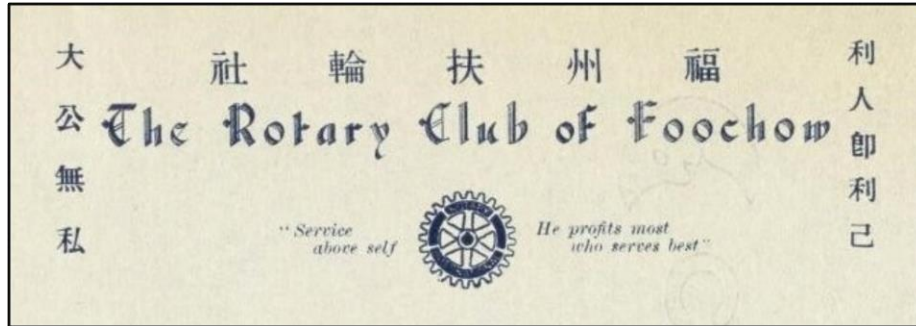


Birth of Foochow Rotary Club (福州扶輪社) in 1933

By Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian)

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The Rotary Club of Foochow (福州扶輪社) was the 8th Rotary Club formed in the Republic of China (中華民國), and was also the first Club formed in the provincial capital of Fukien (*Fujian*) Province (福建省).

As early as 1925, a small group of foreigners in Foochow (*Fuzhou*) (福州) had met and discussed the possibility of organizing a Rotary Club. Each of them had visited Rotary clubs in other cities, and was eager to see such a Club in Foochow. Nothing came of their hopes and it was not until the spring of 1933 that the subject was again discussed by a group of those interested. While in Shanghai (上海), in February 1933, E. H. Munson, Area Secretary of YMCA in Foochow, attended the Shanghai Rotary Club (上海扶輪社) meeting, and met with a group of Shanghai Rotarians to consider the possibility of organizing a Club in Foochow. Publicity material of Rotary information was given to Munson. Upon his return to Foochow early in March, the following group of six men met together, studied the situation, and decided to proceed with the organization of the Foochow Rotary Club:

- (1) D. S. Ho, Assistant Manager of the Bank of China.
- (2) J. Y. Liu, General Manager of Foochow Electric Light Co.
- (3) Y. D. Mark, Chief of the Foreign Department, Provincial Government.
- (4) H. K. Prossor, Manager of Asiatic Petroleum Co.
- (5) J. A. Greenfield, Postal Commissioner, Foochow
- (6) E. H. Munson, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)

This group selected a list of about 30 names of leading business and professional men in Foochow whom they agreed to interview, with a view to their becoming charter members. At the same time, they appointed a sub-committee to draw up tentative suggestions for a constitution and by-laws.

This group spent about 6 weeks in carefully studying the Rotary Club literature and educating their prospective charter members as to the meaning and purposes of Rotary.

After having prepared the proposed constitution and by-laws, they then called the first meeting of prospective charter members for 1 June 1933. At the kind suggestion of J. Y. Liu, General Manager of the Foochow Electric Light Company, this meeting was held in the Foochow Electric Light Company's office.

Harold Kemp Prossor, Manager of the Asiatic Petroleum Company (亞細亞火油公司), was elected temporary chairman; and Y. D. Mark, Chief Secretary of the Foreign Department of the Provincial Government, was elected temporary secretary. After informal discussion, a motion was approved to inaugurate the Rotary Club of Foochow. Copies of the proposed constitution and by-laws were then read, discussed and adopted with slight alterations. The following men were at this meeting:

Messrs. Prossor, Mark, Munson, Tang, Wiant, Uong, Burke, Dr. Wang, Dr. Chai, Bishop Hind, Messrs. Ho, Greenfield, Thelin, Ding, W. G. M. Wilson, Chang, Lueders, Vanderlieb, Dr. Henry Li, Bishop Gowdy.

The following week, on 8 June 1933, another meeting was held, at which a nominating committee appointed at the previous meeting submitted names for the Board of Directors for the first year of the Club's existence. The following names were proposed and approved: Messrs. Prossor, Mark, Ho, Liu, Greenfield, Lueders and Munson.

