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# The Susan Barbara Tallmon Sargent Collection: a biographical and genealogical guide to a digitized manuscript collection at the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library

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**The Susan Barbara Tallmon Sargent Collection: a biographical and genealogical guide to a digitized manuscript collection at the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library**  
**By Ken Rockwell**

Among the numerous digital collections at the J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, is the Susan Barbara Tallmon Sargent Collection.<sup>1</sup> This set of family papers is centered upon the papers of Susan (Tallmon) Sargent, a physician who served as a medical missionary in China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The heart of this collection is the voluminous correspondence sent to and from Doctor Tallmon/Sargent during her missionary years of 1904 through 1918, but it also contains letters and reports from other missionaries after those years, other family correspondence, books and other mementoes, photographs, etc. This collection came into the possession of Ardis Hitchcock, a grand-niece of Dr. Sargent's, who had plans to produce a book on the doctor's experiences in China. This project never came to fruition before Hitchcock's death. Fortunately, her daughter, Carolyn McKay, donated the papers to the library in 2009, and now they are available for researchers interested in the work of Christian missionaries in China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, both in their original form and as a digital collection.

As the metadata cataloger responsible for providing description and subject access to the library's digital collections, I found this collection both fascinating and challenging. For one thing, the original papers were sometimes out of order, and the archivists insisted on preserving the arrangement in which the collection was donated. This may be traditional archival practice, but it is not very helpful to the end user. The digitization project maintained the same "order," including pieces of separate documents being separated in different groupings. I spent a good deal of time inventorying incomplete documents and piecing them together, then providing links between them so that the end user was able to move seamlessly from one page to the next. The digital collection was accessed through the CONTENTdm digital management system. When the library decided to migrate to a new, open-source system (Solr), the links between pieces were preserved.

Often, letters would be addressed to someone by their first name, and similarly signed. As it is important to list the author of the letter (in a metadata field called "Creator,") I needed to know the identity of "Edith" when she wrote to "Clara." So I kept a running list of such ambiguous references, watching for further clues to the writer's (and the recipient's) identity, and these often arose in subsequent letters. The numerous letters between members of Susan Tallmon Sargent's extended family provided a sketch of the family in time, though married names and the identities of husbands of her sisters were sometimes elusive. To aid my construction of a family group record, I utilized the U.S. Federal Census using Ancestry.com at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. What follows is a summary of my findings, which will aid the user of this collection as they encounter references to different names, including other missionaries, and members of the Tallmon family.

**Susan Barbara Tallmon** (born 15 Dec. 1872) attended Iowa College in Grinnell, graduating in 1898. She was active in the "Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor," a group that supported overseas missionaries, and was motivated to become one herself. The family interest in science became fully manifest in Susan as she determined to become a doctor.

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<sup>1</sup> An online finding aid for the manuscript collection is available via Archives West at: <http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv57006/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=Tallmon> . The digital collection may be accessed at [https://collections.lib.utah.edu/search?facet\\_setname\\_s=uum\\_sbts](https://collections.lib.utah.edu/search?facet_setname_s=uum_sbts)

The collection includes correspondence relating to her education, which culminated in her graduation from Northwestern in Chicago in 1902, and her subsequent applications to the American Board of Congregational Foreign Missions (ABCFM) to become a medical missionary. Her first attempts were unsuccessful, and for a time she lived in Berkeley, California, with her father and sister Clover, and opened a private practice there. In 1904, her sister Angeline came down from Rocklin, Calif., and Susie helped deliver her son, named Francis Tucker Tallmon after a prominent missionary. In 1905, she delivered sister Marie's daughter Ruth and brother George's son John. When her application came through, Dr. Tallmon embarked for China in 1905.

Upon arrival in China, the first period of her mission was dedicated to learning the Chinese language. She was posted at Lintsing (Linqing) in Shantung (Shandong) Province, where she was the resident physician. Her colleagues there were Emory and Minnie Ellis, while Dr. Francis F. Tucker, then of Tehchow (Dezhou), was her mentor. As the only woman doctor in the area, she was the only one allowed to treat the Chinese women, and she gained considerable fame in the area. Families would call on her day and night, and transport her with her medical bag to their homes by wheelbarrow to treat the ailing. Her primary responsibilities were medical, but she was also involved in the more overt evangelizing work. The collection's papers provide a window into the complications of promoting Christianity in a culture so alien to the American and European missionaries, and the challenges facing the native converts. There were clear conflicts at times, which flared up in times of unrest. Dr. Tallmon's period of service came in the wake of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 that saw the suspension of mission activity due to hostility against foreigners.

