

# **Made In China: Early American Trade with China, 1784-1844**

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## **Overview**

This curriculum unit will examine the United States' international trade with China from 1784-1844. Overall trade to and from the numerous ports along the east coast and the various trade routes that existed will be considered. Lessons will focus primarily on trade with China and Philadelphia. Ships sailing from the port of Philadelphia during this time period, the voyage itself, the cargo aboard the ships to and from China, and the Philadelphians that took the risk to make this international trade possible will be highlighted. I chose to focus on Philadelphia because my students live in Philadelphia and this would be of most interest to them. Secondly, I believe the specific focus of Philadelphia, as a model port city, in the examination of the China trade will be more manageable and understandable for the fifth graders whom I teach.

Globalization is a relatively new term, yet, its meaning, in perhaps a limited sense, can easily be applied to American's early economic and cultural history with China. Americans today are deeply aware of the amount of goods that are manufactured in China and sold on the American market. The economic relationship between China and America has had a long history. In fact, there has always existed a demand for goods from other places, particularly China. The demand provided incentives for risk-takers in the past, as in the present. This unit will show students what the risks were and why. They will see that most often the risks were worth the results.

The unit was designed for fifth grade students who are studying American history. There is a strong emphasis on geography. The lessons could easily be adapted for the upper middle grades. Students will be introduced to a variety of primary source documents in their exploration of the early American-Chinese trade. They will use historical maps, post-U.S. colonial newspaper articles, advertisements, bills of lading, diary entries, and photographs of painting and material culture.

In addition to the history of America's trade with China and the concept of early globalization, this unit will examine China as part of western expansion, with specific connections to the Lewis & Clark expedition. This idea of the China trade as part of

western expansion is certainly a concept that goes beyond what is traditionally covered in fifth grade history text. Nonetheless, it will expand the students' thinking about this part of American history.

## **Rationale**

“Comparison is the foundation of all learning; it is when, in making comparisons, we see a connection between what we know and what we don't know, that we have learned something.”

Elgin Heinz, pioneer in Asian Studies

The intention of this curriculum unit is to engage fifth graders by understanding the past through their knowledge of the present. Students understand the basics of trade, globalization, our early republic, and wanting “stuff.” It is these rudimentary concepts that will be applied to the study of America's early trade with China.

Prior to 1783, and the Second Treaty of Paris, England did not permit the colonies to compete in the Asian trade markets. With the end of the Revolution, the United States was essentially poor and without foreign commerce. Much of her pre-war shipping had been destroyed, fishing fleets had been decimated, and there was no naval force to protect American ships. In addition, there was no spirit of national unity. The thirteen states were still struggling and the Constitution was still in the making. Yet, there were those who saw that foreign commerce would save the fledgling nation from economic depression. Now the United States was an independent country, free to trade commercially with China without England's permission or interference.

American trade with China began in 1784 with the first American merchant ship, the *Empress of China*. Robert Morris, a Philadelphia financier, was the principal investor. The ship was to leave Philadelphia for Canton, but poor weather conditions caused the *Empress of China* to leave from New York. Thus begins America's independent trade with China and the beginnings of the long, on-going process of the nation's financial, cultural, and industrial globalization.

Initially, China showed an interest in purchasing three items from American merchants: Spanish bullion, ginseng from the Appalachian Mountains, and furs, particularly sea otter pelts. Bullion, also known as specie, was usually in the form of Spanish silver mostly mined in Latin America. The Chinese were quite particular about their imports. They had a high regard for Spanish bullion and acquired a great deal of silver as result of trading with American merchants. Silver, used as a commodity and not a currency, was not charged an import fee and also made it more desirable for Americans to use for exchanging goods. European traders pressured Canton officials to make bullion a duty-free import. However, by the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century opium became the most desired commodity for import by the Chinese.

American ships traveled long and dangerous routes to deliver their goods, so they made certain to return with cargo. The extraordinary travel risks along with the reality of pirate attacks (for the bullion cargo) were constant. Nevertheless, it was the selling of Chinese goods that apparently made this trade venture exceedingly profitable. American demand for Chinese tea, cottons, silk, lacquer ware, fans, furniture, porcelain, and other Chinese goods made the risk financially worthwhile and, in fact, highly lucrative. However, it would be tea that keeps the early trade continuously active over the sixty years. Tea was the preferred drink for all Americans and China was its major source for this important commodity.

The three main ports in early American trade with China were Philadelphia, New York, and Salem, Massachusetts. The ports of Providence, Rhode Island and Baltimore later joined this lively trade. As Foster Rhea Dulles, a leading historian of the China trade, argued:

Whatever the rival claims of any of these cities, however, it is enough that in the years which found the U.S. striving to form a centralized government and to establish its industries and commerce on a firm footing, a fleet of American vessels was annually making its way to Canton. Despite all of the hardships, these ships succeeded in winning for America more than its share of China's riches.<sup>1</sup>

There was a healthy competition amongst these ports whereby many financiers, shipbuilders, merchants, bankers, and others would seek great profits. In the end, this helped to strengthen the economies of each port town and strengthen the fledgling American economy.

