

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
CHR Status Code: 4S

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

Page 1 of 8 Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1830 SUTTER ST

P1. Other Identifier: Japanese YWCA, Nihonmachi Little Friends

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*a. County: San Francisco

*b. USGS Quad: San Francisco North, Californi Date: 1995

c. Address: 1830 SUTTER STREET City: San Francisco ZIP 94115

d. UTM Zone: Easting: Northing:

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number 0676 035

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

1830 Sutter Street is located on a 36' x 137.5' lot on the north side of Sutter Street between Buchanan and Webster streets. Built in 1932, 1830 Sutter Street is a 3-story, wood frame community building designed in a Japanese-inspired style. The rectangular-plan building, clad in smooth stucco, is capped by a combination gable, shed, and flat roof covered in clay tile. The foundation is not visible. The building is set back from the street and a high stucco wall, with clay tile coping, encloses the front of the lot. Stucco piers with clay tile coping frame an entry at the center of the wall. Brick steps between the piers lead up into a paved courtyard.

The primary façade faces south and includes the front of a small block that projects forward from the main building mass, as well as two small sections that are set back on either side of the projecting block. The building features a single entrance on the second story, which is located within a recessed porch on the eastern setback portion of the primary façade. The door is not visible from the street; however, a multi-light, wood sash, casement window is located within the porch and the porch opening is adorned with simple wood brackets. (continued)

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP13. Community Center/Social Hall

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other

P5a. Photo



P5b. Description of Photo:

Primary façade, looking north.
2/5/2008

*P6. Date Constructed/Age:

Historic Prehistoric Both

1932 SF Assessor's Office

*P7. Owner and Address
NIHONMACHI LITTLE FRIENDS
2031 BUSH ST

SAN FRANCISCO CA 94115

*P8. Recorded By:

Page & Turnbull, Inc., DL
724 Pine Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

*P9. Date Recorded: 11/9/2007

*P10. Survey Type:

Reconnaissance - Level 1

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "None")

Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan

*Attachments: NONE Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (list):

*Recorded By: Page & Turnbull, Inc., DL

*Date Recorded: November 2007 Continuation Update

*P3a: Description (continued):

A multi-light, wood sash, three-part casement window is located in the center of the first story. Tall stucco planters flank the window. The second story features multi-light, wood sash, three-part casement windows, one of which is located in the center of the main façade and is adorned with a wood balconet supported by beams with shaped ends. The second story is accented with vertical trim pieces that resemble half-timbering and include decorative bracket-like elements at the top. The third story of the projecting front block projects slightly over the second story and is supported by shaped brackets. The third story features small, eight-light, wood sash casement windows with molded surrounds. A wood fire escape is located on the set back section on the west side of the façade, with a stair descending against the west façade. The primary facade terminates in a gable roof with scalloped fascia boards and slightly flared eaves. A stucco chimney with a peaked cap projects from the roof.

The east façade abuts a neighboring building and is not visible. The west façade is unfenestrated and unadorned. It is clad with channel drop wood siding.

The building appears to be in good condition.



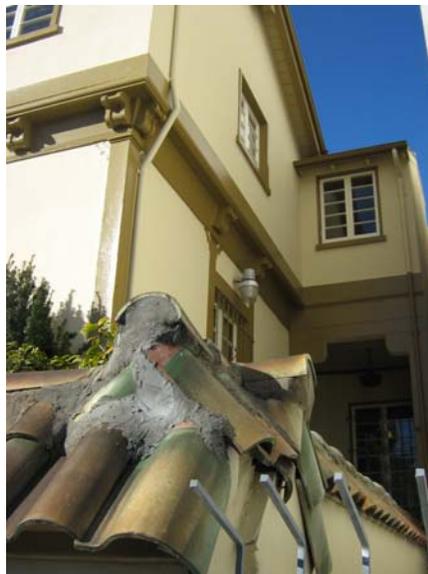
Detail of primary and west facades.
Source: Page and Turnbull

