

PRIMARY RECORD

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

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

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Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1745-1747 BUCHANAN ST

P1. Other Identifier: Benkyo-do Co.

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

*a. County: San Francisco

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

c. Address: 1745-1747 BUCHANAN STREET City: San Francisco ZIP 94115

d. UTM Zone: Easting: Northing:

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number 0685 001

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

1745-1747 Buchanan Street is located on a 25' x 87.5' lot on the southwest corner of Osaka Way (Buchanan Street) and Sutter Street. Built in 1959, 1745-1747 Buchanan Street is a 2-story, wood frame, commercial building designed in the International style. The rectangular-plan building, clad in brick at the first story and smooth stucco at the second story, is capped by a flat roof. The foundation is not visible. An integral garage is located at the first story level on the west side of the north façade.

The primary façade faces east. The building includes 2 commercial units with 2 entrances on the first story. The main entry is located near the center of the primary façade, and features a fully-glazed, metal door with a glazed transom. The recessed entry is covered by a cantilevered canopy that spans the primary façade and wraps around the northeast corner of the building. A secondary entrance is located to the south of the primary entrance within the same recessed vestibule. The secondary entry faces north and features a partially-glazed, flush wood door. It is accessed by brick steps flanked by a geometric metal railing. (continued)

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP2. Single Family Property, HP6. 1-3 Story Commercial Building

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

P5a. Photo



P5b. Description of Photo:

View of primary and north façades, looking southwest. 11/16/2007

*P6. Date Constructed/Age:

Historic Prehistoric Both

1959 SF Assessor's Office

*P7. Owner and Address

SUE SUYEKO OKAMURA REVOC T
1747 BUCHANAN ST

SAN FRANCISCO CA 94115

*P8. Recorded By:

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

*P9. Date Recorded: 11/16/2007

*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):

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Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1745-1747 BUCHANAN ST

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

*Date Recorded: November 2007 Continuation Update

*P3a: Description (continued):

Primary façade fenestration consists of fixed, multi-light, aluminum sash storefront windows at the first story that wrap around the northeast corner of the building and a large picture window with awning sidelights at the second story. Fenestration at the north façade consists of a multi-light, aluminum sashes with fixed and awning components. A blade sign on the northeast corner of the façade at the second story level reads "Benkyo-do" and a flat sign on the south side of the façade reads "Benkyodo Co. Since 1906." Signage features Japanese characters as well as English text. The façades terminate in an unadorned roofline, with a brick pier projecting slightly above the roofline of the southeast corner of the building.

The building appears to be in good condition.



View of primary façade, looking west.
Source: Page and Turnbull

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*NRHP Status Code 7N1

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*Resource Name or # (assigned by recorder) 1745-1746 Buchanan Street

- B1. Historic name: Benkyo-do Candy Factory
- B2. Common name: Benkyo-do Co.
- B3. Original Use: Manju bakery/shop and residence
- B4. Present use: Manju bakery/shop and residence
- *B5. Architectural Style: International

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

1958-59: Constructed. 1959: Vertical blade sign installed at northeast corner of second story. 1966: Mezzanine added and garage door replaced. 1972: Underpinning work done on south foundation to accommodate construction of adjacent building. 1989: Two aluminum windows installed in bedroom. 1992: Aluminum window installed in existing frame in back bedroom.

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

*B8. Related Features: None.

B9a. Architect: Kazuo Goto b. Builder: S. Handa Sons

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

Period of Significance 1959 - present Property Type Mixed-use 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 lot at 1745-1747 Buchanan Street has always had its current 25' x 87.5', rectangular configuration, fronting on Buchanan Street at the southwest corner of its intersection with Sutter Street. As early as 1894, the lot was owned by Peter McMahon. Census records show that McMahon was a carpenter and house builder, and it is likely that he was responsible for constructing the first building on the lot, a three-story residential flats building.

By 1901, the property had been sold to Ellen J. Stanton. The property stayed in the Stanton family until 1946, and was owned by various members, including Francis Joseph, Frank Cyril and May Louise Stanton. During the Stantons' ownership, the family did not reside at the subject property. The flats were presumably rented out, and a two-story shop was added to the front of the building by 1913. In 1913, the shop was designated as "Japanese Photo", and in 1941 the shop still housed the Hanazono photography studio. The studio was undoubtedly closed soon thereafter due to Japanese American internment during World War II.

