

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 1 1984
date entered AUG 30 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Nihon Go Gakko

and/or common Japanese Language School

2. Location

street & number 1715 South Tacoma Avenue not for publication

city, town Tacoma vicinity of

state Washington code 053 county Pierce code 053

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: under renovation

4. Owner of Property

name Loren Ezell

street & number 823 North Yakima Street

city, town Tacoma vicinity of state Washington 98403

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County-City Building

street & number 930 South Tacoma Avenue

city, town Tacoma state Washington 98402

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Tacoma Cultural Resource Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Northwest Room--Main Branch, Tacoma Public Library

city, town Tacoma state Washington

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Japanese Language School building was specifically designed for instructional purposes and is a simply-detailed wood frame structure covered by clapboard siding. Constructed on a steeply sloping site and unconventional in plan and roof configuration, the school stands a full three stories at the highest point. The school exhibits architectural elements and materials typical of vernacular building types found in the Pacific Northwest. The exterior and interior of the Japanese Language School remain relatively unaltered and historically intact. Minor alterations, deterioration, and vandalism have not seriously affected the historic building fabric.

The school is situated in a residential neighborhood approximately seven city blocks southwest of the downtown business district. Constructed on a double city lot and located on a steep west to east sloping half block, the school commands a dramatic view of Commencement Bay and the City Waterway. The site is bounded to the north and south by undeveloped property, to the west by a city arterial, and to the east by an alley bordered on the opposite side by small residences.

The wood frame school rests on a concrete foundation. The core of the building is approximately 45 feet by 100 feet while the western end is narrower by approximately six feet. The school was apparently constructed in two major phases. The eastern 35 feet (a homogeneous three story addition) was added to the original two story structure sometime before 1927. An entrance and porch were located on the original east elevation. Only the uppermost level of the structure is visible from Tacoma Avenue while the entire structure, which steps down to a full three stories, is evident from the alley side.

The exterior is covered by strip sheathing and fir clapboard siding with corner boards. The deteriorated asphalt roofing is being replaced by cedar shingles. The roof configuration is basically a crossed gable with some variations. The main gable ridge is asymmetrically centered over an assembly hall, while the entire length of the building's southern 12 feet (over a residence and office area) is covered by an additional gable which creates a sawtooth roofline at the southwest corner, and an extended roof which creates a saltbox roofline on the eastern elevation. Four chimneys with corbelled caps project above the roof. Deep gable ends with wide barge boards are supported by simply carved kneebraces.

The primary Tacoma Avenue facade is distinguished by a central Palladian window, a small entrance vestibule with a gabled roof, a separate dwelling unit/office entrance to the south, and an attached garage to the north. The garage was added sometime before 1927, and exhibits a flat roof and few details. The centrally placed entrance pavilion was added before 1932 and replaced a band of windows and the original entrance which was composed of a shed-roof canopy supported by large carved kneebraces. The other elevations are distinguished by the placement of double-hung wooden windows with multiple lights and plain surrounds, which are located individually on the upper floor and grouped in bands at the classroom levels. A wooden fire escape and a north entry porch and door have been removed due to deterioration and vandalism.

Located on the main upper floor is an assembly hall with a raised stage area which extends the length of the building. A residence and office area are adjacent to this hall on the south side. A wooden stair leads to six classrooms, five at mid-level and one at the lowest level. Storage rooms and restrooms are located on the lower two levels. Walls and ceilings are painted hard plaster over wood lath. Finished floors are fir

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1922
 c. 1927 (addition) Builder/Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Tacoma Japanese Language School served as a stabilizing civic and cultural institution and was a central part of community life for the first generation of Japanese immigrants and their families. The school provided a formal method for the transmission of Japanese traditions, language, and cultural values while it expanded opportunities for social interaction and reinforced community identity. By 1922, as more Japanese families had become established, a permanent school building was constructed to house increased school enrollment and activities. The Japanese Language School building has remained essentially unoccupied since political conditions forced its closure in 1942 when it was used as a "civil control center" for the registration and forced evacuation of Japanese families in the Tacoma area. It is one of only a few remaining Japanese community buildings in Tacoma and reflects the scale and unity of what was, until World War II, one of the largest Japanese neighborhoods in the state.