*Recorded By: Page & Turnbull, Inc., DL

*Date Recorded: November 2007 Continuation Update



View of the primary and west facades, looking northeast.
Source: Page and Turnbull



Detail of east façade, showing entry porch.
Source: Page and Turnbull

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*NRHP Status Code 3S

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*Resource Name or # (assigned by recorder) 1830 Sutter Street

B1. Historic name: Japanese YWCA

B2. Common name: Nihonmachi Little Friends

B3. Original Use: Community center

B4. Present use: School

*B5. Architectural Style: Japanese Eclectic

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

1932: Constructed. 1964: Fires safety improvements. 1973: Fire-damaged wood siding replaced. 1976: Five doors replaced in-kind. 1977: Construction of 2 dressing rooms in stage area, one storage room, outside platform and deck for playground, and outside storage closet. 1984: Renovation of kitchen and men's toilet, repair exterior stairs, repair/remove radiators. 1985: New retaining wall installed along west property line. 1986: Repair wooden stairs on west side of building. 1988: Renovate women's restroom/janitor's closet, convert 2nd floor restroom to office. 1989: Alterations to 2nd floor bathroom, convert classroom/darkroom to office. 1991: Enlarge 2nd floor office for use as classroom. 1992: Alterations to first floor conference room. 2004: Accessibility upgrade. 2007: Partial seismic upgrade.

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features: None.

B9a. Architect: Julia Morgan b. Builder: Unknown

*B10. Significance: Theme Cultural community development Area: Japantown, San Francisco, California

Period of Significance 1932 - 1942 Property Type Civic Applicable Criteria A/1, C/3

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

The YWCA represents an important element in the social history of Japanese American women in the United States. The Japanese YWCA was established on July 20, 1912 by women from Japanese Christian churches in Japantown, who were otherwise barred from joining the mainstream Young Women's Christian Association. Like the YMCA, the YWCA was a segregated organization with separate branches dedicated to ethnic groups like African Americans and Native Americans. The activism of women in San Francisco's Japantown led to the establishment of a dedicated chapter for their community. Though other Japanese YWCAs were located in cities throughout the United States, the San Francisco Japanese YWCA appears to be the only building purpose-built for a Japanese American chapter of the organization. (continued)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP13. Community Center/Social Hall; HP15. Educational Building, HP36. Ethnic minority property (JA)

***B12. References:**

The Japanese American Directory, San Francisco: The Japanese American News, Inc., 1941.
Japantown Task Force, *Images of America: San Francisco's Japantown*. San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2005. (continued)

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: Caitlin Harvey, Page & Turnbull/
Matt Weintraub, SF Planning Department

*Date of Evaluation: May 2009

(This space reserved for official comments.)



State of California & The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
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B10. Significance (continued)

The first chairwoman of the Japanese YWCA was Kaneko Komuro and the first committee chair was Yona Tsuda Abiko, who is credited with enabling the establishment of the organization. Coming from a family that strongly supported women's education, Abiko served on the YWCA's board of directors, was instrumental in raising funds from within the Japantown community and in Japan, and also taught classes at the YWCA on Japanese culture. In two months, she raised \$596 toward the establishment of the YWCA and recruited 40 of its first members. In 1913, she went to Japan and solicited another \$1,600 from Count Eiichi Shibusawa and other dignitaries. Later, Abiko was largely responsible for working with the San Francisco YWCA to create a legal trust that allowed for the purchase of the property at 1830 Sutter Street, since Alien Land Laws of the period made it difficult for those of Japanese ancestry to own real estate.

Once established, the Japanese YWCA provided social services for Japanese American women and girls. It assisted newcomers, including "picture brides" and students, with immigration procedures and housing. It also offered classes in English, music, sewing and other skills that would ease the transition to American life and that would allow young women to live independently, earn an income, continue cultural practices and participate in social opportunities. YWCA offerings evolved to include numerous cultural, social and athletic activities for young women. In 1917, the monthly publication *Joshiseinen* was produced in partnership with the Los Angeles Japanese YWCA. The independent Japanese YWCA joined the American YWCA in June 1920 and later became an International Institute. Members of the organization were organized in groups determined by age, such as the Golden Echoes, Blue Circle, Y's Echoes, Senior Silver Echoes, Intermediates, Junior and Little Echoes.