This curriculum unit focuses on the Philadelphia's port's trade with Canton. While Philadelphia did not have the most activity, it is believed that it had the most tonnage. Salem has the most precise and most well-preserved records for trade between America and China; nonetheless, there is sufficient documentation on the role of Philadelphia, Philadelphians, and the wide variety of goods traded to and from the Philadelphia port from 1784-1844.

The period of early American trade concludes by 1844. I purposely limit my references of the early American trade with China due to the onset of the Opium Wars between England and China. The 1842 Treaty of Nanking, along with the 1844 Cushing Treaty (also referred to as Wanghia Treaty) change the course of trade. The Treaty of Nanking ended the administrative hierarchy set up by the Imperial rulers and began a period of uniform tariff along with giving Hong Kong to Britain. The Cushing Treaty extended trade to include other Chinese ports beyond Canton, a reinforcement of policy stated in the Treaty of Nanking, and thus changed the existing pattern of trade that had developed in the first fifty years of our nation's existence. It also established the first American Embassy in China and the principle that American citizens in China would only be subject to American laws and not the Chinese legal system.

Essentially, free trade, trade without any official relations, existed between the United States and China until the Treaty of Nanking. This treaty formalized trade with Britain and ended all free trade. America had expected the same rights as Britain after the formalized trade agreement with China and received it. The period that has often been thought of by Americans as rather charming and romantic, with their friendly Chinese merchants as middlemen, comes to an end.

Early China trade included much of what we think of today as international trade. According to Dulles:

commodities, money, information, and people; and the development of organizations, legal systems, and infrastructures to allow this movement. It was the connection between cultures, nations, and people...the desire to consume and enjoy foreign products and ideas. It was the growth of cross-cultural contacts and the increase in information that flowed between geographically distant locations.<sup>ii</sup>

America's trade with China was the very beginning of international trade for the U.S. Today we purchase many different types of goods from China. They cater to our particular styles and requests. The same existed in the early trade. Products were made specifically for the American market and the goods varied in cost and quality. The Chinese learned about the new American country and its people while Americans learned about the Chinese due to this continuous trade. Today Chinese made goods arrive at our port along the Delaware River as they did 200 years ago or at the Philadelphia International Airport.

When the first ships left for Canton from American ports in 1784, the adventuresome spirit reflected the spirit of the newly established country. The objective was focused and clear: to strengthen the new American economy. By the second decade of the nineteenth century the objective had been met.

## Historical Background

"I am sending some ships to China in order to encourage others in the adventurous pursuits of commerce,"<sup>iii</sup> wrote Robert Morris as he congratulated John Jay on signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Americans were now free to trade with countries and areas previously monopolized by the British. The British East India Company had long since been trading with the Chinese and selling goods—silk, porcelain, and tea—to the colonists. No American ship had ever sailed beyond the Cape of Good Hope. Having seen the British make great profits from the trade, Americans were eager to secure these profits for themselves. So began the American Chinese trade in the year 1784.

In February, 1784 the *Empress of China*, Canton-bound, sailed out of New York harbor with a cargo made up mostly of ginseng. The Chinese had been using ginseng since the sixth century for curing mental ailments and restoring vigor to the old and infirmed. At that time ginseng had only been found in China and Korea. Meanwhile Native Americans had long been using ginseng too. It was found in great abundance in Appalachia. And so, this rather strange-looking root helped the young republic as it became an item for export to China.

Ginseng was so prized by the Chinese that they paid substantial sums for this root, even if the American variety was somewhat inferior to the Asian kind. In colonial times the British had used American ginseng as an export in their trade with China. Americans saw none of the profits. After the Revolution was won, Americans were free to use this commodity as part of their commerce. In fact, they would have a monopoly since ginseng was not grown in Europe.

The *Empress of China* went to China around the Cape of Good Hope. She returned to her New York port in May, 1785, with a cargo of teas and silk. The investors, including the major investor, Robert Morris of Philadelphia, made a 25 percent profit on their original investment. The most important result of this venture, beyond profit, was that it opened a new avenue for commerce for the United States and established American merchants in the China trade.

Ginseng had succeeded in opening China's gates of trade, but United States merchants and investors understood that other commodities needed to be found to continue an active trade—commodities with a continued and substantial demand. Fur pelts would make these long, dangerous, and expensive trips very worthwhile for a time.

