



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

LPB 27/22

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: **Panama Hotel and Hashidate Yu Bathhouse
605 South Main Street**

Legal Description: Lot 1, Block 42, Town of Seattle, as laid out by D.S. Maynard (commonly known as D.S. Maynard's Plat of Seattle), according to the plat thereof recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, page 23, in King County, Washington.

At the public meeting held on January 19, 2022 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Panama Hotel and Hashidate Yu Bathhouse at 605 South Main Street as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- A. It is the location of, or is associated in a significant way with, a historic event with a significant effect upon the community, City, state, or nation.
- C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.
- D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or a method of construction.
- E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.

DESCRIPTION

Setting and Site

Located in Seattle's historic Japantown (*Nihonmachi*) in the Chinatown-International District and contributing to the City of Seattle International Special Review District and the National Register of Historic Places Seattle Chinatown Historic District, the Panama Hotel building stands along the lower portion of the hill rising north of S Jackson Street. The building

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program
The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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occupies a full lot at the southeast corner of S Main Street and Sixth Avenue S. The front, north facade faces S Main Street with the main west side facade overlooking Sixth Avenue S. The brick-paved alley, named *Nihonmachi Alley*, runs along the east side facade. The south facade abuts the Northern Pacific Hotel (1914, contributing to special review and NRHP districts).

The site slopes steeply, from an elevation of 105 feet at the northeast corner to 85 feet at the southwest corner. The building is built out to the lot lines with concrete sidewalks along both S Main Street and Sixth Avenue S. There is one street tree along S Main Street.

The Building and Changes through Time

The five-story building has a rectangular plan that fills the entire lot. Due to the site slope the east half of the building has four stories above grade, and five stories above grade at the west half. The main entrance to the hotel on the north facade is located at this shift and is the transition between the different elevations of the east and west commercial spaces. The two light wells on the south side of the building extend down through the upper story hotel spaces—three stories in the east half of the building and four stories in the west.

Foundation & Structure

The building features reinforced concrete footings and perimeter walls. These carry the building's structure of unreinforced brick masonry and internal wood posts and beams. Brick masonry walls within the building extend up from the basement between the 609 and 611 S Main Street commercial spaces; the first floor level of the north stairwell; and as a fire stop extending to the roof between the 603 and 605 S Main Street commercial spaces with a fire door at each corridor opening on the upper floors.

The heavy timber posts (11 by 11 inch) with iron connectors at the beams occur at the basement level in three north/south rows supporting upper floor framing. Wood platform frame walls comprise interior partitions and the load-bearing internal structure at the upper stories. Floor to floor heights at the upper story hotel levels are ten feet with nine feet at the fifth floor.

Exterior Walls

The building's exterior unreinforced Common bonded brick masonry walls are exposed on the east alley facade and clad with a denser red veneer brick on the principle north and west facades. The veneer consists of a red brick for the field with buff brick utilized on projecting quoins at the outer corners, and at window openings. Horizontal rowlock buff brick bands transition between the commercial and upper stories and the fifth story and the parapet. Marblecrete cladding extends along the north facade and wraps the corner at the north end of the west facade above the storefronts. Stucco extends along the top of the parapet on the north and west facades at the former cornice location. Red brick at the north end of the east facade stems from a previous rebuild of this corner after a 25-ton earth mover used in

constructing Interstate 5 rolled down the hill in 1964, ramming into the northeast corner of the building.

Roof

The building features a flat roof with a parapet. Skylights occur at the main and southwest stairways. Composition sheet roofing covers the roof including at the two light wells.

Windows

Wood 1:1 double hung windows provide daylighting and ventilation for the building. All window openings feature wood brick moldings. East facade window openings feature elliptical arched brick headers with rowlock brick sills. North and west window openings feature buff brick jack arches with raised keystones and projecting rowlock buff brick sills at the upper story window openings. West facade basement and first story window openings feature flat headers with steel lintels and rowlock brick sills. Interior trim consists of painted wood casings, stool, and apron at window openings.

Entrances

Several entrances provide access to and egress from the building interior. Each storefront has its own entrance, which is addressed under storefronts. Building entrances are tied to vertical circulation within the building, as each entrance leads directly to a stairway.

302-1/2 Sixth Avenue S

Located at the south end of the west facade, this doorway opens to a direct flight stairway with an intermediate landing that ascends to the southwest quarter turn stairway. There are a pair of double action doors at the intermediate landing. Brass railings extend along either side of the stairway. A tile wainscot and base extend along the sides of the stairwell. A street level plain wood door with an upper closed off lite provides access to the stairway. The street level doorway features a brick jack arch with a raised brick keystone.

302 Sixth Avenue S

Located at the south end of the west facade, this doorway provides access to the basement level bathhouse. The doorway features a brick jack arch with a raised brick keystone. A black metal gate restricts access to the interior stairway. A sign has been added to the gate that replicates a sign that originally existed above the entrance, projecting from the wall. A direct flight descends to a pair of doors, each with a single lite. The stairwell features a troweled plaster finish. Updates were made to the metal gate and wood stairs in the 2010s.

605-1/2 S Main Street

Located at the middle of the north facade, this is the main entrance for access to the upper story hotel. At street level a pair of single lite wood doors provide access to the interior vestibule and stairwell. An added curved canopy projects out over the sidewalk at the doorway with an added eight-lite fixed transom above providing light into the stairwell. The stairwell contains a direct flight up to the third floor with an intermediate landing. There are a

pair of double action, single lite wood doors at the intermediate landing. The entrance vestibule features a tile floor and wainscot, with painted plaster at the upper portions of the stairwell.

609-1/2 S Main Street

Located at the east end of the north facade, this entrance provides basement access. A single lite wood door with a transom provides access to a direct flight stairway. Stairwell walls are painted plaster with a brass handrail along the west side of the stairwell.

East Entrance

Located at the south end of the east facade, this five panel wood door provides basement mechanical space access.

Fire Escapes

Located at the east and west ends of the building, these painted steel fire escapes consist of landings at each story with connecting stairways. Windows at the ends of the corridor on each floor provide emergency access to the fire escapes.

