



City Council Report

915 I Street, 1st Floor

Sacramento, CA 95814

www.cityofsacramento.org

File ID: 2020-01446

April 6, 2021

Consent Item 09

Title: (Pass for Publication) Ordinance Listing 1515 4th Street (Nisei VFW Post 8985) as a Landmark on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources (M20-004)

Location: 1515 4th Street (006-0194-001-0000); District 4

Recommendation: 1) Review an ordinance listing 1515 4th Street (Nisei VFW Post 8985) as a landmark on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources; and 2) pass for publication the ordinance title per Sacramento City Code section 32(c) for consideration on April 20, 2021.

Contact: Carson Anderson, Preservation Director, (916) 808-8259; Sean de Courcy, Associate Preservation Planner, (916) 808-2796, Community Development Department

Presenter: None.

Attachments:

- 1-Description/Analysis
- 2-Proposed Ordinance
- 3-Historic Resource Evaluation
- 4-Public Comments

Description/Analysis

Issue Detail: In August 2019, the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) documented the eligibility of 1515 4th Street (also known as the “Nisei VFW Post 8985”) for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Subsequently, Sacramento Preservation Staff reviewed the documentation (Attachment 2) prepared by the OHP, and concluded the building appeared to meet the eligibility criteria for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources pursuant to the criteria provided in Sacramento City Code section 17.604.210.A.1.a.i for its significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the city.

Research for the OHP nomination was performed by State Historian William Burg as part of a project interviewing former residents of Sacramento’s Japantown for an exhibit at the California Museum, called “Kokoro”. This information was also utilized to create the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) nomination for the Nisei VFW hall, in conjunction with a statewide Multiple Property Document intended to facilitate listing of properties associated with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in California, executed by the OHP. Funding and support for several nominations of AAPI associated properties was provided by a National Park Service Underrepresented Communities grant, including some prepared by outside contractors, but due to the availability of existing research and proximity of the site, the nomination was written in-house by OHP staff.

A notice of the public hearing describing the proposed landmark listing was sent to the property owner and all adjacent property owners within 500-feet of 1515 4th Street. A hearing notice has been posted at the property 10-days in advance of the hearing as required by City Code. Preservation Sacramento and Capitol Area R Street Association (CARSA) have been notified of the landmark proceeding.

As part of the OHP nomination process, State Historian, William Burg, met with the VFW chapter and representatives of Sacramento’s Japanese American Citizens League and made several visits to the building to document the property for National Register listing and explain what listing meant. The property owners also expressed interest in listing the property on the Sacramento Register to bring positive attention to the property; the owners provided a letter of support for the listing and documentation regarding the property’s original deed and dedication of the hall.

Policy Considerations: The City has an interest in maintaining the relevance and integrity of the Sacramento register and ensuring that properties listed on the register meet the criteria for listing specified in City Code sections 17.604.210 and 17.604.220. To this end, City Code directs the Preservation Director, to “make preliminary determinations relative to properties’ eligibility for listing on the Sacramento register” and to “initiate proceedings to nominate

resources for listing on the Sacramento register” (Pursuant to City Code sections 17.604.100.C.2 and 17.604.220.).

The nomination of 1515 4th Street for listing as a historic landmark on the Sacramento register is consistent with Sacramento 2035 General Plan goal HCR 2.1, which provides for the identification and preservation of historical and cultural resources. General Plan policy HCR 2.1.1 states, “The City shall identify historic and cultural resources, including individual properties, districts, and sites, to ensure adequate protection.”

Economic Impacts: Not applicable.

Environmental Considerations: The listing of 1515 4th Street as a historic landmark on the Sacramento register is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15308. Section 15308 exempts from review actions that are undertaken to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. Listing the property as a historic landmark would ensure that future development on the site would undergo preservation review, as part of the city’s site plan and design review process, prior to the granting of any entitlements, thereby protecting the historic resource, which would be considered part of the environment.

Sustainability: Not applicable.

Commission/Committee Action: On November 19, 2020, the City of Sacramento’s Preservation Director, in conformance with Section 17.604.220 of the City Code, held a public hearing, reviewed the historic analysis prepared by staff and concurred with a draft statement of nomination and directed staff to prepare a draft Ordinance (Attachment 2) for review and consideration by the Preservation Commission. On December 16, 2020, the Preservation Commission held a hearing and passed a motion recommending the City Council adopt an ordinance (Attachment 2) listing 1515 4th Street in the Sacramento Register.

Rationale for Recommendation: Listing of 1515 4th Street (Figure 1) as a landmark on the Sacramento Register is consistent with the Historic Preservation Chapter (17.604) of the City Code and the goals of the 2035 General Plan. Listing the nominated resource on the Sacramento register will help ensure its preservation and encourage rehabilitation consistent with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The building is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the city (17.604.210.A.1.a.i). Specifically, 1515 4th Street commemorates the rich ethnic heritage of Japanese-American veterans following World War II. *Nisei* is a Japanese term used to specify the ethnically Japanese children born in the United

States to immigrant parents born in Japan (termed *Issei*). At the close of WWII , Nisei members were returning to Sacramento from internment and service in the United States Army, and community leaders saw a need to establish a community hall dedicated for use by Nisei and Issei organizations.



**Figure 1: Nisei VFW Post 8985 at 1515 4th Street
(Photo Provided by California OHP Staff)**

Financial Considerations: Not applicable.

Local Business Enterprise (LBE): Not applicable.

