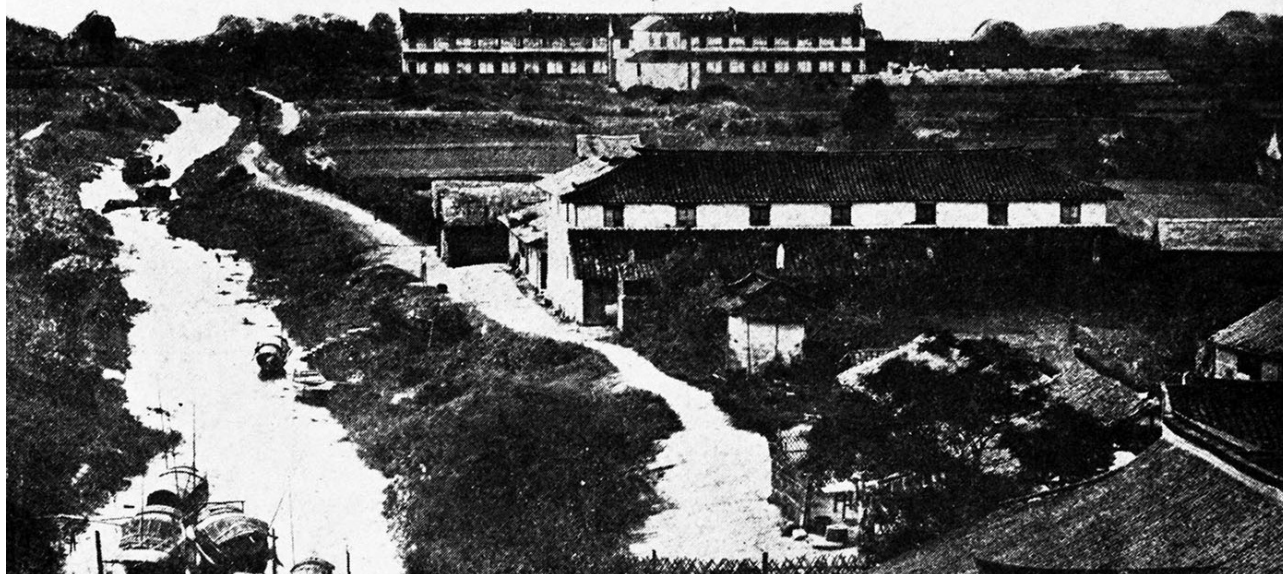


A file photo of the Tou-Se-We Orphanage that was established by the Society of Jesus in today's Xujiahui, Xuhui District, in 1864 — Ti Gong



carpentry, print-making or metal-casting.

The foreign missionaries introduced Western art techniques here, creating a cross-cultural environment. Some of the Chinese students went on to spread Chinese arts and crafts to the broader world.

Among the more illustrious graduates is Chinese sculptor Zhang Chongren (1907-98), who entered the orphanage at age 4. He left China to attend the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1931.

'The Blue Lotus'

Zhang befriended Herge, a Belgian cartoonist and creator of "The Adventures of Tintin." Inspired by Zhang, Herge created the character of a Chinese orphan named Chang Chong-Chen in the volume "The Blue Lotus."

Zhang introduced Herge to Chinese history and culture. A replica of Zhang's renowned sculpture of late French President Francois Mitterrand is displayed at Tou-Se-We Museum.

Artworks made at the school were displayed at world expositions, including the 1900 Paris Exposition, the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and the 1939 New York World's Fair.

Iconic wooden archway

The centerpiece of Tou-Se-We Museum is a carved wooden archway, 5.8 meters tall and 5.2 meters

wide. The archway was made by a group of orphans in the early 1910s, under the guidance of German sinologist Aloysius Beck.

The iconic artwork was sent to San Francisco as part of Tou-Se-We exhibits for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. It later appeared at the Chicago and New York world fairs.

The archway features four dragon-carved wooden pillars, which are set onto stone pads engraved with 42 lions. Guardian lions are a traditional Chinese architectural ornament.

"The stone lions that we normally see look dignified, but the lions on the archway are frolicking and seem amiable," said Yuan Yuan, a docent at Tou-Se-We Museum. "The difference in design is influenced by Western culture."

The archway later went to Indiana University in the United States, until a European architect took it to Sweden with hopes of restoring it.

In 2009, the arch returned to China after 96 years overseas; many of its components with delicate carvings had been sold or were missing. A Chinese team spent seven months restoring the archway.

The Tou-Se-We Orphanage closed in 1960. According to Yuan, many orphans who spent their childhood there returned to their "old home" after the opening of the museum in 2010.

Li Shunxing, a retired worker at Shanghai Zhonghua Printing Co, was one of them.

Born in 1933, he entered the orphanage in 1946 and was later allocated to its printing workshop, where he was responsible for typesetting.

Li found the love of his life during his time in the orphanage. Back then, female orphans were cared for by the nearby sisters of the Notre-Dame Monastery, which today is a Shanghai cuisine restaurant.

A place to find love

Many of the boys at the orphanage were introduced to girls by the nuns, and some later married. Li and his wife He Yongna were among the happy couples.

"The wedding rings we wore were made of copper, which I bought from our metal casting workshop at a cheap price," said Li.

According to Li, traditional rings of golden or silver might be sold if couples had no money, but copper ones would endure on fingers because they had much less value.

After their marriage, Li and his wife rented a house in the Christian village of Tou-Se-We, which was built by the church in 1874.

"Tou-Se-We is a living tribute to the integration of Chinese and Western cultures in Shanghai over the past 100 years," said Yuan. "It is a place where people can get a glimpse of truly local history."

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Yuan Yuan

Docent at Tou-Se-We Museum



File photos show boys received vocational training of skills like typesetting (far above) and woodcarving (above) at the Tou-Se-We Orphanage. — Ti Gong



The graduation certificate of Li Shunxing who entered the orphanage in 1946 — Ti Gong