The first Japanese settler arrived in Tacoma in 1887, and the Japanese consulate was located there from 1895 until 1899. By 1909, a substantial number of Japanese immigrants had settled in Tacoma. Initially these immigrants were drawn by unlimited employment opportunities in the typical Northwest industries of railroading, lumber and logging, fishing, and farming. By 1911, numerous Japanese-owned businesses had been established. These businesses were primarily concentrated at "C" Street (Broadway) and 15th Avenue in the vicinity of the Furaya Store. A residential neighborhood encompassing several blocks of single family dwellings, small hotels, and rooming houses also developed to the south and west. In 1907, federal policy began to restrict the entry of Japanese male laborers while still allowing wives to join husbands. Despite these pressures, traditionally stabilizing religious, civic, and cultural institutions were established.

One of these stabilizing institutions was the Tacoma Japanese Language School, which began in January 1911. It was the second of some 24 similar schools established in Washington State and part of an extensive system of schools along the Pacific Coast and British Columbia. The first Nihon Go Gakko was begun in Seattle in 1902. This school is still in operation and its 1913 classroom building was entered on the National Register in 1982. The concept and function of the Nihon Go Gakko system was an outgrowth of 19th century historical circumstances which strongly influenced the Issei, the first generation of Japanese immigrants who had been born, raised, and educated in Japan. These immigrants possessed ingrained feudal traditions and a sense of Japanese heritage with a strong emphasis on ethical principals and values. The Issei were concerned that their American-born offspring, the Nisei, would lose these values and their regard for Japanese traditions due to American influences. The language schools provided a formal method for the transmission of cultural values and traditions and Japanese language skills. Consequently, the schools also functioned to lessen language barriers within families and to reinforce and expand the social interaction and group identity of the Nisei.

Kuni Yamasaki first began the Tacoma Japanese Language School in a small residence which is still located at 411 South 15th Avenue. Within a year, she was joined by her husband, Masato Yamasaki, and together they successfully directed the school for over thirty years. The operation of the school was funded by parents, concerned citizens, and the

9. Major Bibliographical References

Glasrud, B.A. & J.A. Halseth, The Northwest Mosaic, Minority Conflicts in Pacific Northwest History, Pruett Publishing Co., 1977.
 Ichihashi, Yamato, Japanese in the United States, Arno Press, 1932.
 Insurance Maps of Tacoma, Washington, N.Y., Sanborn Map Company, 1912-1930.

(continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one
 Quadrangle name Tacoma South

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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G	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	H	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification Lots 6, 7, and 8, Block 1711, New Tacoma.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>n/a</u>	code	county	code
state	<u>n/a</u>	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Katheryn H. Krafft Edited by Mark L. Brack
 Archaeology & Hist. Pres.

organization _____ date March 1984

street & number 2422 29th Avenue West telephone (206) 284-1926

city or town Seattle state Washington 98199

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Jacob E. Shaw*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 25, 1984

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

J. Alonzo Byers Entered in the National Register date 8/30/84
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registration

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except for the lowest level, which is concrete. Beaded board or raised-panel wainscotting and simple fir trim, all of which are stained, are located throughout the building. Typical interior doors are multipaneled stained fir. Classroom doors include a glass panel with a transom above. Each classroom has a cloakroom area, and one classroom retains original fixed cast iron desks in place. Slate blackboards, fixed bookcases, and cabinets remain in place for the most part.

Some well established traditional Japanese ornamental plants survive adjacent to the main entrance, and a tremendous amount of original school materials and furniture are currently located within the building.

