



John Rabe was born in the town of Hamburg, Germany on the 23rd of November, 1882. Beginning in 1931, he was the director of Siemens in the Chinese city of Nanking.

In his Foreword to the *Diaries of John Rabe*, John E. Woods tells us what Rabe was doing in China:

*Nanking had been China's capital since 1927. By 1937 [the year the city fell to the Japanese], it had a population of about 1.3 million. Siemens had built the city's telephone system and the turbines of its electrical power plant; it had also supplied the hospitals with German equipment. Chinese technicians trained by Siemens serviced these facilities around the clock. Rabe spent his days at various governmental ministries trying to win contracts for Siemens. (Woods, Foreword to *The Diaries of John Rabe*, page xi.)*

Initially, life was good for Rabe and his family in Nanking. Then ... wishing to build a school on his property, Rabe had to join the Nazi party. Woods tells us why:

*In 1934, he founded a German school on his property in Nanking - and not for his own two children. His daughter was already past school age, and his son was at a boarding school in southern Germany. As chairman of the school board, which had to work through official channels of the Reich and get approval of the Nazi Party for teachers and funds, he joined the NSDAP in 1934. (Woods, Foreword to *The Diaries of John Rabe*, page ix.)*

After Japan conquered the city of Nanking in December of 1937, Rabe grew extremely worried about the plight of residents unable to flee the advancing Japanese soldiers. His fears were well-founded. It is believed that 300,000 people perished in a bloodbath now known as the "[Nanjing Massacre](#)."

Despite the horrors of the Japanese occupation, Rabe did whatever he could to save others from dying:

*A simple man whom people prized for his common sense, his humor, and his congeniality, but certainly not in any way a conspicuous man - and yet he earned people's highest admiration for the way that his love of his neighbor, of his Chinese fellow men in their plight, grew and outgrew itself, for the way he not only rescued them as a Good Samaritan, but also displayed political savvy, a talent for organization and diplomacy, and unflagging stamina in their cause. Working closely with American friends and often at the risk of his life, he built a Safety Zone in Nanking that prevented a massacre and offered relative security to 250,000 Chinese during the Japanese occupation. (Woods, Foreword to *The Diaries of John Rabe*, page ix.)*

To this day, John Rabe is held in high esteem by the people of Nanjing.

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Quoted passages from *The Good Man of Nanking - The Diaries of John Rabe*.

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