At this same meeting, Prossor was elected President, and Mark as Vice President. At a succeeding meeting of the Board of Directors, chairman and members of the Club's regular committees were proposed, and the following officers were elected:

Secretary: E. H. Munson

Treasurer: D. S. Ho

Sergeant-at-Arms: A. H. Lueders

During the previous weeks, Munson had been conducting correspondence with the Shanghai Rotary Club concerning the possible visit of the Rotary International Secretary for the Far East, Douglas C. Howland. Before the meeting of June 8 had concluded, a telegram was received from Howland stating that he would be in Foochow on June 18.

Howland arrived and spent two or three days calling on prospective charter members of the Foochow Club, and meeting with the officers who had been elected, instructing them in the principles and methods of Rotary. Howland met with the Foochow Club on June 22. The meeting was held at the Foochow Electric Company, at 5:30 p.m. At this meeting, Howland spoke on the meaning and significance of Rotary. After his address, considerable time was spent in discussion. Howland gave invaluable assistance in answering questions and clearing up problems which were in the minds of the members.

Excerpted below is the report, dated 22-24 September 1933, made by Douglas C. Howland, Asiatic Secretary, to Chelsey R. Perry, Secretary of Rotary International:

This being a newly formed Club and my visit a short one for the purpose of presenting them with their charter. I am not able to give a very full report.

I had a good visit with the President H. K. Prossor and with J. A. Greenfield, a director and met all those that were present at the charter dinner which included all but five of their members.

Prossor makes an enthusiastic President and a good chairmen at their meetings, and is very anxious that the Club should be a success.

Munson who was the Secretary having been moved away from the port. It became necessary to find another man. Prossor was having a little difficulty to get a suitable person and had decided to split the work between a Chinese and a foreign member -- one to take the local Club work and one to attend to the outside correspondence. Dr. Ding of the University will accept the local work and Lueders, on his return from short leave will take the corresponding secretaryship.

The membership is well selected and gives a good cross section of their community. It is more than 50% Chinese and their interest is good. They hope to build their membership slowly to start with. They could increase their foreign members but they are anxious to try and keep the Chinese percentage at 50%.

Their finances should adequately take care of all their requirements.

Munson drafted out a programme suggestion and if it's followed it includes a proper presentation to the Club of Rotary educational matter. They have had difficulty about a suitable meeting place but they think that this has been solved by accepting accommodation offered in a large Chinese house. The charter meeting took place in the Board Room of the Electric Light Co. and was quite satisfactory although not available for regular meetings.

They are beginning to make a survey for activities. But as the Club is so young I advocated them spending their time on a study of Rotary and on getting to know each other.

Foochow is a city of considerable size but with a decreasing foreign population due to the decadence of the tea industry. It is situated 12 miles up the river from the boat anchorage and is not likely to develop for that reason. It is an educational centre and capital of the Fukien province. Much trouble in the province at the present time is with communist risings. For this reason it is not safe to travel very far from the city.

Foochow should be a good small Club. And as interchange of business relations between it and Amoy are frequent one Club should help the other. Already it has had a desirable effect on bringing the Chinese and foreign community together and Proosor feels that benefits have already been derived.

Howland's another report dated 30 September 1933:

In spite of typhoons I got to Foochow quite safely and although my stay there was cut short by two days due to the postponement of the day of sailing, I had enough time to accomplish all that was necessary.

I had found Foochow quite a hot place on my first visit and it was still hot when I arrived on the second occasion. Prossor was not able to put me up but made arrangements for me with J. A. Greenfield who is the Postal Commissioner and I was very comfortable with them. The boat comes up the river as far as Pagoda and then you have a twelve mile trip up the river to the city which necessitates a lot of baggage handling but I eventually arrived with all my stuff intact.

As soon as I was settled I called on Prossor and learned that everything was going fine with the Club in spite of the fact that E. H. Munson the Secretary had been transferred to Peking. This I felt would be quite a blow as Munson was very enthusiastic and was the prime mover in the club's organization. It's just one of the common occurrences out here and it is to be hoped that his successor gets the same grasp of Rotary that Munson had.

