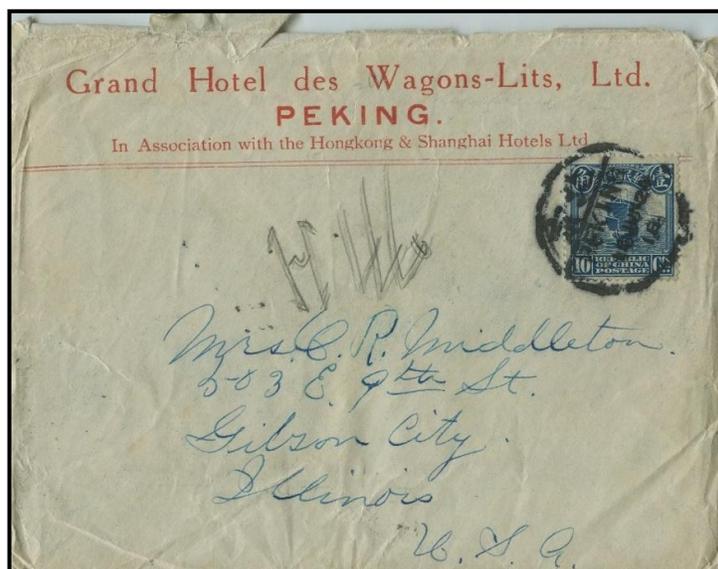


Doc and Laura Ellen Hoover of Gibson City, Illinois: Letters from China, 1923-24

Along with their passport applications, a souvenir record, and a couple of photos

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In 1923, Laura Ellen Hoover (mother of Sibyl Hoover Middleton) convinced William A. Hoover, her husband and a dentist, to go to China for a year. They had a dentist friend, Mr. Ruland, who worked at the Presbyterian Mission Hospital in Nanking (now known as Nanjing), China. Doc Hoover, as he was called, agreed to spend a year in China, helping out in the dental department of this hospital. On October 18, 1923, Doc and Laura Ellen sailed

from San Francisco on the steamship, *SS President Lincoln*. They landed in Shanghai, some 8,000 miles from Gibson City, Illinois, to begin their year abroad. Doc Hoover was 62 and Laura Ellen, 56. There were no international telephone lines, no cell phones, no e-mail, no internet, no Skype, no Facebook or other social media. People communicated with family back home through letters.

The following are excerpts from letters written to their daughter, Sibyl and her husband, Midd (Oscar Ray Middleton). They offer a fascinating glimpse of China in the early twentieth century, albeit from a Westerner's perspective.

From a letter written by Doc Hoover : Nanking, China, November 10, 1923

Dear Midd,

You will be interested in knowing how I spent my first day in China. We landed at Shanghai at 11:00 A.M. Mr Ruland...met us at the boat. We got through the customs and caught the 12:30 train for Nanking. This is considered almost a miracle here because the Chinese don't rush things. We arrived here at 8:00 and then had a five mile ride in an open carriage to the Ruland's...The first day, after breakfast...went over to the hospital, which is well equipped, especially the dental department...This afternoon, we are going down to see about getting a rickshaw. A good one will cost me about \$75 and will be my "Buick". My chauffeur will cost me the princely sum of \$8 per month and will be ready to come up any time...We are going down this afternoon to be vaccinated and inoculated for

typhoid, which is quite necessary...(On the subject of money), one does not give a man a coin expecting change back. You must know what a thing is worth.

Note: No letters written between the date above and February 8 have survived. From letters written in the spring, it is evident that Doc and Laura Ellen made trips to Manila in the Philippines and to Hong Kong.

Excerpts from letters written by Laura Ellen from China:

February 8, 1924

... this is Friday the first week of [the] Chinese New Year. The week has been disagreeable and today, instead of being "the fairest" is surely the foulest ...It is raining...just saw Low-wan, the coolie going toward the gate carrying his paper umbrella over him with one hand, the other holding up the skirt of his long gown, just like a woman at home. He has a very dignified walk.

...Mr. Parker left this morning...he took a rickshaw instead of a carriage to go to the ferry five miles away. It is cheaper of course. He is a big man and had a big suitcase and a steamer rug with him... [The rickshaw] was pulled by a medium-sized man, going at a trot for about 50 cents (for the five miles). Poor things. They are so desperately poor, they are glad to get work to do. There are so many rickshaw men. When they can get nothing else to do, they pay a few coppers a day to rent the rickshaw and are ready for hire.

Hubugiai, Nanking, March 5, 1924

...that reminds me. We have our passage booked on the Empress of Asia for the 5th of July...

Hubugiai, Nanking, March 16, 1924

Dear Sibyl and Family

...We got the ivory in Hong Kong and, coming back, I got another pair of bracelets, a little larger and more elaborate than the one I sent you, so I am going to trade with you when I get home. Your wrist is larger than mine. You can wear it better...Hope Midd has his water pipe long before this. They are curious, aren't they. A few days ago, I saw a good-looking Chinese woman standing in her door smoking one. I think some of the women have sworn off smoking since Chinese New Year's, as I haven't seen very many of them doing it lately. Or perhaps it is because I have been out so little. The weather continues horrid.