Around the same time period that the *Empress of China* sailed, A Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage was published(1783). The journal entries noted that fur pelts were purchased cheaply from northwest coast natives and were in great demand in Canton, where the Chinese paid a high price. Thus began the lucrative fur trade with China, while tea was still the dominant product (80 percent) imported into the states. Ships obtained the fur pelts from natives along the coastline from South America all the way north to what would become Oregon. The trade route therefore changed from going east across the Atlantic Ocean, around the Cape of Good Hope and through the Indian Ocean to China. Now more American ships were traveling south around Cape Horn, then north to pick up fur pelts, and then across the Pacific Ocean. This particular route served another, larger vision beyond trade. This supported America's vision of westward expansion, particularly as envisioned by Thomas Jefferson. As noted in the Greenbie and Greenbie text, Gold of Ophir, Napoleon was reported to have said: "This accession of territory (Louisiana) strengthens for ever the power of the United States, and I have just given England a *maritime rival* that will sooner or later humble her pride."<sup>iv</sup> A goal of the Lewis and Clark expedition would be to explore the waterways west and discover "the practicability of taking the furs of the Rocky Mountains direct to China, upon the line of the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean,"<sup>v</sup> wrote the President. Jefferson saw these

waterways as roads to commerce on this continent and beyond, into the Pacific Ocean and on through to China.

Philadelphia's role in the China trade is rich and long. In 1784 Robert Morris was one of the wealthiest men in America. It is he who partially financed the *Empress of China's* voyage. The captain, John Green, was a Philadelphian also. The ship returned a year later making a considerable profit of 25 percent for her investors. Stephen Girard, another Philadelphia financier, started his extraordinary trade business with China in 1787 when he invested in the *Asia*.

The next year, 1785, the *Canton* left from Philadelphia's port with Philadelphian Thomas Truxtun, as captain. Initially Philadelphia merchants depended on the sale of the ginseng root to bring a profit, and for a while it did. As the market became glutted they turned to other items and specie as the alternatives. The principal cargoes from the port of Philadelphia were textiles, such as broadcloth and chintz; metals, such as lead, iron, tin and copper; sea otter pelts; sandalwood used for beads, knife handles and incense; ivory; specie in the form of Spanish silver dollars; and later, in the early trade, opium. After 1830 the demand for opium increased and some American merchants used opium as the product of trade with the Chinese. This unit will limit its discussion of the opium trade.

Philadelphia captains often took a different route to China than vessels leaving from New York, Boston, or Salem. Philadelphia ships were likely to sail east around the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean and China Sea. Vessels from other Northeast cities often sailed around Cape Horn to trade with the natives on the Northwest coast of America for animal pelts. However, Philadelphia did send at least three ships via the Northwest coast for furs between 1785 and 1818, but this was a small number in comparison with the total number of ships engaging in the China trade.

As trade became more sophisticated in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Philadelphia ships would develop a more complex trading route. For example, Stephen Girard's vessel might leave Philadelphia for Savannah or Charleston, where it would take on cotton or rice to Europe where the cargo was sold for specie. The vessel would then go to Canton for tea and for silk, often returning to Europe to sell it, then proceeding back to Philadelphia.

There were a wide variety of goods exported from China. The main items were tea, silk, nankeens, carved ivory, lacquerware, and a variety of porcelain, some made to order by wealthy Philadelphian families. It is estimated that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Boston, Salem, and Philadelphian households probably had one-tenth to one-fifth of its house contents from China. In fact, "the majority of Chinese articles shipped to early Pennsylvania were found in poorer houses. The commoner grade of porcelain along with misfires, were transported to Philadelphia as ballast on the ship and then sold cheaply in the marketplace."<sup>vi</sup> The lower classes could afford to purchase an occasional Chinese-made jacket, umbrella, fan, or pair of shoes.

Philadelphians of all social classes could afford the wide variety of products offered by merchants selling Chinese goods. Even at that time period there was “low-end” and “high-end” offerings, including clothing, furniture, artwork, and jewelry.

Nathan Dunn was yet another wealthy Philadelphia merchant and philanthropist who was involved in the robust China trade. He traveled to and from China between 1818 and 1831. He resided in Canton for a little over a decade. Dunn collected many Chinese artifacts during his time there. “Because of his stand against the opium trade, while living in Canton Dunn won many close Chinese friends, among them the hong merchant Hou Qua and the artist Ting Qua, who took him into their confidence and introduced him to many Chinese customs”<sup>vii</sup> states Jean Gordan Lee in the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s catalogue of the 1984 exhibit on the early China trade. In 1838 Nathan Dunn opened *Dunn’s Chinese Museum* at 9<sup>th</sup> and George Street (now Sansom ) in Philadelphia. The building was a joint venture with descendants of Charles Willson Peale and part of the Philadelphia Museum. The Chinese Museum was apparently quite a success. One hundred thousand visitors paid 25 cents admission during its several years in Philadelphia. There are some accounts stating that Dunn was having financial problems around 1841. Whatever the case may have been, Dunn packed up his Chinese Museum and moved it to London for public display. The exhibit was quite a hit in London. Unfortunately, Dunn died in 1844. His body was shipped back to Philadelphia where he was buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery. His Chinese exhibit toured England for a while but by 1851 was sold off at auction.

