State of California - The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
CHR Status Code: _____
Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

 Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) **1908 - 1914 FILLMORE ST**

P1. Other Identifier:

***P2. Location:** ☐ **Not for Publication** ☑ **Unrestricted**

***a. County:** San Francisco

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

c. Address: 1908 - 1914 FILLMORE ST **City:** San Francisco **ZIP** 94115

d. UTM Zone: **Easting:** **Northing:**

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number 0660 020

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

1908 - 1914 Fillmore Street is located on a 50' x 81' lot on the southeast corner of Fillmore and Wilmot streets. Built in 1898, 1908 - 1914 Fillmore Street is a 3-story, wood frame, mixed use building designed in the Italianate, but altered. The rectangular-plan building, clad in brick and smooth stucco, is capped by a flat roof. The foundation is not visible.

The primary façade faces west. The building features 3 commercial units with 3 commercial entrances on the first floor, and 8 residential units above with 1 residential entrance on the first floor. The southern storefront features a recessed glass door within an aluminum frame, plate glass window assembly. This storefront is surrounded by marble veneer. The center and northern storefronts have recessed entries that feature fully-glazed metal doors and aluminum frame, plate glass window assemblies. These storefronts have slate tile skirting and are surmounted by fabric awnings.
(continued)

***P3b. Resource Attributes:** (List attributes and codes) HP3. Multiple 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 façade, looking southeast. 11/14/2007

***P6. Date Constructed/Age:**

☑ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both

ca.1890 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

***P7. Owner and Address**

KWUAN LINCO C
1908 FILLMORE STREET

SAN FRANCISCO CA 94115

***P8. Recorded By:**

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

***P9. Date Recorded:** 11/14/2007

***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., MEG ***Date Recorded:** November 2007 ☑ Continuation ☐ Update

***P3a: Description (continued):**

The residential units on the upper floors are accessed by a fully glazed, aluminum door with a thin transom and sidelight. This entry is recessed between the center and northern storefronts and is accessed by slate tile steps. Two square bay windows are located at either side of the primary façade, spanning the second and third stories. Window types on the upper stories include tripartite aluminum sashes consisting of sliding sashes surmounted by fixed transom panes, single-pane aluminum casement sashes surmounted by transoms, and tripartite vinyl sashes. All the windows are surrounded by simple flat trim. The primary façade terminates in parapet adorned with a paneled frieze, bracketed cornice, and a pent roof.

The north facade is clad with composite wood lap siding and features a two-story, square bay window at the east side of the façade. A secondary entrance is located on the north façade and multiple vent pipes and metal ducts run up the north façade to the roof. The parapet is adorned with the same cornice found on the primary façade.

The building appears to be in good condition.

Detail of main entrances on primary façade, looking east.
Source: Page and Turnbull

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Primary # _____
HRI# _____

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

*NRHP Status Code 7R

*Resource Name or # (assigned by recorder) 1908 -1914 Fillmore Street

B1. Historic name: Lotus Beauty Shop, Suyeyasu Florist, Suyeyasu Apartments, Tokyo Fish Market
B2. Common name: None
B3. Original Use: Mixed-use; apartments over retail
B4. Present use Mixed-use; apartments over retail
*B5. Architectural Style: Stick, altered

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations
Ca. 1890: Constructed. 1906, 1914: Alterations to storefront (1908 Fillmore Street). 1925, 1929: Storefront (1914 Fillmore Street) replaced and improvements made to shop. 1929: Storefront (1908-1910 Fillmore Street) remodeled. 1951: Dura-Bricks applied to front façade and asbestos siding to secondary facades. 1991: Exterior stuccoed.

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

*B8. Related Features: None.

