

East Meets Western Mass.

an exploration of our region's unique history with China

Date: April 14, 2012

Place: Great Falls Discovery Center, Turner's Falls

The Pioneer Valley has played an interesting and important role in the history of relations between the United States and China. This day-long conference will highlight some of the historical and cultural elements of that relationship.

The Forgotten Connection: Connecticut River Valley & the China Trade

Amanda Lange

Most of the research on the American China trade has focused almost exclusively on the urban, coastal cities of Boston, Salem, Providence, New York and Philadelphia. But this economic opportunity also impacted rural towns and more inland outposts — like the Connecticut River Valley. Not only did Valley inhabitants own and consume China trade goods, they also supplied outbound cargo (e.g. ginseng) to vessels venturing to China. In addition people from our area set sail for China as captains, first mates, sailors, and travelers — often returning with wealth and souvenirs for loved ones in their home “ports” of Hartford and Wethersfield, Connecticut, as well as Springfield and Northampton, Massachusetts.

Amanda Lange is a graduate of Rice University, Houston, Texas, and received her Master's degree from the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture at the University of Delaware. She holds the position of Curator of Historic Interiors and Curatorial Department Chair at Historic Deerfield, Inc., in Deerfield, Massachusetts. In 2005, Amanda organized “The Canton Connection: Chinese Export Art at Historic Deerfield” and authored it accompanying catalogue.

Chinese Educational Mission

Dr. Edward Rhoads

The Chinese Educational Mission brought the first 120 Chinese students to America — some as young as 11 years old — to gain expertise in the American education system. These boys served as early ambassadors to the United States and lived with host families throughout the Connecticut River valley of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Dr. Edward Rhoads is the author of *Stepping Forth into the World: The Chinese Educational Mission to the United States, 1872–81*. Until his retirement in 2003, Dr. Rhoads was a professor of Chinese history at the University of Texas at Austin.

A Shoemaker's Story

Dr. Anthony W. Lee

On a June morning in 1870, seventy-five Chinese immigrants stepped off a train in the New England factory town of North Adams, Massachusetts, imported as strikebreakers by the local shoe manufacturer. They threaded their way through a hostile mob and then — remarkably — their new employer lined them up along the south wall of his factory and had them photographed as the mob fell silent. So begins *A Shoemaker's Story*. Anthony Lee seeks to understand the social forces that brought this now-famous photograph into being, and the events and images it subsequently spawned.

Dr. Anthony W. Lee is an art historian, critic, curator, and photographer. He earned his Ph.D. in 1995 from the University of California at Berkeley and is currently Professor and Chair of Art History at Mount Holyoke College. He is the author of *A Shoemaker's Story: Being Chiefly About French Canadian Immigrants, Enterprising Photographers, Rasca! Yankees, and Chinese Cobblers in a Nineteenth-Century Factory Town*, Princeton University Press, 2008.

A Very Special Lunch

Pengyew Chin

Pengyew Chin is an ethnic Chinese born in Penang, Malaysia. He attended Brandeis University as a Wein Scholar, graduating in 1985. A self-taught cook, he has been a professional chef and caterer for more than 15 years, specializing in regional Asian cuisine. He also teaches classes on Asian cooking techniques. Chin creates his menus from Malaysian, Chinese and Nyonya preparations and recipes collected from friends, family and cookbooks. His offerings are a blend of this rich personal and historical heritage, encompassing influences from India, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and China. He travels regularly to Asia to keep abreast of culinary development.

China's Tea: Splendid Elixir of Emperors, Nobles, Holy Men and Everyman

Mary Lou Heiss

One of the first recorded usages of tea leaves was the transport of tea from Sichuan province to the court of King Wu (1049/1045-1043 BCE) in Henan province during the Zhou dynasty. However, Chinese tea scholars and anthropologists place the use and knowledge of some form of tea much earlier than that throughout the vast, forested areas that included the region known today as Yunnan province. By the time of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) tea was determined to be one of the daily essentials of Chinese life along with firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce and vinegar. Tea usage and tea drinking evolved in China over the course of many centuries before becoming established as the drink we know today. Along the path from yesterday to today, tea was variously used as: a medical concoction/ herbal remedy; a bitter, stimulating brew; a healthful tonic; a pleasure beverage; and an essential beverage.

Mary Lou Heiss is a noted tea authority, tea educator and independent scholar, premium tea retailer and co-author of *The Story of Tea: A Cultural History and Drinking Guide*, a 2008 James Beard Foundation Book Award and IACP Cookbook Award finalist, and *The Tea Enthusiast's Handbook: A Guide to the World's Best Teas*. When not traveling in Asia sourcing tea, she can be reached at her shop Tea Trekker in Northampton MA or online at www.teatrekker.com

The Bridgmans: America's First Missionaries to China

Cliff McCarthy

Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801 – 1861) was the first American Christian missionary to China and America's first China expert. He was a Belchertown native and an Amherst College graduate. His wife, Eliza Jane (Gillett) Bridgman, founded and managed for 15 years the first girls' school in Shanghai beginning in 1850. After her husband's death, she moved to Peking, secured substantial property and started Bridgman Academy, noted for educating a large number of Chinese women leaders. It was the predecessor to the Woman's College of Yenching University.

Cliff McCarthy is the Archivist at the Stone House Museum in Belchertown which has a collection of Elijah Coleman Bridgman's letters from China.

Chinese Folk Art Workshop

At 3 p.m., conference participants are invited to attend a performance of the Chinese Folk Art Workshop at the Shea Theater across the street.

Chinese Folk Art Workshop aims to promote interaction with and understanding of Chinese culture in the community. Its members range in age from 12 to 18, and they perform a variety of traditional Chinese folk arts such as Dragon Dance, Lion Dance, Taiwanese Drums, Chinese yoyo and Folk Dance. Admission to the performance is included in the conference fee, however tickets for the performance alone can be purchased separately.

Tickets are \$25 per person for the whole day, including lunch and the performance.



The Pioneer Valley History Network is hosting this event in collaboration with the "Big Read" initiative of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, which is sponsoring a community reading of Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. The "Big Read" is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Visit our websites: www.pioneervalleyhistorynetwork.org
www.deerfield-ma.org

