

Landmarks Preservation Board

Nomination Form

NAME (present) Buddhist Temple
 (historic) Seattle Buddhist Church
 ADDRESS 1427 S. Main

NOMINATION AS:

- ☒ Building
☐ Site
☐ Structure
☐ District
☐ Object

RECEIVED

FEB 3 1975

CITY OF SEATTLE
 OFFICE OF URBAN CONSERVATION

NOMINATED UNDER CRITERIA (ORDINANCE 102229)

☒ (1) has significant character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, State or Nation; or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or

☐ (2) is the site of an historic event with a significant effect upon society; or

☒ (3) exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community; or

☐ (4) portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or

☒ (5) embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type or engineering specimen; or

☐ (6) is the work of a designer whose individual work has significantly influenced the development of Seattle; or

☐ (7) contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or

☐ (8) by being part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area, should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural or architectural motif; or

☐ (9) owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or city; or

☐ (10) has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history.

NOMINEE

address

phone

Reviewed

Historic Preservation Officer

date

NOMINATION DATE

BOARD SPONSOR

date

Landmarks Preservation Board

Seattle Historic Building Data Sheet

1. Name (common or present and/or historic) Seattle Buddhist Church
2. Street and Number 1427 South Main Street Block Lot Year Built 1941
3. Present Owner Seattle Buddhist Church Present Use church
4. Interim Owner(s) none Interim Use(s) none
5. Original Owner Seattle Buddhist Church Original Use church
6. Architect Yoshio Arai Builder
7. Assessed Value: Building Land Assessors File No.

8. Classification:

- ☒ Building
☐ Site
☐ Structure
☐ Object
☐ Other

- ☐ Public
☒ Private
☐ Both

- ☒ Occupied
☐ Unoccupied
☐ Preservation work
 in progress
☐ Threatened by
 demolition
☐ Unknown

Open to Public:

- ☒ Yes
☐ No
 Hours

9. Neighborhood Information:

A. Compatibility With Neighborhood

- Structure Yes X No
 Use Yes X No

B. Importance to Neighborhood

- Great
 Moderate X
 Minor

C. Architecturally Strong Neighborhood

Comments The neighborhood is

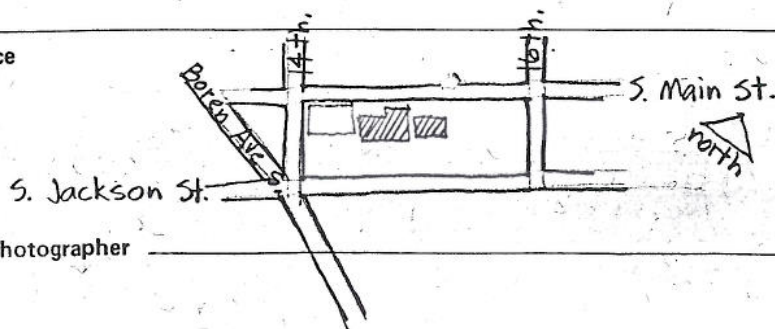
greatly mixed architecturally. Originally
a modest residential area, the area now has a
variety of uses, a park-like open space, modern
housing development, cultural center, and mixed
commercial on two arterials to the southwest.

10. Special Research Sources (Be Specific, list name or item and where found)

King County Assessors Office; Museum of History and Industry; Seattle

Building Department; "Brief History of the Seattle Buddhist Church" pamphlet.

11. Cross Street Reference



12. Photos Attached & Photographer

13. Physical Description

A. Style of Architecture

Contemporary with Oriental influences

B. Construction Material

Brick exterior, wood roof,
concrete foundation

C. No. of Stories

D. Condition

Excellent X
Good _____
Fair _____
Poor _____E. Exterior Desecration of
Original DesignNone or little X
Moderate amount _____
Considerable _____F. Architectural worth at
Example of Its StyleExceptional _____
Excellent X
Good _____
Fair _____
Poor _____G. Notable Features: (Be specific, i.e., detailing, craftsmanship, proportions, materials, colors, interior, etc.
Refer to Guidelines of Landmarks Preservation Board).

The church building and gymnasium/auditorium, built in 1941, is a translation of traditional Japanese architectural elements into contemporary methods of construction and materials. Although the buildings are constructed of modern materials, fired brick and asphalt shingles, many traditional elements dominate its design. The exterior displays traditional large eaves with unturned corners, a decorative roof ridge and ornamental gables. The exterior brick-work acts as a screen between structural columns supporting the roof. This is emphasized by the use of clerestory windows between the columns. The interior surface of these columns is decorated with wooden moulding and capped with a bracket not unlike the traditional brackets elaborately used in early Japanese temples. An excellent example of this elaborate bracketing can be found in the gilded wood canopy over the statue of Buddha in the shrine. The shrine area is particularly exemplary of traditional post and beam construction, with these elements left exposed to view. They are, however, only decorative in this case.

