

Historic Chinatown gets state landmark designation after four tries in 12 years

After four separate appeals to the state over 12 years, Pittsburgh's historic Chinatown was officially recognized Saturday as a Pennsylvania historical landmark with the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the Chinese immigrants who established the neighborhood more than 120 years ago.

The one-block area sandwiched between the Boulevard of the Allies and Third Avenue, Downtown, was granted official status in March 2021 but events to mark the occasion were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Saturday's unveiling finally marked the achievement while commemorating the original Chinatown and its people.

Maybe 100 people gathered under umbrellas and pulled up their hoods in cold, damp weather to watch Pan-Asian performances and speakers organized by the Organization of Chinese Americans Pittsburgh. The performances included a steel lion dance, kung

fu demonstrations, pipa music and more before the celebration ended with a concert featuring Jason Chu, Alan Z and MC Tingbudong.

Earlier, a walking tour of the district was led by Shirley Yee, daughter of the last "mayor" of Chinatown (Pictures)

Sierra Yot, the granddaughter of William Hing Yot, the unofficial first mayor of Chinatown, said she was moved by the celebration. "To me, it's exciting, and to see that this finally made a historic moment, I've got chills," she said. "It's absolutely wonderful."

The plaque acknowledging the Chinese identity of the district is in front of what is often cited as Pittsburgh's oldest Chinese restaurant, the Chinatown Inn. Located on Third Avenue, the

restaurant's pagoda-style front is the only remnant left of historic Chinatown, serving as a reminder of what used to be a bustling community.

The area's Asian identity began taking root when it was a stop for Chinese immigrants on the way to California during the 1849 Gold Rush. Additionally, according to OCA Pittsburgh President Marian Lien, the first Chinese residents came from Beaver Falls, where they were treated poorly at a cutlery factory.

In the early 1900s, Asian groceries, gift shops, hand laundry businesses and restaurants appeared on Second and Third avenues, between Ross and Grant streets, taking up two blocks. There was even a small park where Chinese families would gather and socialize, Ms. Lien said, adding that there were believed to be more than 1,000 Chinatown residents in its heyday.

The beginning of the end came with the construction in 1921 of the Boulevard of the Allies, which basically split the community. Continued urban projects and the building of parking lots followed the highway, further displacing the Chinese residents.

In the early 1930s, the Post-Gazette reported that the "old Chinatown is rapidly vanishing ... A walk through the changing district is disillusioning with signs of swift Americanization."

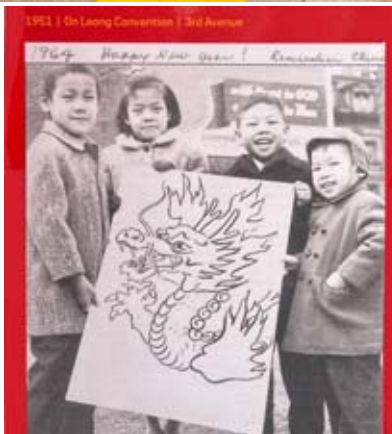
"Why do we do this?" Ms. Lien asked the crowd on Saturday. "They tell us, 'You have to know your past to know your future.' You're seeing it here now, this is your future."

"Legacy isn't just brick and mortar. Yes, of course, we wish the Chinatown was still thriving. Unfortunately, because of urban renewal, that Boulevard of the Allies ... we only have these two buildings left, but it's more than brick and mortar,

isn't it? It's the legacy of our young people. It's their perseverance, it's their tenacity. It's the resilience of us."

Saturday's events also included remarks by politicians, other community leaders and Lydia Ott, a former resident of Chinatown. There were also arts and crafts activities for children, vendors for those who wanted to shop, and food provided by the Chinatown Inn and other Asian organizations.

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匹茲堡唐人街的記憶 (PITTSBURGH'S HISTORIC CHINATOWN)

匹茲堡有“唐人街”嗎？有！今天匹茲堡就舉辦了一場紀念匹茲堡唐人街歷史的文化活動。

170 多年前，隨着美國淘金熱興起，大批華工來美淘金，後又參與橫貫北美洲鐵路的建設，更多華工被雇來參與。華工所到之處，華人聚居之地遍地開花，大大小小的聚居地，被稱之為“唐人街”。

處於早期工業發展的匹茲堡，自然也吸引一批華人勞工前來打工生存，自然也形成了被稱之為“唐人街”的聚居地。

根據阿拉根尼郡在 1942 年的一則新聞調查。匹茲堡華人的小商業，最早聚居地幾經變遷，最終在二街和三街之間安頓下來。坐落於羅斯街 (Ross Street) 和格蘭特街 (Grant Street) 之間。

所謂麻雀雖小，五臟俱全。街區內，中國店鋪隨處可見，禮品店，雜貨店，餐館等一應俱全。甚至還建有一處小公園供人們聚會。每個周末華人會聚集到這裡打麻將，品茶或是互相交流。

但好景不長，排華運動，對華裔的歧視日益嚴重。為求自保，華人內部興起行會，一時間行會林立。免不了行會之間的利益衝突也隨之而來。權力的角逐，導致了唐人街的分裂。1893 年，行會戰爭率先在舊金山爆發，並逐漸向全美華人行會擴散。

遠在東部內地的匹茲堡華人行會也沒有幸免，匹茲堡唐人街分裂成安良工商會和協勝

公會兩派。1924 年三年間，兩派頻繁械鬥，造成了五人死亡。持續紛爭惡化了唐人街的治安狀況，許多華人選擇離開...