The YWCA was initially located in the former Imperial Hotel at 1120 Gough Street, and then moved into a two-story 19th century house at 1826 Sutter Street in March 1921. Around this time, the Japanese YWCA boasted 184 members. The house was located on the site of the current YWCA building (though its address was slightly different than the current numbering); it was razed and replaced with the current building when it was decided that the Japanese YWCA was in need of a purpose-built, permanent home. Fundraising and donations within the Japantown community, some raised through the staging of Kabuki performances, funded the purchase of the property at 1830 Sutter Street and the construction of the new YWCA building. It was one of four community facilities in Japantown (along with the Japanese Salvation Army, Kinmon Gakuen, and the YMCA) to be financed in this way. The 1913 Alien Land Law restricted people of Japanese ancestry from owning property. Therefore, in 1921, with the help of Yona Abiko's husband, Kyutaro Abiko (publisher of the *Nichi Bei Shimbun* newspaper), and lawyer Guy Calden, who had worked together previously to circumvent the Alien Land Law and establish the Yamato Colony and other Japanese American farming cooperatives, the women of the Japanese YWCA formed a legal trust. Through the trust, the San Francisco chapter of the YWCA purchased the property using the funds raised by the Japanese American community and held the title in its own name for the Japanese YWCA.

The new building was designed by renowned architect Julia Morgan and completed on March 14, 1932 for \$40,000. The dedication was presided over by Dr. Inazo Natobe, a high ranking Japanese statesman who had been the first to contribute money to the Japanese YMCA's efforts, and Dr. Earnest Sturge, who was also elemental in the founding of Japantown's Christ United Presbyterian Church and the Japanese YMCA. The building contained a ten-bed dormitory, meeting and club rooms, a library, offices, a kitchen, a dressing room, and an auditorium with an authentic *Noh* stage. The stage is the only one of its type in the western United States and features a *tokonoma*, or tea ceremony alcove. A decorative screen, or *ranma*, over the stage was designed by Japanese American artist Churia Obata, who is best known for his paintings and poetry about internment. Stylistically, Morgan designed the building to evoke Japanese aesthetics, particularly in its rooflines, entry gate, and interior details. Morgan also designed the Tokyo YWCA and San Francisco's Chinatown YWCA and is quoted as saying: "I've designed nearly 15 buildings for the Young Women's Christian Association — here in the city there is this one [the Chinatown YWCA], the Japanese YWCA on Sutter Street, and the Residence Hall on Powell. I'm very proud to support this institute. It offers girls and young women in the cities a safe place to board, learn skills, recreate, and get acquainted with other professionals."

During World War II, when Japanese Americans were relocated to internment camps, the Japanese YWCA was entrusted to the San Francisco YWCA, which still held the title to the property. In 1942, the building was leased to the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), an organization that had actively opposed Japanese American internment. The building became known as the Friends House and was occupied by both the Northern California branch of the AFSC and, later, the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, which was responsible for placing interned Japanese American students in colleges outside of the West Coast exclusion zone. In 1945, when Japanese Americans returned to Japantown, the AFSC provided housing and employment assistance, as well as temporary housing at 1830 Sutter Street.

After the war, few of the women who had established and led the Japanese YWCA returned to San Francisco and the changed demographics of the neighborhood – including a large influx of African American war workers – resulted in the ethnic integration of the Japanese YWCA.

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B10. Significance (continued)

Coupled with policies enacted by the national YWCA organization during the war, which disallowed the formation or re-formation of single-race chapters, the Japanese YWCA was also limited from reestablishing itself as an independent entity. At this time, it came to be known as the Western Addition YWCA rather than the Japanese YWCA.

