



FRIENDSHIP ARCHWAY

1986: Construction of Friendship Archway

It is a 48 foot high and 75 foot wide gateway and is the nation's largest Chinese archway. It is the essence of DC Chinatown located at H and 7th street today.

In 2009, the Chinatown Friendship Archway was restored.



DC CHINATOWN HISTORY



Left and right images: Before and after restoration.

Photos: Chinatown Archway Construction



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Old Chinatown

The first Chinese immigrant to Washington, DC arrived in 1851. Due to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and discrimination at the time, many of the Chinese desired to form an enclave that would create a community of cultural preservation and serve as a safe haven.

By 1884, the first site of Chinatown in the District existed along Pennsylvania Avenue with 100 residents. In 1898, it continued to expand to 3rd Street, NW, and by 1903, there were many drugstores, barbershops, tailor shops, restaurants, laundry mats, and many other small businesses in the area. By 1970, 3000 Chinese individuals lived in and around Chinatown.



Streets of Old Chinatown

New Chinatown

In 1929, the federal government planned a redevelopment of the area known as the Federal Triangle project. All the residents living in the area where new infrastructure was being built had to depart this area. As a result, some Chinese residents and businesses formed a new Chinatown located between 5th and 7th street in 1931 with the hope to re-establish their former businesses and homes.



1935: The Chinatown Community Church was established.

1936: Over 800 people, including 32 families, resided in Chinatown. Many schools, clubs and entertainment facilities opened in the area.

1970: There were about 3,000 Chinese immigrants and American born Chinese living in Chinatown.

1938: The Chinese Youth Club (CYC) was formed to provide recreation opportunities for the community members.

1982: Construction of the Old Convention Center between 9th and 11th street caused the residents in the area to leave.

1982: The completion of the Wah Luck Housing project resulted in 153 units of affordable housing for Chinese seniors displaced by the construction of the Old Convention Center.



Photo: Wah Luck House



Streets of Chinatown

There are many stores and national chain businesses and restaurants located in the current site of Chinatown. All of the stores are required by the city to have identifying signage in Chinese characters. In the heart of Chinatown, the most prominent businesses are the approximately 20 Chinese and Asian restaurants, which are mostly owned and run by Asian American families.