ORDINANCE NO. ____

Adopted by the Sacramento City Council

[Date Adopted]

**AN ORDINANCE LISTING 1515 4TH STREET (NISEI VFW POST 8985) AS A LANDMARK ON THE
SACRAMENTO REGISTER OF HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

BACKGROUND

- A. The city council has found “that significant aspects of the city’s rich and diverse historic resources deserve recognition and preservation to foster an understanding of our heritage, and to promote the public health and safety and the economic and general welfare of the people of the city. The preservation and continued use of historic resources are effective tools to sustain and revitalize neighborhoods and business districts within the city, enhance the city’s economic, cultural and aesthetic standing, its identity and its livability, marketability and urban character.” (Sacramento City Code section 17.604.100.A.)
- B. To this end, the city code provides a mechanism for listing landmarks, historic districts, and contributing resources on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources (“Sacramento register”).
- C. On November 19, 2020, the Preservation Director reviewed a statement of nomination and determined that the property located at 1515 4th Street is eligible for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources a landmark. On December 16, 2020 the Preservation Commission concurred with the findings of the Preservation Director and recommended the City Council list the property at 1515 4th Street as a landmark in the Sacramento register.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SACRAMENTO:

SECTION 1

- A. The property at 1515 4th Street (Nisei VFW Post 8985) meets the criteria for listing on the Sacramento register provided within City Code section 17.604.210. A.1.i. In addition, the city has considered City Code Section 17.604.210.A.2 in determining the resource is eligible for listing.
 - i. 1515 4th Street is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the city (17.604.210.A.1.a.i)

The Nisei VFW Post 8985 at 1515 4th Street (Figure 1) commemorates the rich ethnic heritage of Japanese-American veterans following World War II (WWII). Nisei

is a Japanese term used to specify the ethnically Japanese children born in the United States to immigrant parents born in Japan (termed Issei). At the close of WWII, Nisei members were returning to Sacramento from internment and service in the United States Army, and community leaders saw a need to establish a community hall dedicated for use by Nisei and Issei organizations. In 1950, Sacramento native and Nisei leader Masao Taketa, formed a Community Center Building Committee for fundraising and construction of a building dedicated to spiritual development, a living memorial to Sacramento Nisei who served in the Second World War to be held in trust for use by Nisei and Issei organizations. On December 11, 1955, with the assistance of the Sacramento Japanese American Citizens' League, VFW Post 8985 dedicated 1515 4th Street for their new meeting hall. The dedication ceremony, attended by representatives from U.S. Congress, State Assembly and Sacramento Mayor H.H. Hedron, included placement of a memorial honor roll plaque dedicated to Sacramento Nisei who gave their lives in World War II.

Due to the extensive redevelopment of Downtown and of the West End neighborhood during the 1950s and 1960s era, VFW hall is the last remaining building in Sacramento's downtown associated with Sacramento's Japanese-American community. Therefore, 1515 4th Street is eligible for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources under city code criteria 17.604.210.A.1.a.i for its association with the Sacramento's Japanese-American community and foundational events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the ethnic history of the city.

- ii. 1515 4th Street has integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association. Integrity shall be judged with reference to the particular criterion or criteria specified in subsection A.1.a of this section (17.604.210.A.1.b)

The property at 1515 4th Street retains a high degree of historic integrity. The building remains in its original location. While the building has undergone several minor alterations, the property appears almost identical to the way it did in 1954, as shown in a color photograph of the property (Attachment 2). The elements necessary to convey its historic design, materials, and workmanship of the Nisei VFW Post 8985 have not been altered. The building retains its original construction materials with limited replacement of original materials beyond very minor maintenance-related alterations. The redevelopment of the surrounding neighborhood as a result of mid-20th century Urban Renewal activities has slightly altered the setting of the Nisei VFW Post 8985 but has not adversely affected the association of the property with Sacramento's Japanese American community, as the property continues to be used for the purposes envisioned for it beginning in 1955 as a VFW facility serving the Japanese-American community.

- iii. 1515 4th Street has significant historic or architectural worth, and its designation as a landmark is reasonable, appropriate and necessary to promote, protect and further the goals and purposes of this chapter. (17.604.210.A.1.c)

The building housing Nisei VFW Post 8985 at 1515 4th Street was constructed in 1952, commissioned by African American proprietors Phelix and Minnie Flowers, and opened its doors as the Flower Garden Restaurant. Designed by architects A.E. Kimmel and Roy Swedin, the International Style building featured a roof garden and two large meeting rooms where local social organizations, such as the African American Chapter of Elks and Sacramento Chapter of the NAACP, could host meetings and social events. Although the Flower Garden closed its doors in 1954 the building holds important historic and architectural significance, due to its significant associations with Sacramento's African American as well as the Japanese American communities during the postwar period. The property is a noteworthy expression of the International style as it maintains a high degree of architectural integrity and original materials. Designation as a City landmark is therefore reasonable, appropriate and necessary to promote, protect, and further the goals and purposes of the City's historic preservation program.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Nisei VFW Post 8985Other names/site number: The Flower Garden, VFW Post 8985, Nisei War Memorial

Name of related multiple property listing:

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California MPS

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 1515 4th StreetCity or town: Sacramento State: California County: SacramentoNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

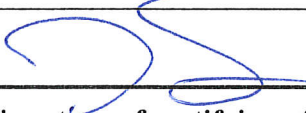
I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A B C D