A core group of Japanese American women continued to conduct Japanese YWCA activities in partnership with the Buchanan YMCA (originally the Japanese YMCA) and formed the first joint YMCA/YWCA in the United States. Their activities included an interracial youth program to serve African American and Japanese American children and teens. Because the AFSC was leasing the 1830 Sutter Street building, the Japanese YWCA group did not seek to regain occupancy of the building. The AFSC allowed the Japanese YWCA to hold activities in the building; however, institutional memory of the Japanese YWCA's ownership of the 1830 Sutter Street property was lost.

Around 1965, the Harrison Out of School program for African American girls came to occupy the building and, in 1985, was joined by the Nihonmachi Little Friends bilingual and multicultural child care program. These tenants were nearly evicted in 1996, when the San Francisco YWCA decided to sell the property. The asking price was well beyond what these community organizations could afford, however, investigation by members of the Japantown community revealed the existence of the forgotten land trust between the Japanese YWCA and San Francisco YWCA. The San Francisco YWCA refused to recognize and honor the terms of the trust and Soko Bukai, the organization of Japanese Christian Churches which had originally formed the Japanese YWCA, sued to enforce the terms of the land trust and secure the property for community use. Legal proceedings were settled in 2002, and Nihonmachi Little Friends purchased the building and remains the occupant today. The activism exhibited by the Japanese American community in the defense of the Japanese YWCA property inspired renewed activism and cultural preservation efforts in Japantown.

1830 Sutter Street retains integrity of association. Though it is now used as a child care facility rather than a community center, it retains close ties to the Japanese American community, it represents a significant pattern of events in the history of the neighborhood, and continues to provide educational, cultural and community-building services similar to those that were promoted by the YWCA. The building retains integrity of location, having never been moved from its original location. Its integrity of setting is slightly diminished as the area around 1830 Sutter Street was reshaped largely by redevelopment projects in the 1960s and 1970s. The building possesses high integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. Few alterations appear to have been made to the original building and it retains the original character and detailing that are true to Julia Morgan's design.

1830 Sutter Street appears to be eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, or for local listing. The building's associations with the Japanese American community began at its construction in 1932. Though major shifts in use and associations occurred during and after World War II, the property's Japanese American associations persisted to the present day. It represents the community-building efforts of Japanese Americans in San Francisco; the importance of religion, community values, civic service, and personal betterment in Japanese American society; and the struggles for civil rights and community recognition that the Japanese Americans encountered in later years. Though the building no longer functions as a YWCA facility, the Japanese American community still readily recognizes the property as the former YWCA and considers it a part of its cultural history and present-day community. The Nihonmachi Little Friends child care program that occupies the property is used by an ethnically diverse range of the local population; it also places special emphasis on introducing students to Japanese American culture and teaches a bilingual English and Japanese program that connects it further with the surrounding Japantown community. Along with other significant properties like the Japanese YMCA and Japanese Salvation Army, the building fits into the context of community organizations in Japantown, particularly that of religiously affiliated Japanese missions. In addition to its cultural importance, the YWCA building was designed by Julia Morgan, who can be considered a master architect. The YWCA building fits into the context of Morgan's work on other YWCA facilities, both in San Francisco and elsewhere.

The status code of 3S assigned to this property means that it has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as an individual property through survey evaluation. It is therefore also eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, and for local listing. This property was not assessed for its potential to yield information important in prehistory or history, per National Register Criterion D.

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The Japanese YWCA, n.d.
(Japantown Task Force, *Images of America: San Francisco's Japantown*.
San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.)



Japanese YWCA, 1964.
(Courtesy of San Francisco Public Library)

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*Recorded by: Page & Turnbull

*Date May 2009

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B12. References (continued)

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Koga, Sumio. "A Centennial Legacy: History of the Japanese Christian Missions in North America, 1877-1977." Chicago: Nobart, Inc., 1977.

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San Francisco Block Books: 1894, 1901, 1906, 1909.

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YWCA, "Our History" (timeline), Internet: <http://www.ywca.org/site/pp.asp?c=djISI6PIKpG&b=281379>, accessed: 9/16/08.