

## ***Written in Porcelain transcript***

[Department of State Seal appears with cloudy sky background.]

[Fades out, and music plays and porcelain painted bowl appears, with words over it:  
*Written in Porcelain*]

Narrator appears and speaks:

[*Marcee Craighill, Director and Curator, Diplomatic Reception Rooms*]

“Today, the relationship between the United States and Peoples Republic of China is filled with excitement. These two nations, working together, have the potential to achieve so much for the benefit of the global community.

[Images of US Embassy Beijing and Chinese Embassy, Washington DC appear]

“Two beautiful new Embassies have opened in Beijing and Washington. These buildings symbolize the importance of that relationship in the 21st century and beyond. But the ties between our two peoples also reach back in time. In fact, you might be surprised to learn just how far back.

[Video tour of Diplomatic Reception Rooms at Main State with voice-over of narrator]

“The Department of State in its building has a suite of rooms called the Diplomatic Reception Rooms. The Secretary of State, the Vice President and President use these rooms to entertain official guests from around the world. These rooms hold one of the finest collections of 18th and early 19th century American decorative arts in the nation, and we’re very proud of it. [Narrator appears] When you look closely at the collection, you begin to see the hidden story of America’s fascination with China more than 200 years ago.

“British traders first brought Chinese style to their colonies, and Americans liked it so much that they copied it. [Video of 18<sup>th</sup> century chair, showing details narrator describes] This chair was made in Boston, Massachusetts in 1750. It’s back is shaped like a Chinese vase, the legs mimic Chinese tables, and the foot shows a dragon s claw holding a pearl. Americans wouldn’t always know what the symbolism meant, but they liked the style.

[Video of table and desk, showing details narrator describes] “This table was made in colonial Williamsburg Virginia, and the decorative element or fretwork shows that same fascination with Chinese motif as does the metalwork on this desk. [Narrator appears] It’s no surprise that when the United States won its independence, our merchants wanted to establish their own trade with China.

“In 1784 we did just that. Captain Samuel Shaw set sail on the Empress of China and established the first American warehouse or hong in Canton. [Video of tea set] This is the tea service he ordered on that very first trip for his personal use.

[Narrator appears] “Americans wanted to know everything about Chinese life, so ship captains commissioned paintings of the places they’d been and of the things they’d seen. [Video of painting and hong bowl, with close up of details] This painting shows their ships and the hong of the United States and other traders. Here is a similar scene on a punchbowl, known as a Hong Bowl. The Chinese have been producing fine porcelain like this for 1000 years. [Narrator appears] And that’s what wealthy Americans wanted the merchants to bring back.

“Chinese themes, such as [video of dinner service] these pagodas and landscapes, were very popular. This elaborate dinner service was ordered as a wedding gift for New York Governor DeWitt Clinton in 1796.

[Narrator appears] “Soon Americans commissioned china showing American themes. [Video of bowl] This bowl shows the surrender of General Burgoyne at the Battle of Saratoga, a turning point in the American Revolution. Although the Americans brought a lithograph to China as an example, you’ll notice that all of the Westerners have Chinese features because the artists had never seen westerners in person.

“The most famous piece of China in the collection shows the [video of piece of china, with close up] emblem of the Order of Cincinnati, which was an elite society of French and American officers who served under George Washington. This service was purchased by George and Martha Washington and was used at their home Mt. Vernon. [Narrator appears] More than 200 years later, that tradition of writing history in porcelain continues.

“Working together, [video of modern hong bowl with close up of details] students from West Virginia University and the GinDeeJenne Ceramic Institute, which is located in the ancient city where porcelain originated, have crafted an exquisite piece of history to commemorate the opening of the new American Embassy in Beijing. As with the earliest Hong Bowls, this bowl shows the headquarters of the United States in China, surrounded by the flowers of all 50 states. [Narrator appears] This fine work symbolizes what the American and Chinese people, working together, can accomplish. It is a fitting commemoration of this truly historic diplomatic event.”