The letters that form the heart of this collection began soon after her arrival. Fortunately, she had a typewriter on which to compose her letters and other writings, including official reports; and she had carbon paper with which to make multiple copies. Some letters were to congregations and Sunday Schools that supported her work, but many are to her family. In one of her letters, dated 2 October 1906, she proposed that copies of the letters be shared around among family members: "One copy should go to Papa, Hester and George, one to Lucy and Clover, one to Angie and Margaret, and one to Clara and Edith and Mabel." An additional comment reads: "I am sorry Angie and Margaret live so far apart and that they are both such busy people. Perhaps Miss Margaret could always attend to sending on the letters to Aunt Margaret." Angeline, in Oregon, had a daughter named after her aunt in Illinois. In the next letter, dated 3 November 1906, she wrote: "This letter is going to Hester to be sent back to George ... I am sending this letter too to Clara for her and Edith ... If you will send it on to Mabel I should be glad for, you know, I expected her to be one of the family. The copy that goes to Margaret is to be sent back to Angie ... Clover and Lucy share their copy, and Papa has one all to himself." Susan often apologized for the time between letters as her schedule became so busy, and the letters could take a couple of months to reach their recipients.

The schedule of missionaries in China included a summer vacation of sorts in the north of China at a missionary compound in Pei-tsi-ho (Beidaihe), on the coast of Hebei Province. Travel in the region included by boat on the Grand Canal between Lintsing and Pang Chuan. Missionaries could also go on furlough and return home after seven years. Susan Tallmon returned to the United States in 1912 and spent considerable time traveling around the United States, often speaking to congregations about the mission work. It was probably during the course of this activity that she met the Reverend Benjamin Farrington Sargent, a Congregational minister. He was a widower and had four children. Dr. Tallmon returned to China in 1914 and

continued to correspond with him. Ben Sargent came to China later and they married, on 28 May 1916, at the Lintsing missionary compound. Their “honeymoon” was a tour of northern China. Ben Sargent worked at the mission while Susan continued her medical duties for another year. The collection includes some of his own writings with his descriptions of missionary work in China. Some are typed, but others are hand-written in very difficult cursive script. When the initials “BFS” are encountered, they refer to him.

As World War I raged, conditions became difficult for foreigners in China. In 1917, the Sargents returned to the United States and lived at Berkeley, California. Susan did not continue her medical profession after this. The Sargents had a second residence, Madrone Cottage, in the Russian River country, Sonoma County. Included in this collection are the guest books for their many visitors at the cottage over the years, including family members, friends, and some of the missionaries they had known in China. Ben Sargent died on 19 June 1931. Susan lived another 19 years, at Berkeley, and died on 21 February 1950.

### Other missionaries in China

In the course of their work in China, the Tallmon sisters became intimately acquainted with several other missionaries. As a result, this circle of colleagues exchanged many letters, a good number of which are to be found in this collection. The letters provide some important details on the lives and experiences of the mission work, and they provide a witness to the history unfolding in China at the time. Among the chief participants in this drama were:

- Grace M. **Breck**, missionary at Paotingfu, Annie Gould Memorial School; at Peitaiho in 1931.
- Dr. Alma **Cooke** became the resident physician at Lintsing after Dr. Tallmon Sargent’s departure. She arrived in China in 1920.
- Rev. Vinton C. and Florence (Cutler) **Eastman** were in Lintsing starting in 1908.
- Emery W. and Minnie (Case) **Ellis**. The Ellises were missionaries at Lintsing when Susan Tallmon arrived and continued there for some time; later they were at Tehsien and Techow. Some of their papers are part of Yale’s “China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection,” Record Group 8, boxes 63 – 64:  
<http://drs.library.yale.edu/fedora/get/divinity:008/PDF>
- Rev. Alfred D. and Erma K. **Heininger** came to China in 1917, staying until 1927.
- Paul V. and Ellie B. H. **Helliwell**, at Lintsing in 1921.
- Clarence **Holleman**, a Medical missionary at Foochow Province, 1919–1950.
- Ethel M. **Long** was a teacher who arrived in China in 1913. She was Edith Tallmon’s colleague and roommate at the Lintsing compound.
- Rev. Hugh W. and Mabel E. **Hubbard** at Paotingfu (Baoding) in 1923.
- Alice M. **Huggins** (1891-1971), a missionary teacher in China from 1917 into the 1930s. She spent 2 years in Japanese prison camps. She was also the author of some books set in China. Some of her correspondence and stories are in Yale’s “China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection,” Record Group 8, box 312:  
<http://drs.library.yale.edu/fedora/get/divinity:008/PDF>
- Mabel I. **Huggins**, at Tehsien in 1913. Sister of Alice.
- Paul N. and Helen (Dunham) **MacEachron**, missionaries from Grinnell College (Susan Tallmon’s alma mater), teaching at Dezhou, 1917–1922. Their correspondence from China is in the Grinnell College archives, Burling Library. (See: Archie R. Crouch,

Christianity in China: A Scholars's Guide to Resources in the Libraries and archives of the United States (1989), p. 131..

