

China Gate

Excerpt from --

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...a stone gateway of white Chinese marble situated on a grassy plot at the fort's Main Post on Morrison Road near the officers' club. It had originally stood near the barracks of the regiment's Headquarters Company in the American compound and was often the focal point of regimental assemblies such as Armistice Day and Organization Day ceremonies. In March of 1938 when the regiment reported to Fort Lewis, near Tacoma, Washington, its commander, Colonel Joseph A. McAndrew, presented the gateway to the Infantry School and had it shipped to Georgia. An engraved inscription on the monument, in both English and Chinese, noted that it was intended as "A Remembrance of the Golden Deeds done by Officers and men of the United States Army Forces in China During the Civil Strife, 1924." It had been "respectfully presented with pleasure" to the regiment in April of 1925, by citizens of some 30 Chinese villages in the vicinity of the American base. The Americans were recognized for maintaining law and order in Tientsin and surrounding towns and villages when the tides of Chinese civil war surged across the area in 1924. The text ended with a poem etched in Chinese characters together with an English translation which stated in part: "The sons of Uncle Sam so gallant in their deed/Day and night so strict defense took greatest heed/And through their strenuous effort and suffering/Peace among us all was kept and maintained," and the villagers wished to accord "Honor to those to whom honor is due."⁴

The commander of the United States Army Forces in China, Brigadier General William D. Connor, graciously accepted the memorial in an address in fluent Chinese "which was understood and deeply appreciated by all." It was "perhaps the first time that an American Army Officer ever addressed a representation of Chinese people at a military function in their own language," an account of the event declared, and would no doubt "go far in maintaining the friendly and cordial relations which exist between China and America." Connor hoped that "long after this stone has decayed the friendship between our two countries may exist, and that as long as this stone endures it will be a memento to all the world of the friendship that grew up between us during the troubled days when China was awakening."⁵

The selection of the final site for the monument and its transporting to Fort Benning was something of a minor odyssey. When Colonel McAndrew presented the gateway to the Infantry School, the War Department and the chief of infantry, Major General George Arthur Lynch, who had earlier commanded the 15th in China, were of the opinion that the gateway was the property of the regiment and that McAndrew had no authorization to present it to the Infantry School. The colonel argued that it belonged to the United States and was only in the custody and care of the regiment while in China. He cited his orders regarding the withdrawal of the 15th, which gave him the authority to dispose of the regiment's property as he saw fit. This carried the day, and the War Department allowed the monument to proceed to Fort Benning, perhaps appropriate after all because so many of the "China Hands" were closely involved there, especially in the 1930s. Subsequently, it was formally unveiled on October 13, 1939, with Captain Philip E. Gallagher - who as a first lieutenant had been adjutant of the 15th's Second Battalion when the gate had been presented by the Chinese - delivering the main address. Gallagher concluded: "I know of no other case in history where the common people of a country in which a foreign army was stationed ever presented such a memento of their gratitude to that foreign army for protecting them against forces of their own country engaged in civil war."⁶

⁴-The engraving included the carved signatures of 15 prominent local citizens, to which were added those of Yu Yuen Cotton Mills and the Pei Yang first Commercial Cotton Mill.

⁵-*The Sentinel*, May 1, 1925. See also *ibid.*, September 1, 1928, for a picture of the monument. There is a good discussion of the civil strife and other circumstances that resulted in the Chinese presentation in a chapter called "The Gate" in Finney, *The Old China Hands*.

6-The monument weighed over a ton and was shipped in three cases. For Gallagher's career in the 15th, see *The Sentinel*, September 24, 1926. He was later a major general. See a series of documents regarding the monument's shipment and final disposition in folder "AG 619.1-15th Inf.," entry AGO 1917-25, RG 407.