Philadelphia businessman, shipbuilder, banker, humanitarian, Stephen Girard, played a major role in the early trade with China. Girard was French-born, but after nine years as a sailor, he found his way to America. He then found his way to the city of Philadelphia at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Philadelphia’s shipbuilding industry was expanding and Girard, a former sea captain who understood sailing and ships, was placing orders for the construction of an advanced fleet of ships. His ships sailed regularly to China. As a tribute to his homeland’s philosophers he named his ships Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Helvetius.

By 1793 Girard’s business was international and his China trade business was of major importance in making him one of the few millionaires in America. It was he who helped establish the First Bank of America in Philadelphia. Girard was so wealthy that he was able to loan the U.S. government \$1.5 million during the War of 1812.

After the War of 1812, most Philadelphia merchants followed the British lead and changed their cargo to opium. Opium was the most profitable commodity and the supply and demand was constant. It was, in fact, illegal and immoral by Chinese standards to buy and sell opium. Yet, there was a never-ending demand by the Chinese, particularly when it was to be smoked. The Americans purchased opium from Turkey cheaply and then clandestinely sold it to Chinese vendors along the Pearl River, before entering the port of Canton .

It is believed that only a few Philadelphia merchants did not participate in the opium trade. Nathan Dunn & Company and Olyphant & Company were the two most prominent companies not trading opium. The researcher on the Philadelphia China trade, Jonathan Goldstein, noted: “Merchants had in their peculiar nineteenth century fashion, cruelly exploited the Chinese through the opium trade and ignored the protestations of many of their contemporaries.”<sup>viii</sup> While the Philadelphia merchant community was divided at the onset of the opium trade, “many of them came to see its legitimacy in the same way that the British did.”<sup>ix</sup>

## **Objectives**

The lessons in this unit were primarily designed for the use in fifth or eighth grade American history classes. The activities clearly reflect a multidisciplinary approach whereby history, geography, reading, writing, math, economics, and culture are integrated. The lessons could be used independently to enrich a unit on trade, the history of globalization or the study of U.S.-China relations. There are several lessons that could solely be used in a geography class.

This unit is integrated into the American history curriculum when teaching westward expansion. The major concept is for students to understand that the China trade was viewed as part of the overall concept of westward expansion and was an early version of globalization as we know it today, two hundred years later.

The main objectives are:

- to use a wide variety of primary source documents, written and graphic
- to analyze, organize, and interpret information
- to understand Philadelphia’s role in the China trade
- to understand the role of prominent Philadelphians in the China trade
- to understand the concept of trade
- to understand globalization
- to understand the principles of supply and demand
- to use latitude and longitude coordinates to find specific locations on a map
- to use maps of the world to trace original sailing routes
- to calculate the actual distance on a map using scale
- to use a world map to plot routes described in a text
- to understand the concept of westward expansion and how the China trade was a part of America’s plan to expand
- to understand how the China trade was part of America’s plan to strengthen its economy
- to compare and contrast paintings
- to make inferences
- to classify and categorize



## **Strategies**

The unit will be taught as an interdisciplinary study, although history is the main discipline. It will also incorporate reading, writing, speaking, listening and art. Each lesson begins with a whole group lesson that leads to an exploration of a topic or a document. Students will then work in small groups to complete a task. Each group will be organized with a facilitator, recorder, and reporter.

To focus and set the tone for the unit, the initial lesson explores the concept of globalization and how it affects, very tangibly, the world in which our students live. The next lesson further focuses the students through geography. The extension lesson takes the focus beyond place, its focus is on time.

All of the lessons, except the first, use primary documents. Students will learn how to explore a variety of documents: paintings, journal entry from the Continental Congress, bills of lading, letters, advertisement, catalogue descriptions, and material culture. After reading the documents, students are asked to analyze, interpret and make conclusions based on the evidence. It is expected that the immersion into the use of primary source materials will enable students to become more thoughtful and critical readers. In addition, the examination of primary source materials will, hopefully, stimulate interest in history.

The final lesson uses material culture at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This lesson is the culmination of study which will further emphasize that Made in China is not a new concept.

## **Classroom Activities/Lessons**

Lesson 1: Seek and Find: Globalization 2007

Materials:

- pencil and paper
- class set of outlined world maps with continent and countries labelled
- chart paper

Time: 2-3 periods

Procedure:

1. Ask students if they have ever seen labels “Made in...” on their belongings. Why is the label there? Have students look in their desk and around the classroom to find items that have such a label. On chart paper, create a list of items in the classroom that have labels from other countries. Write the item and the country in which it was made.

2. Discuss the reasons why things are made in other countries and not just in the United States.
  - The three major reasons students might note:
    - goods are less expensive
    - some goods can only be obtained from certain places in the world
    - U.S. companies have factories in foreign countries
3. Have students locate the country of each item on the class list on the world map provided. They then should place the name of the item on the country outline and discuss which countries have the most items made there.
4. For homework students are to find as many different items they can from as many different countries as possible. They are to make a list of countries and items, place them on their world outline map in the appropriate location. The items they search for labels on may include food, clothing, toys, electrical appliances, etc.
5. The next class period students can share their findings and discuss the countries where most of our goods come from and why. What continents were represented in their findings?
6. Extension lesson: Students may research a country of their choice to further examine that countries imports and exports.