 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer		<u>9/14/20</u> Date
Signature of certifying official/Title:		
<u>California Office of Historic Preservation</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		
In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.		
Signature of commenting official:		Date
Title :		State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Nisei VFW Post 8985

Other names/site number: The Flower Garden, VFW Post 8985, Nisei War Memorial

Name of related multiple property listing:

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California MPS

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1515 4th Street

City or town: Sacramento State: California County: Sacramento

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A B C D

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

California Office of Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

Nisei VFW Post 8985
Name of Property

Sacramento, CA
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
- District ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

Nisei VFW Post 8985
Name of Property

Sacramento, CA
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE: CMU Block

Nisei VFW Post 8985

Name of Property

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Nisei VFW Post 8985 is a one-and-two-story International Style building constructed of concrete (CMU) block, or approximately 6916 square feet gross building area, of which 4666 feet are located on the ground floor. Built by A.E. Kimmel and designed by Kimmel and Roy Swedin, the building originally featured a rooftop garden over the main single-story floor. Located on an 80x80 foot lot and fronted by a concrete-surfaced parking lot, the building is set back from the street with the primary façade oriented to the west. Facing the primary façade, the two-story section of the building is on the left, with the main one-story section on the right. Principal construction is of concrete block, with flat, cantilevered roofs atop both one-story and two-story sections. Windows on the primary façade are fixed plate glass set in large, heavy wood frames, with glass and aluminum commercial storefront doors. Two brick planter boxes are located along the primary façade, one at the southern end of the one-story section, planted with decorative bushes, and a smaller planter box on the southern end of the two-story section, containing rocks inset with plaques and a frame consisting of five wooden posts supporting a cantilevered roof section over the entrance to the two-story section of the building. Located on the western wall of the primary façade are the words NISEI WAR MEMORIAL in aluminum letters. The second story of the two-story section includes a horizontal row of large windows and doors that connect the rooftop of the one-story section, previously a rooftop garden and patio, to the second story of the building. A small enclosure containing mechanical/environmental systems is located on the rear of the one-story roof section.

Narrative Description

Western Façade/Primary Façade

The asymmetrical primary façade includes the southern two-story section, containing meeting rooms and offices, and the northern one-story section, containing the main hall and kitchen. When originally constructed, the roof of the one-story section was intended as an elevated patio for dining, but the property has not been used in this manner since its conversion to VFW hall use and the roof is now covered with white composite roof material. The two-story section contains no windows and features the words NISEI WAR MEMORIAL in aluminum letters on the second floor. Under the cantilevered roof at the entrance to the two-story section is an inset glass display case with dedication plaque and a folded American flag. Both one story and two story sections are accessed via aluminum framed glass double doors. Windows on the primary façade are fixed plate glass set in large, heavy wood frames. In front of the building is a paved parking lot; at the northwestern edge of the property is a large concrete wall containing interpretive panels, text and photographs, describing Sacramento's Japantown and the internment period. This wall was installed in approximately 2000, and is thus a non-contributor.

Nisei VFW Post 8985

Name of Property

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Southern Wall/Alley Facing

The southern wall faces Opera Alley. To the left are a pair of fixed single pane windows, continuing the horizontal band on the primary façade. In the center of the wall is a roll-up garage door. On the right is a small enclosed patio protected by a section of the cantilevered roof and supported by a single metal pole, with a recessed metal exit door.

Northern Wall/Two-Story Section

This facing consists of an undecorated CMU masonry wall, with one metal exit door, and two metal casement windows, each divided into two lights, in a single opening. On the second floor are two metal casement windows, each divided into two lights, in a single opening, located directly above the windows on the first floor, and four metal casement windows, each divided into two lights, in a single opening, located above the first floor exit door.

Eastern Wall/Building Rear

This undecorated wall faces the adjacent building and consists of undecorated CMU brick.

Interior

The interior of the one-story section consists primarily of a large assembly hall, with a commercial kitchen and office on the eastern side of the building, with a smaller assembly hall on the north side of the building. A stairwell in the northwestern corner leads to the second floor, containing a smaller hall and an office. The smaller hall has sliding glass doors that lead onto the building roof, previously used as an upstairs patio but today covered with composite roofing material.

Non-Contributing Object

A concrete memorial to Sacramento's Japantown and the internment of Japanese Americans, erected in approximately 2002, is located at the northwestern corner of the building lot adjacent to 4th Street. Due to its recent construction, it is a non-contributor.

Integrity

The property retains a high degree of historic integrity in all aspects. Other than paint colors and a few minor architectural details, the property appears almost identical to a 1954 color photo of the property. **Location** is unchanged. **Design** is intact and reflects the property's historic functions and technologies. **Setting** differs from the period of significance as the entire neighborhood around the building was redeveloped, but it is still an urban setting with buildings of comparable scale to the period of significance surrounding the property. **Materials** integrity is high, with limited loss on main entry doors, but overall the building retains original materials or limited in-kind replacement, and fenestration is unchanged. **Workmanship** integrity is evident in the building's overall appearance due to limited replacement of original materials. **Feeling** is unchanged; the building conveys its significance via its overall appearance and signage. **Association** is retained; the building is still in use as a VFW meeting hall.