The sun shone part of yesterday. Dad and Mr. Ruland had a game of golf and Dad left his clubs at the club. This morning was nice, so he put on his knickers and sneaked off. Made three rounds he said. He tried to nap (after) luncheon, but could not, so he got in his rickshaw and has gone on an exploration trip. He brought peanuts and oranges home this morning and a few days ago it was a pound of the best Canadian cheese and English tinned crackers. They taste mighty good up in our little room. We were hungry for cheese. They never have it. [Sister] Nell has gotten the tea I sent her. She thinks it fine...

Nanking, China, March 17, 1924

Dearest Sibyl,

...This morning I went to the hospital. Some of the things I saw on the way...First, a woman with bound feet pulling the front of a heavily loaded wheelbarrow. A man behind did the pushing. Then a woman standing in a doorway smoking a pipe about a yard long. Next, a well-dressed man attending to a private affair in the street. You never go anywhere but you see that. Then a couple of boys, possibly eight or ten years old, shoveling a little manure into small baskets for the garden. The garden plots are being spaded now and the streets are kept clean by women and children mostly who gather up everything.

...The dinner last night was the very nicest one we have attended. There were twelve people at table, [including] the British consul and his wife, two teachers from Gin Ling college, an Episcopal missionary and his wife...The dinner we had was the best we have had anywhere. Music, the entertainment...Mr. Pratt, the consul did a funny stunt...he has been a consul in China for more than ten years.

...This morning Mrs. Ruland and I went to the south city to shop. I got black sateen for a petticoat and white linen for a dress and for some luncheon napkins. Almost made my skirt, after taking a nap this afternoon.

...Sunday your dad played two rounds of golf and did about four or five mile's walk on the city wall before dinner, and another four or five miles in the afternoon...

...This afternoon at 4:30 I went with Miss Walker to a Lenten service at the Episcopal mission church. [There were] only ten or twelve there. It was a simple prayer service.

...Bless Billy Sam's heart. I'd like to see him when he gets the grass cape and his Chinese clothes. I am going to try and get the stamps he lacks for those series...

Nanking, China, April 1, 1924

Dearest Sibyl,

We had April showers last night to begin the month of April. It is a little warmer today. I have a bunch of apricot blossoms in my room and Mr. Drummond at the hospital told me the cherry trees are in bloom too...I met Dad at a new Chinese restaurant between here and the hospital at 12:30 and we had delicious chow mein and new bamboo shoots, tea and an orange each to top it off...

...On the way [to Dad's office] we saw a horse burned before a house door, a nice big paper one and with it a paper sedan chair. We learned that an old man had died and these things were to accompany him or his spirit on its journey.

I learned the other day of a custom among the woman that compares with plucking the eyebrows at home. The girls wear straight cut bangs until they marry. Then their hair is plucked to a straight line from temple to temple and they keep it pulled so (that) the hair is straight back to the knot at the neck. I have looked closely at women on the street since being told this and can see where the hair is pulled out. They have no "widow's peaks" here.

(Regarding a dress and petticoat for Laura Ann) The petticoat you can tuck any length or let her wear it for a hot weather dress with a wide ribbon sash. The silk tape in the lace is made by patients in the hospital and is sold to help pay the expense of their being there.

The ivory is for you. We got it in Hong Kong as we came back from Manila... Will send another can of tea before long.

Hubugiai, Nanking, April 7, 1924

Dear Family,

It is time to begin a letter home, but there is no boat out for nearly a week. There are two mail boats in today, so we hope for a lot of letters tomorrow...

Friday afternoon, Miss Warner of the hospital staff took me to a home where they do the satin and tapestry weaving. We were in four rooms, two looms in each room and it takes two men and a boy to run each loom. They were weaving brocaded satin at two looms, another one was black satin with small gold figures in it. They showed us a piece finished and said it was for an official's robe. The weaving is done wrong side up. You cannot see what the tapestry is going to look like. We saw several children spinning the silk in the courtyard. The rooms looked rather well furnished. Miss Warner said it was a fairly well-to-do home. I could not tell if the floor was hard dirt or small cobble stones. There were no rugs of any kind on the floor and the rooms are so dark.

Yesterday, we had a carriage and drove outside the north city wall to Lotus Lake. The lake looks more like a swamp than anything else. There were lots of small boats on it, both paddled and poled as to modes of locomotion. ...The country was lovely, grass getting green, and trees in bloom and hills and purple mountains in the distance.

Coming back, we stopped to see the Bell Temple, a small one with a small pagoda of three stories. In the first story, there is a huge gold idol and several small ones with mats in front of them to kneel on for worship, or to pay your respects to them...The second story contained four rooms. The first had a huge tub affair for burning incense in it, with mats to kneel (on).... In a small room back of this one are the figures of three women sisters. They are quite lifelike in size, features and real hair, dressed in Chinese fashion even to flowers in [the hair]. Each [woman] has a fan and a handkerchief in [her] hands, which are resting on a table in front of [her]. Their gowns are much embroidered and looked clean...