(continued)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP6. 1-3 story commercial bldg, HP2. Single family property, HP36. Ethnic minority property (JA)

***B12. References:**

The Japanese American Directory, San Francisco: The Japanese American News, Inc., 1941.
Japantown Task Force, Data Sheet: Benkyodo Manju Co., 6/23/04.
(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.)



B10. Significance (continued)

In 1946, the California Pacific Title Insurance Co. took possession of the property, and then quickly sold it to L.J. Fiori. Only a month later, in July 1946, Fiori sold the property to Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church. Little is known about this church or its use of the subject property; however, it is interesting to note the existence of two other churches on the block around the same time. Both the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and the Church of God in Christ had African American congregations, reflecting a demographic trend in the Japantown neighborhood during and immediately after World War II. It is likely that the Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church also was associated with the African American community.

The original flats building on the property was demolished sometime between 1950 and 1958, when the current building was constructed. In 1955, the property came into its current ownership when it was sold to Suyeichi and Owai Okamura. A building permit was filed June 5, 1958 for a two-story store and residence to house the Benkyo-do Company. The International-style building was designed by Kazuo Goto, a Japanese American architect based in Berkeley, and was constructed by S. Handa Sons, a building and carpentry business active in the Japantown neighborhood.

The building was constructed to house the Benkyo-do Co., one of Japantown's original businesses, which has existed in two known locations within Japantown since 1906. Founded by Suyeichi Okamura (born in Kagoshima, Japan, in 1886), the business was originally located at 1533B Geary Street and remained there through 1940. During World War II, the Okamura family was detained at Amache internment camp in Colorado. When the Okamuras returned to San Francisco's Japantown after interment, they reestablished Benkyo-do Co. near the corner of Geary and Buchanan streets. A few years later, in 1959, the business moved to the subject property during a time of major neighborhood reorganization that occurred as a result of federally funded urban renewal. At its Geary Street location, the Benkyo-do property was subject to the clearance policies of the Western Addition A-1 undertaking, which began in 1956. It was likely one of at least 38 Japanese American properties that were transferred to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency at that time. The Benkyo-do shop subsequently moved to Buchanan Street, which then became part of the A-2 redevelopment area that was started in 1966. The modern Benkyo-do shop was then integrated into the Buchanan Mall development that was completed in 1976.

Shortly after moving into the current building, the business was passed to Hirofumi Okamura, son of the original founder. Hirofumi, also known as "Hippo," operated the business for 30 years before passing it to his sons, Bobby and Ricky Okamura, who have run the business since 1990. Initially known as the Benkyodo Candy Factory, the business has always specialized in the manufacturing of the Japanese confections, *mochi* and *manju*. Today, it is the last remaining manufacturer of these traditional Japanese foods in San Francisco and the oldest of the Bay Area's two such manufacturers. The company produces several hundred pieces of *mochi* and *manju* in 15 different varieties a day using a traditional handmade method that was brought to the U.S. in 1906. The shop at the front of the building features a bakery counter where the *mochi* and *manju* are sold, as well as a lunch counter that serves Japanese American fare. The shop has been a local gathering place throughout its history and has also become an attraction to Japanese tourists, who come to enjoy traditional handmade Japanese desserts that are becoming less common in Japan as tastes turn toward Western cuisine. Benkyo-do Co. is one of the last remaining *Issei* (first generation) founded businesses in Japantown; the only others to remain active are believed to be Sakai Market, Soko Hardware, and Toraya Restaurant.

Original architectural plans show that the building at 1745-47 Buchanan Street was specifically designed for the business it houses. The first floor contains *senbei* and *mochi* rooms as well as a shop space. (*Senbei* are a type of Japanese cracker, while *mochi* are rice cakes, often filled with ice cream, bean paste, or other sweets. *Manju*, also made by Benkyo-do, is a derivation of *mochi* filled with red bean paste.) The *senbei* and *mochi* rooms are called out specifically in the architectural drawings, along with the equipment and stations necessary to the manufacturing processes. The *senbei* room includes space for the machine that bakes the crackers. The *mochi* room features a space for the *usu*, the wood or stone mortar used to pound rice into a paste; areas for *seiros*, the large rectangular metal or bamboo steamers where *mochi* and *manju* are cooked; and a *kama* space for the large cast-iron pots used to cook bean paste or heat water for tea. The *mochi* room also has a grinding space, press space, oven, work table, and floors sloped for drainage. The second floor of the building was designed as the Okamura family residence and featured a sitting room, three bedrooms, a family room, a dining room, a laundry room, a kitchen, and a small deck.