Nisei VFW Post 8985

Name of Property

Sacramento, CA

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Nisei VFW Post 8985

Name of Property

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage: Asian

Period of Significance

1954-1955

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Swedin, Roy

Kimmel, A.E.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Nisei VFW Post 8985 is significant under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Asian (Japanese) at the local level for its association with Nisei VFW Post 8985 and the Sacramento chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, who purchased the building in 1954. Originally built as a restaurant called the Flower Garden by Black entrepreneur Phelix Flowers, the building also included meeting rooms for African American members of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. The period of significance is 1954-1955, from the building's construction until its purchase and rededication as a VFW Post in 1955. The property is eligible under the *Asian American and Pacific Islanders in California Multiple Property Document* under the historic context Community Serving Organizations, as an example of the property type Property Types Associated with Community Serving Organizations.

Nisei VFW Post 8985

Name of Property

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Ethnic History: Asian

Construction History and Original Use: The Flower Garden Restaurant

Born in 1906 in Charleston, Mississippi, Phelix Flowers arrived in Sacramento in approximately 1937 and worked at the State Printing Office. In November 1952, he opened the Flower Garden Restaurant at 1511 Fourth Street, a unique and contemporary building designed by A.E. Kimmel and Roy Swedin. The Flower Garden had several unusual features, including a roof garden over the main floor that was decorated with potted plants. The building also had two meeting halls to facilitate its social function as a meeting space for African American members of the Elks Lodge, Capital City Lodge 1147, who were not permitted to use the main Elks building at Eleventh and J Streets. Flowers also made the meeting rooms available for other organizations, including the Sacramento NAACP. In 1954, Sacramento hosted a statewide convention of African American Elks. This 1,500-person event far exceeded the capacity of the Flower Garden, but they were still prohibited from holding events at the main Elks tower, so the festivities were held next door at Sacramento's Masonic Hall at Twelfth and J Streets.¹

The Flower Garden's menu featured Southern cooking, and was well-known for its mint julep. In addition to the civic-minded community meetings held at the Flower Garden, the building was also used as a music venue. Unfortunately, the Flower Garden also had difficulty finding success, and the high expenses of the brand-new, architect-designed buildings meant it was difficult to make ends meet. Phelix and his wife Minnie Flowers filed for bankruptcy in the fall of 1954 and closed the Flower Garden after less than two years. The Flowers family found longer-term success after opening a print shop, Sav-On Printing, utilizing Phelix's experience working for the state printing plant. However, the Flower Garden building did not remain vacant for long. Due to its meeting rooms and its location at the heart of Japantown, around the corner from the Buddhist Church and its auditorium, the building was an ideal location for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Nisei Post 8985.

Nisei VFW Post 8985

As with the Elks Lodge, Sacramento VFW organizations refused to accept Japanese American veterans as part of their chapters, so Sacramento's Nisei veterans formed their own chapter, which was dedicated on February 7, 1947, at the Buddhist Church recreation hall around the corner from the site where the Flower Garden was built five years later.

In the late 1940s, Nisei leaders returning to Sacramento after internment during the Second World War, and service in the United States Army, had dreams of a community hall dedicated for use by Nisei and Issei organizations, following their return to Sacramento. The local Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL) and Nisei Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 8985 created separate building funds for meeting halls, but plans for their locations were not yet

Nisei VFW Post 8985

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formulated. In 1950, Sacramento native Masao Taketa returned from a trip to Japan where he had received an inheritance, and offered to donate the funds and purchase a parcel on T Street between Seventh and Eighth Street adjoining Southside Park and Parkview Presbyterian Church, a local church with principally Japanese-American members. Both the JACL and VFW Post decided to combine their efforts and construct a new war memorial buildings.

A Community Center Building Committee, consisting of fourteen members, was formed in order to plan fundraising and construction. Furthermore, they established two principles regarding use of the building: spiritual dedication, a living memorial to Sacramento Nisei who gave their lives for their country in time of war, and use dedication, to be held in trust for use by Nisei and Issei organizations. The initial plans called for a budget of \$25,000 including \$3,000 for furniture and fixtures. The committee reached out to local organizations and regional Japanese-American populations in the Sacramento area. At the time preparations were being made for construction of the memorial building at T and 7th Street, the Flower Garden building became available for sale. Members of the Building Committee inspected the Flower Garden and found it satisfactory for a community center. By selling the parcel at 7th and T Street, they were able to acquire the Flower Garden and began conversion to the War Memorial Hall.²

On December 11, 1955, VFW Post 8985 dedicated their new hall, purchased with the assistance of the Sacramento Japanese American Citizens' League. The dedication ceremony included a memorial honor roll plaque dedicated to Sacramento Nisei who gave their lives in World War II and speakers including Congressman John E. Moss, Assemblymember Roy J. Nielsen, Sacramento mayor H.H. Hedren, Paul Ito of the Florin JACL and Henry Taketa as master of ceremonies. Over the years following the dedication of the Nisei VFW Memorial, redevelopment took the buildings on all sides, leaving the neighborhood utterly transformed. The Flower Garden-turned-VFW hall became the sole remaining building in Sacramento's downtown redevelopment zone that was directly associated with Sacramento's African American and Japanese American communities. The building still serves as the home of VFW Post 8985.³