## Lesson 2: Where in the World is China?

### Materials:

- world map in textbook or atlas for each student
- colored pencils
- class set of world outline maps with continent and countries labeled and has lines of latitude and longitude

Time: 1 class period

### Procedure:

1. In the early China trade, ships leaving from Philadelphia generally traveled across the Atlantic Ocean, around the Cape of Good Hope, across the Indian Ocean to Canton, China. Ships leaving from Boston, Massachusetts most often traveled around Cape Horn, north across the eastern Pacific Ocean to Nootka Sound along the coastline of the Northwest territory to pick up fur pelts, and then west to China. Have students, using different colored pencils, draw on their outline maps the trade routes from Philadelphia and Boston to Canton, China, along the Pearl River.
2. Have students determine the latitude and longitude of Philadelphia, Boston, and Canton, China.
3. Have students calculate the distance in miles of both trade routes.
4. Extension Activity—Comparing ports through paintings  
Provide students with a copy of the three paintings (internet links below). The paintings are of the Port of Philadelphia, Port of Boston, and the Port at Canton, China, circa 1800. Divide students into small groups to compare and

contrast the three paintings of the ports. Each group should have a recorder, facilitator, and reporter. At the conclusion, the reporter from each group should report to the class their group's findings. Students may use a chart to compare and contrast the three ports.

Internet links:

•Philadelphia: [www.ushistory.org/birch/plates/plate02.htm#](http://www.ushistory.org/birch/plates/plate02.htm#)

•Canton:

[www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/detail.aspx?page=dafb&lang=en&id=4488](http://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/detail.aspx?page=dafb&lang=en&id=4488)

•Boston:

### Lesson 3: The China Trade and the Continental Congress: Interpreting a Primary Document

Materials:

- pencil
- a class set of the document “Journal of the Continental Congress, Monday, January 2, 1786” (<http://memory.loc.gov/lj/c/030/0000/00070001.tif>)
- a class set of the Primary Document Analysis Worksheet (see appendix)

Background:

In 1785, a group of six Philadelphia investors sponsored the first ship from Philadelphia to China. The ship was called the *Canton*, in honor of its destination, Canton, China. The ship's captain was Thomas Truxton, a Revolutionary privateersman and commanding officer of the United States frigate *Constellation*. The *Canton* made two round trip voyages to China from Philadelphia. The document in this lesson addresses the second voyage of the ship.

Time: 1 class period

Procedure:

1. Distribute the primary document, “Journal of the Continental Congress”
2. Have students read aloud and discuss the short congressional document acknowledging the ship, *Canton*, and Captain Thomas Truxton, a citizen of the United States.
3. Distribute the Primary Document Analysis Worksheet. Have students work in pairs to complete the sheets.
4. Near the end of the period, review the students' responses and discuss questions that may have arisen as a result of the reading.

## Lesson 4: Proof of Purchase: Bills of Lading

### Materials:

- pencil
- class set of : Bill of Lading, November 30, 1805 (see appendix)
- class set of : Bill of Lading, May 13, 1807 (see appendix)
- class set of “Primary Document Analysis” Worksheet (see appendix)

Time: 1 class period

### Background:

A Bill of Lading, according to the 1998 Oxford Dictionary (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) is “an official, detailed receipt given by the master of a merchant vessel to the person consigning the goods, by which he makes himself responsible for their safe delivery to the consignee. This document, being the legal proof of ownership of the goods, is often deposited with a creditor as security for money advanced.” In other words, a Bill of Lading is a written receipt given by a carrier for goods accepted for transportation.

The *Dorothea*, made four voyages from Philadelphia to China in 1805-06, 1806-07, 1810, and 1821-22. The ship was owned by Louis Clapier, and its captain was Patrick Hayes. This lesson uses Bills of Lading from the *Dorothea*'s first voyage in 1805. The documents have been duplicated from the original Bills of Lading in the Barry Hayes Papers, housed at the library of the Independence Seaport Museum, in Philadelphia.

The Bills of Lading give students an understanding of the goods being purchased, the quantity of the items, the formality of the trade, and the physical experience of viewing an 1805 document.

The Bills of Lading in this lesson are copies from the originals found in the Barry Hayes Collection at the Independence Seaport Museum Library in Philadelphia.

### Procedure:

1. Distribute one Bill of Lading at a time. Review each document separately so that students can carefully interpret the writing and meanings of each document.
2. In small groups have students compare and contrast the two documents.
3. Students may individually, or in small groups, complete the “Primary Document Analysis” Worksheet after examining it carefully.
3. Extension—You may use a shipping bill from books delivered to your school to compare the information noted on the receipt.