- James H. and Netta (King) **McCann**. Missionaries from England, they were at Lintsing. A son, Robert, was also a missionary later, and a letter from the Tuckers to Edith (Tallmon) Park in 1952 mentions that he was a prisoner of the Communists.
- Maude **McGwigan**, nurse
- Alice **Murphy**, missionary in China 1920s to early 1940s.
- Valley M. **Nelson**, a nurse at Lintsing; transferred in 1934 to T'ungchow Hospital, T'unghsien, Hopei, China, according to the annual report for that institution.
- Miss Isabelle **Phelps**, at Paotingfu (Baoding) in 1923.
- Francis M. **Price**, missionary at Paotingfu (Baoding). His wife Sarah Jane (Freeman) died in 1916 and he married, second, in 1918, Jennie M. Reeves. His papers are at Oberlin; see: <http://oberlinarchives.libraryhost.com/?p=collections/controlcard&id=528>
- Rev. Watts and Gertrude Chaney **Pye**, at Fenchow in 1921;
- Harold W. and Mary S. **Robinson**, at Paotingfu (Baoding) in the 1910s.
- Dr. Hugh L. **Robinson**, medical missionary at Lintsing and Tungchow, later at the Peking Union Medical College. Wife Olga; son Wells Robinson went to Oberlin in 1934. He became a prisoner in the Philippines in World War II. Memoirs of wife Olga (Olsen) Robinson in Yale's "China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection," Record Group 8, box 172 of .
- Myra L. **Sawyer**, missionary at Taiku in 1930.
- Francis and Emma (Boose) **Tucker**. Francis F. Tucker (1870–1957) was a physician stationed at Dechow and later at Zhaotong, Yunnan province. Emma's letters to her family back in the U.S. are quite long and rich in detail. They include such episodes as the Japanese invasion of China; the episode in which Dr. Tucker shot and killed an intruder; and their journey into southern China. The Tucker letters are probably the third largest set in this collection, after those of the Tallmon sisters. The collection also includes some letters from their sons, who also became doctors; and official reports of the hospitals in China where Francis worked. His typescript autobiography is at Yale's "China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection," Record Group 8, box 203: <http://drs.library.yale.edu/fedora/get/divinity:008/PDF> The Tucker family also have an archival collection at Oberlin; see: <http://www.oberlinlibstaff.com/archon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=407>
- Arthur Henderson **Smith** (1845–1932) was a missionary at Tientsin with his wife Emma (born Emma Jane Dickinson). Papers at Beloit College: [https://www.beloit.edu/archives/assets/Arthur\\_Henderson\\_Smith\\_Finding\\_Aid.pdf](https://www.beloit.edu/archives/assets/Arthur_Henderson_Smith_Finding_Aid.pdf)
- Ruth **Van Kirk** taught at Lintsing in 1921.
- Vincent E. **Wagner**, missionary at Taiku and later at Peitaiho.
- Rev. Robert B. and Louise G. **Whitaker** at Peking in 1921; came to Lintsing by 1923. Papers at the Graduate Theological Union: [http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt8p3037c9/entire\\_text/](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt8p3037c9/entire_text/)
- Gertrude **Wyckoff**, at Lintsing in 1922. Collection of photographs at Yale

### **The Tallmon family**

The following is a genealogical summary of the Tallmon family:

George Washington Tallmon was born in October 1837 in Forestville, Chautauqua Co., New York. His parents moved west to Missouri. He was a student at Iowa College, Davenport, Scott Co., Iowa and at Beloit, Wisconsin. At Davenport, he enlisted in Co. E, 20th Iowa Infantry 1862. The same year he married Susan B. Carhart of Circle Grove, Iowa, daughter of John and Susan (Chesebro) Carhart. He was promoted to sergeant; commd. 1st LT. Co. I, 73rd U.S.C.T, Nov. 1863; he participated in the Battle of Prairie Grove, Ark., where about one-third of his company were either killed or wounded; also in the Siege at Vicksburg; in charge of freedmen at Baton Rouge, Louisiana 1863-64. His military record and journal are kept by the Rock County Historical Society at Janesville, Wisconsin. Susan (Carhart) Tallmon, a school teacher and writer, accompanied her husband to Louisiana during his service there, serving as a teacher of freedmen for the government. Her stories were printed after the war in Good Housekeeping Magazine. She also made sketches of the people she met during this time. Her first child was born and buried before she returned home to Iowa at the end of the war.<sup>2</sup>

