



In Pursuit of Paul Splingaerd, the Belgian Mandarin

Anne Splingaerd Megowan
Presentation on the Life and Legacy of my
Great Grandfather

September 14, 2009

Believe It Or Not!

Ripley's featured Paul Spingaerd in a 1929 column

∞ Information partially correct:

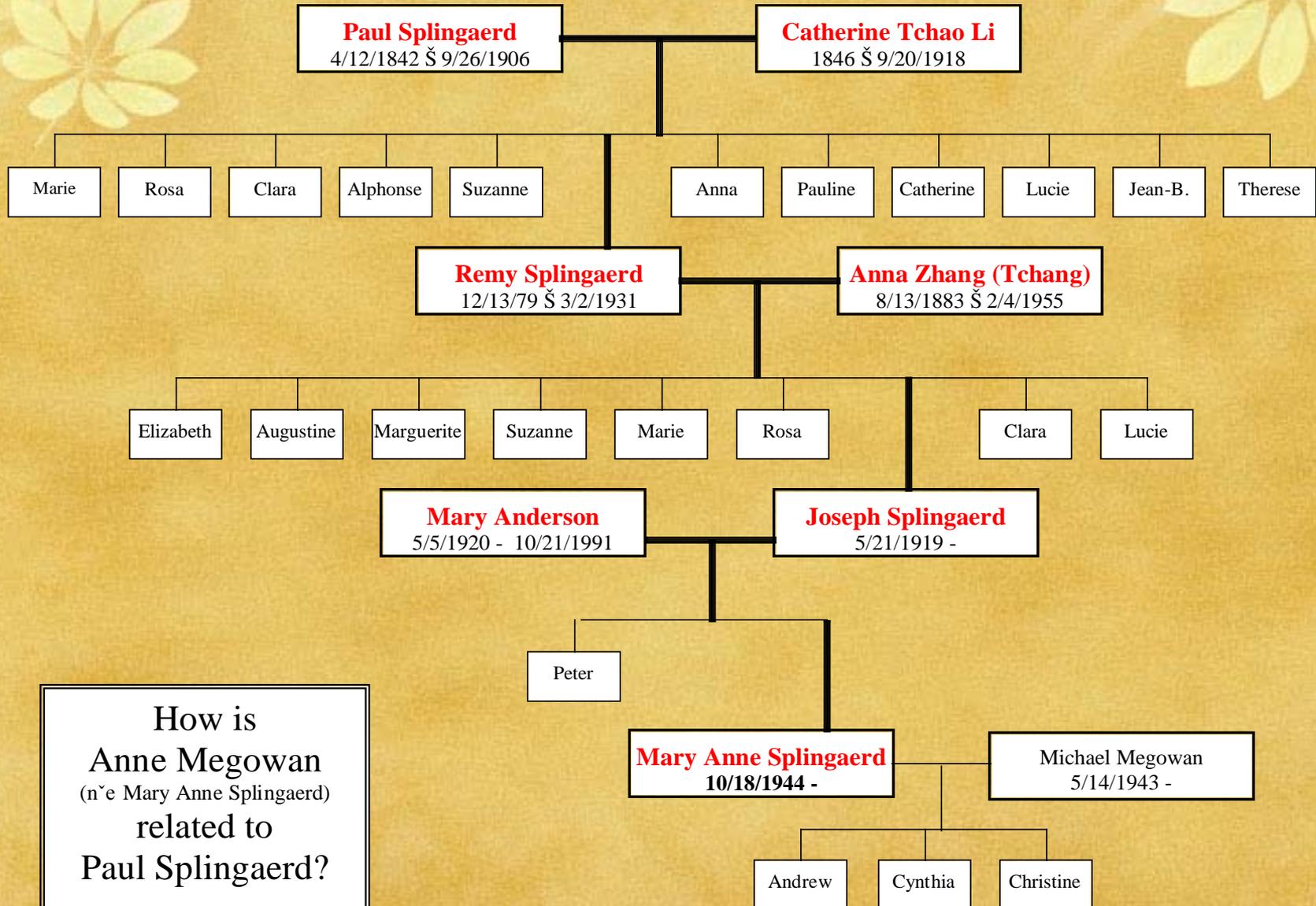
- He did become mandarin and a Brigadier General

∞ Drawing incorrect:

- Paul did not have long nails
- What looks like piece of paper in his hand was a mandarin patch which denotes which of the 9 ranks the official held.
- The picture omits the *ding*, or finial on the top of the hat, which was another indication of the wearer's rank. Paul reached the highest rank, and wore a ruby on his hat.
(more on mandarins on pp 104-106)



Paul was my great grandfather



How is
Anne Megowan
(nėe Mary Anne Spingaerd)
related to
Paul Spingaerd?

My Chinese Roots



I was born in Tianjin, north China, during the Japanese Occupation, when the city was still called Tientsin.

I am 5/8 Chinese, 1/4 Scottish, and only 1/8 Belgian, but I was born a Belgian Citizen.