Storefronts

Commercial storefronts extend along the north facade.

601 S Main Street

The westernmost storefront wraps around the building's northwest corner onto the north end of the west facade. A central recessed entrance with a tile floor and single lite wood door, flanked by aluminum display windows with marblecrete clad bulkheads provides interior access. A multiple lite transom and transom bar extend across the storefront. The portion of the storefront on the west facade features the same pattern of a marble create bulkhead, aluminum display window, and multiple lite transom. Transoms are attributed as remaining behind the marblecrete; however, this has not been confirmed.

603 S Main Street

A central recessed entrance with a tile floor and single lite wood door, flanked by aluminum display windows with marblecrete clad bulkheads provides interior access. Transoms are attributed as remaining behind the marblecrete; however, this has not been confirmed.

605 S Main Street

A central single lite wood door flanked by aluminum display windows with marblecrete clad bulkheads provides interior access.

607 S Main Street

Located on the east side of the north hotel entrance, this storefront provides access to the tea house and consists of a central recessed entrance with a tile floor and single lite wood door, flanked by aluminum display windows with marblecrete clad bulkheads provides

interior access. A multiple lite transom and transom bar extend across the storefront. The interior retains Douglas fir flooring, plaster walls and ceiling finishes, picture and crown moldings, as well as wallpaper along the upper south and southwest wall portions. Storefront bulkheads on the interior retain their Douglas fir paneling and header over the storefront.

609 S Main Street

This storefront consists of a central recessed entrance with a tile floor and single lite wood door, flanked by aluminum display windows with marblecrete clad bulkheads provides interior access. Transoms are attributed as remaining behind the marblecrete; however, this has not been confirmed. A multiple lite transom and transom bar extend across the storefront.

611 S Main Street

An offset recessed entrance with a tile floor and single lite wood door provides interior access. Aluminum display windows with marblecrete clad bulkheads extend to the west of the doorway.

Interior

The interior layout generally corresponds to the functional role(s) of each floor. The basement layout reflects mechanical, storage, and bathhouse functions. The first floor is arranged around the commercial storefronts along S Main Street. The upper floors are organized around the stairwells and two light wells with a double loaded corridor on each floor to provide hotel and office rooms.

Basement

The east two-thirds of the basement provides mechanical and storage spaces in support of the upper story commercial and hotel functions. The main central volume within these storage spaces provides the artifact storage area; it seems part of the basement may have had retail space but ultimately it is unclear how this space was originally used. A commercial laundry originally shared the west end of the basement with the bathhouse, occupying a small area north of the bathhouse. A concrete floor extends throughout these spaces.

The Hashidate Yu bathhouse occupies the western third of the basement. The marble clad concrete bath with built-in benches within the bath is located along the east wall of the space. The bath features a men's portion on the north side and a women's and children's portion on the south. A wood partition wall extends up between the two separate basins. Both areas have tiled floors (hexagonal with blue tile floral motifs and an outer fret band) around the raised bath basin. North of the bath is a marble panel enclosed shower stall and sinks. West of the bath area are lockers and wood benches set on wood platforms with neighborhood business advertisements along the upper canted portions.

First Floor

This floor consists of the building's six commercial spaces, which historically housed retail businesses (food and goods) and personal services. All consist of long, rectangular spaces oriented to S Main Street. Interior finishes vary by space, but generally consist of a Douglas fir finish flooring over a sub floor, with painted plaster walls and ceilings.

Second Floor

This floor does not extend the full length of the building, due to the site's grade difference. The floor occupies only the western half of the building and contains the building's former professional office spaces, since converted to hotel rooms. A double loaded corridor connects the rooms with the main north stairwell, the southeast stairwell, and the west fire escape. The west light well provides day lighting and ventilation for the inner rooms. The corridor retains its wood and leather flooring, wood baseboard and chair rail, with plaster walls and ceiling finishes. Doorways with wood casings and transom open to the perimeter rooms, which feature painted wood floors and plaster wall and ceiling finishes and wood trim.

Third Floor

This floor contains the check-in and office functions for the hotel at the top (southeast side) of the north entrance stairway. A double loaded east-west corridor extends along the north portion of the floor between the two fire escapes, the central north stairwell, and the southwest stairwell. Shorter double loaded corridors extend south to service the central hotel office functions and three blocks of rooms created by the two light wells. The corridors retain their wood flooring, carpet floor runner, wood baseboard and chair rail, with plaster walls and ceiling finishes. Doorways with wood casings open to the perimeter rooms, which feature painted wood floors and plaster wall and ceiling finishes and wood trim.

The hotel check-in window opens to the central corridor near the top of the north stairs to provide direct access for arriving and departing guests and remains highly intact including the key rack and wood casings. A wood frame window provides access between the corridor and office. Directly north of the office is a guest lobby, accessed by two doorways from the corridor with seating for use as a common area. The apartment manager's office occupies the rooms west of the office.

Fourth through Fifth Floors

These floors share the same layout. A double loaded east/west corridor extends along the north portion of the floor between the two fire escapes, the central north stairwell, and the southwest stairwell. Shorter double loaded corridors extend south to service the three blocks of rooms created by the two light wells. The corridors retain their wood flooring, carpet floor runner, wood baseboard and chair rail, with plaster walls and ceiling finishes. Doorways with wood casings open to the perimeter rooms, which feature painted wood floors and plaster wall and ceiling finishes and wood trim.

Vertical Circulation

Vertical circulation functions primarily to provide street level access to the second through fifth floors, and corresponding egress from these floors, with the north and southwest stairwells providing this function. There are several small utilitarian wood frame stairwells within the basement that connect to individual commercial spaces and transition between the two grade levels (east and west) within the basement. Stairways linked to commercial spaces originally supported use of the basement below each storefront for commercial storage.

Southwest Stairwell

This quarter turn stairway provides access and egress from the upper floors, connecting with the 302-1/2 Sixth Avenue S entrance. The stairway consists of stained, Douglas fir newels and drop newels, railings, turned balusters, landings, and baseboard and base cap. Stairwell walls and ceiling are painted plaster. A roof top skylight provides day lighting for the stairwell in addition to windows opening to the west light well.

