdu on a very hot sunny day and arrived at our house beet-red from head to feet and had to lie in agony on our verandah with nothing on the whole day!!



The Library:

Bob Kilborn remains the contact for any printed material requests. He indicated to me last year that he has the following:

“Old Photo Show”, Free

60th CS Anniversary: Free

West China Union University, by Lewis C. Walmsley.

The Canadian School in West China: (The Red Book) 2 donated copies, cost of postage required to send out.

Wood Block Prints:, by Beatrice Kitchen. A collection of her prints which she created. Loose leaf binder and CD. \$25.00 + postage

Canadian School 100th Anniversary:, CD with script. \$8.00 plus postage

If you haven't read **“Granary of Heaven” by Rev. George Hartwell**, I must recommend it. For me it was a vivid account of the early days of the mission experience in West China

Also recommended: **“Heal the Sick”, by Dr. Omar Kilborn**, has been reprinted and is available through Chapters.

“The Mish Kids Club” CS Alumni of the Canadian School in West China

Doris (Hibbard) Rundle, Muriel (Kitchen) Tonge, Gwen (Kitchen) Heatherington, Beth (Lutley) Leach, Malcolm Reed, Newton Reed, Elinor (Reed) Knight, Dorothea (Hoffman) Smale, Dave Spooner, Marion (Walmsley) Walker, Betty Bridgeman, Steve Endicott, Marion Endicott, Neil Bell, Bob (Killy) Kilborn, Phyllis (Allen) Donaghy, Marion (Allen) Reilly, Dora Stinson, Maurice Stinson, Kay (Veals) Wray, Peter and Eric Webster, Diana Maver, Olav Kitchen, Joan (Rackam) Good, Noreen (Anderson) Nolan, Bill Hibbard. Edith (Walker) Woodbridge, Bill Gentry, Helen Bacon, Wendy (Foy) Canning, Frances (Kilborn) Hilliard, Jean (Kilborn) Hooper, Anne Kenard, Dorothy (Bacon) Kerker, August Lovegren, Mary (Struthers) McKim, Bob Parker, Enid (Walmsley) Sills, Ted Smale, Doug Smith, Gwyn (Allen) Smith, Foster Stockwell, Muriel (Kitchen) Tonge, Judith (Outerbridge) Walker, Edith (Walker) Woodbridge, Peter Webster, Bill Willmott, Don Willmott, Ruth (Smith) Winslow

Please excuse if any names have been omitted

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