NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. 8-86)	OMB No. 1024-0018
United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	FE3 1 2 1991
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM	NATIONAL REGISTER
1. Name of Property	
historic name: Isleton Chinese and Japanese Co	
other name/site number: Isleton Asian-American	District
2. Location	
street & number: Bound by River Road, Union St	
	not for publication: N/A
city/town: Isleton	vicinity:NA
state: CA county: Sacramento cod	e: 067 zip code: 95651
3. Classification	
Ownership of Property: Private	
Category of Property: District	
Number of Resources within Property:	
Contributing Noncontributing	
Number of contributing resources previously li	stea in the National

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297

Register: _0___

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A_____

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. ____ See continuation sheet. <u>Hatture of certifying official</u> <u>2-8-91</u> Date California Office of Historic Preservation_____ State or Federal agency and bureau In my opinion, the property _____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. ____ See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official Date State or Federal agency and bureau 5. National Park Service Certification The head in the National Register I, hereby certify that this property is: Alelous Peyer \underline{X} entered in the National Register See continuation sheet. _ determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet. determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register other (explain): wasignature of Keeper Date of Action _____ 6. Function or Use _____ Sub: Specialty store Historic: Commerce Meeting Hall Social Domestic______Single Current : Domestic______Sub: Hotel_____ Single Dwelling Commerce Business

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7. Description
Architectural Classification:
Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century American Movements
Other Description: Commercial Style
Materials: foundation: Concrete roof: Asphalt walls: Weatherboard_ other: Metal/tin Stucco
Describe present and historic physical appearance. <u>X</u> See continuationsheet.
3. Statement of Significance
Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: statewide
Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C_
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A
Areas of Significance: Commerce Ethnic Heritage/Asian Architecture
Period(s) of Significance: 1926-1941
Significant Dates : N/A
Significant Person(s): N/A
Cultural Affiliation: N/A
Architect/Builder: Adams, Noah Lumber Company, Isleton

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. _X_ See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References X See continuation sheet. Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A Primary Location of Additional Data: x State historic preservation office x Other state agency Federal agency x Local government x University x Other -- Specify Repository: Sacramento Museum and History Archives 10. Geographical Data Acreage of Property: Six____ UTM References: Zone Easting Northing A 10 622220 4224560 Verbal Boundary Description: The Asian American district extends from

Verbal Boundary Description: The Asian American district extends from the Sacramento River on the north to Union Street on the south and from E Street to the west to H Street on the east. The district encompasses all buildings fronting Main Street; the ethnic sections are separated by east/west-trending F Street.

Boundary Justification: The district boundaries include the area historically known as "Chinatown" and correspond to the areas labeled as "Chinese Section and "Japanese Section" on 1919, 1925, 1928, and 1931 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of the town. The boundaries also conform to the limits of the district as described by local residents who lived there during the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Mary L. Maniery/Historian & Judith Cunningham/Architectural_ Historian

Organization: PAR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC. Date: July 3, 1990

Street & Number: 2116 T Street_____ Telephone: (916) 739-8356____

City or Town: Sacramento_____ State: CA ZIP: 95816_____

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number __7___ (Isleton Asian American Historic District) Page 6

SUMMARY

The Isleton Asian American Historic District encompasses approximately six acres of land on the south side of the Sacramento River, Sacramento County, California. It is composed of buildings constructed after a major fire destroyed the earlier community in 1926. The district extends on both sides of Main Street, between E and H streets, an area of three square blocks. The majority of the buildings were constructed in 1926, although two were built between the initial construction phase and 1931. They were designed and built for the local residents by employees of the local lumber yard, local contractors, Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans living throughout the Delta and in Sacramento and Stockton. Built in an American Movement commercial style with false or parapeted fronts, the wood siding was covered with pressed tin or stucco as a fire prevention method. The few brick buildings were constructed for the local land owner and were then rented to the Asian businessmen and their families. The district retains a remarkable degree of integrity, reflects a period in Delta history when Asian American commercial districts were constructed in the agriculturally-oriented rural towns, and conveys a strong sense of time and place.

