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Charlie Soong: North Carolina's Link to the Fall of the Last Emperor of China

E. A. Haag

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Charlie Soong has been called many things: a missionary, a businessman, a revolutionary, a pioneer of woman's education, and North Carolina's first international student. He was also the father of China's famous Soong sisters, including Madame Chiang Kai-shek. In turn, the story of Charlie Soong has captivated the imaginations of North Carolinians for over a century now, and has taken on almost legendary status in the state that did so much to shape and influence him in his formative years. It is these experiences, and the extraordinary story of Charlie Soong's triumph and tragedy after his move back to China that are chronicled here. It may have been fate, but it just as easily could have been Charlie's warm and ebullient personality that got him quickly into the good graces of influential North Carolinians who became convinced that Charlie would be an ideal missionary in China. When men like Durham tobacco magnate Julian S. Carr (namesake of the town of Carrboro) took it upon himself to sponsor Charlie and his education at Trinity College, it set in motion a chain of events that would radically impact the future of Charlie Soong. And when men like Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the Chinese Revolution, would later befriend Charlie in Shanghai, it would profoundly alter the course of Chinese history itself. The legend of Charlie Soong in North Carolina has almost outgrown the truth behind the man himself. Indeed, so many stories have been told about Charlie by so many different people in so many different settings that it has been hard to tell fact from fiction in recent years. "Charlie Soong: North Carolina's Link to the Fall of the Last Emperor of China" sheds new light on one of the most colorful and extraordinary individuals ever to grace the pages of North Carolina's long history.

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