## Lesson 5: Letter to a Hong Merchant

### Materials:

- class set of letters, “Dear Mr. Cheonqua...from Edward Gray”
- class set of the primary Document Analysis Worksheet (see appendix)
- chart paper for each group
- marker for each group to record on chart paper

### Background:

In the early China trade, American merchants were not permitted to trade directly with the Chinese. In 1720 an imperial edict created the hong as a means of controlling all aspects of foreign trade and traders. The position was limited to approximately thirteen (co-hong) Chinese businessmen who would pay a staggering amount of money to the Emperor for the position. The hong merchants each had their own “factories” or “hongs” which was an office space, warehouse, and living quarters. The co-hong were the only Chinese who could sell goods directly to foreign traders. There were interpreters who were responsible for translating in “pidgin” English between the traders and hong merchants. From all accounts, the hong merchants were considered to be honest and respectable businessmen. The senior hong for most of the early trade period was Houqua. He is said to have been wealthier than Stephen Girard, the wealthiest man in America at the time.

The letter in this lesson is a business letter from Philadelphian merchant, Edward Gray, to hong merchant, Mr. Chongua (probably Chinqua, as I could find no evidence of a hong merchant named Chonqua). This letter is a copy of the original in the Gratz Collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Time: 2 periods

### Procedure:

1. In a small group, have students translate the letter from “old” writing to our current form of writing/spelling. Have the recorder in the group rewrite the letter on chart paper. Discuss the change in language as a natural occurrence throughout history. Perhaps students have seen the word “busses/buses” spelled differently along the highway when they are traveling (“traveling” has been spelled “travelling” in the past). Grammar rules are always changing. Have groups compare their translations first and then come to an agreement as to which is correct.
2. Students will use Primary the Document Analysis Worksheet to explore the letter carefully.
3. Discuss the groups’ responses when they are completed with the written task.

## Lesson 6: Nathan Dunn's Philadelphia Chinese Museum, 1838-1841

### Materials:

- class set of advertisement for Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum(see appendix)
- class set of excerpt from "Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Collection"(see Appendix)
- paper and pencil
- graphing paper for each student

Time: 2 periods

### Background:

Nathan Dunn was a prominent Philadelphia merchant and philanthropist. He was actively involved in the China trade from 1818 until 1831. He acquired thousands of Chinese items, small and large. He decided to open a museum in which he could publicly display his objects. In 1838, he leased the first floor of Charles Willson Peale's museum, the Philadelphia Museum, to display his collection. The museum was located at ninth and George Streets (now Sansom). According to the curator of the 1984 exhibit at the Philadelphia Museum of Art on the early China trade, Jean Gordon Lee:

Dunn's display was a tremendous success, reportedly visited by 100,000 people over a period of three years. Admission was 25 cents, and shares in the Philadelphia Museum were once hundred dollars. The museum was open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day but Sunday.<sup>x</sup>

Nathan Dunn closed his museum in 1841. He moved his exhibit to London where it was equally as popular. It is believed that Queen Victoria had a private tour of Dunn's collection.

The purpose of this lesson is to have students become aware of items that would have been available during the early China trade. By examining the two sets of primary documents circa 1839, students will compare advertising strategies and collection pieces that made Nathan Dunn's Museum quite successful. They can compare the items they note in Dunn's catalogue with what they view in their next and final lesson at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Interestingly, the Dunn Museum was on the first floor of the Philadelphia Museum, a precursor to the Philadelphia Art Museum.

The documents in this lesson have all been duplicated from the originals located at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

### Procedure:

1. Distribute a copy of the advertisement for Dunn's Chinese Museum. Have students read the information in the advertisement in order to become more familiar with its purpose.
2. Distribute a copy of the catalogue (the cover and four pages from the original catalogue have been provided).

3. Students may work in six small groups or individually for this classifying activity. Have students fold a 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper (hold paper horizontally) into eight columns. Each column should be labeled, as follows:

- Types of cloth
- Household Items
- Personal Care Items
- Items for Decoration of House
- Military-Related Items including Weapons
- Other

4. Using the four pages of the catalogue, have students categorize all of the items into one of the six columns.

5. Divide class into six groups. Each group should have a facilitator, recorder, timekeeper and reporter. Each group is assigned a category. They will become curators. A curator's job is to collect and preserve, interpret, document, catalogue, research and display objects of the collection.

Dunn's museum was set-up in cases. Each case held particular items decided on by Dunn and his assistants. Each group will design a part of the 304 Chinese Museum. Students, using the graph paper, will take care to plan a room for displaying their items. They will consider the size of the item. An advanced group may consider a sub-theme within the main grouping. Each item should be drawn, colored and labeled on the graphing paper.

6. A large poster labeled, The 304 Chinese Museum, will display each group's display of their collection.

### Lesson 7: A Picture Says a Thousand Words: Understanding the Early China Trade Through Art and Artifacts

Background: This lesson occurs at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The museum has a collection of Chinese items from the early China trade. The items are dispersed throughout several galleries.