And now the story... In the early part of the Ming dynasty, a high official ordered a bell maker to cast a big bell, or three, some stories say. The bells were cast several times, but the tones were not good, or something was wrong each time. The three daughters, being told that a living sacrifice would give the bells what was needed, each threw herself into the molten metal for a bell. The bells came out perfect in tone. Two have disappeared, but the one at the Bell Temple stands in a temple by itself in the court. It has no clapper, but is struck by a wooden mallet. It weighs 60,000 pounds and is so big you cannot see how it was hung, any more than you can guess how the pyramids were built. The tone is deep and good. But why anyone should pray to these images of women for sons and to be healed of diseases is beyond me. They are given gifts by the healed and their hair and clothes [are] taken care of by grateful women. I'd like to go back again. The place was so interesting...

Again, we have a new cook. This one does not abuse the amah, but his cooking costs about one fourth more than the other one, who was suspected of graft, charging us almost twice what he paid for a half dozen donkey bells when doing his morning marketing...[The former cook] discharged himself "to save face". This new man has been here three days. He is on trial; the muffins for breakfast this morning were fine.

At the pond [at the] back of this compound, I can see and hear a woman washing clothes, another one near her is washing a couple baskets of rice. The day before yesterday was warm and I saw three small boys stark naked playing in this same pool... All of this can be seen from my room balcony...

April 10, 1924

My dear (Sibyl),

...And now about our going home around the world. For me there are two good reasons against it. Dad wants to get home and would stop any place only as long as the boat was in port. Those boats, the different lines, each make half a dozen ports. No one of them makes all of the stops I'd want to make. And it is the hot season when we leave here. India is having the plague or cholera now. Lots of people are dying. We are planning a boat trip up the Yangtze to Hankow soon, and to Peking the first of June with several stops on the way back to Shanghai. I want to leave the steamer at Kobe and cross Japan by rail, stopping at Tokyo on the way to Yokohama. We take an Empress to Vancouver. Dad will stop with me at Nell's for a week. I am trying to get him to go down to Waterville, but doubt if he will. I am going to stay at Nell's a month or two, and you are to stay where you are until the year is up anyway. Don't worry about Dad. He will take the front room and be darned glad to get it and be at home...

The Rulands gave another dinner party tonight...It is very easy for people here to give dinners. All they have to do is write the place cards, put them where they want them and tell the cook what to get and cook. I am going to wear my black embroidered dress. I wore it to the Smith's dinner and they are going to be here, but I don't care. It's a good looking dress... I got my hair washed this week and curled. That is one big job. I have to use my electric curler by heating it over the lamp. I cannot find a curling iron in this city; I've tried ever so many places.

Nanking China, April 10, 1924

Doc Hoover wrote:

Dear Midd,

...We were passing through a narrow street, when we met a donkey train loaded with rice. The donkeys each had a long sack of rice fastened on its back and projecting a foot or two on each side. The train halted in a wider part of the street, but just as we arrived near them, the head donkey made a dash to get by and stuck fast between the wall and the carriage. It took the combined efforts of the driver of the donkeys and our driver and conductor to get it back. They were a long time doing it and spilled most of the Chinese language in the fray...

...Monday night, Mother and I went to the Community Center for a musical. We were in rickshaws. On the way, we went through one of the narrowest streets here. We met a Chinese (man who) flattened himself against the wall. Our coolies pulled by very carefully and at that we pressed against him.

...Sibyl spoke of us coming home by way of Europe, as we planned...We gave that up long ago. Either we had to shorten our trip to go earlier than this...or lengthen it so as to go home after cool weather next fall. It would be almost unendurable from now on. We had a little taste of that for three or four days on our way out here, only not as bad, for it was the last week in October. Then, the boat would only make stops at a few places so we

would be putting in an awful hot month for a few cities. Coming home by way of Vancouver, we will go the northern route, which we are told is never hot, because they get up too far north.

Nanking, China, April 22, 1924

Dearest Sibyl,

...There is a boat in tomorrow, so there may be a letter on it. Your letters always make us so happy. We think we have about the nicest children anybody could have. This [goes] for Midd too.

...I cut out a white linen dress Friday and have part of the lace whipped on it...I sew because I cannot read all of the time, you know...I had the amah here make [Laura Ann] a pair of Chinese slippers out of white and gold handmade tapestry...I am sending you a pair of carved ivory earrings. Will get the jade when we go to Peking...

Nanking, China, April 28, 1924

...Emerson Culter and his friend Mr. Yarns came Wednesday evening on their way from Peking to Shanghai... Dad took them to the Bell Temple, Drum Tower and Peicheho Temple. Mrs. Ruland. took them to Nanking University where they saw the silkworm work. The worm eggs are hatching now and all the work of it is very interesting...

