

## Chinese students mentioned in Sarah Carrington's diaries

To Jingcao Hu, executive director, China Central Television News Probe:

Dear Jingcao, First, let me tell you what a wonderful day I had with you and your film crew when you visited Colebrook. I wish that we had more time so that you could see more of our town. Perhaps someday you will return and do another story for News Probe and there will be more time.

This letter is to give you all the references to Yew Fun Tan and the other Chinese students that appear in Mrs. Carrington's diaries. There will be entries that are not complete, such as "Wd" when she means "Winsted". When this happens, I will use this symbol [ ] to tell you that what is inside these symbols are my additions. For example: W[insted]. Also, the exact words from the diary I will place within quotation marks " ". Winsted is the town south of Colebrook. The train station was there as well as many more stores than there were in Colebrook, so there were many trips between those two towns.

In the 1880 diary, the first mention of Tan is January 1, 1880. This is our New Years Day, and so is a holiday. Tan was already in Colebrook. The holiday dinner consisted of two ducks and plum pudding. (And also other items – she mentioned only the two most important.) The diary says "Tan to Winsted to make NY". What this means is that he went to Winsted to take the train to New York City.

There seems to be another student named Low that she writes to and gets letters from, but she does not say that he comes to visit. On this same day (New Years) she wrote three letters, one to her son Edwin, one to Low and the other to a friend named Mrs. Anderson. Low I assume is a Chinese student.

On Friday, January 2, an entry states: "Tan packing - Sarah took him to W [Winsted] for Htfd" [Hartford].

On February 13 1880, the entry reads: "Sent Tan a postal". Postal means a post card, instead of a letter.

On February 16 Mrs. Carrington is visiting New Haven, where Yale University is located. She is visiting a friend, Mrs. French. An entry says "Tan spent eve." This means that Tan came to visit during the evening.

February 22 "Wrote to Gar." This name appears several times, and I have to assume that it, like "Low", is another Chinese student.

March 9, Sarah is reading a book titled "Memories of China".

March 10 "Letter from Gar."

March 22 [Monday] "Sarah off early for Tan & waited till [until] pm [afternoon] train, but no Tan came – much disappointed – made his bed & got roast chicken dinner."

March 23 "Heard that the Commission kept Tan to study Chinese." We know that some of the students were thought to be neglecting the studies of their language, so this is what that sentence means.

March 29 "Kate brought home Tan."

March 30 "Tan took drive for syrup." Maple syrup is made here during the months of February and March. (We boil the sap (liquid) from the Maple trees until it becomes syrup (like honey from bees). If you continue to boil the syrup, it becomes sugar, and is considered a great treat.)

March 31 "S[arah] took Tan to W[insted] for early train."

April 6 "Letter from Tan."

May 26 "Wrote to Gar."

June 1 "Wrote Gar – letter from him."

June 24 (Thursday) "Tan came pm [afternoon] from Colebrook Station."

Colebrook Station was a small station west of Winsted and southwest of Colebrook. It was about the same distance from Colebrook as the Winsted station. I think that when he came to this station he was coming from Hartford, because the Hartford train traveled east – west, and the train from New Haven came to Winsted from the south and ended there. (There were two different train companies. The tracks were next to each other in Winsted, but did not touch each other.)

June 26 Mrs. Hannas and Halsey unexpectedly at four. Made three beds after tea & moved Tan from the parlor chamber. (Remember, Jingcao, that this shows he was considered a member of the family, otherwise he would not have been moved.)

June 28 S[arah], Mrs. H[annas], Tan & Ellen to Winsted." (I do not know who Ellen was, but it is a woman's name.)

July 2 "Tan left"

July 27 "Letter from An Poi – going back" This is the only mention of a student named An Poi. Going back has to mean that he was recalled home to China.

July 28 "Mrs. Bartlett & Gar came."

August 1 "Wrote Dr. B [Bacon - ? – I am not sure about this name.] & Mrs. about Tan's troubles."