North Stairwell

Refer to Entrance 605-1/2 S Main Street for a description.

Alterations

The following timeline highlights key alterations to the building.

1910s-1920s: Installation of the fifth window along the second floor, north facade. Based on a photograph in a January 15, 1911 *Seattle Sunday Times* article showing the building shortly after completion, the window was not part of the original construction.

1928: Damage due to a fire in 611 S Main Street commercial space that at the time operated as a fruit stand business.

Ca. 1945: Work included removal of the 603-1/2 S Main Street entrance originally providing basement access and converting the former stairwell volume into part of the 605 S Main Street commercial space.

1964: Work included rebuilding the northeast corner of the building after a 25-ton earth mover rammed the corner. The brick walls up to the parapet collapsed. The building's sheet metal cornice and belt course were removed as part of this work and the existing marbled concrete installed at all storefronts and wood display windows replaced with the existing aluminum display windows.

1970-1971: Work included sprinkler and standpipe additions to the building.

1990s: Work included adding skylights over the main north and the southwest stairways.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Panama Hotel embodies a number of significant themes related to the Japanese story in Seattle. The hotel represents the limited work of Sabro Ozasa, the first Japanese architect to practice in Seattle. It also stands within Seattle's Nihonmachi, which was a growing and vibrant Japanese community up until the forced relocation of the Japanese in 1942 during World War II. It contains the Hasidate-Yu, the last known traditional bathhouse or sento in Seattle and one of only two known to remain on the West Coast. The bathhouse represents the culturally important social activity of bathing within the Japanese community and was originally one of at least 10 in Seattle. The building also reflects the establishment and growth of the Seattle Japanese Hotel and Apartment Association (SJHAA), the trauma inflicted upon the Japanese during the forced relocation, and the enduring stewardship by the Hori family, who returned to their business after the war and continued to operate the SRO even when residential hotels were a challenge to run and maintain in the city.

Much of the following text is reused from a 2014 Historic Structures Report, utilizing information from the National Historic Landmark nomination (2002, designated 2006) for the Panama Hotel and National Register of Historic Places nomination (1986) for the Seattle Chinatown Historic District. The text has been reorganized for the purposes of this nomination report, with some additional information added.

A National Historic Landmark (NHL), the Panama Hotel stands at the heart of Seattle's Nihonmachi (Japantown), as a nationally significant representative of the Japanese immigration experience. The larger neighborhood is commonly known as the Chinatown-International District, or CID. In addition to its status as an NHL, the Panama Hotel is a contributing resource in the Seattle Chinatown Historic District (National Register) and in the International Special Review District (local district). The hotel building, designed by Sabro Ozasa, Seattle's first Japanese (and Asian) architect, historically housed key aspects of daily life for Japanese Americans in Seattle, providing lodging upstairs in the hotel; access to Japanese-owned businesses in the retail spaces, basement, and second floor; and community in the basement's traditional Japanese-style bathhouse or sento.

Historian Dr. Gail Dubrow, who wrote the NHL nomination for the building as well as co-authored *Sento at Sixth and Main: Preserving Landmarks of Japanese American Heritage*, identifies the location of the Panama Hotel at the intersection of Sixth Avenue S and S Main Street as "the physical and cultural epicenter of Seattle's Nihonmachi, literally at the heart of the goods and services provided by the Nihonmachi." Dubrow emphasizes the importance of Nihonmachi as "the center of the universe for Japanese immigrants and their American-born children who had made Shiatoru, as they called it [Seattle], their home before World War II." Neighboring buildings to the Panama Hotel housed additional hotels and boarding houses, restaurants, barbershops, and grocery stores, all of which helped Japanese immigrants establish a strong sense of community in their new home.

Neighborhood Context: The Chinatown International District & Nihonmachi

The Chinatown International District was primarily developed between 1907 and 1927. Although originally referred to as Chinatown, the neighborhood became home to many different ethnic groups with sub-communities formed within the neighborhood. The Chinese business district was located along S King Street, the Filipino along S Weller Street and west of Maynard Avenue S near King Street, and the Japanese business core (Japantown/Nihonmachi) along S Main Street and the north side of S Jackson Street. Seattle's Japantown was largely located in the area bounded by Yesler Way on the north, 4th Avenue S on the west, S Dearborn Street on the south, and 14th Avenue S on the east. According to Larry Kreisman, author of the historic district's National Register of Historic Places nomination, "The history of the Seattle Chinatown Historic district is inextricably tied to the history of Asian settlement in Washington, and is characterized by alternating periods of immigration and deportation, cultural florescence, and racial discrimination."

Waves of Chinese, followed by Japanese and Filipino immigrants arrived in Seattle beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, China was in crisis from the devastating effects of war and famine. News of a gold strike in eastern Washington in the 1860s spurred Chinese to immigrate to the Pacific Northwest seeking refuge from conflict at home. This first wave of Chinese immigrants to the Pacific Northwest were primarily men and from southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. Construction of a northern transcontinental railroad during the 1870s and 1880s drew Chinese workers to the Pacific Northwest, and many remained in the region after construction was complete, working in other industries, such as canning. Seattle's first Chinatown developed following the Great Seattle Fire of 1889 in the Pioneer Square neighborhood. Chin Gee Hee, a merchant and labor contractor, constructed a brick building to house his Quong Tuck Company on S Washington Street and Second Avenue S, which sparked new development in the area, with Chinese merchants leasing buildings up and down S Washington Street. These businesses included restaurants and shops; the largest merchant shops included the Wa Chong Company, the Quong Tuck Company, and the Ah King Company.

Chinatown continued to grow throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s and S Washington Street became crowded as the number of single male laborers in the district increased. In 1907 the City of Seattle re-graded and widened S Jackson and S King streets, opening up an area east of the railroad tracks and south of the original Chinatown for further development. Goon Dip, a leader in the community and the Chinese Investment group Kwong Kick (Quong Yick) Company had a series of buildings erected on S King Street between Eighth Avenue S and Maynard Avenue S.