I have made a short report on the Club. It is short because the Club has only been going a little while. An evening meeting had been arranged for on September 3rd and the meeting place was the Board Room of the Electric Light Co. They still have to solve the question of a really suitable place for their weekly meetings. It was a Chinese dinner as you will see from the enclosed programme. About 60 members, wives and guests were present and the general atmosphere was very friendly. The dinner took rather long to serve and some of the entertainment numbers were run off during the service and Prossor also made his address during the meal which was interpreted sentence by sentence by a Chinese. This slowed things down so much I decided that when my time came to say my little piece I would have a synopsis given of it after I had finished. As a matter of fact the interpreter must have found that he was not familiar enough with the subject matter of the address or found some other difficulty, and so it was dispensed with. It was just as well as most of those present understood it.

After the dinner they danced and played bridge and I thought the evening quite a success. They had had some difficulty to get a suitable person to take on the job as Secretary and something I said in my talk must have impressed Dr. Ding who had been approached but had declined, because he told Prossor after the dinner he would take the job on. Dr. Ding is President of the Anglo-Chinese University and should be a good man for the job.

Next morning I left at 10:00 a.m. to catch my boat for Amoy. Prossor and Mark the Vice President came down with me in the launch and Dr. Ding and Mr. Liu who was our host at the Electric Light Co. dinner were also there.

The Communist trouble around Foochow has upset things somewhat in that locality but the situation was clearing up. You may have heard of the celebrated 19th Army. They are the people that earned a lot of glory at Chapei by resisting the Japanese. Well, the 19th Army were at Foochow suppressing the Communist rising and in my opinion Foochow suffers more at the hands of this gang than they would if the Communists took control. Army pay as you may know is an uncertain quantity here and it seems to be a recognized

The Rotary Club of Foochow, organized on 21 June 1933, was elected to membership of Rotary International on 31 July 1933, Charter #1913(b). The following is the list of 24 Charter Members with their classifications:

- (1) Burke, Gordon Lee – Vice Consul, American Consulate
(Foreign Government Consular Service)
- (2) Chai, C. S. – Dentist (Dentistry)
- (3) Chang, S. F. – Manager, Foochow Motor Sales Company
(Automobile Distributing)
- (4) Chen, Robert K. – Manager, Fukien Paper Manufacturers
(Paper Manufacturing)
- (5) Culver, C. P. – Superintendent, Christian Herald Industrial Mission
(Education – Industrial School)
- (6) Ding, James L. (陳芝美) – President, Anglo-Chinese College (鶴齡英華中學校長)
(Education—Colleges)
- (7) Greenfield, James A. -- Postal Commissioner
(Postal Service)
- (8) Hind, John (恆約翰) -- Bishop of Anglican Churches, Church Missionary Society
(Christianity—Protestantism)
- (9) Ho, D. S. – Assistant Manager, Bank of China, Ltd.
(Commercial Banking)
- (10) Lau, Wan Kai (劉雲階) – Compradore, Jardine Matheson & Co., Ltd.
(Coastal Shipping)
- (11) Li, Henry (Medicine - Eye, Ear, Nose & Throat)
- (12) Liu, J. Y. – Manager, Foochow Electric Co., Ltd.
(Electric Light Power Service)
- (13) Lueders, A. H. -- Assistant Manager, Siemssen and Krohn
(Tea Exporting)
- (14) Mark, Y. D. -- Advisor to Fukien Provincial Government, i/c Foreign Affairs
(Provincial Government Administration)
- (15) Martin, Albert John -- Her Britannic Majesty's Consular Law Court
(Judiciary)
- (16) Munson, E. H. -- Y.M.C.A. Area Secretary
(Young Men's Associations)
- (17) Prossor, Harold Kemp – Manager, Asiatic Petroleum Company
(Refined Oil Products Distributing)
- (18) Sykes, N. – Assistant Manager, Imperial Chemical Industries (China) Ltd.
(Fertilizer Distributing)

- (19) Thelin, Guy A. – Principal, Union High School (Agricultural)
 (Education – Agricultural Schools)
- (20) Tong, S. W. – Superintendent, National Government District Salt Gabelle
 (Salt Revenue Service)
- (21) Uong, G. G. – Assistant Manager, Hing Lung Sawmills Co. (Saw Mills)
- (22) Wang, C. C. -- Chokciu Hospital
 (Physician & Surgeon)
- (23) Wiant, Paul Prince (范哲明) – Architect, Fukien Construction Bureau
 (Architecture)
- (24) Wilson, J. G. P. – Manager, Dodwell & Co., Ltd.
 (Insurance – Fire)