Particularly noteworthy is the shrine itself and altar of elaborately carved and gilded wood. These, together with other religious elements, screens, lanterns, furniture and religious articles, are the most noteworthy elements of this church. Although the structure is clearly an interpretation of traditional temple design, its method of construction and use of materials place it in the twentieth century.

14. Significance

A. Major Significance

- ☐ Historical
- ☒ Architectural
- ☐ Engineering
- ☒ Cultural
- ☐ Geographical
- ☐ Archaeological

B. Level of Significance

- ☐ National
- ☐ State
- ☒ Community

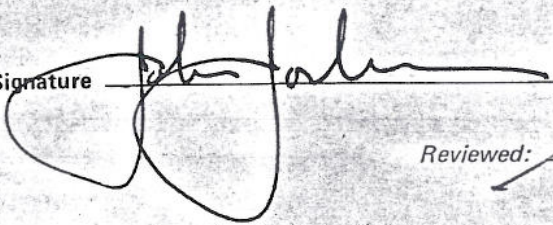
C. Statement of Significance (Be specific, history, personages, events, etc.)

NOTE: Numbers correspond to criteria for designation of Section 6 of the Landmarks Ordinance 102229.

- (3) Throughout its 75-year history, the Seattle Buddhist Church has served as a cultural center for Seattle's Asian Community.

Since its dedication in a small one-story house in 1901, the Church has grown steadily. Its present facilities, completed in 1941, include a gymnasium, an auditorium, and a fine library for students of Buddhism. It provides programs for teen-agers and younger groups, giving opportunities for participation in dance, music, drama and sports. The building serves as one of the focal points of the community and a manifestation of the Asian contribution to Seattle's cultural heritage.

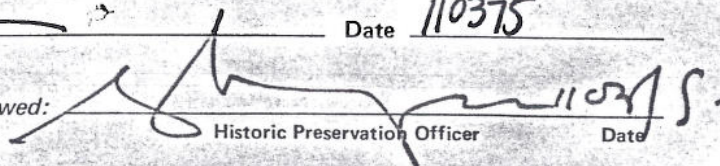
Surveyor Signature



Date

110375

Reviewed:



Historic Preservation Officer

Date

110375

THE SEATTLE BUDDHIST CHURCH - HISTORY

The Seattle Buddhist Church began with the organization originally called "The Seattle Bukko Seiheukai" (Seattle Young Men's Buddhist Association), and consisted of seven young men led by Chojiro Fujii and Jiro Iwamura. On November 15, 1901 the dedication ceremony was conducted by Reverend Kakurgo Nishijima from San Francisco in a small two story house at 624 Main Street. At this time 4,000 of Seattle's 80,000 people were Japanese.

During 1903 the Buddhists struggled to raise money to build a temple at 1020 Main Street. The new temple was finished in 1908. Eager temple leaders purchased four lots of land centered at 1427 Main Street, the present site of the Buddhist Church, in 1931. The temple at 1020 Main Street was closed by the City in the condemnation procedures of the gigantic Public Housing Project on First Hill, in the Yesler District, in 1939. The land purchased in 1931 was a fortunate foresight. Construction of the Buddhist Church started in 1940 and was finished with the gymnasium-auditorium by the fall of 1941. The official name of the organization was now "The Seattle Buddhist Church". Its purpose was to help relate the organization to American society.

War with the Japanese in the Pacific broke up the Church by the issuance of the Exclusion Act of 1941 and the Relocation Act. Four years later, after World War II, Reverend Gikan Nishihaga re-established the temple. By 1948 the Church was out of debt.

According to the pamphlet, A Brief History of the Seattle Buddhist Church, 1901-1951, the Church is known for its spirit of cooperation and friendliness to everyone. "It also fills many needs of the Seattle area in cultural, civics, religious and social affairs".

INFORMATION SHEET CONCERNING SHIN BUDDHISM

HISTORY

The full name of the SHIN BUDDHIST sect is JODO SHIN SHU. It developed in 13th century Japan as a result of the teachings of the religious reformer Shinran. At that time, Buddhism was already more than 17 centuries old and had become rigid and formalized and almost inaccessible to the average man. Shinran broke down the accumulated barriers of tradition and preached a fresh outlook which enabled the ignorant, the destitute, the hopeless, and even the wicked to experience the eternal wisdom and compassion that permeates the universe.

Shin Buddhism was formally established in North America in 1899. It is incorporated under the name of Buddhist Churches of America and is the oldest and largest Buddhist organization in this country. It has kept most of its Japanese cultural base. Although Shin Buddhists do not aggressively proselytize, membership is open to everyone.

DOCTRINE

Buddhism teaches basically that man is unhappy because of his un-ending thirst or blind desire which in fact cannot be satisfied. This thirst is caused by an unenlightened attachment to an illusory ego. It is possible to be enlightened, that is, to transcend ego-attachment.