#### Gallery 270:

- cabinet, 1795
- coffee pot & lid
- punch bowl
- pair of urns, circa 1780-1800

#### Gallery 289:

- lacquer wood and ivory table, circa 1840
- tea pot service
- pair of vases
- tea caddy

#### Gallery 104

- teapot
- tea service
- gameboard, circa 1800-1940

## Gallery 106

- George Washington plates
- saucer, caudle cup with lid

Time: •museum lesson, one hour  
•classroom writings, 2-3 periods

Time: one hour lesson

### Procedure:

- Students will examine artifacts from the early China trade in the various galleries of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. They will learn that these goods were specifically for import to America. The students will examine the items in the Chinese gallery to compare and contrast the items made for import and those items created for the Chinese themselves.
- When students return to their classroom they will write an article, editorial, advertisement, or cartoon for the fictitious, *Shawmont Gazette*, circa 1800. The piece that they write will describe the Philadelphia China trade.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Christman, Margaret C.S. *Adventurous Pursuits: Americans and the China Trade, 1784-1844*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984.

This is a very readable account of the people involved in the China trade. These diplomats, entrepreneurs, traders, merchants-in-residence at Canton, were all highlighted in an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in 1984.

Downs, Jacques M. *The Golden Ghetto: The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784-1844*. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1997.

This book is a scholarly examination of the early China trade with an emphasis on the Opium Wars, the established companies trading in Canton, and Cushing's Treaty/Treaty of Wangha. There are numerous graphs concerning imports and exports in the appendix.

Dudden, Arthur Power. *The American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.



Dulles, Foster Rhea. *The Old China Trade*. Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1930.

This classic text gives a rather romantic view of the China trade, even with its one illustration, that of baby seals being clubbed to death for their skins. It is a comprehensive view of the trade with a proud posture of nationalism and Yankee spirit and competitiveness.

Forbes, Robert Bennet. *Letters from China: the Canton-Boston Correspondence of Robert Bennet Forbes, 1838-1840*. Compiled and edited by Phyllis Forbes Kerr. Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1996.

The Boston merchant, Robert Forbes, gives his observations on the opportunities and obstacles of being a China trader.

Goldstein, Jonathan. *Philadelphia and the China Trade, 1682-1846: Commercial, Cultural, and Attitudinal Effects*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978.

The author uses the Stephen Girard Papers to tell the story of Philadelphia's role in the China trade. The focus is how Philadelphia's intellectual community was intricately involved with the trade.

Greenbie, Sydney and Marjorie Barstow Greenbie. *Gold of Ophir: The Cina Trade in the Making of America*. Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1972.

The authors underscore throughout, in a rather romantic and patriotic way, that the China trade was one of the greatest economic feats of America between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War.

Lee, Jean Gordon. *Philadelphians and the China Trade, 1784-1844*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984.

In 1984 the Philadelphia Museum of Art produced this exhibit catalogue.

It also has an extensive narrative about the Philadelphia-China trade. All of the notable Philadelphians involved in the trade are discussed.

May, Ernest R. and John K. Fairbank(ed.). *America's China Trade in Historical Perspective: The Chinese and American Performance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

This is a collection of nine essays from a 1976 conference on American East Asian relations. Each essay explores the economic relationships between the United States and China from 1874 until 1949.

Nelson, Christine H. *Directly from China: Export Goods for the American Market, 1784-1930*. Salem: Peabody Museum of Salem, 1985.

This catalogue was created from the Peabody Museums' exhibition on the American-China trade. It includes photographs of the exhibition's objects that have a national scope.

Smith, Philip Chadwick Foster. *The Empress of China*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Maritime Museum, 1984.

This book has everything one would want to know about American's first voyage to China. It is somewhat technical in description, but it is readable for the novice. It contains one of the best collection of primary source documents in a text. Unfortunately, all of the paintings and Chinese artifacts photographed are in black and white.

Trubner, Henry and William Jay Rathbun. *China's Influence on American Culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. Seattle, New York: China Institute in America, 1976.

This is a catalogue of the 1976 Bicentennial exhibition at the Seattle Museum of Art. It shows the collection of Chinese material culture acquired by Americans during the early China trade. Most pictures are in black and which is most disappointing.

Van Dyke, Paul A. *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the china Coast, 1700-1845*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.

This is a highly technical text detailing the China trade. It gives a detailed description of the Canton system, customs procedures, navigating the Pearl River in China, and the administration of the trade by special Chinese administrators.

## Websites

[www.newtradewinds.org](http://www.newtradewinds.org)

This website highlights Alaska, Hawaii and Salem, Massachusetts' role during the China trade.

[www.philamuseum.org](http://www.philamuseum.org)

This is the Philadelphia Museum of Art's website. Click "Collections" and search "early China trade" to view material culture from the time period at the museum.