ARCHITECTURAL OVERVIEW

The Isleton Asian American Historic District consists of brick and frame commercial buildings constructed after a devastating fire in 1926 destroyed the Chinese and Japanese American sections of the town. The district is located on the south side of the Sacramento River, on the eastern edge of Isleton and extends along both sides of Main Street from E to H Street, and from Highway 160 (along the river) to Union Street. The Japanese American section lies east of F Street and the Chinese American section is west of F Street. The vast majority of the buildings were built shortly after the fire and reflect a style that was popular in the Sacramento River Delta in the 1910s and 1920s. Some of the brick buildings, however, have Art Deco elements, while others are severely plain. Primarily vernacular false front commercial, the buildings in the district retain a strong sense of time and place and reflect the period of significance (1926-1941) to a remarkable degree.

Built to withstand the vicissitudes of fire, the one and two story brick buildings are all constructed of red common brick, many with yellow face brick facades. Most of the brick buildings have parapeted false-fronts with gabled or slanted roofs. Architectural details include cornice moldings, diamond or geometric patterns in the brick, and raised courses. According to residents who were involved in the rebuilding effort, brick work was completed by masons brought in on steamers from San Francisco (Richardson 1990).

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The one and two story frame buildings generally have gable roofs with false fronts, many with stepped or peaked parapets. Corrugated metal or pressed tin over horizontal boards was the universal choice for the siding on the rear and side walls, while the front facades were covered with various sidings of pressed tin (usually in a brick pattern), stucco or horizontal wood in the California Rustic pattern.

The unusual use of tin siding on many of the buildings consisted of overlapping large and small sections in a haphazard pattern and was probably an economic solution to reconstruction. The sections of tin appear to have been cut from larger pieces, probably remnants of sections sold to others, and create a charming mosaic pattern. The tin was purchased from the Noah Adams Lumber Yard in Isleton, who also supplied many of the other materials for reconstruction. Some of the tin scraps are stamped with the name of the lumber company (Chinn, S. 1990)

According to a local resident, no architects were involved in the rebuilding effort. Instead, a building would be constructed and then admired by others who saw something they liked. The design was then copied on other buildings (Chinn, B. 1990). This explanation is consistent with the physical appearance of the district, where many of the buildings are almost exact duplicates of others in mass and facade design elements.

Many of the buildings in the Chinese Section had second story balconies or porches. Several of the buildings used by the general public had central wooden flagpoles on the ridgepoles, but most of these have been removed due to deterioration. The most interesting building, the Bing Kung Tong branch office, is the only one that retains any distinctly Chinese inspirations, and still has its original interior furnishings.

Because this was a commercial district, most of the structures were used for stores, hotels and boarding houses, pool halls or gambling halls. Almost all of the two story buildings had commercial enterprises on the lower story and residences on the second, while the second stories of the larger ones were used as boarding houses. The entryways were generally central, recessed and flanked by large storefront windows. The windows on the second stories and on the sides of the building were of single-pane wood sash.

In addition to the commercial enterprises, three industrial buildings are included in the district. Two brick auto repair shops are located at either end of Main Street, one in the historic Chinese American section and one in the Japanese American section. In addition, a frame and stucco ice plant is present at the west end of the Chinese American section, across the street from the brick garage. All were built in 1926 after the May 31 fire.

Two of the buildings in the historic district, both one story stores with recessed entryways, false fronts, and exterior tile wainscoting, were constructed in 1947 or shortly thereafter next to the ice plant. Although non-

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The three modern buildings, a coin-operated laundry constructed of concrete block, and a restaurant/florist and telephone company office of frame and stucco do not detract from the form or historic sense of the district.

There are numerous rear and side gardens in the district, providing islands of green in the monochromatic sea of buildings. Common plantings include fruit trees (primarily figs), pepper trees, citrus, grapes, cactus (nopales), flowers, and vegetables. Gardens have always been an integral part of the Asian American community and the maintenance and presence of the vegetables, flowers, and greenery is in keeping with the historic flavor of Main Street.