While Chinatown was growing, the first Japanese settlers began to arrive in Seattle in 1879, reflecting the second wave of Asian immigration to the United States. A number of factors contributed to Japanese leaving their homeland. An American naval delegation, led by Commodore Matthew Perry, arrived in Japan in 1853 to forcibly open Japanese ports to

Western trade. As Japan's Meiji government sought to swiftly industrialize the country, many farmers were removed from their land, profoundly impacting the Japanese economy and culture. Japanese arrived in the Pacific Northwest, either directly from Japan or after working on sugar plantations in Hawaii, seeking similar employment opportunities as the Chinese immigrants before them. Filipinos comprised the third wave of Asian immigration to the area, also seeking economic opportunity abroad. The U.S. colonized the Philippines after the 1898 Spanish-American War, which afforded Filipinos status as U.S. nationals (but not full citizenship), allowing them to more easily migrate to the United States.

The Japanese community in Seattle grew quickly, partly due to fewer immigration restrictions than were placed on the Chinese, which included the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (prohibiting the immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years), and anti-Chinese sentiment in Seattle which culminated in a February 1886 riot forcibly expelling hundreds of Chinese from the city. And by the early 1900s the Japanese population exceeded that of the Chinese. Following the regrading along S Jackson and S King streets, the Japanese established what became known as Japantown (Nihonmachi), adjacent to Chinatown, in the area bounded by Yesler Way on the north, 4th Avenue S on the west, S Dearborn Street on the south, and 14th Avenue S on the east. Japantown's business core was located primarily along S Main Street and the north side of S Jackson Street. Japanese entrepreneurs established thriving businesses with a range of specialties, including trading companies importing Japanese foods, florists (in connection with Japanese-owned and -operated greenhouses), dry-cleaning shops, restaurants, and hotels. Prominent businesses in Japantown included the Panama Hotel and its related storefronts (e.g. Taisho-Do Bookstore), the Higo 10 Cents Store (opened by Sanzo and Matsuyo Murakami in 1909 at a location on Weller Street before moving to the Jackson Building in 1932), and Cherry Land Florist (opened by Tamano and J.M. Kobata in 1932).

A key component of Japantown was the presence of public bath facilities. While public bathhouses were critical for SRO residents during the early twentieth century, city code did not dictate the amount of bathing facilities (i.e. sinks, showers, or baths) per occupant. However, these bathhouses were more than bathing facilities, for the Japanese they were a social and cultural gathering place for Japanese living in the city. By 1914, there were 10 bathhouses south of Yesler Way, nine of which were in SRO hotels, including the Panama, Chicago, Miyajama, Eastern, Markeen, Nippo Ryokan, Yorazuma House, Diamond, and Paris hotels. The number of bathhouses operating in Japantown slowly decreased and by 1936, only three were still in operation (Miyako-Yu, Hashidate-Yu in the Panama Hotel, and Hinonde-Yu). Hashidate-Yu continued in operation until the mid-1960s.

The Japanese faced racial discrimination upon their arrival. This intolerance was codified with the passage of immigration legislation in the 1920s. In 1921, Washington State House Bill Number 79, a result of anti-Japanese agitation, extended the state's constitutional prohibition against alien land ownership to also prohibit leasing or renting land. This forced many Japanese, particularly farmers, to find creative solutions to keep their land—through contract farming, lease extensions before the new law took effect, or leasing or buying their property

in the names of their American born (Nisei) children. However, the legislature closed those loopholes in 1923 with the passage of Washington State House Bill Number 70, identifying property owned in the name of a child as held in trust for an “alien.” This placed further burden on Japanese landowners, who “had to take the further step of putting the children’s land in the trust of a white lawyer.” Such restrictions likely triggered the decline in the city’s Japanese population, which dropped from 8,448 in 1930 to 6,975 in 1940. Japanese had also established themselves in communities, many of them farming, throughout the Puget Sound region and would make special trips into Seattle to frequent the Japanese businesses and use the bathhouses.

Anti-Japanese sentiment further intensified following Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the United States’ entrance into World War II. President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, authorizing the Secretary of War and the military to prescribe exclusion zones to restrict or prohibit anyone from entering, remaining in, or leaving. While EO 9066 did not explicitly call out Japanese, its implementation through military orders in proscribed military zones, curfew, voluntary relocation, temporary assembly and, ultimately, forced relocation of all people of Japanese ancestry. Within weeks of evacuation orders, all of the Japanese in Western Washington, Western Oregon, and California were required to gather at assembly centers—Seattle area residents were gathered at the Puyallup Fairgrounds.

Allowed to bring only what they could carry with them to the relocation centers, some Japanese stored their belongings where they could; one such place in Seattle was in the basement of the Panama Hotel, owned by the Hori family. After the end of the war, Japantown, practically empty during the internment, never quite recovered. Many Japanese Americans chose not to return to Seattle and Japanese and non-Japanese laborers working war-related jobs moved into the neighborhood. Of those Japanese Americans who did return to Japantown, not all collected their belongings from the Panama Hotel. The Hori family made attempts to reunite the belongings with their owners over the years, but it was a difficult task particularly when many Japanese families did not return to Seattle after the war. As a result, items from this era remained in the hotel’s basement even as the building’s ownership shifted from the Hori family to Jan Johnson in 1985. Johnson loaned some of these items for temporary exhibits at the Ellis Island National Museum of Immigrants and the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles in the 1990s. In 2015, a Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) grant was awarded by the National Park Service to inventory, catalog, photograph, and research the belongings left in the basement.

The construction of Interstate 5 in the 1960s further altered the character of Nihonmachi and the rest of the Chinatown-International District, as it effectively bisected the neighborhood. A major housing project then went in east of Seventh Avenue S, where the pre-WWII Japanese residential area had been. By the early 1960s, Hashidate Yu, the only public bathhouse to reopen in the district following the end of the war, was closed.

