

Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association Timeline

Time: 19th Century

During the 19th century China underwent economic and political disintegration. From the Opium War in 1839 onwards the Chinese Empire experienced intense pressure from imperialist powers to open its doors to economic expansion of every sort. China was subjected to repeated humiliation and punitive indemnities as a result of the Unequal Treaties. The country was being dismembered as the imperialist powers carved off spheres of influence.

Time: 1858

The Treaty of Tientsin supplements the previous Unequal Treaties by providing, among other things, the right of foreigners to travel in the interior of China, allowing missionaries and others into Shanxi Province.

Time: 1878

Students at the Oberlin Theological Seminary are inspired by the lectures of Judson Smith, professor of Church History, to “go forth” to foreign missions.

Time: January 5, 1881

Martin Luther Stimson writes to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and volunteers a group of Oberlin Theological Seminary students for mission work, preferably in China. The group is referred as the “Oberlin Band.”

Time: Fall 1881

Stimson and wife Emily Brooks Hall Stimson, sister of Charles Martin Hall (OC Class of 1885), embark for China. In the fall of 1882 they are joined by several other missionaries.

Time: July 1883

Following land surveys, the Oberlin Band rents premises in Taigu and two years later in Fenzhou. They practice street corner and itinerant evangelism, and build chapels, small schools, orphanages, medical clinics and opium refuges.

Time: 1890

H. H. Kung of Taigu enters the mission school. He studies there for 8 years before entering Oberlin College.

Time: 1895

China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, resulting in the loss of Korea and Taiwan, further threatens to "cut China up like a melon" amongst imperialist powers.

Time: 1899

The Boxer Uprising (*yihe yundong*) emerges in Shandong Province in north China. The Boxers are primarily villagers who practice rituals and martial arts that they believe would allow them to drive foreigners and foreign influence from their land. They first rise against Chinese Christian converts who are their neighbors. Then the uprising moves on Beijing. After it receives wavering approval from the (non-Chinese) Manchu Imperial Government, they attack foreigners in and around Beijing, in Shandong, and in Shanxi Province.

Time: Summer of 1900

Boxers kill the members of the "Oberlin Band," their families, and many Chinese Christians.

Time: 1903

Oberlin College dedicates the Memorial Arch in memory of Oberlin graduates and their families killed in the Boxer Rebellion at the inauguration of President Henry Churchill King.

Time: 1907

After completing his Oberlin B.A. in 1906 and an M.A. in Finance at Yale, H.H. Kung returns to Taigu with the support of Oberlin College President King and Kung's 1906 classmates. Kung becomes the founding principal of the Ming Hsien School, named in honor of the Chinese Christians and missionaries who were killed.

Time: January 30, 1908

The Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association is founded to support the Ming Hsien School. College President Henry Churchill King serves as Chair. Annual drives are organized to raise money for the Shanxi schools; Shansi Day in Finney Chapel is established.

H.H. Kung is instrumental in Shansi's founding and he remains a staunch and ardent supporter of Oberlin's educational programs throughout his life.

Time: 1911

Sun Yat-sen's Nationalists overthrow the Qing Dynasty and declare the Republic of China.

Time: 1915

The Tank Home for Children of Foreign Missionaries in Oberlin welcomes "thirty young people, representing missionary families in India, China, Japan, Turkey and Micronesia, with one boy from Persia ranging in age from nine to twenty-one."

Time: 1917-1923

The New Culture Movement inspires scholars to call for the transformation of traditional Chinese culture to one that is based on global and western standards.

Time: 1918

Austria and Germany surrender to end World War I; Japan occupies part of Manchuria.

The first Oberlin student, Lewis Davis, goes to Taigu as a Shansi representative, followed by his brother John.

Time: May 4th, 1919

The May 4th Movement is started by Chinese students in response to the Treaty of Versailles that transferred rights of Shandong to Japan. Begun in Beijing, the movement spreads to other cities and students and workers boycott Japanese goods.

Time: 1921

The Chinese Communist Party is established.

Time: 1927

Chinese scholars come to Oberlin College, marking the beginning of the visiting scholars program.

Shansi Representative Raymond T. Moyer, OC Class of 1921, is named head of the new agricultural department at the Ming Hsien School.

Time: 1928

The Re-unification of China as The Republic of China occurs under the leadership of Chiang Kai Shek. H. H. Kung serves as Minister of Industry and Commerce in the Nanjing government, then Minister of Finance in 1933.

First female representative, Esther Church, joins the other Shansi representatives in Taigu.

Time: 1929

Japan Student Club of Oberlin College is established.

Time: 1930

Shansi Representatives in Asia: 6. Shansi Visiting Scholars at Oberlin: 1

Time: 1931

Ming Hsien launches an industrial department to introduce simple technologies, such as more effective plows for farming in rural Shanxi Province.

Wu Shouming establishes the Department of Rural Service in nearby Guanjiapu village, where students teach literacy and public health, organize a rural credit cooperative and hold periodic clinics and other public service events. Wu travels to Oberlin and stays from 1939 to 1941 as a Visiting Scholar.

Time: 1932

Aisin-Gioro Puyi, the last emperor of China, is given the role of puppet leader of Manchukuo by the Japanese Empire.