Immediately after Howland's visit, the committee on classification and membership, of which Bishop Hind was Chairman, met and began their task of drawing up classification for Foochow and proposing names of additional members. In accordance with the regular procedure, the following were proposed and elected as members of the Foochow Rotary Club:

- (1) K. P. Pao, Electrical Engineer, Foochow Electric Co.
- (2) W. G. M. Wilson, Marine Engineer, Asiatic Petroleum Co.
- (3) E. J. Vanderlieb, Accountancy, Chinese Post Office.
- (4) Bishop John Gowdy (高智主教), Missionary, Methodist Episcopal Mission.

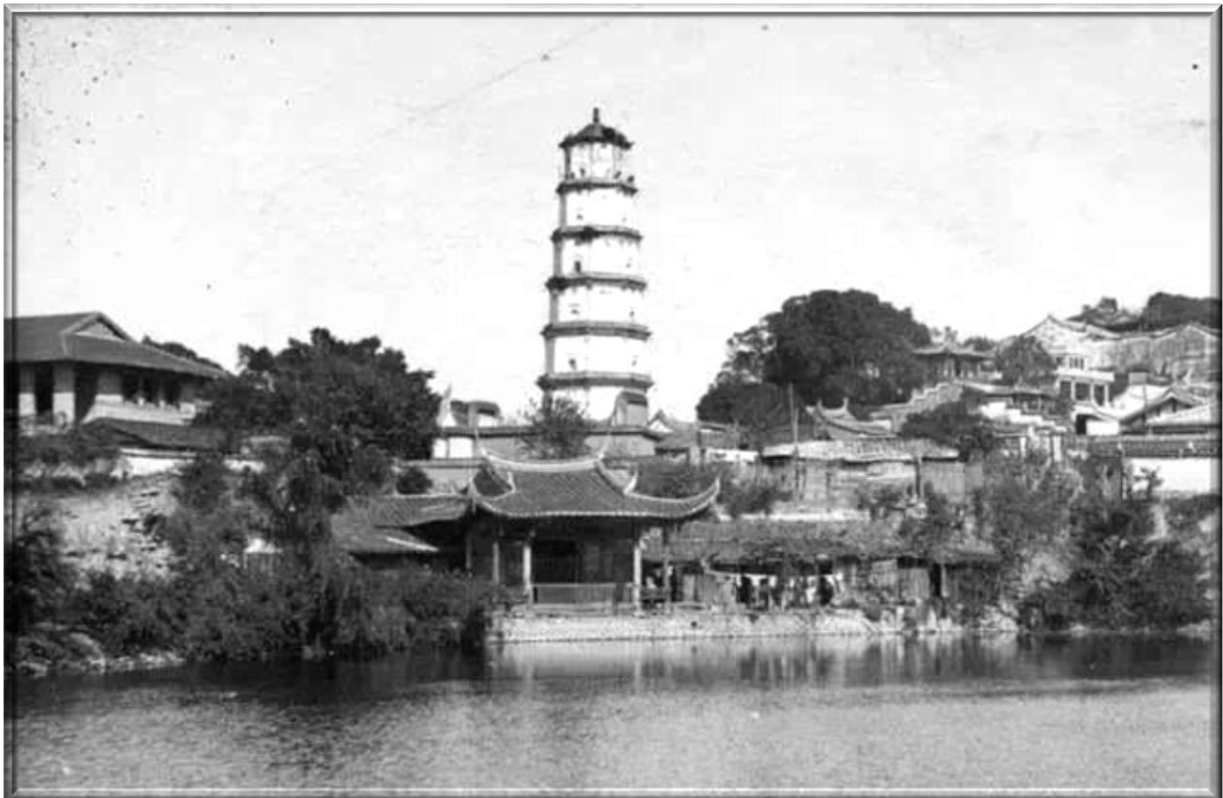
The program committee, of which G. L. Burke was Chairman, had considerable difficulty during the first month in securing a suitable place for the regular meetings of the Club. After extended investigation, Burke announced in the meeting, held on 6 July 1933, that arrangements had been made to hold the regular meetings and tiffins at Brand's residence. Throughout the summer, meetings were held at Brand's residence. But beginning with the autumn, Lau Wan-Kai very kindly offered his residence as the meeting place for the Club. The program committee having arranged with a special caterer, the transfer was made to Lau's residence, where they have been held throughout the next two years.