There are specific methods which lead to enlightenment. Traditionally these are summarized in what is called "The Noble Eightfold Path" as follows:

Right Views	Right Livelihood
Right Thoughts	Right Effort
Right Speech	Right Mindfulness
Right Conduct	Right Meditation

Important Concepts of Shin Buddhism

When the Shin Buddhist awakens to the actual content of his religion, he realizes that his religious practice requires nothing of him; in fact, there is nothing he can do except express his profound appreciation.

All life is One -- separation is illusory.

The Oneness is worshipped under the title of Amida Buddha.

Oneness is thought of as infinite light and life, or wisdom and compassion.

Oneness is not a creator, nor a ruler, nor a judge.

Amida Buddha (oneness) cannot be supplicated, angered, placated, pleased, disappointed, offended, or any of these things -- only appreciated.

Oneness is not a goal to be accomplished by one's own hard work.

Oneness is an absolute truth which is simply accepted with no strings attached.

Oneness is not conditional upon virtue or worthiness.

Oneness is formless and inconceivable; it is the plenum void.

Shin Buddhists express their profound appreciation in the Japanese phrase:

NAMU AMIDA BUTSU

BON ODORI AT THE SEATTLE BUDDHIST CHURCH

Bon Odori is a Buddhist festival of gratitude and appreciation of life. It is a time to reflect on our utter dependence on our fellow humans, on other animal life, and on plant life. It is especially a time to remember those who have gone before us because it is from them that we have directly received our own individual lives.

In the week prior to Bon Odori, solemn memorial services are held in all of the cemeteries. During this time we feel close to those who are no longer with us and we express our gratitude in formal rituals. As the week closes, the mood begins to shift, and on the days of Bon Odori we celebrate with joyous dancing our gratitude and total involvement in all life.

There are somewhat conflicting accounts regarding the origin of Bon Odori. We know that Japanese immigrants brought the tradition to the United States more than seventy-five years ago. We know that Chinese missionaries brought the custom to Japan more than a thousand years ago. We also know that Shakyamuni the Buddha lived in India two-thousand five-hundred years ago and according to legend, the dances were inspired by one of his sermons given to his disciple Moggallana.

The word Odori, of course, is the Japanese word for "dance". The word Bon is a little more complicated; apparently it is the Japanese simplification of the Sanskrit title Ullambana which was given to the Buddha's sermon. By means of this sermon, Moggallana was brought to the realization that all beings are secure in infinite compassion. Particularly did he realize that his own mother, whom he knew to have been a very greedy woman, was not hanging upside-down in hell. It was a popular belief in India that such was the fate of avaricious people and the word for such a condition was Ullambana.

Shin Buddhists believe that everything is One just as it is, and after realizing that, there is nothing more to be done except be grateful. This gratitude is expressed in Japanese by the words . . . NAMU AMIDA BUTSU.

IDENTIFICATION DIAGRAM OF THE SHRINE AREA

THE 7 PATRIARCHS

asubandhu - Nagarjuna
Tan L'uan
ao Ch'ao - Shan Tao
enshin - Honen

he major teachers of
ure-land thought in
ndia, China, Japan.

RENNYO

(Japan 1415-1499)
Prominent Shin Abbot
who developed Shin
Buddhism as the major
school in Japan.

SHINRAN

(Japan 1173-1263)
Buddhist reformer.
Founder of Jodo Shin
Shu, the Shin sect.

PRINCE SHOTOKU

(Japan 574-621)
The first member
of the Imperial
Family to become
a serious Buddhist.

THE SHRINE OF AMIDA BUDDHA

Goldleafed, wooden statue symbolizing
dynamic, unlimited Wisdom and Com-
passion. A symbol of the Light and
Life which permeates the universe.
A symbol of Enlightenment itself.
It is not a representation of Shakya-
muni Buddha the founder of Buddhism,
nor of any man or deity.

UTRA BOOKS

TABLES

HAIRS

for ministers' use
during the chanting
of the Sutras.

LARGE BRONZE GONG

(bowl-shaped)

SMALL BRASS GONG

SMALL TABLE

Holds: rice bowl, vases, incense burner.

LARGE TABLE

Holds: flower vase, incense burner,
candlestick.

HANGING OIL-LAMPS

(electrified)

PAINTED SLIDING PANELS

CURTAINS

PAINTED SLIDING PANELS

FOUR-CHARACTER CHINESE INSCRIPTION

Sekke jippo -- "(Amida Buddha) embraces, transforms, (all in the) ten directions
(of the universe)"

INCENSE BURNER

Incense ritual (Oshoko):

Bow in front of the urn, step forward and with the right hand, drop one pinch of
powdered incense onto the already burning stick incense; place hands together in
"gassho"; step aside and bow once more.

This ritual is an ancient Indian symbol of self-purification -- similar to ritual
handwashing.