B9a. Architect: Unknown b. Builder: Unknown

*B10. Significance: Theme Cultural community development Area: Japantown, San Francisco, California
Period of Significance ca. 1910 - present Property Type Mixed-use Applicable Criteria A/1
(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

The subject building was constructed circa 1890 as a three-story mixed-use structure containing three shops (addressed 1908, 1910, and 1914 Fillmore Street, from south to north), including a paint and hardware shop, with apartment lodgings above (addressed 1912 Fillmore Street). As early as 1894, the property was owned by Ernst Schmidt, who maintained ownership through 1901. The paint and hardware shop still occupied the southernmost shop in 1899, while a plumbing business occupied the central shop space.

By 1906, the property was owned by Charlotte J. Levensaler, the wife of an insurance broker who had her own income - perhaps the rental property at 1908-1914 Fillmore Street. The 1906 Earthquake and Fires resulted in the relocation of San Francisco's Japanese American community to the Western Addition, which was reflected in the changed occupancy of the storefront at 1908 Fillmore Street around that time from the established paint and hardware shop to a Japanese fancy goods store run by K. Nagano. By 1920, the Japanese American-associated Lotus Beauty Shop had replaced the plumbing shop at 1910 Fillmore Street and remained there until at least 1941. (continued)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP3. Multiple family property, HP6. 1-3 story commercial bldg., HP36. Ethnic minority property (JA)

*B12. References:
Aanraku Stained Glass Studios: Yoshinori Takao's Personal Page. Internet: http://www.bayareastainedglass.com/yoshinoriTakao1.htm.
The Japanese American Directory, San Francisco: The Japanese American News, Inc., 1941. (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)
Charlotte Levensaler owned the property until 1925, when it was sold to Fred Hechter, a tailor. In 1925, a fish and poultry market was located in the shop at 1914 Fillmore Street, but in 1929 that shop was converted to a florist shop. In 1926, the property had been sold to Leopold and Pauline Hirsch, a clothing merchant and his wife. The property was transferred to the Hirschs' son, Joseph (also a clothier), in 1941.

In 1940, the A.M. Yashida florist shop was located in the shop at 1914 Fillmore Street and the Albert Florist shop occupied the same space the following year. The Dee Radio Mart was located in the shop at 1908 Fillmore Street in 1941. In 1944, the subject property was sold to Luella J. Peterson, the wife of a lumberman, then quickly transferred to the Franklin Realty & Investment Co., and subsequently to Toshiko Suyeyasu in the same year. Toshiko was the daughter of a Japanese American family that was active in the flower business and operated a nursery in San Leandro as early as the 1920s. Their shop in the subject building was known as Suyeyasu Wholesale Florist, and the apartments above the shops were known as the Suyeyasu Apartments. In 1947, the shop at 1914 Fillmore Street was occupied by K. Yoshimura's cleaning business.

In 1953 George and William Suyeyasu (possibly Toshiko's brother and his son) resided in the apartments, while Creole Rendezvous, Personality Beauty Shop, and KY Cleaners occupied the ground floor shops. By 1956, the Suyeyasus had been joined by two other Japanese American residents who occupied the apartments. Tokyo Fish Market also moved into the building that year. The beauty shop occupied the building through 1960, while the Tokyo Fish Market remained through 1975. A newspaper article suggests that this may have been a branch of the well-known Tokyo Fish Market owned by Larry Fujita and located in Berkeley since 1963. The Tokyo Fish Market at 1908 Fillmore Street was run by Mrs. Sada Kubo.

In 1963, Yamada Seika Bakery, a *mochi* and *manju* shop, opened in the shop at 1910 Fillmore Street and operated until 1999, when the proprietor, Mr. Yamada, retired. In 1964, title to the property was redistributed between Toshiko Suyeyasu and her husband, Shizuo. Also in 1964, Toraya Japanese Restaurant was opened in the building's northern shop spaces (1910 and 1914 Fillmore Street) by Yoshinori and Akiko Takao. The restaurant was a branch of the Toraya Japanese Restaurant located at 1734 Post Street, which appears to have been established only slightly earlier. By 1978, the two Toraya restaurants came to be operated by the second generation of the Takao family, with son, Frank Takao presiding over the 1914 Fillmore Street branch until it closed in 2008. (The Toraya Restaurant on Post Street remains open and is considered to be the fourth oldest Japanese American business in Japantown to still be operated by the family that established it.) Lee "Cubby" Nakamura was a chef at the restaurant at one time and later became co-owner of the Tokyo Fish Market in Berkeley, which further suggests a link between the Berkeley market and the business located at 1908-1914 Fillmore Street. In 1991, the property was owned by Ted Suyeyasu.

