

**History or Her-Story? The Role of Yenching College for Women in the
Establishment of Yenching University
March 22, 2019**

Good afternoon! I'm so pleased to be here with you this afternoon.

Professor Niu invited me to come talk with you about my research into the early history of Yenching University—specifically what role the Yenching College for Woman played in the establishment and success of Yenching University—and what I've learned using the Peking University Archives.

First of all, this is not a lecture. OK? This is just a talk, a sharing. I hope it will be informative and fun.

I would like to divide this talk into three main parts, with discussion and questions at the end.

First, I will give you some **background** as to why I am studying this. How did I get interested in Yenching University?

Second, Why have I come to BeiDa to use the BeiDa Archives? What have I been looking for? What was my initial thesis? What have I discovered? And how has what I have found changed my initial thesis?

This will give me an opportunity to share with you my thoughts on historical research—history vs. her-story—using Yenching University and Yenching College for Women as an example.

Third, I'll show you some fun photographs I've found in the Archives of Yenching University in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and see what's still here on the BeiDa campus now.

Finally, I hope there is time for Q&A.

OK? Let's begin. If I speak too quickly or you don't understand something, please let me know. This isn't a lecture—it's like a conversation—so feel free to ask questions.

How did I get interested in Yenching University?

My grandmother. My grandmother taught chemistry at Yenching University in 1923-24, the year before she was married. As a child, I was fascinated by the Chinese artifacts in her home—porcelain figurines, paintings, tapestries, rugs, rice bowls—and when I was old enough to understand that there was a country called China, I decided at a very early age I wanted to go there.

Unfortunately, at the time, the US and China had no diplomatic relationship so I had no hope of going to China until my junior year in college in 1979 (yes, I'm very old). So immediately the summer of 1979 I started studying Chinese at UC Berkeley with the first Chinese teachers from Mainland China to come to the US in 50 years!

After I graduated from college, I was too poor to go to China as a tourist, and wasn't an expert in anything, so I decided to get my master's degree in teaching English and in 1982 I went with a group of teachers from UCLA to Guangzhou, 中山大学 (ZhongShanDaXue) at the Ministry of Education's 英语培训中心 (YingYuPeiXunZhongXin) to teach English to brilliant graduate students in science—biology, chemistry, physics—who were going to the US for their PhDs. I taught there for 1 year and then taught English at 复旦大学 (Fudan University) in Shanghai for another year. I went to Cornell University to study law, married my husband—a biochemist I had met at ZhongShanDaXue!—had 2 children and the whole family moved to Hong Kong in 1993 when my law firm opened a branch there.

All this time I was becoming more interested in finding out about my grandmother's experience in China. I had copies of all the letters she had written to her fiancée when she was teaching at Yenching. I also discovered that her mother, my great-grandmother (曾外祖母 zhengwaizumu) Corabel Tarr Boyd, was instrumental in establishing the Yenching College for Women. In the early 1920s a group of American Christian Women raised US\$3million to build 7 Christian colleges for women in Asia—3 in China –Yenching, Ginling, QiRu (燕京, 金陵, 齐鲁女子医学院), 3 in India and 1 in Japan. After their daughter's experience at Yenching in 1923, Corabel and her husband, William Boyd, personally contributed US\$100,000 to build a gymnasium for women at Yenching University as well as scholarships for women to study physical education.

My husband, Xie Yong, was a visiting professor at BeiDa in January 1998 and the whole family moved to Beijing. The kids went to BeiDa FuXiao and I began my research in the Archives—the first foreigner to be allowed into the Archives in 50 years! That was because the President of BeiDa at the time, President Chen JiaEr, was a friend of my husband's, as was the head of the Library, Professor Lin BeiDian (also a history professor). So they got me into the Archives to begin my research in the Yenching Archives which are still here!

You are all too young to remember but that year, 1998, was BeiDa's 100th Anniversary. And President Chen JiaEr invited my mother and me to represent our family's contribution to BeiDa at the 100th anniversary celebration in the Great Hall of

the People. [The BeiDa celebrations were held in front of the former Boyd Gymnasium for Women, donated by my great grandparents.]