Friday [afternoon], we started off in a rickshaw and our first stopover was at the compound of one of the woman who brings the tapestry to the house. We saw four of the looms in operation. Two men working a loom can only make one foot a day. Think of it. It was a typical Chinese home. There must have been a number of sons in it, judging by the number of children and women with babies in their arms, who stood around looking at us. Mr. Yarns bought \$10 worth of tapestry and everybody was pleased.

Our next stop was at the Buddhist Bell Temple...It [is known for its] colored figures, filling both sides of a big room. These figures portray all sorts of torments as punishment for the wicked. Next, we went to the Temple of the Reclining God. We were taken through corridors, three courts and up a flight of stairs into a room where his godship reclined on a couch behind glass. There is a big table in front of it for incense and a bunch of fresh peonies were on the glass frame. Downstairs, there is a wonderful room. A great big room! The walls [were] lined with tiles with figures in them, the ceiling with plain tiles. [At] each end of the room, besides the big drum and big bell, were seven-story pagodas. They were fifteen or twenty feet high. Beautiful! Between them was an immense carved table with incense burners and other things on it. This temple is the largest and best kept and altogether the wealthiest looking of any that we have been in.

Our last place [to visit] were the Ho Gardens. They say it is a home and grounds typical of a wealthy Chinese [man], with sons and grandsons and their families around him. The enclosure is quite large. The houses mostly back against the compound wall. The center is a miniature park with a big pool, rock grottos, summer houses, a canal and bridges, a small bamboo grove and all kinds of trees and shrubs. A bed of peonies was fenced all to itself...

We are planning to leave Thursday by the best boat on the Yangtze for Hankow, a noted city and four hundred miles from here. It will take six days for the round trip and give us a good idea of the country south west of Nanking...[After returning from Hankow], we will have three weeks here before leaving the first of June for Peking. Time

is going rather fast now and I feel a lot better than I did when the weather was so raw and cold. The roses and iris are beginning to bloom and the sun is shining today...

Hubugiai, Nanking May 11, 1924

...Ruth Wright asked me to come to Ming Dah and to go from there to see a Mohammedan mosque near there...The compound at Ming Dah is a big beautiful private park and garden. The roses and snapdragons are gorgeous. All of it is so well arranged, with old trees and clumps of bamboo and creeping vines...

[We went to] a Mohammedan school for girls. [There were] about 25 [girls], aged from six to ten or twelve years...studying aloud and they kept it up, visitors notwithstanding. The matron came and showed us the different rooms. The first was the bathroom (shower room). I wish you could have seen it...There were six little cubby holes, three each side of a tiny corridor, with loose board partitions and floor. The floor over a drain, a little stool in each one and the water supply was from a ...two gallon bucket suspended from the ceiling of each room. A little old stove in one end of the corridor provided heat when needed... By this time we had an audience of eight women. Four were carrying babies...They told us their religion was like ours, and they had no idols, but prayed five or six times a day with faces toward Mecca. Only women worshiped here; the mosque for men was at another place...Then we went back to the schoolroom and were asked to sit at a tea table and have tea with a bread dough small cake and a dried fruit, something like dates... The walls were hung with long scrolls covered with characters and the children's primers were in Arabic. With many bows and sa-sa's (thank you's), we got away...

With still a half an hour of daylight [we] went a very little out of our way to see the silk worms feeding in the seri culturi building of the university. They feed the 1,250,000 worms eight times a day. They buy the leaves from the farmers. Because of the cold damp weather, the eggs did not hatch for [the farmers]. The university will take care to have the silkworm eggs of good stock for them next year. The larger worms look like a medium sized tomato worm. I am going back to see them wind the cocoon later...

Nanking, China May 25, 1924

...Miss Hyde, one of our missionaries, took me to see our "Door of Hope", a rescue home and school for girls. We had the door unlocked for us by a policeman stationed near. (There is a temporary refuge for girls at each police headquarters, for slave girls who run away from cruel treatment.) It [Door of Hope] was a very interesting place...A matron...shows us a dorm, with three beds in it, each one was like our high four posters with white curtains all around it. The curtains looped back from the side toward the middle of the room, showing the made up bed with the covers rolled and placed at the back making it look somewhat like a couch,. Underneath there was a shelf fastened to the bed in some way. There was a washstand in the room. Next was the kitchen. They were cooking rice...and duck eggs in the shell...There were four sewing machines in [another] room...Then the matron showed us a dining room with lovely table and chairs, evidently for those in charge of the home. We were introduced to two old Chinese gentlemen, one of whom asked my age. [This] is perfectly proper here, really quite the thing to do.

...We went to Dr. and Mrs. Maclins for dinner. They have been here for thirty-six years. I only wish I had met these people sooner. They are so very interesting and know so many things I want to learn.

Tian (Tsinan?), China, June 3, 1924

Dearest Sibyl,

We left Nanking yesterday morning on the Blue Express, the best train in China, we are told. It is the fast train between Nanking and Peking. It carries soldiers and the search lights sweeping the country on each side of the train ought to "throw the fear" into any bandits that might be tempted with the thought of loot. We arrived here safely at midnight.