[www.phillyseaport.org/Permanent\\_Exhibits.shtml](http://www.phillyseaport.org/Permanent_Exhibits.shtml)

This is the Independence Seaport's website that has a brief summary of the museum's permanent exhibit "Philadelphia and the China Trade."

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Dulles, Rhea Foster. *The Old China Trade*. Cambridge: the Riverside press, 1930, p. 30.

<sup>ii</sup> Dulles, p.

<sup>iii</sup> Lee, Jean Gordan. *Philadelphia and the China Trade, 1784-1844*. Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984, p. 63.

<sup>iv</sup> Greenbie, Sydney and Marjorie Barstow Greenbie. *Gold of Ophir: The China Trade in the Making of America*. Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., p. 189.

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<sup>v</sup> Greenbie, p. 190.

<sup>vi</sup> Goldstein, Jonathan. Philadelphia and the China Trade, 1682-1846: Commercial, and Attitudinal Effects. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press. 1978, p.

<sup>vii</sup> Lee, p.15.

<sup>viii</sup> Lee, p.16.

<sup>ix</sup> Goldstein, p.194.

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**Appendices-Standards**

Name--- \_\_\_\_\_

Date-- \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Document Analysis Worksheet**

**•Type of Document (check one)**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper            | <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release | <input type="checkbox"/> Draft           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Map                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Diary Entry   | <input type="checkbox"/> Directory Entry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patent               | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement | <input type="checkbox"/> Ticket          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram             | <input type="checkbox"/> Letter        | <input type="checkbox"/> Receipt         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional Record | <input type="checkbox"/> Census        | <input type="checkbox"/> Bill of Lading  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trade Card           | <input type="checkbox"/> Indenture     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other           |

**•Special Physical Characteristics of the Document (check all that apply)**

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seals            |                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Received" Stamp | <input type="checkbox"/> Colorful     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten      | <input type="checkbox"/> Faded        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notations        | <input type="checkbox"/> Torn         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Typed            | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard to Read |

•Date of Document-- \_\_\_\_\_

•Author (creator) of the document-- \_\_\_\_\_

•Title or position of the author-- \_\_\_\_\_

• For whom was the document written? \_\_\_\_\_

**Document Content**

1. List three different types of information you learned from reading the document.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What evidence in the document helps tell you why it was written?

3. Why do you think the document was written?

4. Write a question to the author of this primary source document that you'd like to know the answer to but is not answered.

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## **Pennsylvania State Academic Standards**

### **Geography Standards**

#### 7.1.5 Basic

- B. Identify and locate places and regions

### **Social Studies Standards Grade Five**

#### 8.1.5

- A. Understand chronological thinking and distinguish between past, present and future time
- B. Explain and analyze historical sources
- C. Explain the fundamentals of historical interpretations
- D. Describe and explain historical research

#### 8.2.5 Pennsylvania History

- B. Identify and explain primary documents, materials artifacts and historic sites important in Pennsylvania history from Beginnings to 1824 I

#### 8.3.5 United States History

- A. Identify and explain primary documents, material artifacts, and historic sites important in United States history from Beginnings to 1824
- C. Explain how continuity and change has influenced United States history from Beginnings to 1824

#### 8.4.5 World History

- B. Identify and explain important documents, material artifacts and historic sites in world history
- C. Identify and explain how continuity and change has affected belief systems, commerce and industry, innovations, settlement patterns, social organizations, transportation and women's roles in world history

### **Literacy Standards**

#### 1.1 Learning to Read Independently

- A. Establish the purpose for reading a type of text
  - B. Select texts for a particular purpose using the format of the text as a guide
  - D. Identify the basic ideas and facts in text using strategies
  - E. Acquire a reading vocabulary by correctly identifying and using words
  - F. Identify and understand the meaning of and use correctly key vocabulary from various subject areas
  - G. Demonstrate after reading an understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text
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## 1.2 Reading Critically in all Areas

A. Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas

## 1.3 Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

F. Read and respond to fiction and nonfiction

## 1.4 Types of Writing

B. Write multi-paragraph informational pieces

## 1.6 Speaking and Listening

A. Listen to others

C. Speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations

D. Contribute to discussions

E. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations

## 1.7 Characteristics of the English Language

C. Identify word meanings that have changed over time

## 1.8 Research

B. Locate information using appropriate sources and strategies

## **Standards for the Arts and Humanities**

### 9.2.5 Historical and Cultural Contents

A. Explain the historical, cultural and social context of an individual work in the arts

B. Relate works in the arts chronologically to historical events

C. Relate works in the arts to varying styles and genre and to the periods in which they were created

D. Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective

F. Know and apply appropriate vocabulary used between social studies and the arts and humanities

G. Relate works in the arts to geographic regions

### 9.3.3 Critical Response

A. Identify critical processes in the examination of works in the arts and humanities

B. Describe works in the arts comparing similar and contrasting characteristics

### 9.4.3 Aesthetic Response

A. Identify uses of expressive symbols that show philosophical meanings in works in the arts and humanities

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