The early ownership of 1908-1914 Fillmore Street by European American owners and its eventual sale to a Japanese American family in 1944 reflects the development of Japantown from a neighborhood inhabited primarily by European Americans to one that supported a large Japanese American demographic. The dramatic timing of the Suyeyasu's ownership, even before internment was deemed unconstitutional in December 1944 and exclusionary orders had been rescinded in January 1945, is exceptional.[1] Though the details are unexplained, the action suggests that communication with and assistance from non-Japanese American parties outside of the camps occured, and that Japanese Americans were aware of the war's eminent conclusion and were focused on the eventual reestablishment of their community. Although a Japanese American beauty shop and two different Japanese American florists were located in the building prior to World War II, it was not until after Suyeyasu ownership of the property that more Japanese American businesses and residents came to occupy the building. This situation illustrates the difficulties faced by *Issei* (first-generation Japanese) during the first part of the 20th century who were not able to own property due to laws like the Webb-Heney Alien Land Act, which was in effect from 1913 to 1956 and made it illegal for "aliens ineligible for citizenship" to own property or hold it in trust for eligible children. Because Toshiko Suyeyasu was American-born *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese), her family was able to purchase the property in her name when she became a legal adult. Ties between the Suyeyasu florist shop at 1908-1914 Fillmore Street and the Suyeyasu nursery in San Lorenzo are also significant, reinforcing a broader context of Japanese American nurseries in the Bay Area and the cultural importance of the flower industry.

The Soyeyasu Building at 1908-1914 Fillmore Street still functions as a mixed-use building with apartments over shops, as it was designed, and therefore retains strong integrity of association with its original design and function. The continuing presence of a at least one Japanese business at the storefront level since soon after the turn of the 19th century to the present (with the exception of the internment period) contributes to the building's association with the cultural and commercial history of Japantown. The building retains integrity of location. Its integrity of setting is also strong, as the commercial nature of Fillmore Street has remained relatively unchanged since the initial development of the neighborhood.

[1] San Francisco Sales Ledgers record the transaction between Franklin Realty and Investment Co. and Toshiko Suyeyasu occurring on November 16, 1944.

B10. Significance (continued)
The building has diminished integrity of design, materials, and workmanship from its original construction, due to alterations such as the recladding of the front façade, replacement of original windows, and changes to the storefronts; nonetheless, it retains characteristic scale, form, massing, and entablature. In addition, many of the alterations may be associated with the important events of Japanese American business establishments and property ownership, since they often occurred at about the same time. Therefore, the building retains integrity of feeling.

The Soyeyasu Building at 1908-1914 Fillmore Street does not appear to be eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, or for local listing. As an important element in the historic development of culture and commerce in the Japantown neighborhood, it may be part of a historic district that is based upon the social and cultural history of Japantown; however, such a historic district has not been documented. The building was associated with the Japanese American community as early as 1920, the earliest period of Japanese settlement in the neighborhood, and it reflects events and patterns of development that are important to the history of the cultural community. The property may reflect historic trends as part of a historic district that is based upon the social and cultural history of Japantown; however, documentation of such a potential district has not been completed. The status code of 7R assigned to this property means that it was identified in reconnaissance-level survey but a final evaluation was not determined. Further research into the feasibility of a potential historic district may be required in order to fully evaluate the property. 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.
JCCCNC, “Mochitsuki with Yamada-san” (flyer), 2007.
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.
San Francisco Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan Historic Context Statement, 2009.
San Francisco Block Books: 1894, 1901, 1906, 1909.
San Francisco City Directories.
San Francisco Department of Building Inspection, permit records and plans.
United States Federal Census records.