Unfortunately, I had to discontinue my research when the US accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, but the then Vice President Hao Bin (also a professor in the History Department) told me, “Take the long view, like we Chinese do. There will be a time when you can come back and continue your research.”

I really didn't think much more about it until a year and ½ ago when my cousin, Ginny Rowan Smith, emailed me and said she wanted to visit BeiDa and would I show her around? She and I share the same great grandparents and she wanted to learn more about what William and Corabel Boyd had done in China.

So I got back in touch with Professor Niu and he arranged for us to meet with President Hao Ping (also originally a professor in the History Department). They arranged for me to become a visiting scholar in the History Department for 3 months to return to my research in the Archives. We also met with Director Yuan Ming of the Yenching Academy. We were amazed and delighted to discover that this Academy is built directly underneath the original Boyd Gymnasium for women and occupies some of the former women's dormitories that my great-grandparents helped to build! So cool!



2nd from left: Ginny, President Hao Ping, Heather, Xie Yong, Head of Archives



Heather and Ginny in front of the former “Boyd Gymnasium for Women”



Steps leading to lecture hall and gathering spaces for Yenching Academy under the “Boyd Gymnasium.”



So thanks to Professor Niu and President Hao Ping, I’m back!

2. So, what did I come to the Archives to find out? What was my initial thesis? What have I discovered? And how has what I have found changed my initial thesis?

I started this whole project with primary source material that I had already—all my grandmother’s letters that she wrote to her fiancée and her mother the year she was in China. And I have Corabel Tarr Boyd’s letters from when she was in Beijing in 1929 for the Opening Ceremony of Yenching University.

I also had newspaper articles about Corabel when she was young—she was the first secretary of the International YWCA and had traveled to China and India in the late 1890s before she was married! And Wellesley College, a women’s college in Massachusetts that was a sister college to the Yenching College for Women, published many articles about Yenching. Here’s an example from May 3, 1923 “Letter from Yenching Thanks Wellesley for Gift”:

RUSSIAN LIFE RECEIVES NEW INTERPRETATION

The Road to Calvary. By Alexey Tolstoy. New York, Boni and Liveright. The Revolution which convulsed Russia in 1917 is still so little understood with all its complexity of class hatred, deep-rooted social forces, and awakening peasant consciousness that such a book as *The Road To Calvary* is important merely for the interpretation it gives of the tempestuous times which culminated in social anarchy.

Alexey Tolstoy, the author and a relative of Leo Tolstoy, possesses a clear understanding of his subject and a simplicity of expression that makes his novel a real contribution to Russian literature, as well as a picture of Russian life valuable for the light it throws on that period of the country's history. The character of the pre-war period, its low moral tone, the riotous living of the well-to-do middle class, the feverish modernism of the intellectuals, is drawn with unsparing honesty and yet with compassion. The same elements are evident in the reproduction of Russian life in wartime by a series of graphic studies, forceful, exact, now in the trenches, now in the capital, now in the factories. The narrative is concluded by a vivid depiction of Moscow and Petrograd in the early stages of the Revolution.

Through the small group of characters with which the narrative is immediately concerned, the author has succeeded in giving an impression of Russian life in a nationalized aspect, and in separating significant currents of thought from the mental confusion of that period. His method is one of realistic detail, and the effect is that of a painting on a broad canvas. Seen close at hand it emphasizes one figure, one color. At a distance, however, the relation of the part to the whole is made clear, and the canvas is seen in the full sweep of its proportions. For this reason, *The Road To Calvary* adds to its interest as a well-written narrative the deeper interest of its national significance, and the suggestive analysis of events leading up to that momentous affair—the Russian Revolution.

LETTER FROM YENCHING THANKS WELLESLEY FOR GIFT

A letter has come from Yenching, written the day the word arrived that over \$700,000 was her share of the \$2,000,000 fund raised by American colleges for the Orient. The letter, which was sent to the Woman's Board of Missions in Boston, is of particular interest to Wellesley because Yenching is

her sister college, and she was a generous contributor to this fund.