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Japanese Association, an organization which provided general community aid and leadership. From 1915 to 1922, the school was located in a dwelling at 510 15th Avenue. By 1922, the permanent Japanese Language School building was constructed. It served some 200 students who attended class daily for one and three-quarter hours after public school and two to three hours on Saturday. Mr. and Mrs. Yamasaki were well respected in the Issei community because they were literate and well educated. Although strict disciplinarians, they gained the enduring admiration of their students, most of whom were the children of farmers, fishermen, or shopkeepers. The Yamasakis lived with their son and two daughters in the school building. They hired several other Japan-educated teachers in order to maintain the highest quality teaching staff.

Mr. and Mrs. Yamasaki's approach to education went well beyond purely academic achievements. The school sponsored talent shows, children's evenings, oratory and story-telling contests, and athletic events, held parents meetings, organized an orchestra, taught brushwork and calligraphy, and undertook excursions to points beyond Tacoma. Another unique aspect of the school was the early instruction of English to kindergarten age children in order to prepare them for public school. The Nihon Go Gakkos in Seattle and Tacoma became the most prosperous and prominent Japanese Language Schools in Washington. Their accomplishments within the themes of education and social/ethnic heritage are significant to the entire state.

On May 12, 1942, the Tacoma News Tribune reported the issuance of Order 67, which instructed all persons of Japanese ancestry "living in western Pierce County and southwestern King County including Tacoma, Fort Lewis" to be evacuated. The heads of all families were ordered to immediately register at the Japanese Language School, which was referred to as the "civil control center." The registration procedure involved physical examinations and the completion of government forms which indicated the disposition of personal property and business interests. Within seven days, nearly 900 people were processed and had departed by train for initial internment at Pinedale, California. Today, the evacuation of the Japanese-Americans is generally regarded as one of the great tragedies of twentieth century American political history. This abridgement of civil rights was stimulated by war hysteria and a long-standing racial enmity toward Asian immigrants. The school survives as one of the state's best reminders of this regrettable yet historically significant political decision.

Since the evacuation, the Japanese Language School has remained unoccupied except for a brief period after the war when it was used to house families returning from the relocation camps. Alterations to the structure have been minimal, although it has suffered from some vandalism and deterioration.

In August 1977, more than 500 former Tacoma Japanese Language School students and teachers, local Japanese and their families celebrated their first reunion since the evacuation. The three day event was highlighted by a memorial service which honored Mr. and Mrs. Yamasaki, former teachers of the school, and those Tacoma Japanese who suffered during internment.

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Ito, Kazuo, Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants to North America, Executive Committee of the Japanese Community Service, 1973. Location: Northwest Collection, Suzzallo Library, University of Washington.

Kawasaki, Tadaye (Fujimoto), 1910 South Fawcett Avenue, Tacoma, Washington, 98402 (former owner, graduate of Japanese Language School), interviewed March 16, 1984.

Konzo, Seiichi, 510 South McKinley Avenue, Champaign, Illinois, 61820 (graduate of Japanese Language School 1922), interview by telephone March 20, 1984.

Kosai, Yoshi (deceased), former Japanese Language School pupil, taped interview, March 1980, Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room.

Tacoma City Directories, 1911 through 1923. Location: Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library.

Tacoma News Tribune, newspaper articles, week of May 12 - May 18, 1942. Location: Tacoma Public Library

Reports of the Immigration Commission, Immigrants in Industry, (Part 25: Japanese and other Races in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain States, 3 vol.) Government Printing Office, 1911. Location: Suzzallo Library, University of Washington.

The 35th Year Reunion in 1977 of the Tacoma Japanese American Community, a reunion souvenir booklet. Location: Mrs. Tadaye Kawasaki, 1910 South Fawcett Avenue, Tacoma, Washington, 98402.

1781 SE
(616 HARBOR)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

122°30' 538000m E R. 2 E. R. 3 E. 540 27'30" PORT ORCHARD 25 MI. NARROWS BRIDGE 5.7 MI. (TAC)

Japanese Language School
Washington

References:
Sheet 10
Sheet 542260
Sheet 5232640