...The first interesting thing we saw from the train was the farmers transplanting the rice from the seedling bed to the paddies. They prepare the ground with a buffalo pulling a sort of a roller through the water. Over it, they plant the rice in water, ankle deep. We would never have rice if we had to do it. Then came the fields where they were harvesting wheat. The crop is poor for lack of rain. There were gleaners in the fields and in some they were getting every inch of the straw. They use everything for fuel.

...It rained last night ...and was very cloudy when we started up Shantung's Sacred Mountain "Tai Shau". We had only gone a mile or more when it began to rain. Fortunately, we were near a temple and went into it for shelter...We had four bearers for each of our chairs; two carried and two walked and rested. They changed places without putting the chair to the ground. The eight were good-natured fellows, but not one spoke English. We all made signs and got along beautifully. When it thundered, they looked at the sky and waved their hands up and down. "It was going to rain", and it did each time. So after taking refuge in two or three temples...we decided to turn back. I think we were a little more than halfway up the mountain. We had some beautiful views and the farming and houses of the peasants we saw was worth the trip. We cannot regret the rain for it is so badly needed.

Tsinanfei (Tientsin?), China, June 5, 1924

We arrived here [on a second class train]. Second class was the best to be had and it should have been called third class. We were glad we took it, as it was the only way we could have seen the part of China we saw. All other trains go through in the night. We skirted mountains all of the way here. Much of the land in the valleys looks like miniature grand canyons, but all of it is terraced and something grown on it, except where the rocks cover the ground. Many patches were the size of a room. They stack the wheat around a common threshing floor in each village, or so it looked. The village houses are made of mud and thatched with straw... The city [Tsinanfei] is much more prosperous looking than Nanking. We went through the University grounds yesterday...

...I saw a little girl of six or eight years with bound feet last evening. The first [so young] I have seen. I saw plenty of girls of fifteen or more hobbling along, and never saw one in Nanking...

...The Parkers are having in two couples for dinner this evening. They have the house and the servants. She only gives the orders to the cook and, presto, it is done...I hear a whistle now (2:00), calling the coolies to work. They have been having their noonday nap. They begin work about 6:00 in the morning and work late.

Peking, China, June 8, 1924 (Written from the Grand Hotel, Des Wagons-Lits)

Dearest Sibyl,

We arrived here yesterday at 2:30, after a nice journey from Tsinanfei...After resting and a hot bath, we took a rickshaw ride out the south gate of the Tartar city down into the Chinese city...[The next morning], the first thing we went to was our Presbyterian mission. They have a large place, a beautiful compound of homes, a church, boys' school, girls' school, hospital for women...It is near the north wall of the Tartar city, so we went to see the gate and went up on top of the wall. There, the view over the north part of the city is fine, also of the country outside the wall...Next, we saw the bell tower and drum tower. The latter is a wonderful structure. Both are hundreds of years old. Coming back to the hotel, we came by the wall and moat of the Forbidden City...After resting,, we went to the Chinese City to see the Temple of Heaven and the wonderful Altar of Heaven. Both are of white marble with dragons and emblems carved in the marble. We went to the Temple of Agriculture, where the emperor prays once a year in the spring that they might have abundant harvests. This place is something of a pleasure park, beautiful old trees and flower beds and acres of outdoor tea houses. We stopped and enjoyed a pot of hot tea and a dish of apricots.

[Tuesday] I was too tired to catalogue the day's doings, so will do it now. We [went] to the National Art Museum, in the Forbidden City. It is in buildings that were formerly used by the Emperor. The collection is of bronzes, porcelain, ivories and embroideries. All [of it is] Chinese, and valued at \$300,000,000. Our guide took us to one of the throne rooms here also.

...[Wednesday] morning, our objective was the Pei Hai (Winter Palace), again inside of the Forbidden City. We had to get permission to go here. The palace is a succession of rooms, big and little, with nothing in them now..Then we crossed one of the lakes in an old boat, poled by one lone Chinese to find the Dragon Screen, among more palaces...The screen is really a wall of glazed tile, both sides (showing the) same nine dragons...about 70 feet long...The roofs of all of the buildings, the gates and even the tiles topping the walls of the Forbidden City are glazed tiles. Showing through big cypress trees, it makes a gorgeous picture. The Buddhist Temple near the Dragon Screen is very old and called "The Buddhas of the Mountain"...

[June 11]...The drive to the Summer Palace is about 11 miles. The buildings are disappointing, as they are a succession of one story buildings. [However], their setting around the lakes and among the hills (trees on the hills) is very beautiful. From there [we went to the] Jadestone Pagodas, up to a Buddhist Temple [of the] Laughing God...About two miles from the city, we stopped at the Big Bell Temple. The temple is the usual thing.

...I've had a hot tub and rest. Also a cup or two of tea in the tea room and am quite fit again.

Peking, June 12, 1924

Dear Sibyl,

...This morning we went to the very old astronomical observatory and up on the top of it to see the things the Germans carried away in 1900 and returned after the World War [I]. We went up on top of the wall to see them. From there, we could see the green

tile roofs of the Rockefeller Foundation Hospital...[At the hospital] we saw the dental department...the last word in efficiency and up-to-date.