Sacramento's Japantown

Sacramento's Japanese American community first emerged in the 1890s, growing from less than a hundred people in 1890 to 336 in 1900, and 1437 by 1910. While Sacramento's Japanese community was smaller than those in Los Angeles and San Francisco, Sacramento ranked first in percentage of Japanese population, comprising 5.6% of the city, making Sacramento the most Japanese city in the state, if not the nation.⁴ Centered on Fourth and M Street and extending from Second to Fifth between L and O Street, Sacramento's Japantown was called "Sakura-mento" (Sakura=cherry blossom) by early settlers, leading to the nickname of "O-Fu," based on the Chinese character for sakura, which can be pronounced "O," and the character "fu," meaning "Capital"—"Cherry Blossom Capital." As the regional transportation hub and largest population center in the region, Sacramento's Japantown became the central point for regional Japanese American commerce between widely dispersed farmers and small Japanese communities in Delta, valley, and foothill towns.⁵ Businesses ranging from grocery and dry goods stores to bars and restaurants to hospitals and banks were located in this community, along with *kenjinkai*, benevolent associations based on Japanese immigrants' prefecture of origin in Japan. Churches

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Name of Property

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were also located in Japantown, with the Japanese Buddhist Church, located at 418 O Street starting in 1900, as the largest, especially after its replacement following a 1923 fire with new construction, and addition of a large auditorium in the 1930s.⁶

Following their return from internment camps and military service during World War II, Sacramento's Japanese American population returned to the same neighborhood, reestablishing businesses and institutions, where possible in the same buildings or the same neighborhood. During the war, Sacramento's African American population had greatly increased, leading to competition for space and real estate. While many businesses never recovered, and some returning home found quarters farther from the old neighborhood, by 1954 80% of Japanese American businesses and homes in Sacramento were located within a few blocks of the old neighborhood hub at 4th and M Street (by then renamed Capitol Avenue.) This busy, crowded postwar Japantown became the home of recently incorporated Nisei VFW Chapter 8985, utilizing an African American built restaurant in the shadow of the Buddhist Church's auditorium at 4th and O Street.⁷

Nisei VFW Post 8985
Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Books

Cole, Cheryl, *Golden Notes* Vol. 21 No. 1, Spring, 1975, "Japanese in Sacramento 1910" (Sacramento County Historical Society, Sacramento), Pages 1-2.

Maeda, Wayne, *Changing Dreams and Treasured Memories: A Story of Japanese Americans in the Sacramento Region*, Sacramento JACL, 2000.

Wildie, Kevin, *Sacramento's Historic Japantown: Legacy of a Lost Neighborhood*, History Press, 2013.

Newspapers

"Restaurant And Roof Garden Project Is Ready," Sacramento Bee November 22, 1952, Page 16. "NAACP Will Seat Officers Sunday," Sacramento Bee January 22, 1953, Page 18. "1500 In Order Of Negro Elks Are Arriving For Convention," Sacramento Bee June 23, 1954, Page 1.

"Nisei Memorial Ceremony Will Be Held Sunday," Sacramento Bee December 9, 1955, Page 1.

Unpublished Materials

"Institution Ceremony and Installation Of Officers of Nisei Post No. 8985," event program, personal collection of Ouye family.

Fuji, Harry, et al, "History of the Nisei War Memorial Community Center," unpublished notes presented at December 1955 dedication of hall. Original document provided by Sacramento JACL.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.576379° Longitude: -121.503710°

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is located on Assessor's Parcel Number 006-0194-001-0000 in Sacramento County. The property area is approximately 8800 square feet, or 0.2 acres. Assessor's property description is South ½ Lot 1 & West 30 Feet of South ½ Lot 2, Block O& P, 4th & 5th.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property boundary is the original parcel upon which the nominated property is located.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: William Burg, Historian II
organization: California Office of Historic Preservation
street & number: 1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
city or town: Sacramento state: California zip code: 95816
e-mail william.burg@parks.ca.gov
telephone: (916)445-7004
date: August 20, 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Nisei VFW Post

City or Vicinity: Sacramento

County: Sacramento

State: California

Photographer: Cameron Evans

Date Photographed: December 9, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: CA_Sacramento_Nisei VFW Post 8985_0001.tif Building exterior/primary façade
CA_Sacramento_Nisei VFW Post 8985_0002.tif Building exterior, south wall
CA_Sacramento_Nisei VFW Post 8985_0003.tif Building exterior, north wall
CA_Sacramento_Nisei VFW Post 8985_0004.tif Building interior, kitchen
CA_Sacramento_Nisei VFW Post 8985_0005.tif Building interior, VFW display

Note: These photos were taken in 2017 but the prepare can attest that the three-year old photographs still reflect the current condition of the property.

Figure Log

Figure 1. Google Earth location map.

Figure 2. Historic photo of building, 1954, as "The Flower Garden"

Figure 3. Sacramento Bee article about Flower Garden building construction, 1952.

Figure 4. Sacramento Bee article about Flower Garden restaurant, 1952.