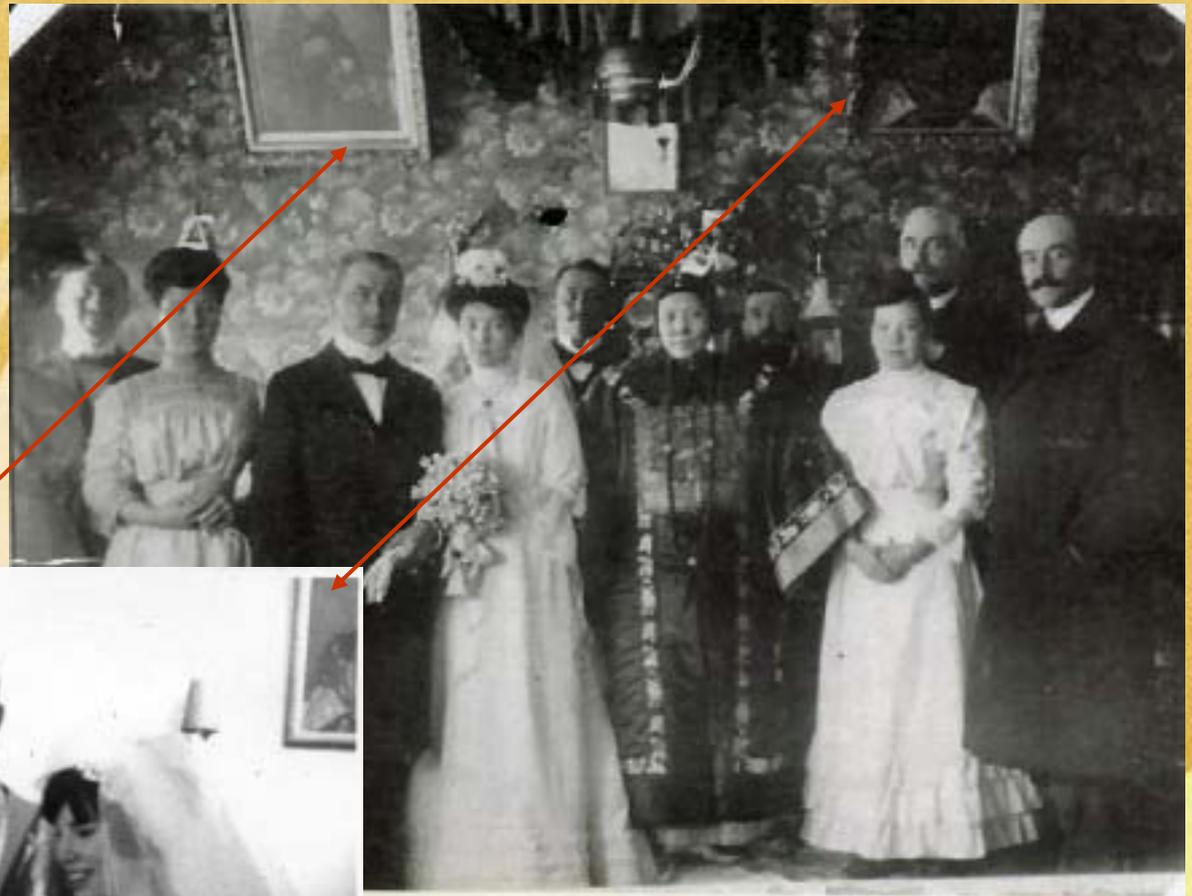
My Parents



My grandmothers were Chinese: My Dad's (Joseph Springaerd) mother, my "Nainai" was from Lanzhou. My Mum's (Mary Anderson) mother, my "laolao," was Cantonese. (Mary and Joseph were wed in Tientsin on April 11, 1942.)

The Presence of Paul

Below, reception for my wedding to Michael Megowan in 1967 was held at my parents' home in Mexico City



Above, the 1908 wedding of Paul's daughter Lucie to Albert Paternoster. The red arrows point to the presence of the portraits of Paul & Catherine Springaerd being at both ceremonies.



The Portraits Today

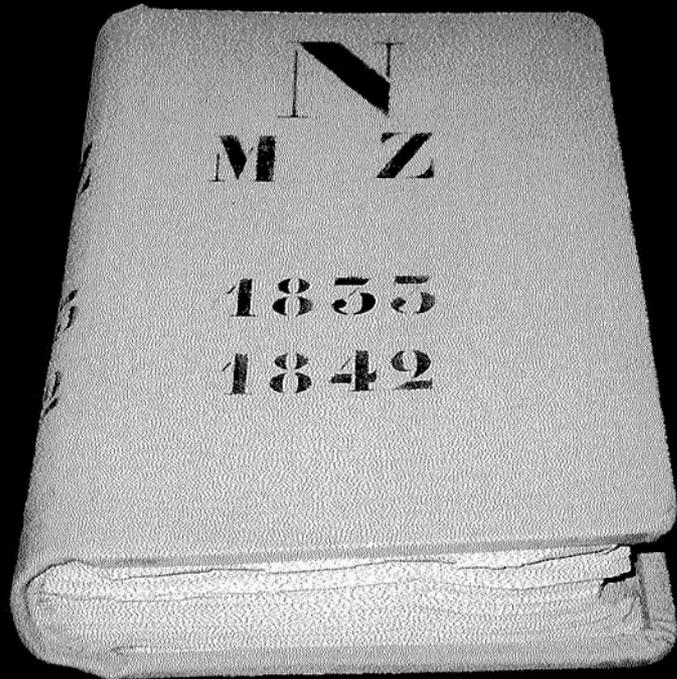
- ☞ These pictures now hang at the Phoenix home of my brother, Peter Splingaerd, the last male heir to the Splingaerd name, pictured here with his wife, the Hon. Alice Wright
- ☞ Although those portraits traveled with my parents from China, through Hong Kong, Japan and Mexico, and hung in our living rooms forever; no one knew how great grandfather Paul became a mandarin, or anything about Chinese lady he married, shown in the portrait on the right, not even her name.
- ☞ I was curious, and decided to find out more, and began researching in 1994, and resulted in the book that came out last January.

Historical Setting

- ❧ The recently industrialized Western countries of the mid- to late-19th century needed a market for their manufactured goods
- ❧ China had no need for trinkets from the west, felt self-sufficient, superior, and kept only one port, Canton, open for trade.
- ❧ Victorian Era Britain liked tea, silks and porcelains from China. Selling opium to the Chinese was how they planned to pay for these luxuries.
- ❧ Britain forced open China's doors to trade by provoking and winning the Opium Wars in the mid 1800s.

Paul's lifetime relative to World Events

- ☞ 1842 Paul born
 - ☞ the Treaty of Nanking signed, end of Opium war
 - ☞ gold was discovered in Placerita Canyon, CA
- ☞ 1865 Paul arrived in China
 - ☞ Abraham Lincoln assassinated
 - ☞ US Civil War ended
 - ☞ The TransAtlantic cable was laid.
- ☞ 1869 While P.S. traveled with Richthofen
 - ☞ Suez Canal opened to traffic
- ☞ 1872-80 While Paul was fur trader
 - ☞ Telephone, phonograph, electric lights and canned food introduced
- ☞ 1898 Paul decorated by King Leopold II
 - ☞ Paris Metro opened
- ☞ 1906 return to Belgium, death in Xian
 - ☞ the great San Francisco earthquake.



This book at Brussels' City Hall holds the record of the birth of Paul Splingard on April 12, 1842

1376. Du Douzième jour du mois d'Avril L'AN MIL HUIT CENT QUARANTE-DEUX, à dix heures du matin,
Acte de Naissance de Paul Splingard, né le même jour à quatre heures du matin,
Fils de Madame Splingard, femme de chambre domiciliée en cette ville
rue de la Chapelle n° 11, au couchée rue de l'Évêque n° 12.
Sur la Déclaration faite par Catherine Madlart, Cordelière âgée de quarante-trois ans, domiciliée
même rue n° 11, et a déclaré ne savoir signer et a dit être.
En présence de Jean-Baptiste Matern, Menuisier âgé de cinquante ans et de Pierre Marazé,
Cordonnier âgé de vingt-cinq ans, domiciliés en cette ville et ont signé.
Constaté en la Maison Communale par Nous soussigné ÉCHEVIN, désigné pour remplir les fonctions d'Officier de l'État-Civil de la Ville de
Bruxelles, duquel acte il leur a été donné lecture.
J. Matern
p. marazé
377. Vermeulen

Ottenburg, Belgium, where Paul grew up

Map from an article about Paul
by Willy Goossens shows location of
the farmhouse (below) where Paul
grew up (picture by Cynthia Megowan
Olds)



Atlas der buurtwegen. 1844. Gemeentearchief Ottenburg.

