

# Dr. Susie Carson

Medical Doctor, Missionary and Tibetan Explorer

Born in Chatham, Ontario in 1868, Susanna Carson, known as Susie, was the daughter of James and Martha Carson. The family moved to Strathroy when Susie was young, as her father was granted a principal position in the community and later became the inspector of public schools in West Middlesex.

While growing up in Strathroy, Susie became heavily involved with the Methodist Church, joining a Methodist young adult association called the Epworth League. Her faith influenced her life greatly as she felt the calling to become a missionary later in life. Carson attended the Women's Medical College in Toronto and graduated in 1888.

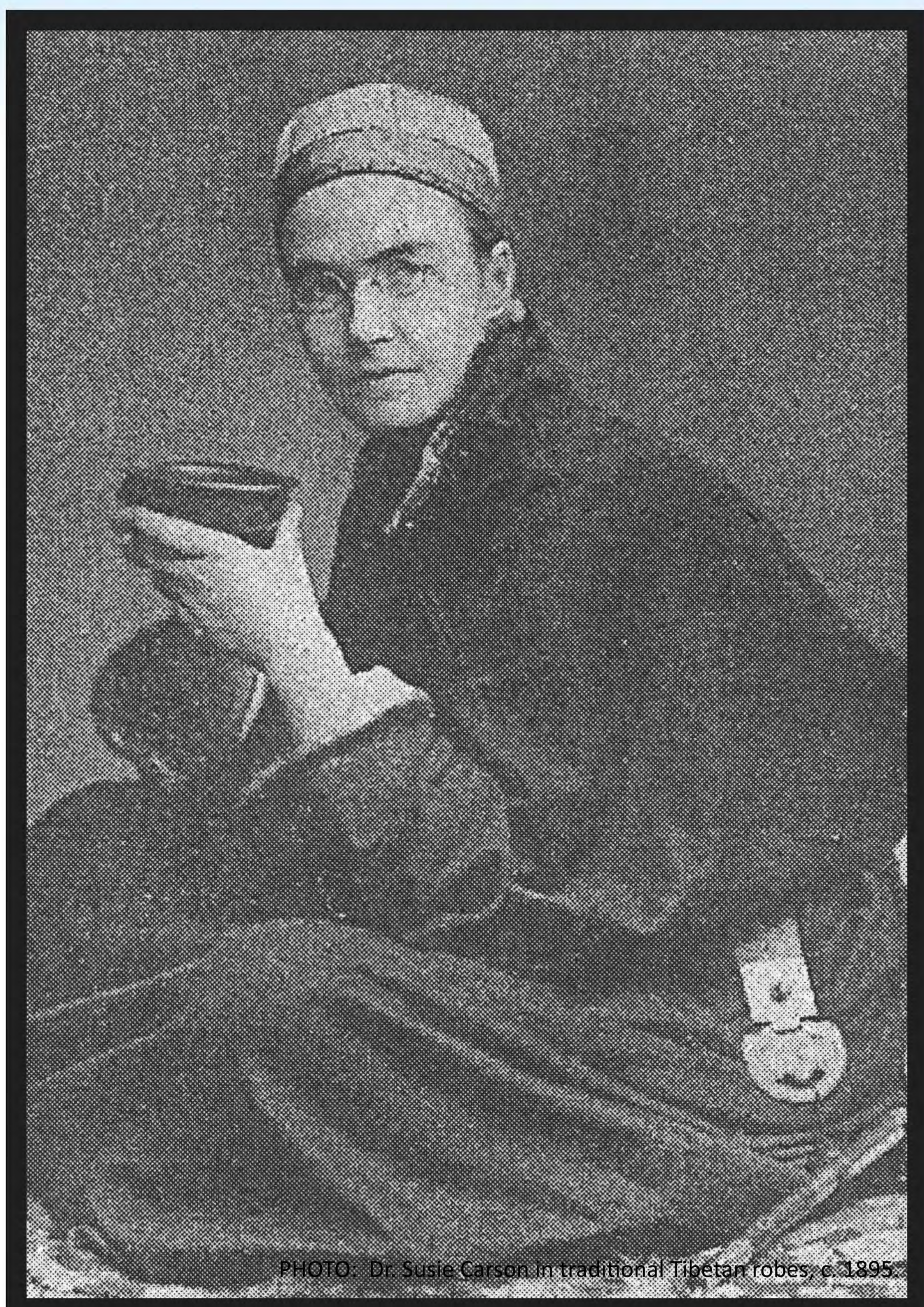


PHOTO: Dr. Susie Carson in traditional Tibetan robes, c. 1895.

She returned to Strathroy to practice medicine here and in the London area with her sister, Dr. Jennie Carson. In 1894, Susie married a Dutch missionary, Petrus Rijnhart. Rijnhart was an advocate for missions to Tibet and gained Carson's support. A few weeks after their marriage, Carson and Rijnhart left Canada for Tibet, planning to stay as independent missionaries.

Susie reflected on her experiences as a missionary in her book, "With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple," published in 1901. From this account, we know that Susie and Petrus dressed in traditional Oriental attire while travelling (giving them an advantage when negotiating to obtain belongings), and that they successfully learned the Chinese and Tibetan languages. We also learn from this account that she suffered considerable hardships on her journey. On a trek near the beginning of their mission, Petrus attempted to cross a river to an encampment and did not survive, leaving Susie on her own for the rest of the mission.

Carson's medical skills proved to be essential in serving the people of Western China during the bloody Mohammedan rebellion of 1895. Friends and family feared for her safety as she travelled alone and was surrounded by imminent danger. Her work as a doctor and pioneer missionary serves as a testament to her selfless nature, gaining her the title of HOMETOWN HERO.