August 4 (Wednesday) "Tan came to say goodbye. For China."

August 6 "Tan to Avon early." (Avon is a town about 25 km east of Colebrook. You drove through it going to and from Hartford.)

August 7 "Gar left early train." "Tan came [word I can not read] & Ki Ke." (I am not sure about this spelling. The name is never mentioned again.)

August 11 "Brother Northrup [the use of the word "brother" here does not mean he is her family brother, rather it means that he is a member of her church. They called themselves "brother" and "sister".] and Tan to lake – home in rain." (They had gone swimming in a lake because the temperature was hot.)

August 12 "Tan to Htfd." [Hartford]

August 15 (Sunday) "Wrote Mr. J. C. & Tan & Gar."

August 24 (Tuesday) "Tan came after we were in bed & had his cue cut."

August 25 [Two people, their names are not important] "left. Tan took them to W[insted].

August 26 "Very cool" [air temperature] "All young people berrying." (This would have included Tan. They were picking blueberries – the botanical name is vaccinium.

September 1 (Wednesday) "For camping fixing up Kate, Tan, Alice, Em & Harry at W Lake. Quantity of things taken" This means that Kate and the others left for Highland Lake in Winsted to camp. Probably they had tents that they would put up next to the water. Em is what we call a woman named Emma. It is just like men named Robert who are called Bob. Kate is another example, as her full name was Katherine. That type of word is called a nickname.

September 2 "Kate came at 4 [in the afternoon] [with the] others"

September 9 “Sarah and Tan to W[insted] on lake [where they] met Kate. Home at 4pm.”

September 10 “Daughters & Tan to P[eter] Corbin’s eve.” Peter Corbin lived about 2km south of the center of Colebrook. They spent the evening visiting.

September 11 “Went after dinner with Tan to call at Mrs. Coe’s.” I do not know where Mrs. Coe lived, but it was most likely in or near the center of Colebrook.

September 13 “Poured [means that great amounts of rain fell in a short time] when Kate came home – Sarah over east [means the field east of the house] with Tan & children [they] came home dripping.

September 14 “Tan went for [Mrs. Hannahs] her to C. Station.” This mentions Colebrook Station again.

September 15 “Tan left, Mr. Cowles took him.”

November 22 “I finished preparing rooms for E.J. C. [her son, Edward Carrington] & Tan.

November 25 (Thursday – This is our Thanksgiving Day, one of the most important holidays in the year. Traditionally we have a large feast with turkey or sometimes venison (deer meat) goose or beef. It celebrates the successful first years when the Europeans came to North America (1620 – 1630). They almost starved to death, and would have if the Native Americans had not fed them. If it is possible, we try to gather our families around us on this day.)

“To dinner [with] my 3 noble children & little granddaughter & Tan & Aunt Cate. How I miss the one bright face that always made our gatherings cheerful.” What she means by “the one bright face” is her son Edward, who was killed during the Civil War (1865). She had one other son, Edwin, who was with her this day, but he lived in Michigan, about 900km away. I think that in many ways Tan became a substitute for Edward at their home in Colebrook.

November 26 “Win [her nickname for Edwin] & Tan fishing.”

December 7 “I read & finished Tan’s night shirt.” A nightshirt was worn to bed at night, especially during the winter when it is cold.

December 30 “Tan & Woo Chon [not sure of spelling] came [in] eve[ning] after ten [10 pm] gave them rib supper.” This was most likely pork ribs, as they had butchered two pigs 24 days before.

This is the last entry of 1880.

Diary entries for 1881:

January 1 “Tan & Woo had Bill [a horse] to go to W[insted] & make calls.”

January 3 “Woo left in stage.” This means he went back by stagecoach. These stages stopped in front of the Colebrook Store.

January 4 “Tan & Kate to W[insted].”

January 5 “Rode with Tan to see John Connelly about wheel his man crushed. Elegant sleighing.” Jingcao, do you remember the word “spectacular”? Elegant means almost the same. A sleigh is a type of carriage that has two long iron strips called runners instead of wheels. They are only used in the wintertime when there is snow on the ground. I don’t know how a man could crush a wheel, but he must have damaged it in some way.