- Chemin nr. 20 is de huidige Florvalstraat

- Chemin nr. 29 is de huidige Bergstraat

1. Het gebouw op de hoek van chemin nr. 20 en chemin nr. 29 was de hoeve van Franciscus Vandeput en Barbara Deboth.

2. Het huis van Philippus Depré en Maria Vandeput komt op deze kaart niet voor. (zie het aangeduide x teken).

3. Het huis van Henricus Depré en Joanna Vanbever.

4. De woning van Maria Theresia Scheers weduwe van Franciscus Depré.

N.B. De families Depré en Vandeput waren met elkaar verbonden door het huwelijk van Philippus Depré, zoon uit het eerste huwelijk van Franciscus met Catharina Bombers, en Anna Maria Vandeput, zuster van Gerardus (vader van Franciscus).



Ottenburg

On December 10, 2006 the town of Ottenburg unveiled a monument to Paul



November 8, 2008

I invited Spingaerd Descendants From around the world to meet at the Statue.

We came from:

Venezuela,

Australia,

Paris,

London,

Israel,

New York,

and Belgium.

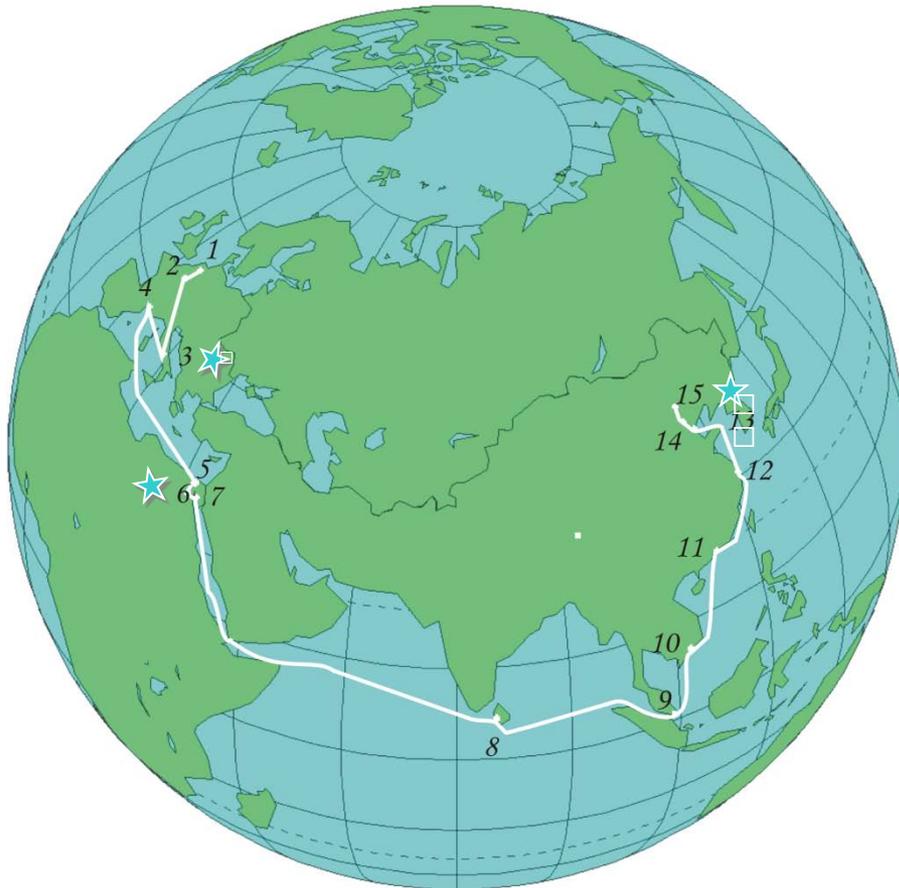
most of us were meeting for the first time.

How did Paul get to China?

- ☞ When Paul was 21 he moved to Brussels to fulfill his military duty and to find work.
- ☞ The chaplain at the military school where he performed his military service was **Theophile Verbist**. Verbist founded the missionary society (CICM) to help abandoned children in China.
- ☞ Verbist hired Paul as a handyman at the order's headquarters in Scheutveld. They are known as Scheuts, but in the U.S. they are called Missionhurst.
- ☞ When the Vatican gave Verbist permission to take over Mongolia as his mission territory, he took 3 other priests, **Vranckx**, **van Segvelt** and **Hamer**, as well as handyman Paul.

From Brussels to Xiwanzi in 104 Days

August 25 – December 6, 1865



1. Brussels departure by train
2. Paris to arrange for passage.
3. ★ Rome for private audience with Pope Pius IX, who was missionary in S.A
4. Marseille to board steamship, where Paul began learning Chinese from Ch. workers
5. Alexandria
6. Cairo
7. Suez
8. Ceylon
9. Singapore
10. Saigon
11. Hong Kong
12. Shanghai
13. ★ Tianjin (Tientsin) end of sea voyage
14. Beijing (Peking) travel by “those damn carts” springless, mule-drawn
15. ★ Xiwanzi (Siwantze) NE of Great Wall, final destination.

Xiwanzi, Mongolia, just north of the Great Wall



The hillside farming town was the center of the Catholic Church in Mongolia. This was where Catholics had fled during religious persecutions in China. It is now called Chongli, and is currently becoming known as a ski resort.

Paul in Mongolia

Paul worked at the mission at Xiwanzi for 3 years:

- As a handyman and Jack of all trades
- Helped set up new missionary posts
- Built brick ovens so priests could have baked bread
- Built a brewery at each post. (Belgians like beer)
- He knew Chinese well enough to translate homilies that the priests whispered into his ear.
- After 3 years, Fr. Verbist died
 - Paul had paid off his passage to China
 - He left for Beijing.



After Xiwanzi



- Paul worked at the Prussian(German) Legation in Beijing, where he met German geographer and geologist, **Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen**.
- They traveled through almost every province of China, reporting to the foreign-run **Shanghai Chamber of Commerce** on natural and mineral resources
- This is a page from Richthofen's "Tagebucher aus China"

Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'F. von Richthofen'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the bottom.

