

Once Upon a Chinatown: The Story of Denver's Chinese Community | Deborah Jang

This flag acknowledges the historical reality of Denver's Chinatown. Chinatown thrived in the 1870's after the completion of the transcontinental railroad, whose builders were largely Chinese laborers. Many settled in Denver, in the area bounded by Wazee, Blake, 15th, and 21st Streets. In spite of being ghettoized and stigmatized, the area was home and refuge for a small but culturally rich population, who established habitations, community centers, and businesses.

Racially-motivated resentments from the dominant white citizens culminated in an anti-Chinese riot on October 31, 1880. One man, a laundry worker, was beaten to death. Fire destroyed homes and businesses. Today what remains as evidence of Chinatown's history is a derogatory plaque near Coors Field that speaks of the riot, Hop Alley, and opium dens. On the contrary, this flag honors and celebrates the Chinese community that once thrived in Denver. It speaks of hope for subsequent immigrant populations making their ways through inhospitable and challenging circumstances.

Incorporated in the design are these symbolic elements:

The pagoda roofline/silhouette represents the habitations and activity centers enjoyed in the Asian-based neighborhood. The color red traditionally celebrates Chinese culture. The yellow windows indicate the vibrancy of the community.

The purple mountains along the bottom refer to Colorado's Rocky Mountains, giving geographical reference.

The yellow background plays off the color code assigned to Asians in common vernaculars. It also references the fire that burned many homes and livelihoods in 1880.

Finally, the green reflects the optimism and renewal found in nature. The lotus grows out of muck and mud. It is a Chinese icon, indicating resilience and growth in the face of hardship.