Another significant impact on the district (and historic buildings in general) was the passage and enforcement of stricter building and fire codes. In 1973, Seattle Times reporter and religion editor Ray Rupert interviewed hoteliers of downtown residential hotels, including Takashi Hori, about the challenges of running a residential hotel. Hori and the other operators shared their struggles with Rupert, from the fixed income of their residents and guests to the rising costs of meeting city codes. Hotel and apartment fires, specifically the 1970 Ozark Hotel fire and the 1971 Seventh Avenue Apartment fire which together claimed 32 lives, led the city to tighten its fire and housing codes.

In 1973, the neighborhood was designated as a historic district, the International Special Review District, by the City of Seattle. The neighborhood was also listed as a historic district, the Seattle Chinatown National Register Historic District, in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. The International Special Review District has been expanded over the last few decades and now includes the historic Chinatown, Japantown, and Little Saigon, including historic resources located east of I-5. In 1969, community organizers formed InterIm CDA (ICDA), a nonprofit affordable housing and community development organization based in the Chinatown-International District to serve the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in the district. Since then, InterIm has expanded to serve not only low-income Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, but also refugee and other immigrant communities throughout Puget Sound. In 1975, the community formed the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) to revitalize and preserve the neighborhood, with a focus on three areas: affordable housing and commercial property management, real estate development, and community economic development and community engagement. As of 2020, SCIDpda owns and/or manages nearly 500 units of affordable housing and 200,000 square feet commercial/retail space in the district.

Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Hotels in the Chinatown-International District & Nihonmachi

The Panama Hotel's role as a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel is significant, particularly in light of its location and ownership/management. As Chinatown and Nihonmachi were established, the majority of early Asian immigrants to the neighborhood were single men. Initially SROs provided affordable housing for single men working in the city or neighboring industries with accessibility to other services (e.g. barbershops, restaurants, bathhouses). SROs were common throughout Seattle's urban core and were primarily constructed between ca. 1900 through ca. 1920. Construction of SRO hotels dwindled during the 1920s as apartment buildings increased in popularity. As residential hotels, SROs catered to a transient and then permanent work force corresponding with the city's increasing population; Seattle had a population of just over 3,500 in 1880 and steadily climbed to nearly 43,000 in 1890, 237,000 by 1910, and over 300,000 in 1920.

Paul Groth delves into the history of SROs in the United States in *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels* (1994). They were not simply homes to single men working blue collar jobs or to prostitutes, but historically provided affordable housing for temporary or low income workers, those wanting to live downtown, and individuals seeking the freedom that

shared housing did not allow. As the most inexpensive type of residential hotel, SROs were comprised almost entirely of residential rooms with very few tourist rooms available for nightly rental.

In Seattle, according to Dr. Marie Wong in *Building Tradition: Pan-Asian Seattle and Life in the Residential Hotels* (2018), nightly rental rates for SROs south of Yesler Way ranged between \$.10 and \$.50 between 1900 and 1930. In 1910, there were listings for over 200 SROs in Seattle between Yesler Way and Charles Street and from the waterfront to 14th Avenue S. Other SRO buildings constructed contemporary with the Panama Hotel in or near Nihonmachi with Japanese ownership interests include the Astor Hotel (628 S Washington Street, 1909) and the Hotel Puget Sound (718 6th Avenue S, 1914). In 1908, Japanese operated fifty hotels and SROs in Seattle and by 1920, hotel and apartment operation comprised 26% of the jobs held by Japanese in the city. These business owners formed a business association, the Seattle Japanese Hotel and Apartment Association (SJHAA), and began meeting in January 1910. What began as a support for business owners, expanded over the years to host social gatherings and events for the owners' families. The SJHAA ceased operating between 1942 and 1949, but resumed business in 1949 with only eight fewer hotels than before the war.

Construction & Use of the Building

Notice of construction at the southeast corner of South Main Street and Sixth Avenue South appeared in the March 27, 1910 issue of *The Seattle Times*. S. (Sabro) Ozasa is listed as the architect for the five-story brick building, to measure 60 feet by 120 feet. Construction commenced soon after this article and was completed by the end of 1910 or beginning of 1911, with the finished building appearing in a photo in the January 15, 1911, issue of the *Seattle Times*. Upon completion, the building featured six storefronts available for retail businesses on the north facade, basement retail spaces (the exact number of which are unknown), a basement bathhouse, a floor for professional office spaces, and three floors of hotel rooms.

The NHL nomination for the Panama Hotel building traces the building's development and ownership. At the time of construction, the owner of the property was the West Coast Building Company, with the owners of record listed as August Packard, a lawyer, and George Ward, vice president of the Oriental Trading Company. According to Dubrow, this type of ownership was not uncommon during this time, "Because of the prohibitions against alien land ownership in the Washington State constitution, bicultural umbrella companies were a common mechanism for allowing Japanese Americans into the real estate market at the time." In fact, Japanese immigrants were not able to become naturalized American citizens until the 1952 Immigration Act, which eliminated race as a basis for naturalization. The West Coast Building Company were the developers of the building, F. Fujii was the Japanese hotel proprietor. The original proprietor of the bathhouse was T. Ohme, eventually taken over by the Sano family, Fukuo and Shigeko. Over the next several years, it appears that a couple of different corporations owned the building and hotel— Sound Trading Investment from 1915–

1920 and Enterprise Investment Company in 1925—but this may simply reflect name changes, rather than actual ownership changes.

The building continues to host the Panama Hotel on its upper floors with six retail storefronts on the north facade, only four of them occupied. The Panama Hotel Teahouse occupies two storefronts, Bill Gaylord's art gallery occupies one storefront, and a photographer/artist occupies another storefront. The bathhouse closed in 1964 and has remained vacant. The basement retail spaces serve as storage for the Panama Hotel and also contain personal belongings left in the basement during the forced relocation of the community's Japanese during World War II. The building, which has stood on the corner of Sixth and Main for more than 100 years, has only had a few owners, with the Hori family owning the building the longest, from 1938–1985.

