PREVIEW OF
EAST MEETS WESTERN MASS.
Saturday, April 14, 2012
Great Falls Discovery Center,
Turners Falls, MA
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 bring to light some of the historical and cultural elements of that relationship.

Image Credit: Historic Deerfield, Deerfield, MA
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.
Elijah Coleman Bridgman was the first American Christian missionary to China and translated the Bible into the Chinese language.

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 Beijing, secured substantial property, and started Bridgman Academy, noted for educating a large number of Chinese women leaders.

Credit:
Stone House Museum, Belchertown, MA

Credit:
Stone House Museum, Belchertown, MA

Credit: Amherst College Archives and Special Collections
Eliza Jane Bridgman wrote this book entitled, *Daughters of China or Sketches of Domestic Life in the Celestial Empire*, published in 1853.

Credit:
Stone House Museum, Belchertown, MA
This thread knife, made in China in the shape of a missionary, was sent to the U.S. by missionary James Granger Bridgman, nephew of Elijah Coleman Bridgman.

Credit:
Donated to the Stone House Museum, Belchertown, MA by Ida May Bridgman of Amherst, MA
As early as 1848, members of the Congregational Church in Belchertown were contributing to the Morrison Educational Society in China.

Samuel R. Brown would bring Yung Wing to the U.S. to study at Monson Academy and Yale University.

Credit:
Stone House Museum, Belchertown, MA
Yung Wing studied at the Morrison Educational Society school. Headmaster Samuel R. Brown brought Yung Wing to America and enrolled him at Monson Academy and later at Yale University. After graduating from Yale, Yung Wing returned to China and began promoting the idea of sending Chinese students to America. This eventually became the Chinese Educational Mission. Yung Wing died in Hartford in 1912.

Credit:
Wikimedia Commons
In 1876, the Anniversary Exercises at the Springfield Collegiate Institute included several presentations by students from the Chinese Educational Mission.

Credit:
Wood Museum of Springfield History, Springfield, MA
When some of the Chinese students were recalled to China in 1880, one student, a graduate of Springfield High School, went missing at the Springfield train station. That student, Yung Kwai (Rong Kui), remained in the U.S. and married a Springfield girl, May Burnham.

Credit:
Wood Museum of Springfield History, Springfield, MA
Chung Mun Yew (Zhong Wenyao) was a student in the Chinese Educational Mission and was attending Yale University when the students were recalled to China in 1881. Nicknamed “Money”, he was coxswain of the Yale crew when they beat Harvard.

He spent his life in the Chinese government and, among other positions of prominence, he was Secretary-Interpreter in the Chinese Legation, Washington, DC (1893-1903).

Credit:
Dr. Bruce A. Chan, Toronto, Canada and the Wood Museum of Springfield History.
Chu Sih Shu (Zhu Xishou), another student with the Chinese Educational Mission living in Belchertown, left this note in a fellow student’s autograph book in 1878.

Credit:
Stone House Museum, Belchertown, MA
Wing Chang Tong (Tang Rongjun), a student of the Chinese Educational Mission, left this photograph with his teacher, Maria Longley of Belchertown.

The reverse is inscribed, “To my teacher, Mrs. Longley, from her good wisher and pupil, Wing C. Tong. Hartford, Conn., U.S.A. Aug. 8th ’81”. That was the last day the students spent in Hartford before being recalled to China.

Photo credit:
Stone House Museum, Belchertown, MA
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Photo Credit: Historic Deerfield, Deerfield, MA”
The Chinese Education 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.
On a June morning in 1870, 75 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, Rascal Yankees, and Chinese Cobblers in a Nineteenth-Century Factory Town, Princeton University Press, 2008.
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.
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 2005, Amanda organized “The Canton Connection: Chinese Export Art at Historic Deerfield” and authored its accompanying catalogue.
AFTER THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND A PERFORMANCE OF THE CHINESE FOLK ART WORKSHOP AT THE SHEA THEATER ACROSS THE STREET.