- ❧ Ferdinand is not as well known in the States as his grand nephew, Manfred, the **Red Baron**, but in Europe he is a known geologist and geographer who contributed much to those fields. (and he found gold @ the Comstock Lode.)
- ❧ His book on China, based on his 1868-1872 travels (with Paul), told the world that there was abundant coal in China, and it was of high quality. This increased the interest of the western world in accessing it.
- ❧ Ferdinand credited with the term, “Silk Road.”
- ❧ See Chapter 5



Travels with Richt- hofen in red



Frontier Fur Trader



After his explorations with Richthofen, Paul opened a fur trading business In 1873 at Kalgan on the Chinese border with Mongolia. [map]
He had a German partner, Graesel, who minded the store while Paul traveled the steppes to get the furs.

Jardine Matheson provided goods for Paul to trade with the Mongolians



Above: The former Jardine Matheson building still stands on the Bund in Shanghai.

Right: a letter to Paul from Matheson & Co. archives. Letters in this collection tell of items being traded, the costs, the popular items, and the importance of the Bactrian camels.

D1/59/1

ff "Appia" Shanghai 5th Sept^r 1873-

Mess^{rs} Grael & Splingard
Halgau
Mongolia

Dear Sirs,

We have to acknowledge the receipt of your favour of the 25th ultimo to all the points of which we give our careful attention. We take note that payments will be made to us for the credit of your account by Mess^{rs} Mischner Rogers & Co - L. Franzenbach and C. Piffenich. The former gentlemen have already deposited Sh. Taels 245.20. appropriated to your account in due form.

Our London friends have sent us a detailed report on Mongolian Hair, and Wool, Samples a Copy of which we now send you, and we think a perusal of it will convey to you a very just idea of the relative value of each class of the article. You will observe that the Wool and hair is not readily saleable in London.

We are also informed that the samples of furs were offered at auction and sold thus:-

A. Doyu Skins, Fox, Wild Cat, otter &c	one Lot	46/-
100 Squirrel Skins		15/-

We observe from your letter that Mr Grael



Camel Caravans

- Sturdy camels could carry heavy loads up to 30 miles a day
- Inns were set about 1 day's distance from each other.
- Innkeepers did not charge for animals. The beasts paid in *argol*.
- No stops for food till animals were hungry. Animals fed first, then owners, then workers.
- Goods carried into Mongolia: candles, flour, fabric, brick tea, sugar.
- Goods carried out: wool, camelhair, yak tails, hides, sheepskins, felt, fur
- It was fairly common practice for camel drivers to steal wool and furs, and replace the weight with mud, sand and stones. Bad for business.

Catherine Tchao Li

- Paul's business did well and he opened a second branch in Guihuacheng (today's Huhehote, capital of Inner Mongolia)
- His priest friends felt that he was sowing too many wild oats, and wanted him to settle down.
- Catherine, a teacher at the Catholic orphanage had planned to become a nun.
- Fr. Verlinden told her that her daughters would take her place as nuns.
- She married Paul in 1873.
- Four of their daughters did become nuns.



Undated photo of Catherine Spingaerd 1846 - 1918

Viceroy Li Hongzhang makes Paul a mandarin

- ☞ **Li (1823 - 1901) was the most prominent non-Manchu in the Qing government. He was a ruthless Military leader, shrewd businessman, foreign affairs minister, yet considered himself a scholar & poet,**
- ☞ **Principal proponent of China's "self-strengthening movement" to bring country's technology, science, business practices and education to international standards.**
- ☞ **Per terms of 1881 Treaty of St. Petersburg with Russia, Li made Paul the customs mandarin in charge of the western gateway to China. (ch. 7)**



TO CHINA'S WESTERN FRONTIER

- Jiuquan (aka Suzhou) was once an important stop on Silk Road, near the Jiayuguan fort built at the western end of the Great Wall.
- Marco Polo lived there for 2 years.
- Near Dunhuang, which is known for the Buddhist grottoes.
- Its name means “wine Spring,” depicted in this monument →



Friend and interpreter, retired doctor, Bobby Tan at Jiayuguan Fort

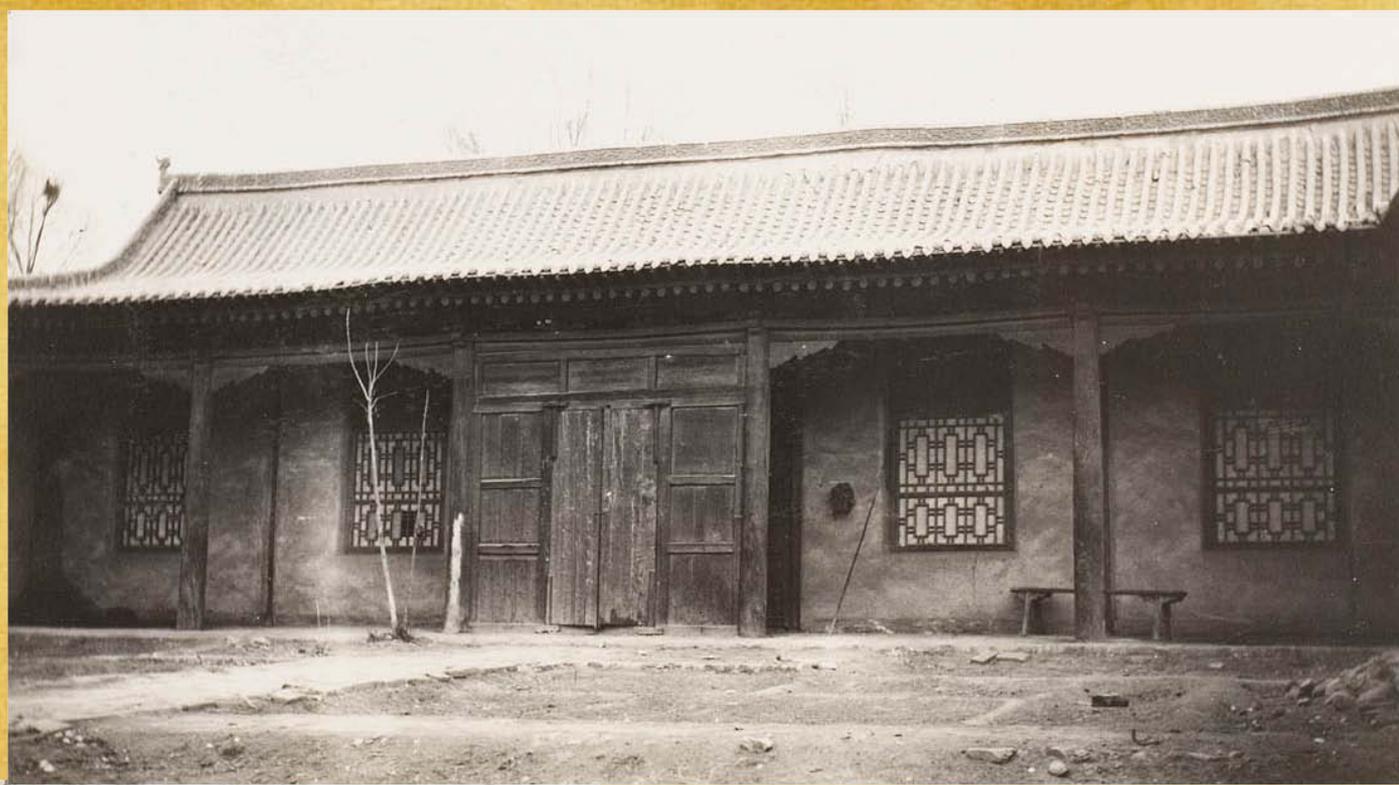
Customs Inspector in Jiuquan (Suzhou)