"It meant a new campus full of buildings," writes Mrs. Alice Browne Frame, of Yenching. "It meant dormitories and a science building and a gym and the other buildings we have been needing so tremendously. . . . It meant that in a year or two we can say goodbye to leaky roofs and walls that tumble down, to icy floors and impossible sanitary conditions. It meant that more fine girls can go to college and get ready to tackle the huge problems that China faces today. It meant that the very lifeblood that some of you have been putting into this Building Fund for these seven colleges has not been given in vain."

The letter closes with a description of the joy of the students and an expression of gratitude to the colleges of America which made this possible.

CAMPING PARTY TO GO TO THE RANGELY LAKES

A trip of more than usual interest, through one of the loveliest sections of New England, is being planned by Miss Margaret Dodd of the Wellesley College Physics Department for any students who want a week of genuine camping at the end of the college year. The party will take the boat for Portland on the night of June 20, and from there proceed directly to the Rangely Lakes. This line of travel lies, by lake and trail, across Mooselookmeiguntic Lake, up the Kennebago stream, through virgin wilderness, and up Bald Mountain. This itinerary comprises many other points of beauty and interest often overlooked by campers in this district. Membership in this party is open to any student. Those interested should apply to Miss Dodd for further information.

SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION HAS CONFERENCE AT WELLESLEY

The Association to Aid Scientific Research met at Wellesley, Friday and Saturday, April 27 and 28. A dinner was given at the Guest House on Friday evening in honor of the delegates, and President Pendleton held a luncheon on Saturday, followed by a reception at Tower Court in the afternoon in honor of Dean Ada L. Comstock of Smith College, president-elect of Radcliffe College.

The delegates represented Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Barnard, Brown, University of Pennsylvania, Radcliffe, Goucher, Vassar, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Wellesley's representatives were President Ellen F. Pendleton and Professor Mary W. Calkins.

John A. Morgan & Co.
PHARMACISTS
Shattuck Building Est. 1901

MOTHER'S DAY
Sunday, May 13th, 1923

It is a good many years since Mother hustled us upstairs to bed; read us our good night stories; heard our prayers; kissed us good night; and then tucked us into bed. Those days are gone, but to many of us who are fortunate, Mother is still here with us, and on this day we are anxious to do something to let her know that we still love and appreciate her for the good old days and her care of us.

See that Mother has one of the special Page & Shaw

Mother's Day Packages

Let us send the package for you

Phone Wellesley 674

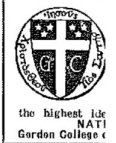
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For Tea every afternoon

Luncheon
11-3

Dinner and Dancing
6:00 to 8:00

The Shepard Rest

Tremont Street at Winter
Boston

TENNIS SIMPL
STUDENTS may arrange for PRIVATE with MR. GEORGE J. HIGGINS, (the college in the instruction courts or by calling Centre Ne Special reduced rates to stud

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From my personal research, I knew that women like my great grandmother and my grandmother had been very important in the establishment of Yenching College for Women, and my thesis was that the Yenching Women's College was in turn, very important for the establishment and success of Yenching University as a whole.

So what I have been doing in the Archives for 3 months is reviewing all the historical documents in the Yenching Archives from 1916—when the 3 Christian colleges in northern China started talking about uniting to form one university—until 1937—when the Japanese invasion forced the campus to close and the University moved to Chengdu for a year.

I have found letters and telegrams to and from China and the Board of Trustees in New York, minutes of the Board of Managers in Beijing, minutes of faculty meetings, correspondence with building supply companies, financial information about the exchange rate, budgets, architectural plans, published college catalogues, yearbooks, etc. It's been fascinating.

So what have I discovered? And how has what I have found changed my initial thesis?

First, I have discovered evidence of the influence of the Yenching College for Women on the establishment of Yenching University. In at least 5 ways.