Permit records indicate that a third-story addition was planned in 1981 to provide additional residential space, but this project was never carried out. In fact, few changes have been made to the building since its construction, including addition of a mezzanine in 1966 and the replacement of a few windows on the secondary facade in 1989 and 1992. (continued)

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*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 1745-1747 Buchanan Street

*Recorded by: Page & Turnbull

*Date May 2009

Continuation Update

B10. Significance (continued)

The Benkyo-do Co. building was constructed during an important time in the history of Japantown's physical and cultural development, when *Nikkei* who were still stabilizing their cultural community after war-time internment were faced with imminent urban redevelopment. The Benkyo-do Co. building may be seen as both a functional resource and as a symbol of mid-century *Nikkei* values associated with modernization, permanence, and the continuation of a culturally significant historic business. Its construction was related to the events of post-World War II Japanese American resettlement, to the physical redevelopment of the Western Addition, and to the history of the Japantown cultural community.

The Benkyo-do Co. at 1745-1747 Buchanan Street is still used as a *mochi* and *manju* bakery, shop, and lunch counter, and therefore retains strong integrity of association with its original use and with the cultural and commercial history of Japantown. The building retains integrity of location, since it has never been moved. Its integrity of setting is good, even though it was constructed before the development of adjacent Buchanan Mall / Osaka Way in the mid-1970s: it was originally located on a vehicular street among older mixed-use buildings. However, since the construction of Buchanan Mall, Benkyo-do has served as a prominent anchor at the northern end of the mall and is a compatible element of the modern pedestrian oriented development. The building retains excellent integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling, having undergone few alterations. The interior of the shop, an important feature, also exhibits high physical integrity.

Due to its strong association with the historic development of culture and traditional commerce in the Japantown neighborhood and to its physical merits, the Benkyo-do Co. at 1745-1747 Buchanan Street may be eligible for listing in the National and California registers and for local listing. Though the building is not the original location of the Benkyo-do Candy Shop, it is a site that was, and is, critical to the continuation of one of Japantown's original businesses, which has strong cultural significance. The building that previously housed Benkyo-do is no longer extant. Benkyo-do has been continuously operated by three generations of the same family and survived the disruptions of World War II and urban renewal in the Western Addition, which both had major impacts on the Japanese American community and the Japantown physical neighborhood. The building embodies distinction of design, as a good example of International-style Modernist architecture, and retains excellent physical integrity. The incorporation of interior spaces specifically designed to accommodate the *mochi*- and *manju*-making processes is also historically and culturally significant. The building's design and construction by a Japanese American architect Kazuo Goto and builders S. Handa Sons illustrates the strength of cultural ties within the Japantown community and in the local region.

The status code of 7N1 assigned to this property means that it may become eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places when it meets specific conditions. Specifically, the property needs to be reevaluated when it has achieved more than fifty years of age (at the time of this evaluation, the property had achieved significance within the past fifty years, and the requirement of exceptional significance pursuant to Criterion G had not been determined) and/or when sufficient perspective and research regarding the complex legacy of urban renewal in Japantown has been achieved (in order to fully understand the subject property as well as its relationship to other properties associated with the period). If determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the property is accordingly deemed eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and for local listing as well. This property was not assessed for its potential to yield information important in prehistory or history, per National Register Criterion D.

B12. References (continued)

Japantown Task Force, *Images of America: San Francisco's Japantown*. San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.
Obituary: Hirofumi Okamura, 2004. (Accessed through Ancestry.com, June 19, 2008)
Pease, Ben. San Francisco's Japantown and Western Addition maps; 1910, 1920s, 1940, 1948-49, 1956-59, 1972, 2004.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: 1893, 1899, 1913, 1950.
San Francisco Assessor's Office, sales ledgers.
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San Francisco Block Books: 1894, 1901, 1906, 1909.
San Francisco Chronicle. "Manju, Handmade Perfection," February 8, 2001.
San Francisco Chronicle. "The Great Quake 1906-2006, Businesses weather a century," April 2, 2006.
San Francisco City Directories.
San Francisco Department of Building Inspection, permit records and plans.
United States Federal Census records.