- Paul was called by the honorific title, Lin Darin when he was made a mandarin. His Chinese name was ‘Lin Fuchen.’
- He lived in Jiuquan (aka Suzhou) for 14 years, had many civic duties besides taxes: judge, public works, education and health minister.
- His introduction of smallpox vaccine was greatly appreciated.
- A room at the yamen was set up as a free health clinic
- Another was converted into a chapel for visiting priests to administer sacraments
- Hosted many explorers and travelers. (see chapter 7)

Paul’s actual yamen (office and residence) is long gone, but on our 2005 visit we were taken to the location and shown buildings in style of “Lin Darin’s” Yamen in Jiuquan

Lin Darin's actual Yamen in Jiuquan



After the book was published, I found these photos taken by London Times correspondent George E. Morrison in 1910, 14 years after Paul's family left Jiuquan

http://www.topchinesenews.com/listo.aspx?topic_id=18&msg_id=40974&level_string=0&page=1&n=48257

Paul's Family circa 1896



- Paul and Catherine had 12 children. Daughter Suzanne died of Cholera in Shanghai shortly after the children were sent there for schooling so only 11 here.
- In background is banner presented to Paul in recognition of his service in Jiuquan, especially his **medical contributions**. (p. 95- "Paul the Practitioner")

Cloissonné Tribute Stand

**Given to Paul by
businessmen of Jiuquan
when he left the city
in 1896**



**Inscription on the fan reads:
“To Honorable elder Lin”
(Sprlingaerd’s Chinese name),
“businessman renowned in China and
abroad, we express our gratitude.”**



Jiuquan honored Paul in 2008

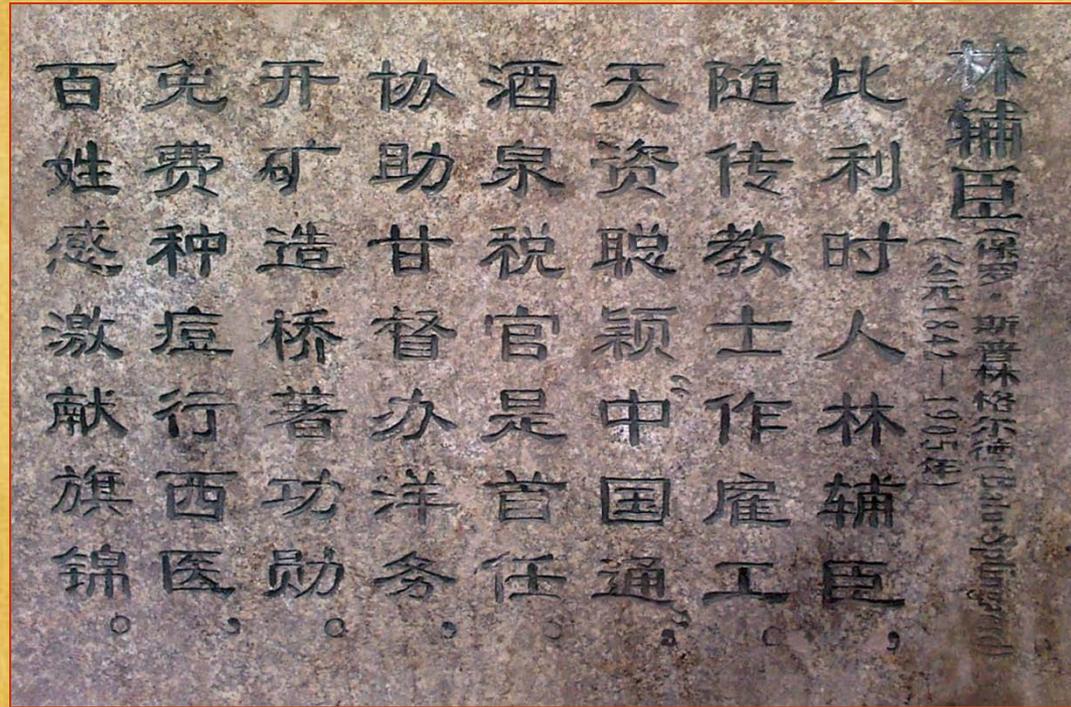
This statue of him was erected in Jiuquan in October of 2008.



Translation of Plaque

(Lines from right to left, trans. By S. Chow)

- (1) Belgian citizen Lin Fu-Chen
- (2) He followed the Missionary as a handyman
- (3) He's intelligent and was a Chinese expert
- (4) He was the first Tax Official of Jiuquan
- (5) He assisted the Kan-Su government in dealing with foreign affairs and foreign trades
- (6) He started the mining, built the bridge and had distinguished accomplishments
- (7) He provided free vaccines for small pox and practiced as a physician
- (8) People showed their admiration and appreciation to him by established the stone statue, plaque and appreciation banner.



Engraved Plaque now decorates the base of the statue



- Spingaerd (1842-1905) Belgian National, Chinese name, Lin Fu-Chen was nominated by Li Hong-Zhang to be the First Commissioner of Customs of Su Zhou.
- From 1882-1896 he was Commissioner for 14 years.
- He was clean and just in his dealings and also had knowledge of foreign medicine.
- He was in charge of Small Pox Vaccine for the Su Zhou people, constantly he treated the poor free of charge.
- In the eyes of the People of Su Zhou he was a benevolent Government Official and the People gave him a Ten Thousand Name Umbrella made of fine silk. The words inscribed on the Umbrella had the description of his BENEVOLENCE.
- In 1892 he started the Jiuquan Catholic Church.

