Chinese Language and Culture: Remembering Henry C. Fenn
Henry Courtenay Fenn: Background

He was born in Peiping, later called Peking [now Beijing], China, son of the Reverend Dr. Courtenay Hughes Fenn, missionary to China and compiler of *The Five Thousand Dictionary*, and his wife Alice Holstein May Fenn.

He joined the Yale Institute of Far Eastern Languages (IFEL), and was known widely as one of the originators of the so-called “blitz” method of teaching students to speak Chinese. He was active in the “Yale system” of Chinese grammar developed by himself, George Kennedy, Gardner Tewksbury, Wang Fangyu, and others, working in the Institute in the late 1940s.

H.C. Fenn was director of the Institute from 1952 to 1962, when he reached the mandatory retirement age of 68. After a period of writing and editing, he set up the Chinese language department at Dartmouth and then for three years was at Washington University in St. Louis, where for a period he was acting chairman of the department of Chinese and Japanese.

b. February 26, 1894

d. July 22, 1978

84 years
Henry C. Fenn: The Early Years
Henry C. Fenn

Henry with some students in China
The Institute
215 Park Street, New Haven, Conn.
ca. 1958
Photo by Dennis Conklin
From 1951 through early 1965, during the presidencies of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, the US Air Force contracted with Yale University for training in selected Asian languages for Cold War intelligence operations performed by USAFSS under NSA direction. In the 14 year period, over 3,000 airmen completed intensive language courses, primarily in Chinese and Korean, at IFEL in New Haven, Connecticut.
In 1965, the Institute of Far Eastern Languages ceased to exist as a separate entity of the University and its language teaching functions were incorporated into the Department of East Asian Languages. The publishing tasks of the Institute were taken over by Far Eastern Publications, which established its headquarters at 28 Hillhouse Avenue, right in the center of the University. Since the seventies, Far Eastern has continuously published additional titles and remains to this day one of the world's leading publishers of texts to learn East Asian languages.
Established in January 1943 as the Chinese Language School to provide training in spoken Chinese for officers and enlisted men of the United States Army.

Under its founder and first director, Professor George A. Kennedy (1901-60), it made a successful transition from a wartime expedient to a recognized part of the University's program in instruction and research.

Early in the academic year 1945-46 the school began the training of civilians for service in various posts in the Far East, and in 1946 the first regularly enrolled Yale students took courses here.

Since the spring of 1947 it has been designated the Institute of Far Eastern Languages, and at present enjoys a world-wide reputation in the teaching of spoken and written non-Western languages.
Japanese was first taught in the Institute in the academic year 1948-49, and beginning with the academic year 1960-61 the Institute became responsible for instruction of Yale students in elementary Chinese in cooperation with the department of Indic and Far Eastern Languages and Literatures.

In the academic year 1963-64 it will extend its regular activities into several of the languages of Southeast Asia, some of which have been taught on demand in the past.

The academic programs of Yale University, especially those in International Studies, require a high degree of foreign language competence for the student; for the languages of the Far East and Southeast Asia the Institute of Far Eastern Languages provides the staff, facilities, and program by which this level of achievement may be reached quickly and efficiently.
Institute of Far Eastern Languages (IEFL)
Books on the Chinese Language

Some books authored by H.C. Fenn

Books edited or contributed to by H.C. Fenn
Books on the Chinese Language

1952

1982 (Revised edition)
A Syllabus of the History of Chinese Civilization and Culture

SIXTH EDITION

BY

L. C. GOODRICH          H. C. FENN

Illustrated

THE CHINA SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC., NEW YORK

Books on the Chinese Language

1953

CHINESE DIALOGUES
An Intermediate Level Text For Modern Chinese
Fred Fang-Yu Wang
Edited by: Henry C. Fenn Pao-Ch' en Lee
Yale University

1966

CHARACTER TEXT FOR CHINESE DIALOGUES
Fred Fang-Yu Wang
Edited by: Henry C. Fenn Pao-Ch' en Lee
FAR EASTERN PUBLICATIONS YALE UNIVERSITY New Haven, Connecticut
Henry and Connie

The Newlyweds

January 27, 1925

Peking (Beijing), China
Travels

Connie S. Fenn (with her father) and Feng Yü-hsiang’s soldiers (1925)
Travels

The Great Wall
Travels

A picnic at the Great Wall
Travels

An ancient domed marvel
Travels

Camels carrying coal to the city

Connie S. Fenn traveling with camels
Travels

A family in Inner Mongolia
Locals along the way to Inner Mongolia
Travels

A camp site on one of the expeditions
Travels

A camp site and view from the camp on one of the expeditions
Buddhism

Yungang Caves in Datong China
Buddhism

Yungang Caves
Other Religions

Lama priest

Taoist priest
The Famines: 1920-21 & 1928-30
The Famines: 1920-21 & 1928-30

Children at a soup kitchen
The Famines: 1920-21 & 1928-30
The Famines: Hope

A ritual dance as a prayer for children

Road building; famine relief effort
Street Scenes

Sawing wood into planks
Street Scenes

Harvesting ice
Street Scenes

Barber
Street Scenes

Hauling reeds to market
Street Scenes

Vegetable seller, arriving for early market
Street Scenes

Peanuts and persimmons
Street Scenes

More peanuts and persimmons
Street Scenes

Baskets for sale
Street Scenes

A street lunch counter
Not the end of the story…

…only the beginning…