1. **The name of Yenching University in English.** In 1917, three Christian colleges merged—one named Peking University. Others didn't like the fact that the new union college kept the old name (and the old president!) In 1920 when the women joined the united college, they called their college the Yenching College for Women in both English and Chinese. Not until 1925 did the University as a whole adopt the English name of Yenching University. Here's the original logo and school motto:



2. **Finances.** As I mentioned, a group that called themselves American Christian Women of which my great-grandmother was a leader, raised US\$3million for 7 Christian colleges for women in Asia, one of which was Yenching College for Women. After my grandmother's experience teaching at Yenching, my great-grandmother persuaded the group to give the largest share to Yenching College for Women—US\$600,000! This was enough to build all the women's buildings—the Russian building, the NanBeiLou (南北楼), the women's dormitories—now Yenching Academy, and they had enough left over to build the chemistry building and contribute to the library (now the Archives), which were used by both men and women. They also paid 1/3 of all the operating expenses for the university.
3. **Influence abroad.** The women were powerful influencers in the US. Remember, this was the time when women in the US got the right to vote and were pushing amendments to the Constitution, etc. They had enormous influence on their husbands, on public opinion and on the country as a whole. Many of the men who are praised for their contributions to Yenching University had very strong wives behind them pushing them to contribute!
4. **Chinese faculty and language for instruction.** From the beginning, the Women's college had a higher proportion of Chinese to foreign faculty members than did the Men's college. Also many of the courses offered at the Women's College were taught in Chinese. Some of the girls that came to the Women's college had very limited English. The Women's college established a YuKe (预科) school to train these girls in English, but at the same time, these women students were able to take subject courses in Chinese. In the Men's college a majority of the faculty were foreign and so almost all the courses were taught in English at first. But with the women leading the way, eventually over 2/3 of the faculty at the University were Chinese and most of the courses were offered in Chinese or were bilingual.
5. **Excellent Faculty.** Many of the professors in the Men's College were women, and quite a few were "borrowed" from the Women's College. My grandmother is an example. She not only taught chemistry in the Women's College, she also taught organic chemistry in the Men's college and Chemistry to both men and women at the Peking Union Medical College.

Second, I learned personally that my great-grandmother role in this project was much greater than I had thought. In reports by the Dean of the Women's College, I found that Corabel was the Chairman of the Promotion Committee of the New York-based Yenching College Committee for the Women's College throughout the mid-

1920s. Every year the Dean praises her by name for her tireless efforts on behalf of the Women's College raising funds and making friends for the university. The reports also continue to wish for funds to come to build a gymnasium for the women, as they have no place to exercise during the bitter cold winters. Finally, in 1929, my great-grandmother finally finds someone to donate to the gym. Guess who? Yes, her husband!

I discovered that my great-grandmother was not only on the Board for the Women's College, she was one of a very few women on the Board of Trustees for Yenching University until she died in 1937! (not her husband)

How has this changed my initial thesis? It has confirmed my suspicions that Women made a big difference on the establishment and success of Yenching University.

Let me end this part of the talk by sharing with you what I've found about my great grandmother. As the secretary of the International YWCA, Corabel was invited to speak all over America about the status of women in the world. She is quoted in this 1890 newspaper report "Christian Young Women" covering the 3rd annual convention of the YWCA.

The Syracuse Journal.

MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 14, 1890.

The Weather.
Reported for The Journal by Brown & Dewees,
Druggists, 13 South Salina-st.

	Ther.	Bar.	Wind.
4 p. m. yesterday	57° above	30.70	North East
8 p. m. "	56° "	30.70	North East
8 a. m. today	56° "	29.91	West
10 a. m. "	56° "	29.91	West
12 m. "	57° "	29.91	North West
3 p. m. "	57° "	29.91	North West

INDICATIONS FOR TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.
WASHINGTON, April 14.—8 a. m.—Forecast till
8 a. m. Tuesday—
For Vermont and Eastern New York—Fair
weather, followed by increasing cloudiness and
light showers to-night, cooler, variable winds,
becoming westerly.
For Western New York—Fair Monday and
Tuesday, preceded by showers to-day, colder,
northwesterly winds.
The weather in New York city to-day is
fair.

