

As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary, it is also a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the history and contributions of Chinese Americans.

The story began more than 240 years ago. In 1785, three Chinese seamen arrived in Baltimore, Maryland, aboard the merchant ship Pallas, becoming the first recorded Chinese to reach what is now the continental United States.

Over the next two centuries, the Chinese American community experienced two major periods of growth. The first came during the mid-19th century, when tens of thousands of Chinese immigrants crossed the Pacific in search of opportunity. They endured extraordinary hardship and discrimination, yet their perseverance helped build America. Chinese laborers completed approximately 95 percent of the western portion of the Transcontinental Railroad, connecting the nation from coast to coast and forever changing its future.

The second great wave began in the late 20th century, when hundreds of thousands of Chinese students came to the United States to pursue higher education. Many chose to make America their home, contributing their talents to research, education, medicine, engineering, entrepreneurship, and especially the high-tech industry. Their innovation and dedication continue to strengthen our economy and enrich our society today.

For 250 years, Chinese Americans have been an integral part of this nation's history. Their journey has not always been easy. They endured discrimination, including the Chinese Exclusion Act—the first U.S. law to prohibit immigration based on nationality—and, more recently, witnessed a rise in anti-Asian hate. Yet through every challenge, the Chinese American community has demonstrated resilience, perseverance, and hope.

Today, Chinese Americans continue to share a rich cultural heritage that includes language, music, dance, festivals, cuisine, family values, and a deep commitment to education, community service, and future generations. These traditions have become an important thread in the diverse fabric of America.

America is often described as a "melting pot," but many also prefer to think of it as a "salad bowl" — a nation where people from different cultures preserve their unique identities while contributing to a stronger, richer, and more vibrant whole. Chinese Americans are proud to be part of that story.

Today's festival is more than a celebration of Chinese culture. It is also a celebration of friendship, diversity, and the shared values that bring us together as one community. We invite you to enjoy the performances, explore the cultural exhibits, and learn more about the remarkable journey of Chinese Americans and their enduring contributions to our nation.

Thank you for joining us, and enjoy the festival!