(Written by Jiuquan General History)



King Leopold (1835 –1909) became wealthy from exploiting rubber and ivory in the Congo.

The Scheut priests worked under his patronage in Africa and in China.

After Jiuquan

- ⌘ Paul returned to China's East coast in 1896, was given a post as inspector of the Kaiping Coal mines near the eastern extreme of the Great Wall
- ⌘ While an employee of the mines, he was contacted by Leopold II of Belgium to act as intermediary in China negotiations
- ⌘ Leopold wanted to to build a railroad down the "Backbone of China" between Beijing and Hankou.
- ⌘ He was in competition with Britain, Russia, and the US for this RR.

Service to Belgium and China

- ❧ After a haughty Belgian engineer failed to get a satisfactory contract with Chinese officials, Paul is asked to help (amusing anecdote on p. 123).
- ❧ Paul successfully negotiated new terms between Li Hongzang and Leopold's representatives, and the Belgians got to build the major railroad connecting Beijing with Hankou, an important commercial center on the Yangzi River.
- ❧ In 1950 Hankou merged with Wuchang and Hanyang to form the city of Wuhan, capital of Hubei province. (Terminus of Yangzi River cruises.)

Paul is made a
"Chevalier de
l'Ordre de la
Couronne"

(Knight of the
Order of the Crown)



Léopold II, Roi des Belges
Souverain de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo.

A tous présents et à venir, Salut:
Voulant donner un témoignage de Notre
bienveillance, à Monsieur *Splingaerd, P.*

Sur la proposition de Notre Secrétaire d'Etat

Nous avons décrété et décrétons:

Art 1. Monsieur *Splingaerd,*
est nommé Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Couronne

Art 2 Il prendra rang dans l'Ordre à dater de ce jour

Art 3 Notre Secrétaire d'Etat, ayant l'administration de
l'Ordre, est chargé de l'exécution du présent décret.

Donné à Ostende, le 20 octobre 1898.

(s) Léopold.

Par le Roi-Souverain.

Le Secrétaire d'Etat,

(s) *B^{on} van Etvelde.*

Pour copie certifiée conforme,

Le Secrétaire d'Etat,

B^{on} van Etvelde

The Original Train Station at Hankou

- The building is now a museum
- but the road it is on is still called “Train Station Road”



Mandarin and *Chevalier*

- ❧ Paul proudly wore his “chevalier” medal, even on his mandarin robes,
- ❧ He used his mandarin status to help save European lives during the Boxer Rebellion, and afterwards to help his priest friends
- ❧ As a representative of the governor of Gansu province, he returned to Belgium after an absence of 41 years.
- ❧ He brought Belgian engineers, technicians and businessmen, to Lanzhou.



Paul died in Xian the same year he returned from Belgium, in 1906.

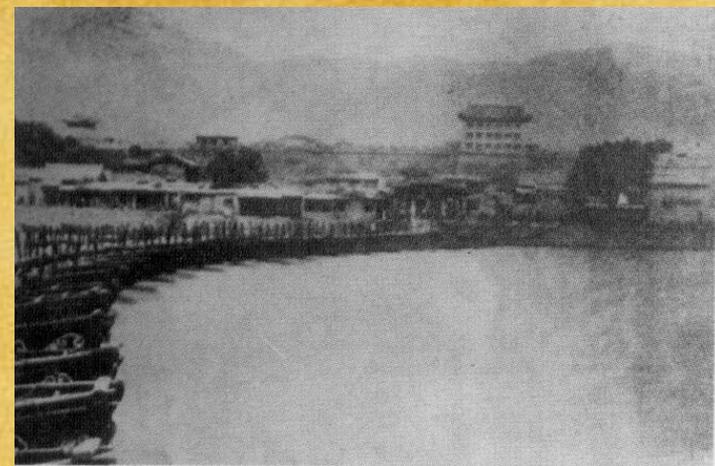
Four of the Belgians who came to help develop Lanzhou, capital of Gansu Province, married Paul's four youngest daughters: the four at right: Lucie, Catherine, Pauline and Thérèse. Anna, at the left, became a nun, like her three older sisters. (comment on p. 116)

