

Chinese Cultural Exchange, 2002-2003

The purpose of this paper is to define where we are in the quest to match up the Colebrook Consolidated School with one in China. Our primary contact in China is Jingcao Hu, whose title is Executive Director of "News Probe" for China Central Television, Beijing, China. It was her crew that came to Colebrook during the month of October 2002 to film aspects of the life of the Chinese students who came here in the 1870's. Because of the close relationship that developed between the Carrington family of Colebrook and several of these students, and the information concerning them documented in Carrington diaries and other papers, Colebrook became the focal point for the gathering of documentary evidence by the film crew sent here to make a Ken Burns type documentary film.

Because one of the Chinese students died and was buried here in Colebrook just three short months after graduating from Yale University in 1883, we have a unique opportunity to involve the students from Colebrook with a cultural exchange between themselves and a school in China.

Contact has been made in this country with a woman living in Enfield, Julie Lai (pronounced "lie"). Mrs. Lai teaches Chinese dance and other cultural activities from her studio in Enfield. She also teaches at the Mandarin School, a school for American primary grade students, I believe. Mrs. Lai expressed great interest in our project, and said that she would be willing to come to the Colebrook School to help in any way to facilitate the learning process. We would have to contact her and set up a schedule.

While we couldn't undertake to teach our students Chinese characters, Mrs. Lai made the suggestion that our students take digital photos of anything they want; themselves, their school, both inside and out, buildings in town, scenes around town, etc. These could then be cut in pieces, much the way a quilt is constructed, and assembled into Chinese characters. The word "friend", for example, consists of two characters that could be constructed from our photos, then photographed and sent via e-mail to the school in China.

Another item of possible interest is the upcoming Chinese New Year, which will be on February 1st, 2003 (a Saturday). It will be the year of the goat.

Julie Lai may be reached at 1-860-749-4751.

According to the latest e-mail from Jingcao, received Dec. 11, 2002, they are searching for a school in China that has computers. The initial thought had been a school set up 140 some-odd years ago by one of the Chinese students who had been educated in Connecticut in the town of Zhuhai (near Macao). This school is still functioning, but unfortunately does not yet have Internet connections. At this time, they want to know more information about the Colebrook School, such as photos and their e-mail address.

Robert Grigg