... From there we went to the Buddhist Lama Temple. It is a big place...with five hundred images of Buddhas in the buildings. The big one is seventy four feet high and carved out of one big tree trunk. He is so big, the Temple he is in was built around him...There were beggars galore around this place. There are so many here, that we put on a stony look and try to ignore them. From the Lama Temple we went to the Confucian Temple. We did not go in, when we learned there was a fee at every gate. All of the temples are so much alike. I've had just about enough of Buddhist temples to last me the rest of my life.

Peking, June 14, 1924

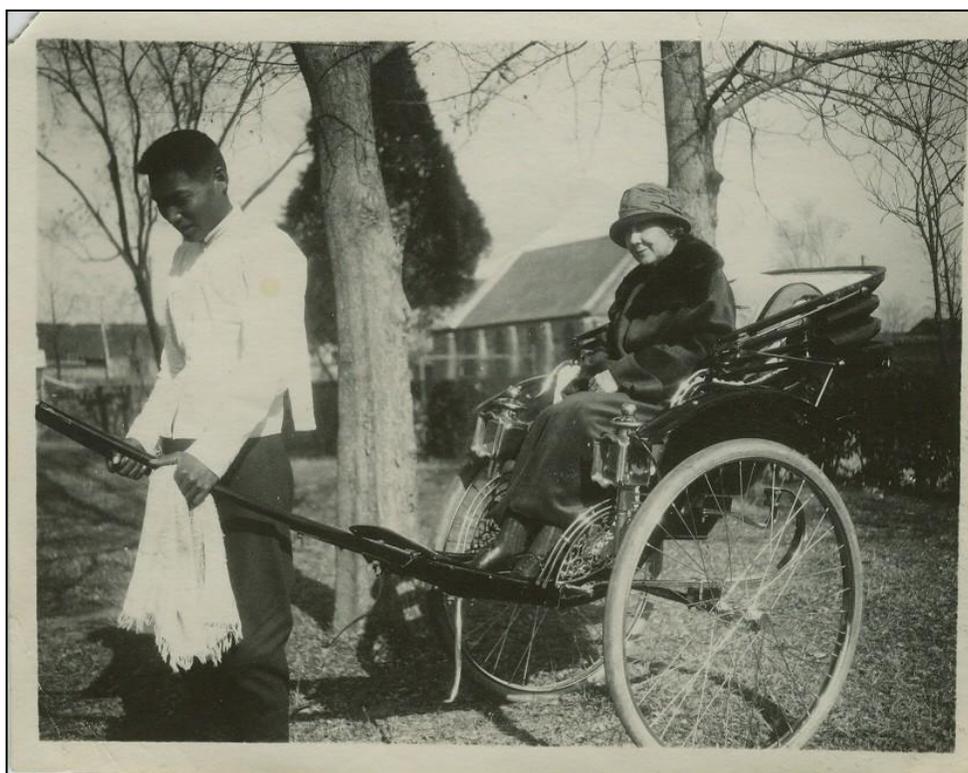
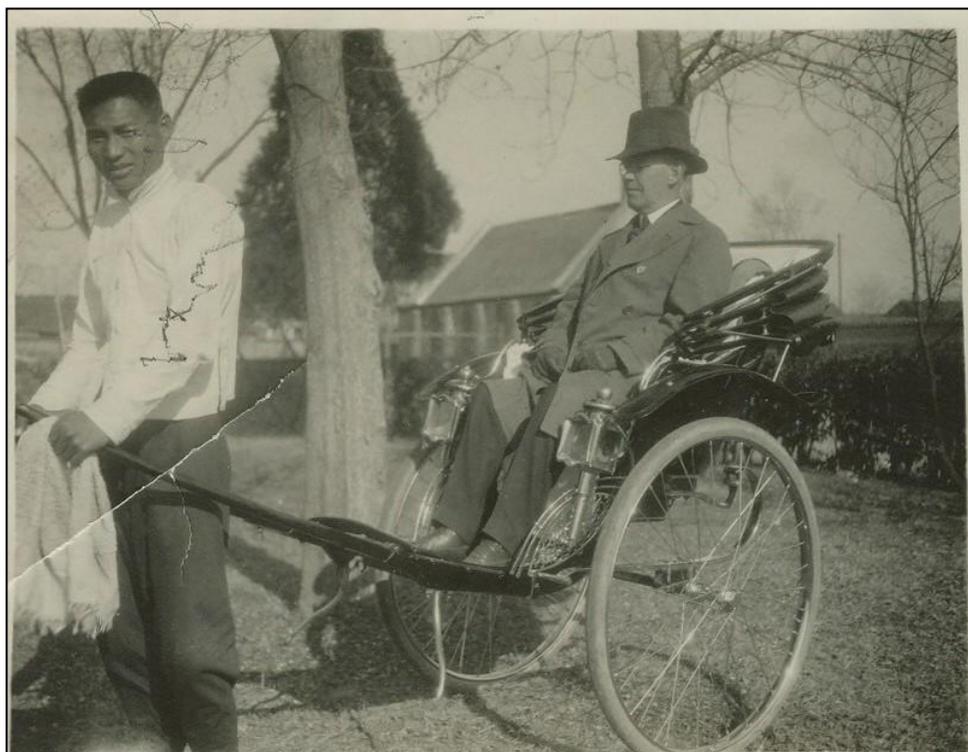
...We went to the Great Wall yesterday. Leaving the hotel by rickshaw, we arrived at the station outside of the north wall of the city, four miles in fifty minutes. The train left the station at 8:39. We arrived at the Great Wall station at 11:30. The country we passed through looks very much like some of our western country: not very good and very stony. As we neared the mountains, Nankou Pass is grand. At the Wall, we took mountain chairs (four bearers to each one) to go up to the Wall. After we got to the Wall, we had to carry ourselves up as far as we wanted to follow the Wall on the crest of the mountains. I took Dad's arm and the arm of a pigtailed Chinaman, one of my chair bearers, and got up quite a way. When we stopped and ate our lunch, one of my chair boys asked me for what lunch was left. There was a lot of it. You should have seen them grab into the basket when I gave it to them. They even ate the kernel of the apricot seed. Dad walked to a very high point on the Wall. I was very well satisfied with the view I had of Mongolia, the Pass and different parts of the Wall to be seen. We took the train back at 3:00...Our [rickshaw] boys had stayed at the station all day, waiting for us. We pay them a dollar a day and have them by the week...