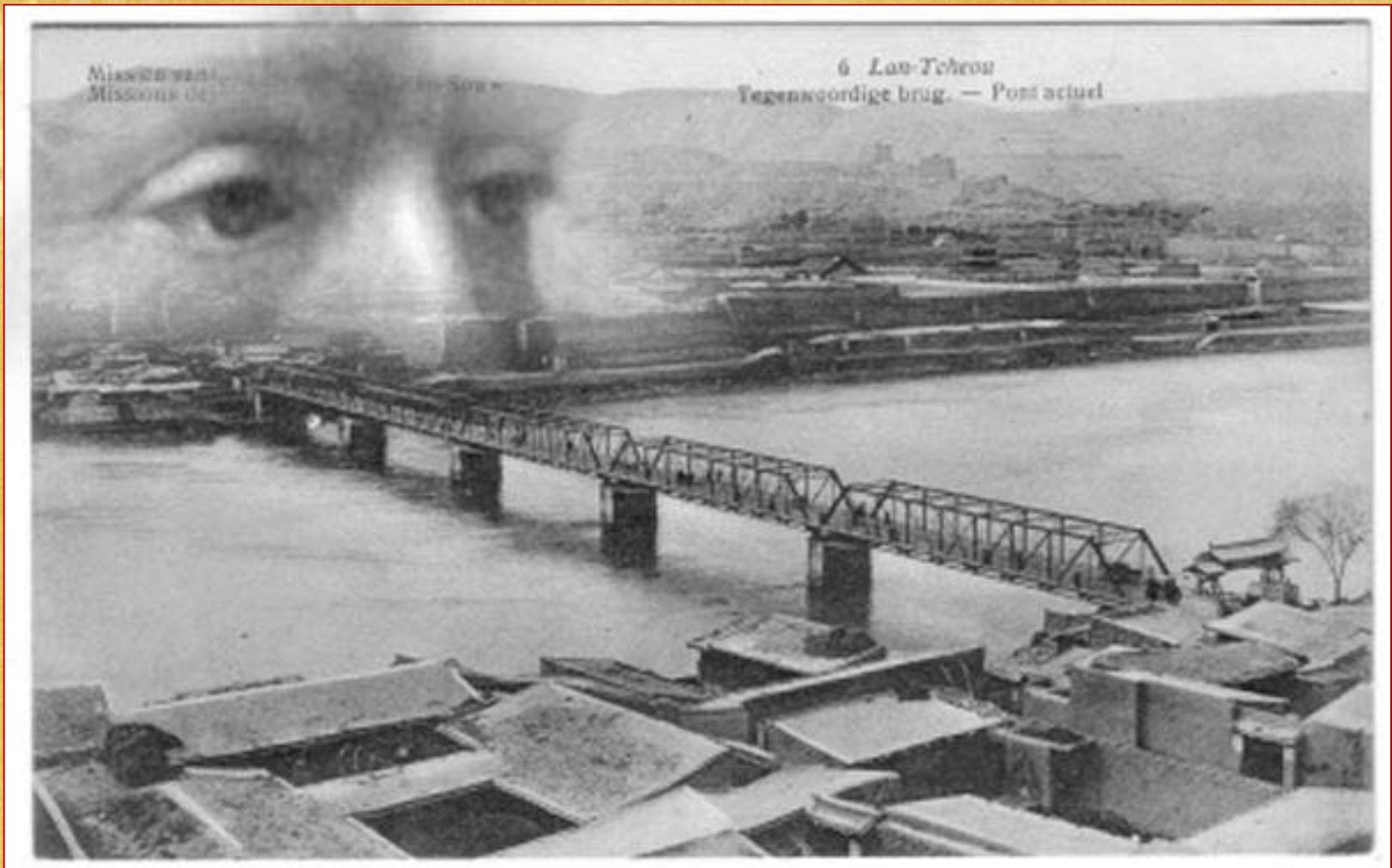


Paul's Youngest Daughters and son John

"Paul's bridge"

- In Paul's days, there were two ways to cross the Yellow River at Lanzhou:
 - One was on an unstable pontoon bridge, used since Silk Road days
 - The other is "Yang Pi Fazi," A raft made of ballooned goat skins
- Many people drowned while attempting to cross, so Paul proposed to Governor Peng the construction of an iron bridge.





- ❧ Paul died in 1906, and did not realize his dream of getting the bridge built.
- ❧ A German company was commissioned to build it, completing it in 1909. (Chapter 14)

First Iron Bridge Across the Yellow River

Picture from an old family album

Taken on the occasion of the inauguration of the bridge in the summer of 1909.

Following our 2005 visit, This picture has been in newspapers, a documentary on CCTV-2, and an hour-long program on Lanzhou TV.

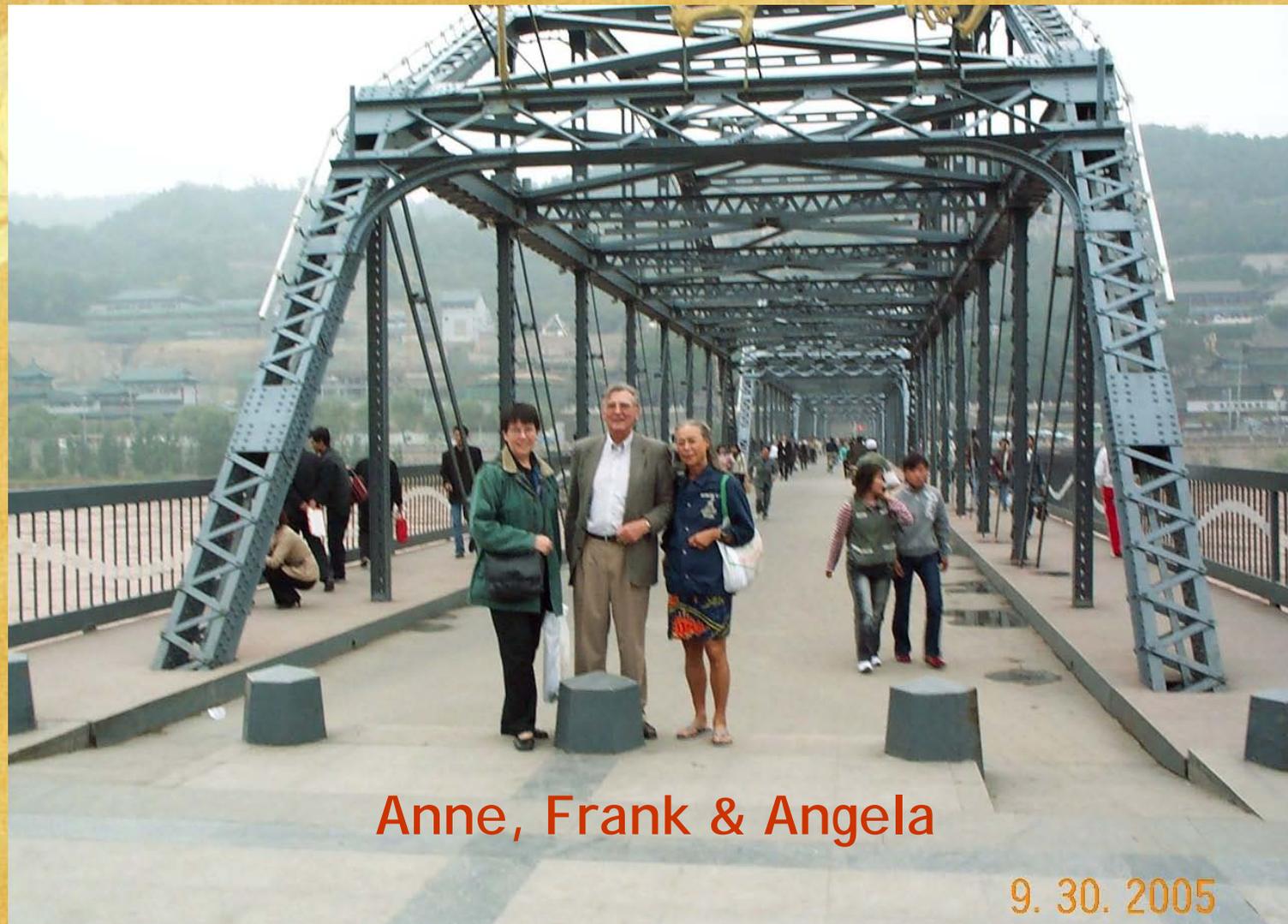
Paul's descendants were able to participate in 100th anniversary celebration.



Lanzhou Landmark



- The first iron bridge across the Yellow River at Lanzhou has been re-named “Sun Yat Sen Bridge” (Zhong Shan Qiao).
- Reinforcing arches were added in 1954, and is now only open to pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- It is a tourist attraction featured on many souvenirs, like postcards, stamps, gourds, books and snuff bottles, and you can get your picture taken on it.