Time: 1934

Chinese Communist “Long March” begins.

Time: 1937

Japanese invade China – Nanjing Massacre occurs.

Ming Hsien students and faculty flee Taigu as Japanese troops advance southward, beginning Ming Hsien’s own version of the famous long march. They escape westward to Xi’an and finally move the school to Jintang and Chengdu in Sichuan Province for the duration of the war, an epic story called “The Trek.”

Time: 1940

Japanese install puppet regime in Nanjing.

Shansi Reps in Asia: 7. Shansi Visiting Scholars at Oberlin: 1. During the early 1940s the Ming Hsien School enjoys its best years in a family castle near Jintang.

Time: 1941

Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor; U.S. declares war on Japan and Germany.

Time: 1945

World War II ends; Oberlin loses 75 people during the war. Ming Hsien is caught in the chaos of the civil war between Nationalists and Communists. Efforts to return to Shanxi are thwarted.

Time: 1946

Obirin Gakuen in Japan is founded by Yasuzo Shimizu (OC GST 1926).

H.H. Kung establishes a junior college and then a college in Jintang, called Ming Hsien Oberlin-in-China.

Time: 1949

Chinese Nationalist forces and government retreat to Taiwan; The People's Republic of China is established on the mainland. Communist authorities take control of Ming Hsien Oberlin-in-China.

Time: 1950

Reps in Asia: 4. Shansi Visiting Scholars at Oberlin: 2. The goal of returning to Taigu in Shanxi is achieved with the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

Time: 1950s

With the outbreak of the Korean War in the Spring of 1951, all ties are severed between Oberlin Shansi and Shanxi Province. Shanxi provincial authorities take charge of the school and create what becomes Shanxi Agricultural University.

Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association creates connections with Obirin College near Tokyo, Japan; American and Lady Doak colleges in Madurai, South India; and, in 1954, with newly founded Tunghai University in Taichung, Taiwan. Oberlin builds the Ming Hsien Center at Tunghai and Oberlin Shansi buildings at American and Lady Doak colleges.

Time: 1958

"Great Leap Forward" begins in China, a plan to transform the country's agrarian economy into a modern society through industrialization and collectivization.

Time: 1960s

A regular pattern of having four representatives at the two colleges in India and four representatives at Tunghai is established. The two-year representative terms are followed by a year back at Oberlin. For a time Shansi also supports “senior representatives” or field directors at each site.

Time: 1970s

In 1970 the Indian government, for its own reasons, declares the connection between Oberlin Shansi and the two colleges no longer tenable. Shansi enters a new stage of development. New ties are inaugurated with Yonsei University in Korea, Nagoya University in Japan, Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia, and Chiangmai University in Thailand. Shansi representatives visit these locations on a regular basis.

An experimental representative program sends additional Oberlin graduates to Hong Kong, Indonesia, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal. At the same time a new emphasis on mutual exchange is inaugurated and the Shansi staff size increases with the addition of a program planner. The visiting scholars program begins to bring professors from Asia to teach classes at Oberlin as well as to study. Oberlin faculty members make frequent visits to Asia.

Time: February 1972

President Nixon visits China and reopens diplomatic relations between U.S. and China.

Time: 1976

Mao Zedong, architect and founder of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, dies.

Time: Late 1970s

At the end of the decade Shansi representatives are invited back to Lady Doak and American Colleges. The exchange program with Tunghai University is terminated.

An exchange program is set up with Shanxi Agricultural University in Taigu, and for a few years at Taiyuan Institute of Technology.

Time: Late 1970s, continued

The first letter from Mark Wu in Shanxi is received in 1979, reestablishing contact with China. Ellsworth Carlson and OSMA director Carl Jacobson ask for visas to take Oberlin people to China.

Time: 1980s

Exchange programs with Nagoya University in Japan, Yonsei University in Korea, and Chiangmai University in Thailand are terminated. A new program is inaugurated with Obirin University in Tokyo.

In 1988 a new program with Yunnan University is inaugurated. For a time it includes an undergraduate language training program.

Time: 1990s

A regular program of exchange with six universities in Asia is maintained: Lady Doak College and American College in India, Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia, Obirin University in Japan, and Yunnan University and Shanxi Agricultural University in China.

Time: 2000s

After a thorough re-evaluation of programs, Shansi establishes a three-level exchange program as its target: faculty and staff exchange, post-graduate exchange and undergraduate exchange. At each level of exchange it seeks to create mutuality and collegiality.

Shansi inaugurates undergraduate Winter Term study programs and study grants. It adds a new position of campus program coordinator, and inaugurates professional conferences. The first is in Yunnan and concerns libraries in the 21st century.

Shansi purchases Mallory House in Oberlin, Ohio to place its visiting scholars and returned fellows.

Time: 2006

Shansi inaugurates an exchange program with Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Time: 2008

Oberlin Shansi celebrates its centennial and establishes an exchange program with Jagori in Himachal Pradesh, India, a non-governmental organization for the empowerment of women.

Shansi discontinues the program with Yunnan University and establishes a three-way exchange program between Oberlin College, Beijing Normal University, and Shansi.