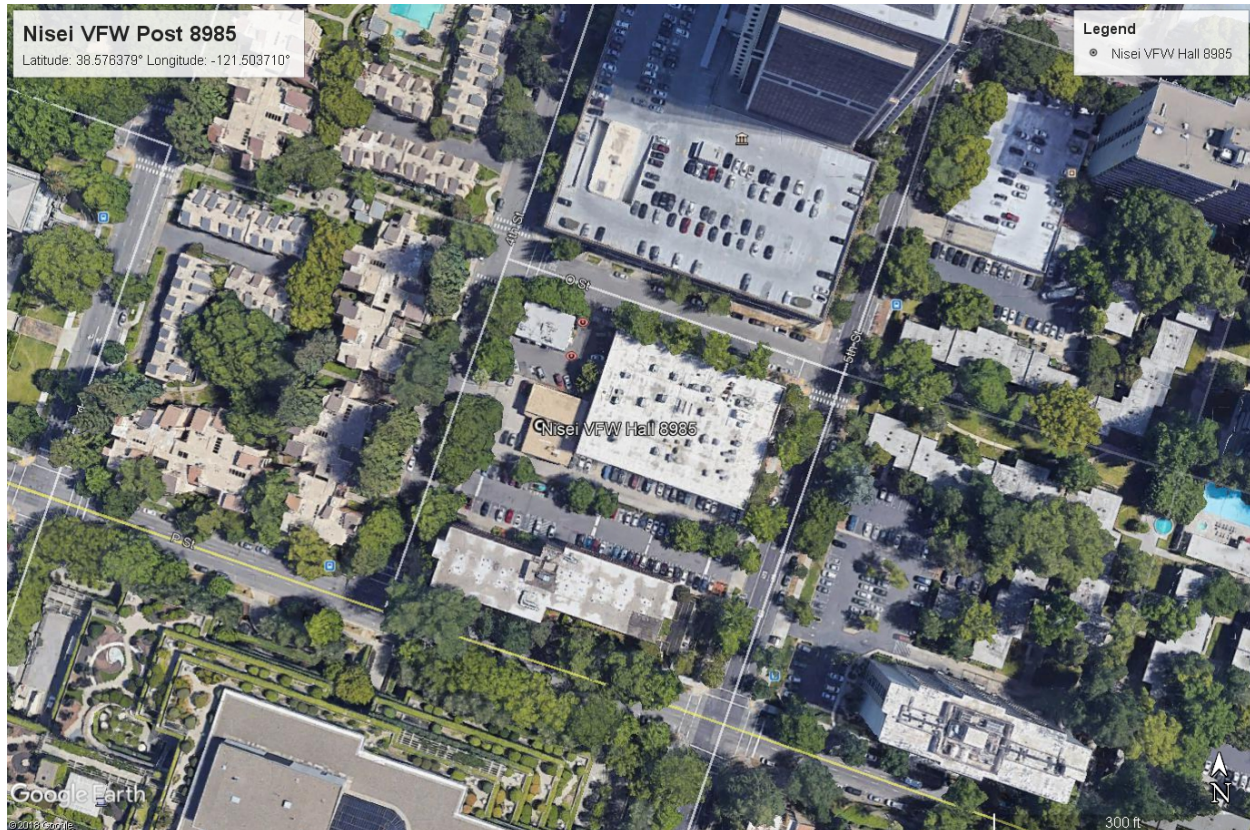
Figure 5. Institution ceremony and installation of officers, Sacramento Nisei VFW Post 8985

Figure 6. Sacramento Nisei VFW Post 8985 members, circa 1990.

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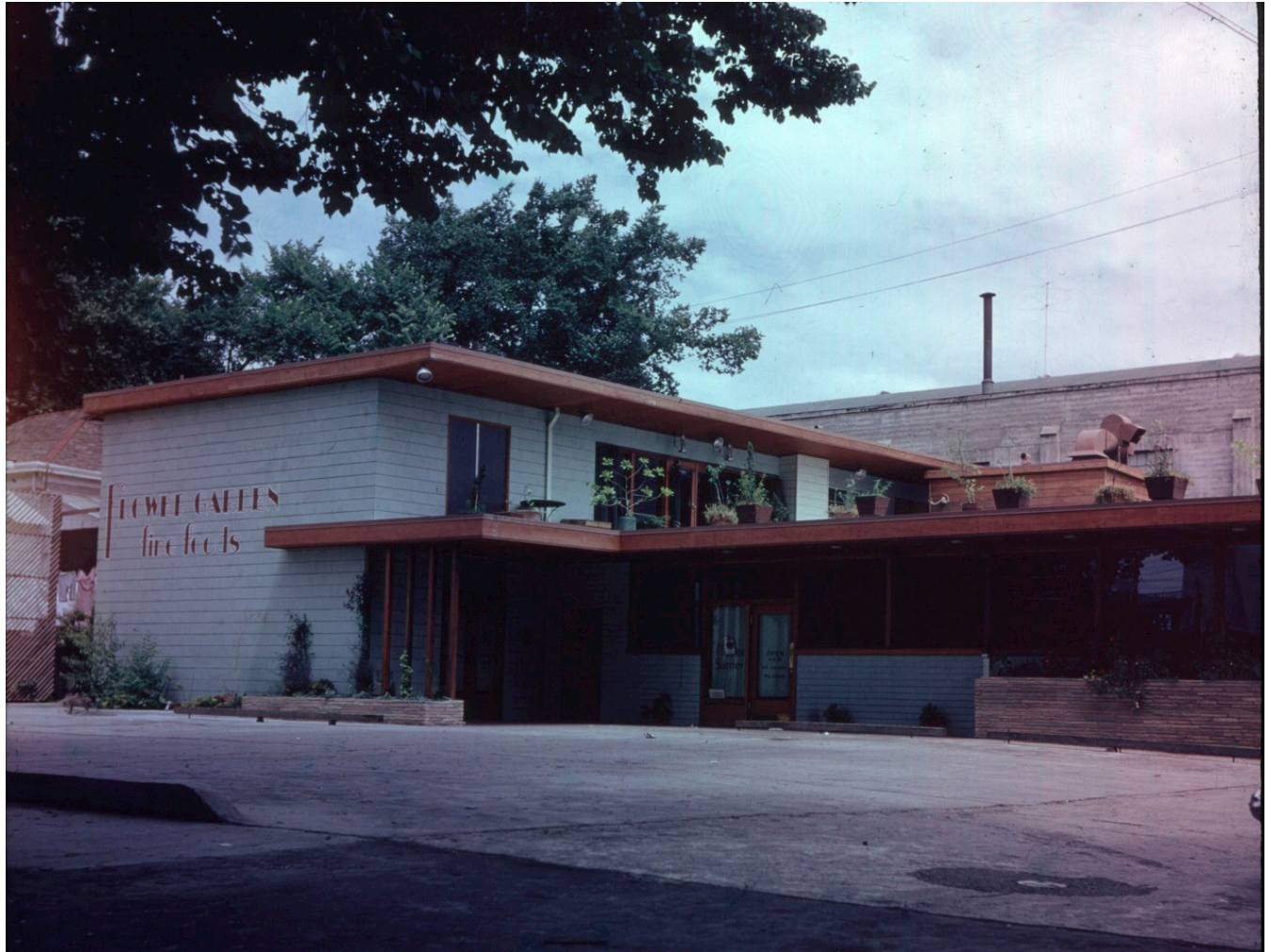
Figure 1. Google Earth location map. Latitude: 38.576379°, Longitude: -121.503710°