After the war, the Tallmons lived in various parts of Iowa, eventually settling in 1876 at Grinnell, Iowa, where most of their children grew up. Susan died there on 1 March 1890.<sup>3</sup> George was a farmer, but he was very interested in science, and organized a club for the youth of Grinnell called the Agazzi Club, after the famous natural scientist. Members included his daughters, Susie and Clover, as well as two Jones brothers, Burton and Lynds, who married his daughters Angeline and Clara. The Tallmons valued education and made sure both sons and daughters received the best available. Most of them went to college. Around 1900, George moved west to California, first to Berkeley, then to Morgan Hill, Santa Clara Co., where he had a farm, specializing in peach orchards. He died there on 28 January 1928, and was buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in San Jose. An obituary is found online:

<http://iagenweb.org/boards/poweshiek/obituaries/index.cgi?read=388086>

The Tallmons were solid members of the Congregational Church tradition. This is reflected in their children's choices in life, as missionaries and the wives of ministers or others connected to the church. George's wife, Susan, had wished to become a missionary herself, but it was her daughters who fulfilled that dream for her.

Children of George W. and Susan B. (Carhart) Tallmon<sup>4</sup>:

1. Grace Melissa Tallmon, b. 13 January 1863 in Circle Grove, Scott Co., Iowa; d. 23 March 1864 at Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
2. Ada Morganza Tallmon, b. 18 January 1865 at Morganza, Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana; d. 10 August 1877 in Grinnell, Poweshiek Co, Iowa.
3. Angeline Carhart Tallmon, b. 15 Dec. 1866 at Davenport, Scott Co., Iowa; d. 8 Jan. 1921 at Forest Grove, Washington Co., Oregon. She attended Iowa College [later Grinnell College] and married Burton Howard Jones (b. 1868 in Grinnell), who became a Congregational minister. They had children, including Margaret B. [m. Bishop]; Lester T.; Arthur C.; Howard C.; Dorothy Ruth [who d. in 1927]; Francis Tucker [named for the prominent missionary in China]; Carrie Lavinia; and Kathryn Edith [m. Walker]. The

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<sup>2</sup> From Dee Davidson in response to a genealogical inquiry on a Chautauqua County message board, <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/NYCHAUTA/2003-03/1048497829>

<sup>3</sup> Notice from Grinnell Herald, May 4, 1890; <http://www.grinnell.lib.ia.us/Obit/1/TallmonSusanB.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> From Larry Chesebro's genealogy at Rootsweb: <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=lanastl&id=I13638>

Burton and Angeline Jones papers are at the Marriott Library. See:  
[http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/UU\\_EAD&CISOPTR=1246](http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/UU_EAD&CISOPTR=1246)