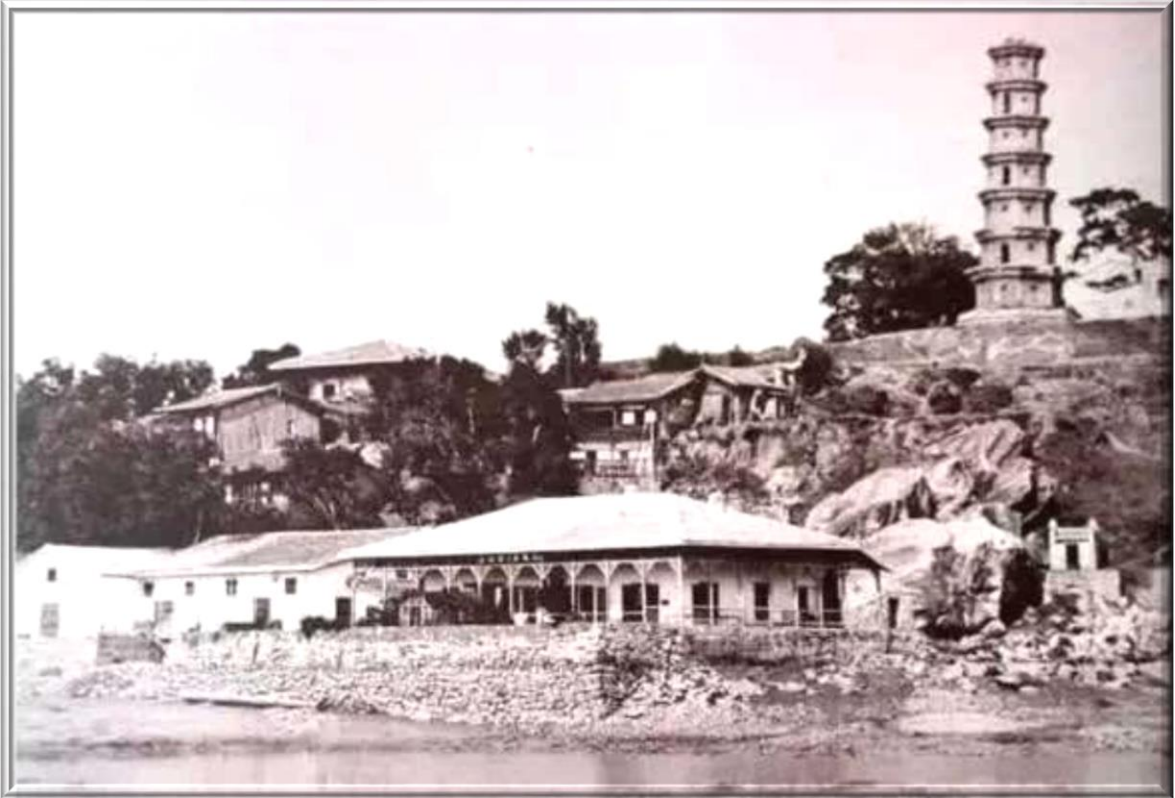
The above were the dry facts connected with the beginnings and organization of the Foochow Rotary Club. These, however, failed to adequately interpret the significance of the establishing of this Club for the Foochow community. For the first time, through Rotary, men of different nationalities, varying professions, social groups, and relationships, met in fellowship together, facing common tasks. This in itself had exerted tremendous influence in breaking down barriers, which formerly existed between various groups and nationalities in a small port such as Foochow. The opportunity which Rotary has given for foreign and Chinese business leaders to meet weekly in fellowship and service has been of inestimable value. The Foochow Rotary Club had become one of the most potent factors in the life of Foochow.