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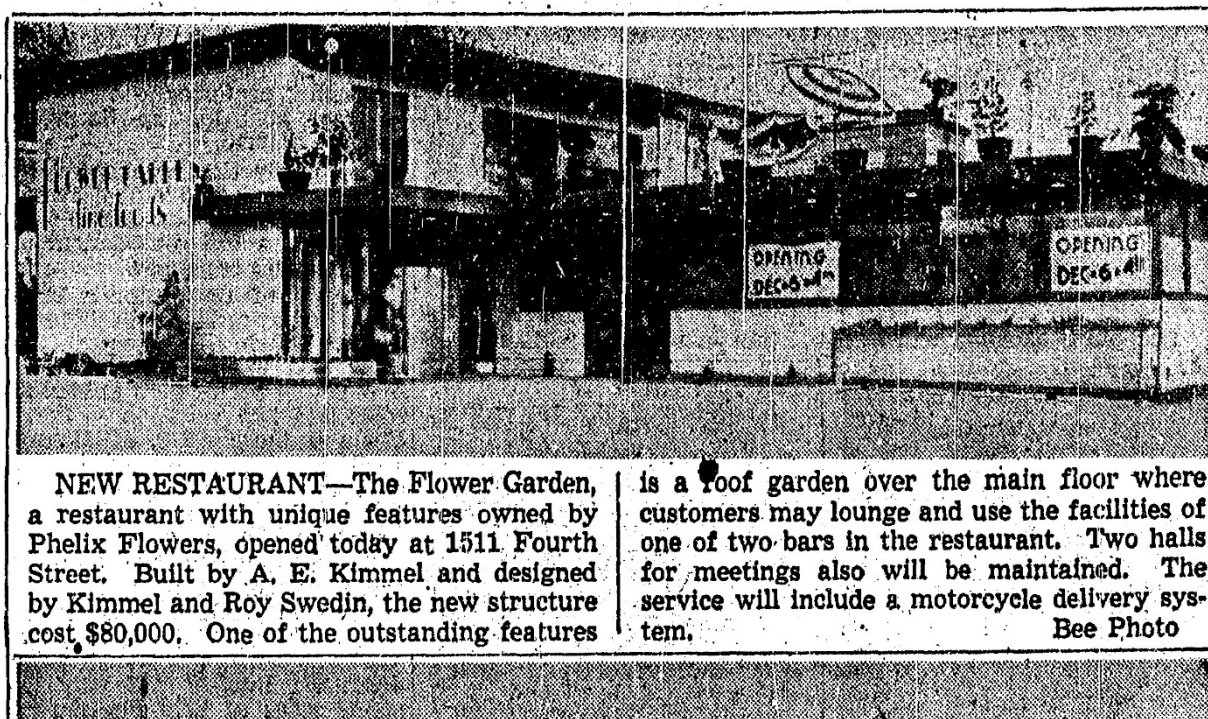
Figure 2. Historic photo of property, 1954.



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Figure 3. Flower Garden restaurant, Sacramento *Bee*, 1952.



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Figure 4. Sacramento *Bee* article about Flower Garden restaurant.

Development Highlights

Of The Week

Bids are scheduled to be opened December 12th by the Sacramento District Corps of Engineers for construction of a refrigerated storage building in the Sacramento Signal Depot.

Building construction authorized in Sacramento during the last 10 months of 1952 represented a total valuation of \$9,810,986. Building inspection office reported the total for the same period in 1951 was \$12,366,898.

bid of \$26,938 by E. J. Mackey to install new seats in eight sections of the Charles C. Hughes Memorial Stadium on the Sacramento Junior College campus was accepted by the city board of education.

I SEE IT..."
friendly Terry

BASEMENT
T WINTER?

rainy season, many of the area became wet or mine. Some basements fully that water stood on situation as well as an ail recently the cure was d sometimes nearly im-

Restaurant And Roof Garden Project Is Ready

Phelix Flowers announces the completion of the Flowers Gardens, a drive-in barbecue restaurant at 1511 Fourth Street between O and P Streets.

The grand opening will be held next week.