Hotel

A number of proprietors managed the Panama Hotel during its first decades in business. T. Maedo and M. Miyuta appear as managers in the city directories between 1914 and 1931; the men are listed together, individually, or with other managers throughout this period. In 1917, I. Yasui is listed as the manager. Then in 1931, M. Tatsumi took over ownership and management of the Panama Hotel.

Takashi Hori and his father, who had previously managed a different apartment building, purchased the Panama Hotel and took over its operation in 1938. The Hori family consisted of Sanjiro and his wife Toyo, along with their five children—two sons, Takashi and Fukashi, and three daughters, Aiko, Florence, and Toyome. Takashi Hori was born in 1918; the second child born to Sanjiro and Toyo, but their firstborn son. Takashi's father, Sanjiro, was born in November 1875 in the Kumamoto Prefecture in Japan. Sanjiro was the second born son—traditionally the firstborn son inherited the family property and business(es). Sanjiro left home to travel to Hawaii as a *dekasegi* (one who works away from home to earn a living). He earned enough to buy land in Japan, but left on another *dekasegi* trip in 1906 to head to San Francisco. The ship he was on changed course following San Francisco's massive earthquake that year, and Sanjiro ended up in Seattle. Sanjiro worked in saw mills and married his wife, Toyo. After breaking his leg, he settled with his family in Seattle. In partnership with a friend, Sanjiro purchased a *meshiya*, or diner, in Seattle's Japantown—the diner was located in the front of the building with lodging room upstairs. The Hori Family initially lived in quarters behind the diner, but eventually rented a room upstairs. Takashi and his siblings then spent their childhood growing up in Nihonmachi and attending school at Bailey Gatzert Elementary at 12th and Weller streets and later Broadway High School.

Sanjiro eventually sold the diner and began leasing an apartment building at 6th and Columbia, where the family soon moved. When Takashi was 16, his father transferred the family's bank accounts at Sumitomo Bank into Takashi's name. Takashi helped his family run the business, even while attending high school. After he graduated, he attended the University of Washington to study accounting. In the meantime, Sanjiro observed the

Japanese hotel business and determined it to be a better financial investment than apartments, when many tenants struggled to pay rent during the Depression years. When the Panama Hotel came up for sale in 1938 for \$20,000, Sanjiro purchased it.

In the midst of the Hori family's early ownership of the Panama Hotel, the world was at war. The United States officially entered the conflict after the Japanese bombing of the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu on December 7, 1941. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which opened the pathway to forced removal and incarceration of persons of Japanese descent—both foreign born/immigrants (Issei) and American citizens (Nisei)—from the west coast. Over a period of six months, over 120,000 individuals of Japanese descent were forced to leave their homes, businesses, and belongings. The Hori family, along with their neighbors and friends of Japanese ancestry, were held at the Puyallup fairgrounds before being relocated to the Minidoka Relocation Center in southern Idaho, one of 10 civilian relocation camps administered by the War Relocation Authority. All 10 camps were located in remote areas; the other 9 camps were located at Heart Mountain in Wyoming, Tule Lake and Manzanar in California, Poston and Gila River in Arizona, Granada in Colorado, and Jerome and Rowher in Arkansas. Prior to the forced relocation and incarceration, the Hori family allowed members of the Japanese community to store their belongings in the Panama Hotel's basement. The Japanese had less than 40 days from when EO 9066 was signed and the first orders removing Japanese from nearby Bainbridge Island. Japanese scrambled to prepare for their relocation to unknown locations, many of them selling what they could with a few able to safely store their belongings, as the Hori family offered at the Panama Hotel. The boarded-up Higo Variety Store was looked after by the owners of the neighboring Jackson Loan Office pawn shop—Julius Blumenthal and Maurice Zimmer—who ensured the Murakamis' bills were paid and their store was not vandalized. Others were not as fortunate and returned to vandalized property and businesses rented out rather than awaiting their return.

Takashi and his brother Fukashi briefly returned to Seattle in September 1944 to sort through belongings stored in the building's basement, and were actually the first known Japanese American civilians to travel without escort in the region, following the forced relocation. It was not until January 1945 that the majority of those of Japanese descent were able to return to the west coast. While some, like the Horis and Murakamis, returned to Seattle's Japantown, many others did not. The businesses that resumed in Japantown provided familiar goods and services to returning Japanese families, but the number of businesses dwindled as the area's demographics shifted.

The Horis originally left the Panama Hotel under the management of John Davis and Company in 1942. This arrangement did not last long and the Horis leased it to someone else (or John Davis and Company arranged the lease); it appears that was A.D. Munro, beginning in March 1943. The Horis chose not to renew the lease when it seemed they'd be able to return to Seattle. According to Takashi,

“However, when I came back in August and I asked them that I want to take over, they just refused to turn the keys over to me. They said no...and they just refused to give me the keys until I hired an attorney to send them papers saying that they had to do it and finally got my keys back for the hotel.”

According to an interview of Takashi Hori, Yoshito Mizuta, and Elmer Tazuma—former hotel operators in Japantown—most other hotel operators did not face the challenge the Hori did, with Takashi indicating the nearby Northern Pacific and Atlas Hotel had management agreements that worked well. In the interview Takashi stated that the Takemuras at the Pacific Hotel had a similar problem to his family upon their return, but he did not elaborate. Sanjiro Hori eventually retired, passing away in 1954 after a long illness. Takashi took over ownership of the building and continued to own and manage the hotel, alongside his own family—his wife Lily Morinaga and their two children, Susan and Robert—until 1985.

The Hori family sold the building and hotel business to Jan Johnson in 1985. Johnson has taken her role as steward of the building and its important story seriously; she continues to operate the Panama Hotel on the upper floors of the building and has renovated three of the six storefronts, two of which house The Panama Hotel Tea and Coffee House. Historic photographs of the building and Nihonmachi highlight the interior of the tearoom. The building was already listed as a contributing resource in the National Register of Historic Places for the Seattle Chinatown Historic District, and historian Gail Dubrow sought further recognition for the building because of its national role in the Japanese American story. In 2006, they succeeded in getting the National Park Service to list the Panama Hotel as a National Historic Landmark for its association with the immigration of Japanese to the United States and its connection with an important cultural aspect of Japanese life.