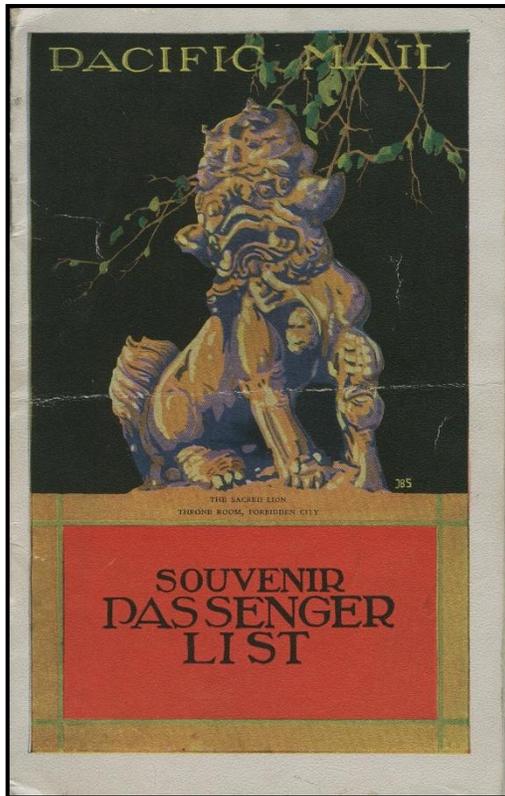
I think, my dear, that we have done all of the sightseeing in Peking that we are going to do. It has been raining all day...This may be the beginning of the rainy season here. Anyway, the rain is badly needed...We leave tomorrow morning for Pei Ti. Mrs. Moc insisted that we come...My next letter will be from there.

There are no more letters written from China in the possession of Susan McNelley, great-granddaughter of the Hoovers. On July 6, 1924, Doc and Laura Ellen sailed from Shanghai on the *Empress of China*. They arrived at the Port of Victoria in Vancouver, B.C. on July 21. Laura Ellen died in 1928 and William in 1937, both in Gibson City.

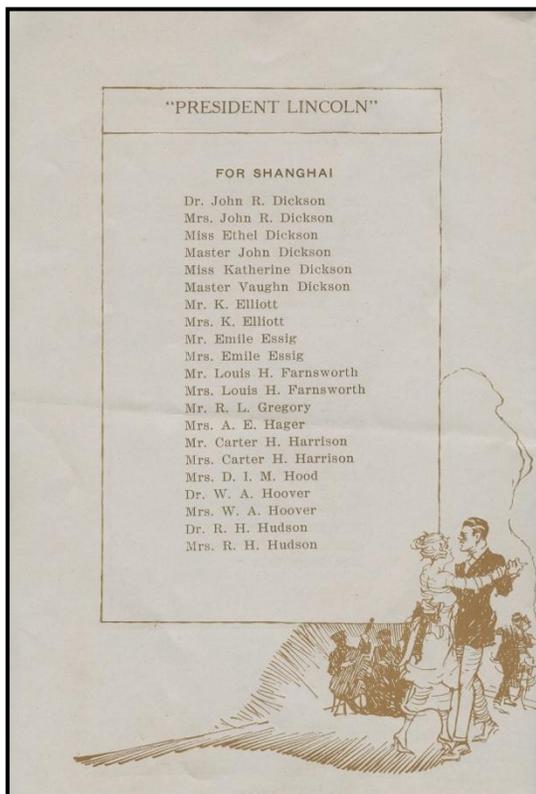
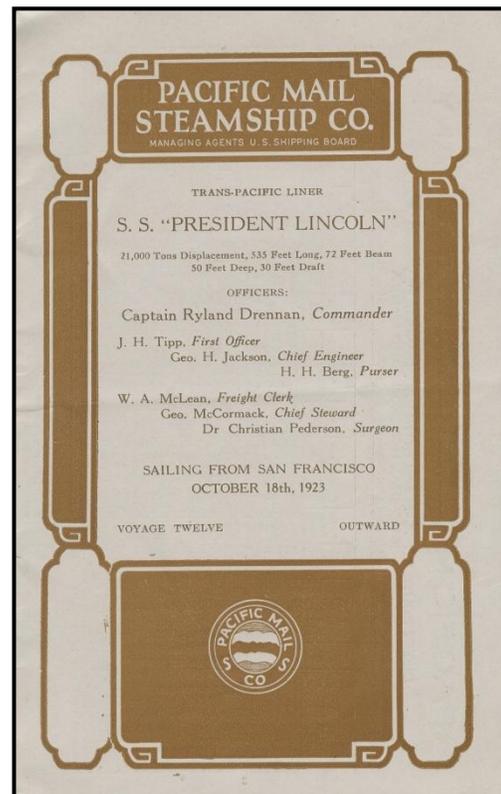
In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria in what would become the Second Sino-Japanese War. The capture of Nanking in December of 1937 resulted in the raping of thousands of women and the mass murder of up to 300,000 Chinese in that city. It has been referred to as the Rape of Nanking, one of the more horrific incidents of the war.