“Young folk to Lit[erary] Soc[iety]. Came back soon as guests were excluded & Tan was with them.”

January 7 (Friday) “Went to W[insted] with Tan. Called at Mr. Camp’s. Went to bank & did shopping – home before 2[pm]. Fine sleighing – foot or more snow. Daughters and Tan to Mr. Corliss to tea.”

January 12 “Kate took Tan & carried Yonkers butter.” This means that they took the butter that had been made on the farm and brought it to the train so that it could be shipped to a buyer who lived in Yonkers, New York. (Yonkers is north of New York City not far from southern Connecticut.)

January 18 “Letter fr[om] Sarah in Norwich & Tan.” Norwich is a city in southeastern Connecticut.

February 25 Mrs. Carrington is visiting in New York City. “Sent a letter home, Tan & Gar & Mrs. Harley.”

April 14 “Sarah off to W[insted] for Kate & Tan. They came about 4o’c [4pm].

April 16 “Gar came [in the] eve[ning] after Tan & daughters had gone to call at Mr. Reeds.”

April 18 “Packed butter for Yonkers & car[ried to] W[insted] – Tan went down & did errands.” “Fixing [This means getting ready for] for Tan’s birthday tomorrow – daughters made cake pm.” (Kate and Sarah baked Tan a birthday cake in the afternoon.) “sugaring off eve. for boy’s benefit. Chang came pm.” Remember I told you about boiling maple sap into syrup, and that if you continued to boil the syrup, it would become sugar? This process is called “sugaring off”. In this case, it was done in honor of Tan’s birthday. I do not remember the name Chang before this, although by referring to him by just one name, she must have known him quite well.

April 19 “Gar left – sent him to C[olebrook] Station.” 15 guests arrived for Tan’s party in addition to those already staying at the Carrington house. The menu for his dinner follows: “Handsome supper table – Escalloped Oysters (oysters cooked in a sauce) Chick[en] salad, ice cream, biscuits, two kinds [of] cake, oranges & bananas.”

April 20 “Got off early from W[insted] with Kate – took Tan & Chang to cars.” What this means is that the four of them took the train from Winsted to Hartford. When they arrived at Hartford, the two boys were put on horse cars to go wherever they were headed in Hartford, probably the Commission headquarters there. A horse car was something like a trolley, or bus that was drawn over tracks similar to train rails. Larger cities in the late 1800’s used this form of transportation. Horses drew the earlier models of these; later they were driven by electricity. I have ridden on them many years ago in Hong Kong.

June 17 “Letter from Gar.”

June 27 “The stage brought Gar.”

June 28 “Sarah to W[insted] for Tan.” “Rode with Gar to see Mrs. Kenny.”

June 29 “Mended Gar’s pants.”

June 30 “Rode with Tan & Reuben Rockwell round [should be spelled around] Pisgah. Pm (afternoon) to Corbin’s with Gar.”

July 1 “Rode with Tan to W[insted] – home at 2 [pm].”

July 4 (A national holiday, our country declared independence from England on this date in 1776.) “Daughters busy about picnic (a lunch eaten outdoors) – ice cream, cake, biscuits & salad. Fireworks in eve[ning].”

July 6 “Daughters & Tan to J. Seymour’s to tea, home at 10.”

July 7 “Rode with Tan to Simons’ – machine not mended.” Mr. Simons owned a machine for cutting grass that will be made into hay for the cows and horses. The Carringtons are paying him to cut their grass. It has broken down and has yet to be repaired. “Sarah set (planted) 150 celery plants, Tan helped.”