Professional Office Spaces

The second floor in the Panama Hotel building is accessible from the intermediate landing of the Panama Hotel’s primary stairwell. Due to the building’s construction on a sloped lot, the second floor is almost a mezzanine level and exists only at the west end of the building (above the storefronts at 601, 603, and 605 S Main) rather than extending the entire length of the building. Businesses often advertised their presence here by placing signs in their windows, evidenced in historic photographs of the building. A complete list of businesses is unavailable, but companies or individuals rented space on the floor during the following years:

1912

- B. K. Sugiura and S. Ikeda, Japanese Interpreters. Rooms 1 and 2.

1916

- S. Watanabe. Japanese interpreter.
- T. Nagasawa, dentist.
- B. Ishibashi, dentist.
- H. S. Matsumoto, life insurance agent.
- Keizo Uchimura, life insurance agent.

- J. Shiguma, physician. Room 5.
- 1917
- T. Nagasawa, dentist.
 - H. S. Matsumoto, life insurance agent.
 - Keizo Uchimura, life insurance agent.
 - S. Watanabe. Japanese interpreter.
 - J. Shiguma, physician. Room 5.
- 1928
- Zenzo Shimomura, dentist. Married to Kiku. Listed as in Room 3.
 - Keizo Uchimura, Agent for New York Life Insurance Co. Married to Rue.
 - Shuichi Watanabe, interpreter. Married to Sadako.
- 1929
- Zenzo Shimomura, dentist
 - Keizo Uchimura, Agent for New York Life Insurance Co
 - Shuichi Watanabe, interpreter.
 - Dr. Paul S. Shigaya, physician. Married and his wife was an X-ray technician. Shigaya graduated from Kent High School and the University of Washington.
 - Yukio (Yuko) Marinaga, photo finisher. Room 10. Marinaga was a founding member of the Seattle Camera Club, along with Yasukichi Chiba, Hiromu Kira, and Dr. Kyo Koike.
- 1930
- Zenzo Shimomura, dentist
 - Keizo Uchimura, Agent for New York Life Insurance Company
 - Shuichi Watanabe, interpreter.
 - Dr. Paul S. Shigaya, physician.
 - Yukio Marinaga, photo finisher.
- 1932
- Zenzo Shimomura, dentist
 - Keizo Uchimura, Agent for New York Life Insurance Company
 - Shuichi Watanabe, interpreter.
 - Dr. Paul S. Shigaya, physician.
 - Yukio Marinaga, photo finisher.
- 1934
- Dr. Paul S. Shigaya, physician.
 - The former office spaces are now used as additional hotel rooms.

Bath

In its basement, the Panama Hotel building housed a Japanese style public bathhouse, a community social center. Known as Hashidate Yu, the laundry and bathhouse were one of several baths in Nihonmachi. According to the NHL nomination, "Religious institutions, Japanese language schools, laundry facilities, barbershops, and bathhouses were all places for gathering, sharing of resources, networking, and affirmation of cultural traditions in a new land." These community centers, like the bathhouses, catered to Japanese immigrants,

welcoming them to the community and providing protection from the racial discrimination they faced at other establishments. As a result, the bathhouses were often not advertised, at least in English, as bathhouses.

Hashidate Yu appeared in the Seattle City Directory under “Laundries—Chinese and Japanese,” rather than being strictly advertised as a bathhouse. Over the years, the bath was listed in the city directory as Hashidate, Hashidate Yu, Hashidate Laundry, and even just under the name of whoever was the current manager. The business operated as both a bathhouse and a laundry facility. At one point, there were at least 10 Japanese bathhouses in Seattle. The Hashidate Yu was the only bathhouse to reopen following the end of World War II.

The original proprietor of the bathhouse is believed to have been T. Ohme. The first known manager of the bathhouse as Hashidate Yu was R. Kobayashi in 1916. Kobayashi continued to manage the bath through at least 1917. Sosuke Tokushige managed it between at least 1929 and 1931. In 1932, Fukuo Sano was listed as the manager in the Seattle City Directory. The NHL nomination indicates Sano owned and managed the bathhouse, alongside his wife, Shigeko and their two sons, Eddy and Ted, between 1930 and 1942 and from 1946 to 1954. During World War II, the Hori family leased the building to A.D. Munroe. A 1963 article in The Seattle Times indicates the bathhouse may have still been in operation until late January of 1963.

When the Hashidate Yu bathhouse closed it was the last sento operating in Seattle and may have been one of the last public bathhouses in the western United States. There were once hundreds of Japanese-style bathhouses throughout the western United States, but now only two are known to remain: the Hashidate Yu in the Panama Hotel and one in Walnut Grove, California. The Walnut Grove example is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a contributing property within the Walnut Grove Historic District; it is an example of a small public bathhouse in a small community rather than a large sento like the one in the Panama Hotel. A shed that used to house a Japanese-style soaking tub (or furo), rather than a public bathhouse (sento), has been restored and is located at the Neely Mansion in Auburn, a King County landmark.

Storefronts

In addition to the hotel services, professional offices, and former bathhouse, the Panama Hotel building features six storefronts on its north facade. The following sections provide a brief summary of known occupants for each storefront.

601 South Main

The first known occupant of the retail space at 601 South Main Street was the Pacific Print Co. (or Pacific Printing Co.), which appeared as a listing at the address by 1916. Management for the company—at least in 1931—consisted of Jiro Kaneko, Tojiro Kono, and Moriji Takei. The company continued to occupy the storefront until at least 1942. The next known occupant was Kazuye Kuritsuka in 1951 followed by Kiichi Mayeda in 1955.

603 South Main

Although this was a single storefront, at one point the Seattle City Directories indicate the existence of businesses at 603 1/2 S Main in addition to 603 S Main. It is unclear how or if these businesses operated together. S. Ikeda, who worked as a Japanese interpreter, is listed at 603 1/2 S Main in 1912; in 1918, S. Yamane ran a restaurant out of the space, and between 1925 and 1928 Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kawabata operated a restaurant in the space.