Features Are Unique

Designed by A. E. Kimmel, who also was the contractor, and Roy Swedin and built at a cost of \$80,000, the structure incorporates several unique features.

One of the highlights is a roof garden over the main floor where customers may lounge and use the facilities of one of two bars in the place.

Part of the main floor of the structure provides a meeting hall, 25 by 60 feet, for the Capital City Lodge No. 1147 of the Elks.

Second Hall

A smaller hall, 25 by 30 feet, for party and dinner groups is located on the second story section. A bar also is situated on the main floor.

Flowers said the restaurant facilities are large enough to accommodate from 80 to 100 patrons. He also will inaugurate a delivery service in which orders will be delivered speedily by motorcycle. Specialties will be barbecued beef and chicken.

It is a masonry construction building.

Reaches \$411,500,000

NEW YORK—Contract awards for heavy construction, as reported by the Engineering News-Record and the Construction Daily, soared to \$411,500,000 for the week ended November 13th. The total was 32 per cent above the average week to date.

DRIVER OF CIVIL ENGINEER AS A non profit organization,

New Office Building Is Completed

John H. Loddick, Sacramento general building contractor, today reported the completion of a 10 unit two story office building at 816 Sixth Street.

Loddick said he has incorporated several new designing features in the brick structure which also includes basement office space. A 12 by 36 foot skylight arrangement constructed of a special material furnishes indirect sunlight for the first and second floor offices.

The first floor features a spacious foyer 12 feet wide which runs the entire length of the 40 by 80 foot building. On the second floor the offices face another large foyer. Each unit has large plate glass windows.

Loddick said 90 per cent of the units have been leased.

Harper Joins Real Estate Firm Here

Bliss K. Harper, former member of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, has joined the sales force of Coldwell, Banker & Company, Sacramento real estate firm.

Harper, who was a supervisor from 1948 to 1950, will specialize in commercial properties in the Sacramento Valley and Superior California mountain communities.

He is living at 5778 Sheppard Avenue with his wife and two sons.

Public Work Drops

Public non residential building contracts in the nation for the week ended November 13th had a value of \$59,300,000. This was 34 per cent less than the total for the average week.

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Figure 5. Institution ceremony and installation of officers, Sacramento Nisei VFW Post No. 8985, February 7, 1947. Sacramento State University Digital Collections, Japanese American Archival Collection, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, JC17D:50



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Figure 6. Members of Sacramento Nisei VFW Post No. 8985 circa 1990. Front row from left to right: Kiyo Sato-Viacruccis, Gary Shiota, Jim Tanaka, Roy Sato. Back row from left to right: Yosh Matsuhara, Kiyano Noguchi. Photo taken at Nisei VFW Post 8985. Sacramento State University Digital Collections, Japanese American Archival Collection, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, JC17D:74



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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

¹ "Restaurant And Roof Garden Project Is Ready," *Sacramento Bee* November 22, 1952, Page 16. "NAACP Will Seat Officers Sunday," *Sacramento Bee* January 22, 1953, Page 18. "1500 In Order Of Negro Elks Are Arriving For Convention," *Sacramento Bee* June 23, 1954, Page 1.

² Fuji, Harry, et al, "History of the Nisei War Memorial Community Center," unpublished notes presented at December 1955 dedication of hall. Original document provided by Sacramento JACL.

³ "Nisei Memorial Ceremony Will Be Held Sunday," *Sacramento Bee* December 9, 1955, Page 1. "Instituion Ceremony and Installation Of Officers of Nisei Post No. 8985," event program, personal collection of Ouye family.

⁴ Cole, Cheryl, *Golden Notes* Vol. 21 No. 1, Spring, 1975, "Japanese in Sacramento 1910" (Sacramento County Historical Society, Sacramento), Pages 1-2.

⁵ Maeda, Wayne, *Changing Dreams and Treasured Memories: A Story of Japanese Americans in the Sacramento Region*, Sacramento JACL, 2000, Pages 95-97.

⁶ Maeda, 117-139.

⁷ Wildie, Kevin, *Sacramento's Historic Japantown: Legacy of a Lost Neighborhood*, History Press, 2013, Pages 122-132.

NISEI POST 8985



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA
1515 FOURTH STREET
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

November 20, 2019

State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816-1700

RE: Nisei VFW Post 8985 Nomination

Dear State Historic Preservation Officer:

I am submitting this letter to inform you of my approval for the Nisei VFW Post 8985 nomination. After being evacuated during World War II and forced to relocated for the Urban Renewal Project (Capital Mall Gateway), the elders decided that there must be something in this area to acknowledge that there was a Japantown in Sacramento.

This is the only building of the old Japantown. It is a reminder that there was a thriving Japantown in Sacramento. This building was dedicated to the Nisei soldiers who fought and died to show America that they were loyal Americans. Therefore, to preserve the history of the Japanese American experience in Sacramento, it is my wish that this build gets nominated and is placed on the National Register of Historical Places.

Yours truly,

Kent Nakashima
Post Commander
Nisei VFW Post 8985
vfwpost8985@yahoo.com

ENCLOSURE

Sean deCourcy

From: Penny Redman <redman.penny@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 1:10 PM
To: Sean deCourcy
Subject: project number M20-011

Mr. de Courcy,

I have reviewed the letter regarding this project and spoken with members of the Nisei VFW Post 8985 and I am pleased and hope it goes forward.

Too much has already been destroyed and I am much in favor of this project.

Thank you,

Penny Redman