Doc and Laura Ellen Hoover in China (1923-1924)





On October 18, 1923, Doc and Laura Ellen Hoover sailed from San Francisco on the steamship SS President Lincoln. They landed in Shanghai, some 8,000 miles from Gibson City, Illinois, to begin their year abroad.



Passport Application for Laura E. Hoover, dated September 29, 1923

348494

The original and each copy of an application for a passport must have attached to it a copy of the applicant's photograph. A loose signed photograph of the applicant must accompany the application. The photograph must be on thin paper, should have a light background, and be not over three inches in size.

*If this blank must be completely filled out. The legal fee of nine dollars, in currency or postal money order, must accompany the application. A woman's application must state whether she is married or not, and a married woman must state whether her husband is a native citizen. The rules should be carefully read before making the application to the Department of State, Division of Passport Control, Washington, D. C.

[EXEMPT OF 1922.]
[FORM FOR NATIVE CITIZEN.]

The total cost of a passport is \$14.00. It is unnecessary to pay any other fee of any person in connection with the making out or execution of this application or the obtaining of the passport. The clerk of court or Passport Agent before whom this application is executed will give the applicant all necessary information and guidance.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
PASSPORT
OCT 1 1923
ISSUED
WASHINGTON

STATE OF Illinois)
COUNTY OF Ford) ss.
I, Laura E. Hoover, a NATIVE AND LOYAL CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES, hereby apply to the Department of State, at Washington, for a passport.

I solemnly swear that I was born at Singer's, Glenn, in the State of Virginia, on or about the 28th day of August, 1867; that my ~~husband~~ William A. Hoover was born in Greenville, Ohio, and is now residing at Gibson City, Illinois, [that he emigrated to the United States from the part of _____ on or about _____, 1____; that he resided 62 years, uninterruptedly, in the United States, from 1____ to 1____, at _____; that he was naturalized as a citizen of the United States before the _____ Court of _____, at _____, I _____ shown by the accompanying Certificate of Naturalization]; that I have resided outside of the United States at the following places for the following periods:
Visited Germany, 1907-1908, from _____ to _____, from _____ to _____

and that I am domiciled in the United States, my permanent residence being at Gibson City, in the State of Illinois, where I follow the occupation of Housewife. My last passport was obtained from Washington D.C. (U.S.A), on October 9, 1919, and was NOT USED. I am about to go abroad temporarily; and I intend to return to the United States within 18 months with the purpose of residing and performing the duties of citizenship therein; and I desire a passport for use in visiting the countries hereinafter named for the following purpose:

<u>China</u> <small>(Name of country.)</small>	<u>Travel (Accompany husband)</u> <small>(Object of visit.)</small>
<u>Japan</u> <small>(Name of country.)</small>	<u>Travel</u> <small>(Object of visit.)</small>
_____ <small>(Name of country.)</small>	_____ <small>(Object of visit.)</small>

I intend to leave the United States from the port of Seattle, sailing on board the Boat unknown on about October 15, 1923.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

Further, I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion: So help me God.

Laura E. Hoover
(Signature of applicant.)

Sworn to before me this 29th day of September, 1923.

John P. Russell
Clerk of the _____ Circuit Court at Paxton, Illinois.

FEE REC'D. OCT - 1 1923

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* A person born in the United States should submit a birth or baptismal certificate with his application, or if the birth was not recorded, affidavits from the attending physician, parents, or other person having sufficient knowledge to be able to testify as to the place and date of the applicant's birth.
† If the applicant's father was born in this country, lines should be drawn through the blanks in brackets. 1-24
[OVER.]