July 12 “Telegram from Gar. Sarah went to W[insted] for him.” “Simons came with machine – 4h 20 min.” This means that the machine is now repaired and he used it to cut grass for four hours and twenty minutes. “Tan and Nelson (Nelson is a local man who has been hired by Mrs. Carrington to do farm work for her.) helped get in 3 loads – one stood in barn besides.” What this means is that they brought 3 loads of hay into the barn and put it in the mow (the open space under the roof used for storing hay for use in the winter.) They also brought in one other load, but did not have time to put it in the mow. It was important to get the dried grass (hay) into the barn, or at least under cover so that it would not get wet with the dew that forms at night. If hay is put in the mow wet, it can become very hot – hot enough to set itself on fire. If this happens, the barn and everything in it will be lost.

July 17 (Sunday) “Rode with – (I can not read someone’s initials) & Tan around Pisgah.”

July 19 “Tan to (I can not read this word – it looks like “Ceakham”, but that is not a word I am familiar with. The last four letters are clear; the first three are not.) Sarah, Mary & Nelson to C S (Colebrook Station) with him.” For a week or ten days they have been getting hay into the barns, sometimes as much as six loads in one day. Most loads of hay were made about the same size, and the ones we made on our farm probably averaged 30 cubic meters or thereabouts. Just because Mrs. Carrington does not mention Tan each day does not mean he was not helping – I’m sure he was. We have an expression that says: “Make hay while the sun shines.” This means that when an opportunity presents itself, do it at once before something happens that might prevent you from doing it. Every man that was able helped with getting the hay into the barn as quickly as possible.

July 22 “Letter from Tan.”

July 25 “Tan came from Ashburn.” I do not know where this is, but the writing is very clear.

July 26 “Rode to Mrs. Vinings with Tan.” “My daughters and Tan to Norfolk.” (This is where we all had lunch together.)

July 27 “Young folks berrying.” (Picking blueberries.)

July 28 “Sarah, Kate, Nelson & Tan to W[insted] Lake.” She means Highland Lake, a large body of water in Winsted.

August 1 “Kate, Winthrop (a family friend) & Tan fitted off for camp with -- (here is a word I can not read) at Norfolk at 10 – Sarah drove.” “Fitted off” means that they brought with them whatever it was they needed in order to camp, such as extra clothes, if they were to stay more than one day. The word camp might mean a location out in the country that has cabins (small houses, usually having only one room.), or sometimes you were expected to bring along your own tent (made out of cotton canvas) to stay in.

August 5 “Tan & Winthrop from camp – soon after S & K (Sarah and Kate) & boys – skunk broke up camp.” We talked about this – a skunk is a small animal, about

the size of a cat. It is black and white, usually with a white stripe down his back. When they are frightened, they sometimes lift their tail and spray a very foul-smelling liquid in a fine mist that floats in the air and sticks to whatever it lands on. The smell lasts for days. We usually wash it off using tomato juice. If the skunk sprayed inside the camp, it certainly would send everyone running for home!

August 16 Mrs. Carrington is dying, she made no entry on August 13, and on August 14 through 18, someone else (probably either Kate or Sarah) made short notes. On August 16, it says "Low came." I take this to mean a Chinese student.

August 20 Mrs. Carrington made a short note on this and the following day. She only mentions her state of health. The rest of the pages in the diary are blank. Sarah Terry Carrington died on August 29, 1881.

I told you that Tan could milk cows. This entry must have been made at the bottom of the page where she made notes about the operations running the farm, and I missed it while I was going through these pages for a complete record for you.

I hope that I did not make this too long or complicated for you. I attempted to make these notes as accurate as possible. I know that you have some close-up photos of some of the pages, and I tried to make these notes close enough for you to compare them. I suppose that I did not need to write Winsted all those times "W[insted], but I hoped it would help you not to be confused when she just wrote "W".

We know that Chinese students continued to come to the Carrington home for the lifetimes of Sarah and Katherine, as I believe I showed you photos dated as late as 1927. Both sisters died in the early 1930's.

If there is anything at all that I can help you with, either on this topic or any other, please ask, and I will do my best to help. I have some pictures that I will send you via e-mail, but not on this, as it is so long already!

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