Listings for 603 South Main Street begin in 1916, with U. Yuasa who ran a barbershop and billiards room out of the storefront. Yuasa continued to operate his shop through 1917, and by 1928 with Shizahara and Ura Aoki. In 1931, Aoki's business is identified as the Aoki Shoe Co., operated by Shizahara and his wife Ura. The Aoki Shoe Co. occupied the storefront until at least 1932. Seattle City Directories listed the retail space as vacant between 1940 and 1955, but Fujitomi Real Estate, operated by Eiji Fujitomi, was listed at the address in 1953.

605 South Main

The first known occupant of 605 South Main Street was the Yamaki Grocery in 1928. The grocery store leased the storefront until at least 1933. Managers of the store included M. Hayashi (1933) and J. Isozaki (1928–1930). Valley Food Mart then occupied the space beginning in 1948 and until at least 1963. Keisuke Yoshida owned the business in 1953 followed by Ineko Yoshida in 1955.

607 South Main

The earliest found occupant of the storefront at 607 South Main Street was Asahi News Company in 1916. The Asahi News Company published The Asahi News, a Japanese Morning Daily newspaper. It also appears that the newspaper shared space with the Taisho-Do Bookstore. In 1917, J. Ito Terusaki was listed as the manager.

The K. Kanda Co. is the next known tenant, beginning in 1928. Operated by K. Kanda, the store specialized in women's furnishing goods, dress making, piece goods, and ladies' clothing. Kanda leased the space until at least 1932. The next known occupant was the Yamato Importing Co. in 1938 followed by the Educational Society of Japanese Cannery Workers between 1941 and 1942. Kosaku Sato operated his store, Joe's Antiques, out of the storefront between 1948 and 1958. Prior to WWII and his internment, Sato leased retail space directly across the street. In addition to the aforementioned businesses, it appears Taisho-Do (lessees of the adjacent retail space, 609 S Main) rented the space, according to an undated historic photograph.

609 South Main

The primary historic occupant of the storefront at 609 South Main Street was the Taisho-Do Bookstore, which sold books, stationery, crockery, glassware, and cut flowers. The Taisho-Do leased the space by 1916 and continued to occupy the storefront until at least 1937. The store even shared space with the neighboring storefront, 607 Main. Managers of the business included W. Sunada and W. K. Omura (1916), W. Sunada (1917), Taichiro Miyasaki (1928–1932), and G. Miyasaki (1933–1937). Kasaku "Joe" Sato ran Joe's Antiques from the storefront

by 1953 until at least 1956. In 1979, the iconic Tokuda Drugs relocated to this storefront from their longtime location at 16th and S Jackson Street. Tokuda Drugs was first founded by George Tokuda in 1935, which he ran alongside his wife, Tama. The Tokudas' son, Kip, represented the 37th District in the Washington State Legislature between 1994 and 2002. George Tokuda was one of the business owners who pooled resources with eight Black leaders in Seattle to apply for a state charter to pen the Liberty Bank—the first primarily Black-owned bank in Washington State.

611 South Main

The first known occupant of the retail space at was Fujii Kataro in 1915. Kataro's business was listed under "Cigars & Tobacco-Retail" in the Seattle City Directory. In 1930, Main Pool Parlor occupied the space and then a Mrs. Taka Omura, a clothes presser, rented the space between at least 1938 and 1942. Henry Bayani is listed in the space in 1943 and 1944, followed by Kaeiseoka Yoshida in 1951. A Keisuke Yoshida is then listed at the address in 1955.

Architects and Builders

Sabro Ozasa – Architect

Sabro Ozasa (1875-1915), the building's architect, immigrated to the United States from Japan in 1893, arriving in Spokane via Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Australia. Ozasa's Japanese birth name was Kosasa Saburo. Ozasa later relocated to Eugene, Oregon, to attend the University of Oregon, where he studied engineering and graduated in 1908 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mining Engineering. Ozasa arrived in Seattle in 1908 and began to practice architecture—the first Japanese (and Asian) individual to do so in Seattle. He advertised his services in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer between 1908 and 1910. His ads in 1908 stated "Young civil engineer of 27, graduate of University of Oregon, with good experience in office and field work, desires position as an engineer or a draftsman., S. Ozasa, California hotel, 218 4th ave. south, Seattle, Wash." In 1909, his ad language changed to state, "Plans, details, specifications of buildings half price. S. Ozasa, expert architect and civil engineer, 331 Central bldg., city."

Very little is known about Ozasa's personal life. He is listed in the 1910 U.S. Census as living at 1058 Austin Street (in the Delridge neighborhood of Seattle) and married to Shizu with a young son named Yonao (born ca. 1909). A notice of marriage license for Ozasa appeared in the May 10, 1908, issue of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer: "Sabro O. Zasa (36) and Shizu Nakata (24), Seattle."

He designed the Gaffney and Hyde apartment building (1909–10), the Cascade Investment house (1909–10), R. Malan house (1910), Elgin Hotel/Bush Garden (1913), 601-11 S Washington Street (1910, demolished), and Specie Bank of Seattle building (1910–11, 413-17 Maynard Avenue, demolished), in addition to the Panama Hotel (1910). The Panama Hotel is the largest of Ozasa's designs remaining in the United States, as he spent most of his career in Japan. He died in Tokyo in 1915.

Manhattan Building Company – Contractor

The Manhattan Building Company had their main office in the Central Building (810 3rd Avenue) in Seattle. In addition to their construction of the Panama Hotel, the company is credited with construction (according to notices in *The Seattle Times*) of the following buildings:

- 1701-1723 Minor Avenue (1905, demolished), 3-story frame apartment house
- 1127 Howell Street, Manhattan Flats (1905, demolished), 3-story frame stores and apartments

The Manhattan Building Company appears to have been a building firm but also involved with property management. As of 1912, according to an advertisement in *The Seattle Times*, they owned four large apartment houses in Seattle, all within the block bounded by Howell and Olive streets and Boren and Minor avenues.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include: *the exterior and interior of the building.*

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