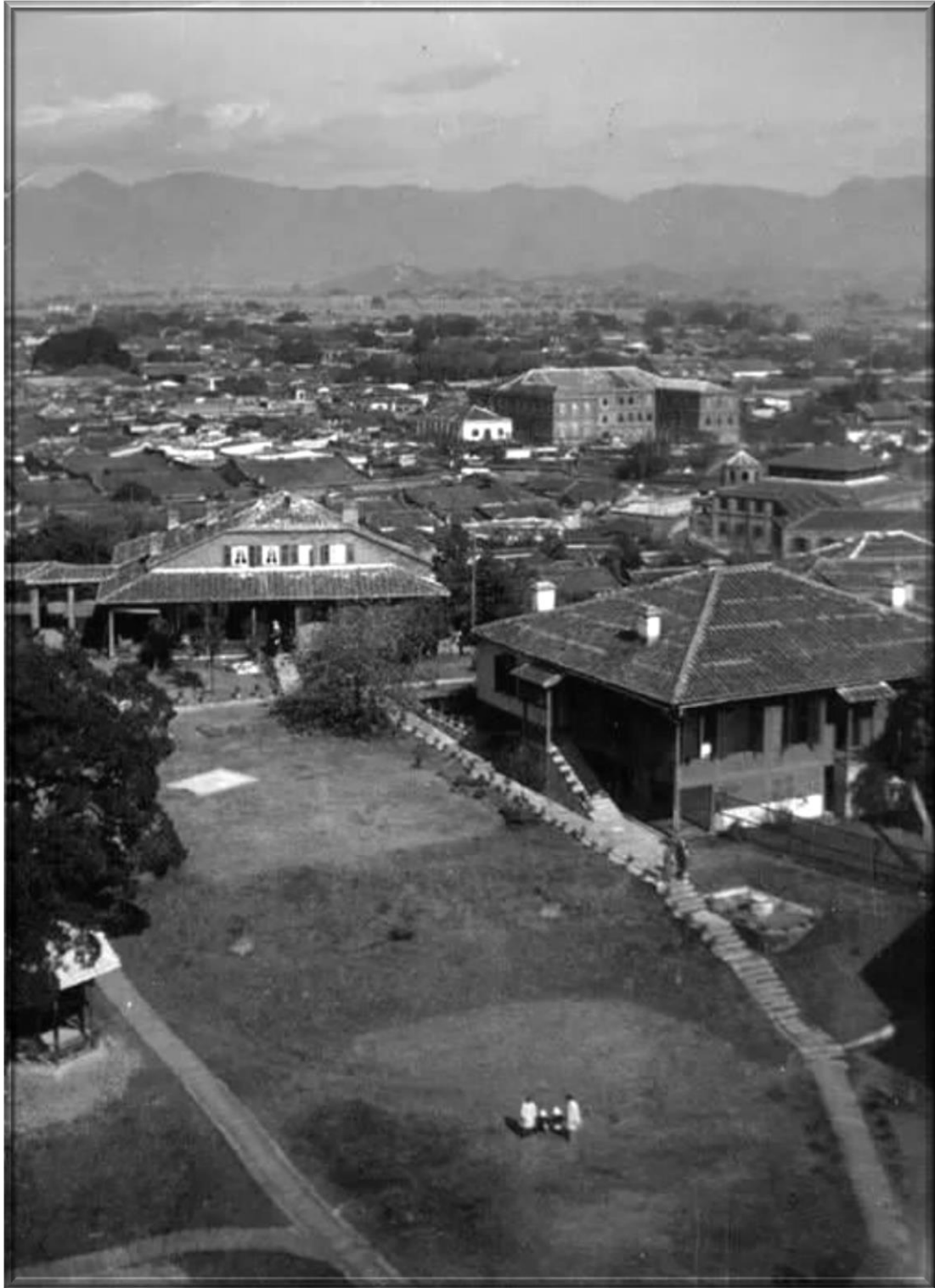
29 April 1934 – Members of the Rotary Club of Foochow, who in a recent gathering were honoured by the presence of the Governor of the Fukien Province General Chen Yi (陳儀上將) (front centre). A welcoming speech was made by President Harold Kemp Prossor (front left 2).

Scenes of Foochow in 1930s









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