另一方面不斷發展的匹茲堡，市政建設也在擠壓着唐人街的生存空間，新建的同盟大道 (Boulevard of the Allies) 將街區一分為二。周圍地價不斷上漲，中國餐館逐漸被排擠出去。新修的停車場和其他基礎設施則趕走了原本的中國超市。

更為嚴酷的是排華法案對華人諸多限制，華人很難找到工作，許多華人不得不遠走他鄉。到 1934 年，匹茲堡唐人街只剩下 10 家店鋪。1959 年，只剩下了三個中國家庭。1985 年，最後一任中華會所主席余遠只好順勢宣佈解散所有社團，匹茲堡唐人街從此不復存在。時至今

日，僅剩一家“中華園餐廳 (Chinatown Inn)”。 “中華園餐廳”是安良工商會原址，具有中華建築特色，見證着走入歷史的匹茲堡“唐人街”。

被稱之為“唐人街”的華人聚居處雖已走入歷史，但匹茲堡定居華人在近幾十年飛快增加。據稱有一萬五千的定居者和總數超過一萬的留學生。中餐館布滿匹茲堡大街小巷。在幾所大學中漫步，迎面走來的華裔或亞裔面孔佔比很大。

華裔，在美國這個以移民為主的國家中，佔據了與其他種族同樣重要的地位，是這個國家的一份子。這個國家對種族和文化的包容，應該不在需要像在排華時期那種需要抱團取暖。雖然不排除依然存在的種族之間的歧視和矛盾，但這個國家的法律是不允許種族之間的彼此歧視，反過來說，我們也應該善於利用法律

賦予我們的權利去抵制和反對任何一種種族之間的歧視。

這個國家包容不同的文化，每一種文化在這個國家有同樣崇高的社會地位。我們可以大力傳承和傳播自己種族文化，也應該尊重和學習其他種族文化，吸收其他文化中的優秀部分，令中華文化更加優秀。

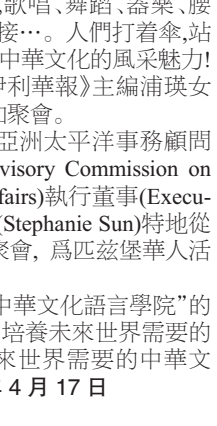
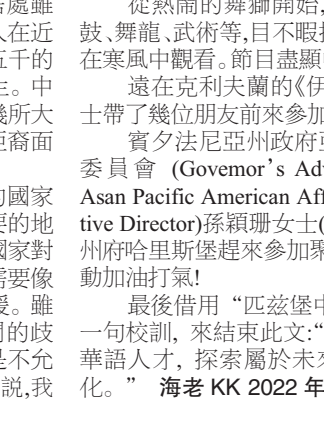
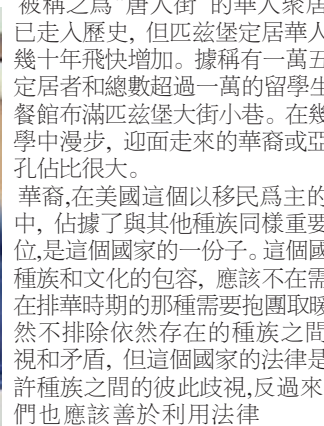
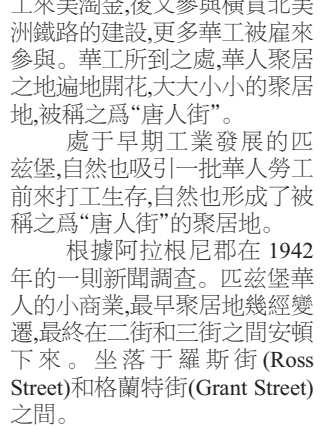
今天就在匹茲堡唐人街舊址舉辦了一場紀念匹茲堡唐人街歷史的文化活動 (PITTSBURGH'S HISTORIC CHINATOWN)。

今天這個活動，由“美華協會”(OCA)主辦。吸引了匹茲堡大部分的華人組織和團體參加。匹茲堡四月天陰雨綿綿，但參與活動者的人們熱情高漲。同時準備了許多文藝節目。

從熱鬧的舞獅開始，歌唱、舞蹈、器樂、腰鼓、舞龍、武術等，目不暇接... 人們打着傘，站在寒風中觀看。節目盡顯中華文化的風采魅力！遠在克利夫蘭的《伊利華報》主編浦瑛女士帶了幾位朋友前來參加聚會。

賓夕法尼亞州政府亞洲太平洋事務顧問委員會 (Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs) 執行董事 (Executive Director) 孫穎珊女士 (Stephanie Sun) 特地從州府哈里斯堡趕來參加聚會，為匹茲堡華人活動加油打氣！

最後借用“匹茲堡中華文化語言學院”的一句校訓，來結束此文：“培養未來世界需要的華語人才，探索屬於未來世界需要的中華文化。” 海老 KK 2022 年 4 月 17 日



左起：浦瑛友人，孫穎珊女士，本文作者，浦瑛