Journal Telephone Calls.
COUNSEL ROOM, 274; EDITORIAL ROOMS, 278.

Entertainments This Evening.
WITING OPERA HOUSE—"Mr. Haroon of New
York."
GRAND OPERA HOUSE—"A Rag Baby."

LOCAL JUSTICES.
The Tailors' union, K. of L., will remove
May 1st to the Pike block.

The closing hop of Prof. Gutstadt's dancing
class will be held at Greyhound hall this
evening.

Rev. E. A. Rogers of Jordan will lecture
on "Sir Walter Scott" at the Fourth Baptist
church this evening.

CHRISTIAN YOUNG WOMEN.

The Convention Brought to a Close
Last Evening.

The third annual convention of the Women's Christian Association was brought to a close last evening. Services were held yesterday in several churches, in the Y. M. C. A. music hall and in the University chapel. Miss Corabel Tarr of Chicago, secretary of the International Young Women's Christian Association, was the principal speaker at the First Presbyterian church last evening. Miss Tarr said this was the great age of organized effort. There are organizations of very many kinds. When woman began to realize her individuality she began to reach out her hand to do something for other women, and to help mankind generally. These organizations have resulted in the building of hospitals for the sick, and asylums and homes for orphans, the aged and the friendless. It is not surprising, she said, that the question has been asked: "Do we need the Young Women's Christian Association?" The name signifies the aim of the association. It is an associated effort of young women, Christian young women, to lead their sisters to the foot of the cross. This is not a charitable institution, yet the members in doing their work cannot see any one in need without doing something for that one.

The committee on resolutions returned thanks to the members of the University Young Men's and Young Women's associations, to the Y. M. C. A. of the city for the use of music hall, to pastors of the city for the use of their churches, to citizens generally for throwing open their doors, to the members of the press for their notices and reports of meetings, and to Chancellor Sims, Prof. G. J. Little and Rev. Dr. Stebbins for addresses. On Saturday evening parlor conferences were held from 4:30 to 7 o'clock. One at the home of George C. Sawyer was led by Miss K. P. Norse of Chicago; one of the Y. W. C. A. was led by Miss Tarr, International Secretary of the Y. W. C. A., and one at the Y. M. C. A. parlors by Miss K. P. Wilder of New York.

ALL KINDS OF OFFENSES

BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF
JUSTICE MULHOLLAND.

Henry Fowler Keeps His Saloon Open
in Violation of the Law—The Indian
Refuses to Tell Where He Obtained
His Fire Water.

The Police court was well attended by prisoners and spectators this morning, and, as Chief Wright remarked, there was lots of business and more coming. Since the recent accident caused by jumping on and off of cars while in motion, the police have increased their efforts to suppress the evil and several arrests have occurred recently. The first case this morning was that of our jumper Patrick McCabe. "Pat" was old enough to know better and the "Squire" fined him \$5 to stand committed till paid.

Under the head of "Plain drunks" were Leopold Mathius, a laborer, who was reprimanded and discharged, George Holmes, laborer, \$3 or 15 days.

David Meiers, better known as "Rats," was charged with a breach of the peace. "Rats" crept into H. K. White's place and curled up in a corner to sleep. The case was not very strong against him and he was discharged.

On a warrant sworn out by Chief of Police Wright, Thomas Grant, a contractor and hostler, and John H. Costigan, ex-janitor of the City hall, were arraigned for a breach of the peace in engaging in a brutal fight in Jackson st., Sunday. Attorney Joseph Bondy appeared for Costigan and on his request the examination was adjourned until 10 a. m. on Wednesday. Costigan claims that Grant assaulted him and tore a piece of flesh out of his nose. Attorney Bondy stated to the court that the case would not have

A FALLEN

The Sheriff Appointed

George Crownheart is at variance with the sheriff there is apparent to Judge Kennedy in making Sheriff Johnson authorize him to Crownheart enters Moulton, for the from Oneida lake, appeared in this party Crownheart, who wife. The sheriff took was to furnish books and Crown tools and do the hauling the ice, Crownheart sold it to her husband was obtained but the property had other member of the live in Cicero.