4. Clara Mabelle Tallmon, b. 3 Oct. 1868 in Scott Co., Iowa; d. 20 June 1956. She married Lynds Eugene Jones, a brother of Burton who attended Iowa College in Grinnell and became a science teacher at Oberlin College, which was founded by Congregationalists. Their children included George, Beth, and Harold. This family's papers are at Oberlin. For further information, see:  
<http://www.oberlin.edu/archive/holdings/finding/RG30/SG107/biography.html>
5. George Albert Tallmon, b. 13 May 1871 in Jasper Co., Iowa; d. at Morgan Hill, Calif. He settled in Morgan Hill and started a farm there before 1900, and was no doubt important in his father's decision to settle there. He married Emma Shaffer (b. 1879 in Kansas), and they had twelve children, including Edith Grace, 1898÷1991 [m. Paul Walker]; George Allison (b. and d. 1899); Emma Elizabeth (Bessie), 1901÷1978 [m. Willard P. Walker]; Raymond S., 1903÷1988 [ m. Violet Steele]; John C. (1905÷1928); Willard (Bill), 1907÷1986 [m. Winnie Pearce]; Susan W., 1910÷1997 [m. Irving L. Atkinson]; Donald S., 1912÷1998 [m. Helen F. Smith]; Alice, b. 1914 [m. Johnny Ferguson Roberts]; Dorothy H., 1916÷1961 [m. Robert W. Raney]; and Melvin E. Tallmon, 1923÷1982.
6. Susan Barbara Tallmon, b. 15 Dec. 1872 in Jasper Co., Iowa. She was often called "Susie," but she was in missionary circles "Dr. Tallmon." (**Further above.**)
7. Lucy Maria Tallmon, b. 2 Nov. 1874 in Jasper Co., Iowa. While an online record of the family says that she died 2 March 1904 at Watsonville, Santa Cruz Co., Calif., the Tallmon letters in this collection clearly prove otherwise. Rather, she married Harry W. Miler and lived first at Berkeley and later at Walnut Creek, California. They had children: Ruth, George, Robert, and Gertrude.
8. John Arthur Tallmon, b. 25 July 1876 in Jasper Co., Iowa; d. 19 Nov. 1901 at Fort Worth, Tarrant Co., Texas, while serving in the military. At the time of his death, he was apparently engaged to marry Mabel Putman of Grinnell. This is suggested by an early letter from Susan Tallmon in China, where she arranges for copies of letters to be forwarded among the family. She asks, "If you will send it on to Mabel I should be glad for, you know, I expected her to be one of the family." Because of John's death, Mabel did not join the Tallmon family. Instead, she married a Canadian, Hugo Meilicke and lived in Vancouver. She remained in touch with the family, visited Susan and Ben Sargent in California, and in 1934 she visited China.
9. Margaret Amanda Tallmon, b. 30 January 1878 in Grinnell, Iowa; d. 20 May 1960 at Peoria, Peoria Co., Illinois. She lived in Portland, Oregon, in the first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. She married Mr. Leslie Bertram Rutherford and they lived first in Oregon and later at Peoria. Children: Margaret, Robert Bruce, William Leslie, and Bertram W.
10. Hester Ann Tallmon, b. 31 August 1879 in Grinnell, Iowa; d. 22 May 1948 at Agnew Hospital, Santa Clara Co., Calif. Hester earned a B.S. at the University of California-Berkeley, in 1904, and was a teacher at Tillitson College in Austin, Texas during 1904–1906. Later letters from China addressed to George W. Tallmon are often addressed as well to Hester. She lived with her father from 1906 on and ran his household. She never married.
11. Marion Clover Tallmon, b. 28 June 1881 in Grinnell, Iowa; d. 9 January 1960 at Berkeley, Calif. She always went by "Clover." She earned a B.S. at the University of

California-Berkeley, in 1904. She married Lycurgus Demosthenes (“L. Dee”) Smith, a lawyer (a graduate of Iowa College), in 1905, and they lived in Berkeley, first on Virginia Street and then on Vicente Road. Children included: Leroy, Reatha, Ellen Marion, Max F., and Barbara Smith.

12. Edith Celia Tallmon, b. 13 Jan. 1883 in Grinnell, Iowa; d. 2 Oct. 1960 at Marina, Monterey Co, Calif. The youngest child in the family, she was also interested in missionary work. She was educated as a teacher, graduating from Oberlin in 1907, and worked at Des Moines, teaching Kindergarten in 1909. In 1911, she was accepted as a missionary. She sailed for China and was posted at Lintsing in the same mission compound as her sister, Dr. Susan Tallmon. She went on furlough 1922, with the intention of returning, but concern for her father’s health led her to stay and help her sister Hester in running the Morgan Hill farm. While living there, she met Hubbard B. Park, and they married in 1927. They eventually moved to Marina, on Monterey Bay. Edith’s letters from China constitute the second largest set of letters in this collection. One letter dated 10 June 1904 from "Deakie" to "Hettie" reveals the nicknames of Edith and sister Hester.

Photographs of many of the family members have been scanned and placed in Ancestry.com

### **Some other names encountered**

Some letters from Susan Tallmon are addressed to a friend nicknamed “Pet.” This was Lucetta **Kelebarger** (was in pencil on back of one of the letters), and by 1930s when she visited the Sargent cottage, she signed with married name Lucetta K. Radcliffe.

Mabel **Meilicke** of Vancouver, B.C., was probably that Mabel who had been engaged to marry John Arthur Tallmon, Susan's brother, at the time of his sudden death in 1901. See his listing under the Tallmon family’s genealogical section, above.

(Keywords: Manuscript collections; Digital collections; Medical missionaries; Doctors; China; American Board of Congregational Foreign Missions; Tallmon family)

Abstract: Description of the Susan Barbara Tallmon Sargent Collection, a manuscript collection now available online through the University of Utah’s Marriott Library. The collection contains correspondence, reports, and other documents about medical missionaries in China, as well as correspondence of the Tallmon family of Iowa, California, and Oregon. This article is particularly useful in identifying the many writers and recipients of letters and reports in the collection.