Anne, Frank & Angela

9. 30. 2005

- Three of Paul Spingaerd's great grandchildren at the First Iron Bridge across the Yellow River (Huang He di Yi Qiao).
- We are: Anne Megowan of Los Angeles, Frank Keet of Perth, Australia, and Angela Elliott of Vancouver.

On our 2005 "Find Relatives" Journey



The Zhang sisters of Lanzhou



L–R: Philomene, Anna (“Nainai”), and Marie at Remy and Anna’s home in Beijing.



Meeting Zhang Relatives in Lanzhou

- Three of Paul's sons married women of the Zhang family of Lanzhou. Remy married Anna, Alphonse married her aunt, and John married Anna's younger sister.
- When contact was made, we learned that our Chinese relatives had been looking for us since 1949. Meeting our Zhang relatives was an overwhelming highlight of our trip.

Nainai's fan in Venezuela

My grandmother left China with her daughter, Marguerite in the late 1940's. They lived in Tokyo with another daughter, Marie, for a couple of years, then moved to Venezuela where two other daughters were. She died there without ever seeing China again.

This fan was found among her belongings, and the poem she inscribed on it was about homesickness, based on a poem by Dufu. It was translated by my uncle Zhang Da Quan in Xian:



HER SIGNATURE

A petal's fall betokens hasty
spring's decline;
Now myriads whirl in wind as
many woes of mine.
So relish what remain on
twigs ere they are gone,
And to the full indulge in cups
and cups of wine.
A villa once hilarious, there
kingfishers room;
Stone unicorns lie sideways
on a lofty tomb.
If nature goes this way, make
merry while I may;
Why care for empty fame,
with all my life in gloom?

Signed
Zhang Ziyin,
my grandmother's Chinese name

Uncle Zhang Daquan in Xian



Family in Lanzhou

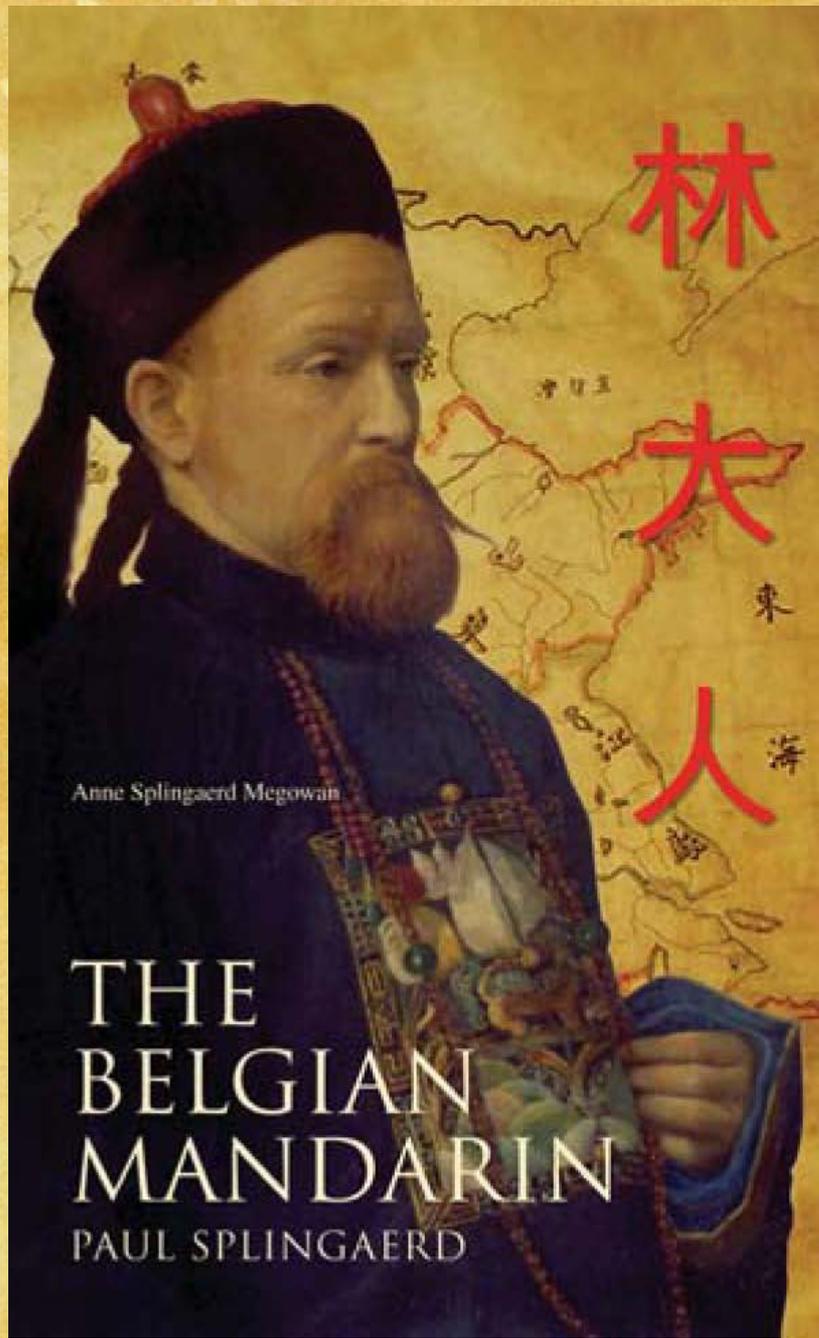
My Aunt Zhang Jian Qin (in brown jacket) is the daughter of my grandmother's brother.

Her husband, Liu Guang Hua, standing behind her, is a history professor at Lanzhou University. Thanks to his connections, I met with the Archivists of the Province.



At a Meeting arranged through relatives, I was given documents that mentioned Lin Fuchen (Paul) and his family, And I shared my pages on what I knew about Paul's life and involvement with the province of Gansu. The meeting was followed by a banquet, and a tour of the city to visit places touched by the Spingaerds.





PAUL SPLINGAERD
**THE BELGIAN
MANDARIN**

BY ANNE S. MEGOWAN

For more info about the book:

www.splingaerd.net

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local bookstore

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Contact Anne at:
anne@splingaerd.net



Found in Venezuela

The robe that Catherine wore in the photograph on page 83 of the book is being kept in remarkably good shape by my cousin Ana Clara Paternoster in Caracas. Her grandmother was Paul and Catherine's daughter, Lucie.

(This picture was sent to me after the publication of the book)

The background is a textured, golden-brown color. In the top-left and top-right corners, there are decorative floral motifs consisting of several light green leaves arranged in a fan-like pattern, with faint, larger-scale floral patterns in the background.

The End