ALONG THE

New Thousand Genuine

The drawing power well illustrated yes out of doors by hundreds large part of these t lake. The cars had do, people having to cars to pass before t ing room, to say do mated that between people were at the vicinity at 4 o'clock seized by suspending lake and fishing. The work on the as much as possible seventy-five carpenter it will be finished by Utica, president of t People's Pier comp

"When woman began to realize her individuality she began to reach out her hand to do something for other women, and to help mankind generally." This was her driving

force from the time she was young—about your age. She wanted women to recognize their identity and their ability to serve—to change the world. Like Yenching’s motto: Freedom through truth for service.

She raised daughters who went fearlessly out into the world—two as scientists (a biologist and a chemist) and one as a journalist. Her granddaughters, like my mother, became professors and scientists. Her great-granddaughters, like me and my cousin Ginny, became lawyers, business women, professors, and archivists. Who knows what her great great-granddaughters, like my daughter, will accomplish?

And look what has happened to the work she began by supporting the Yenching College for Women! Corabel died in 1937. She would have LOVED to know that the building she and her husband built and the women’s dorms she raised money for have become the center for students from around the world to learn more about China. And that it’s called the Yenching Academy. (There are quite a number of women Yenching Fellows, too, I noticed!)

What does this story tell us about the study of history? First of all, it’s not always just “history”—dig deep and you’ll find that it could be “her-story.” I am glad they honored Corabel as well as William at the Opening Ceremony in 1929.



In every official document from 1920 through the early 1930s, the history of Yenching University includes the Yenching College for Women joining the three male colleges in 1920. [history] UNTIL 1936!! In the “Historical Statement in the 1936 Guidebook for Students there is no mention at all about the Women’s College! So **her-story** was buried—until now!

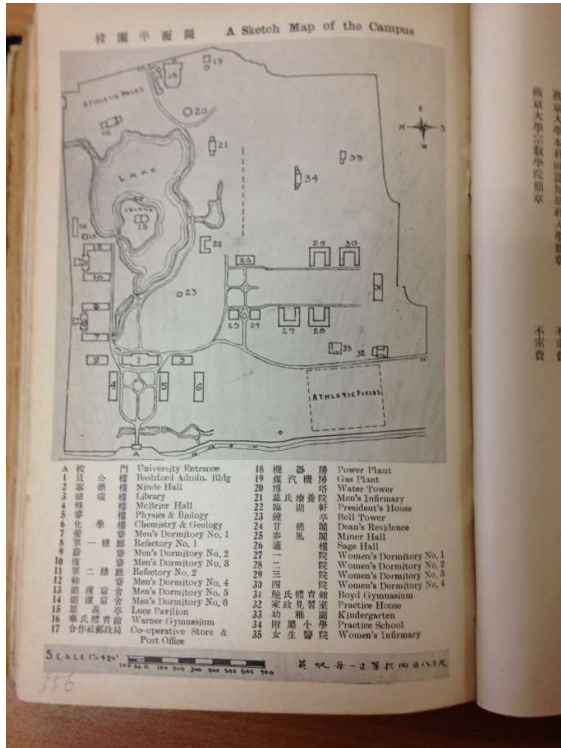
Don’t settle for the current view of an historical situation or a surface explanation. Go to original documents and find out what was really going on. Then make your own conclusions.

Second, and this is for everyone here: **what you do with your life matters**. You may not live to see the result of your efforts, but history tells us that what you do makes a difference. Corabel in her 20s could have no idea that her work on behalf of educating women would some day be part of Peking University. My grandmother could never have imagined that her pioneering work in teaching women students to exercise, play basketball and volleyball would be part of a movement that would make Chinese women athletes number one in the world! You have no idea the impact of what you do in your life will have on the world. So believe in yourself. Live your passion. Freedom through truth for service.

Thank you!

Q&A

If you have time, we can look at some photos of the campus—then and now.



1931 Map of Yenching University campus



2019 Map of Peking University campus