Isleton's Asian American Historic District presents a cohesive architectural unit, evocative of the period of its economic height, the 1920s through early 1940s, with its simple false front facades situated immediately on the sidewalks and punctuated only by a few vacant lots. The noncontributing buildings, although with renovated or modernized facades, have had little or no alteration to their mass and shape, thus preserving the basic form of the original Main Street architecture.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Chinese Section

1. <u>Garage</u> - 3 Main Street. This one story, T-shaped, red brick commercial building with pedimented facade appears to have been constructed in 1926, replacing another auto repair shop that was destroyed in the fire. The central front door, facing Main Street, is flanked by large windows, all now boarded up. The E Street side of the building has a garage door entrance. The rear, top of the T, portion of the building was constructed between 1928 and 1931 and has corrugated metal siding on the rear and east walls. According to historic maps, this building has always housed an auto repair shop.

2. <u>U-Like Market</u> (Croissanterie, Isleton Florist) - 7 Main Street. Recently remodeled with the addition of a stucco finish, new signage and awning, this frame and stucco building was constructed in the mid-1950s on a vacant lot and is a non-contributor to the district.

3. <u>Eagle's Store</u> - 11 Main Street. This one-story frame building has corrugated metal siding and was constructed in 1926, and was used as a grocery and dry goods store into the 1930s. The front facade has a recessed entryway flanked by large storefront windows. Stucco covers the original upper portion

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4. <u>Vacant Building</u> - 13 Main Street. A two story red brick building with yellow brick front facade, this building is in original condition and retains its 1926 appearance. The front facade has a stepped parapet top above an elaborate cornice. The upper story has three windows while the lower has a recessed entryway flanked by storefront windows. A multi-paned transom is located above the front windows and entry. The windows on the side walls, of single-pane sash, have brick relieving arches. The building is almost identical to No's 22 and 26 on Main Street and was probably constructed for J. W. Gardiner, president of the Gardiner Improvement Company, the firm that owned the land the district was on in 1926. It housed a pool hall and barber shop in 1928 and 1931.

There is a corrugated metal shed with gable roof in the rear lot. The shed was constructed between 1928 and 1931 and was used for storage.

5. <u>Antiques and Gifts</u> - 15 Main Street. A simple, one story frame building with recessed entry flanked by store front windows, this store has a false front with central louvre. It has been recently renovated with the addition of a stucco coating in the Mediterranean style, new wooden wainscoting, and a canvas awning. It retains its original mass and detail and is a contributor. A notions and clothing store was located in the building in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

6. <u>Hop Fat & Co.</u> - 17 Main Street. In original condition, this two story frame building has corrugated metal siding and a pressed tin facade. The central storefront entry door is flanked by windows, with a small doorway to the second story located on the west front. The upper story has a porch that extends over the store front below. It is supported by knee braces, has wooden posts and railing, and exposed rafters on its roof. The upper portion of the front facade has a parapeted false front and a central flagpole. A porch for the second-story residence is located on the upper rear facade of the building facing the river. The interior walls and ceiling are of tongue and groove.

The 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map notes that the building was used for storage. By 1931 it had been converted into a dwelling. The building was constructed by longtime Isleton resident, Sing Toy, for one of his three daughters (Chinn, S. 1990).

7. <u>Isleton Bait Shop/Quong Wo Sing Co.</u> - 21 Main Street (23 Main Street). A two story rectangular store with stepped parapet, this frame building has a recessed entry flanked by storefront windows, with a transom above. The

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original canopy is located across the facade above the entryway and windows. Recent renovations include new horizontal wooden siding, selected to match the original. The interior walls and ceiling are covered with vertical tongue and groove boards. A balcony, with turned wooden railings and shelving courses around all four sides of the interior store section of the building. The rear portion of the building is residential. The interior of the building was designed like similar stores in China. A wooden shed sits on the rear lot.

The Quong Wo Sing Company, originally a match factory, started in Truckee during the 1850s gold rush. The owners moved to Isleton in the early 1880s after the Truckee store was destroyed by fire, and opened a general merchandise store. One partner retained ownership of the store until it was destroyed by fire in 1926. At that time he returned to China and his son, Sing Toy, rebuilt the store on the same location. Bessie Chinn, Sing Toy's third daughter, inherited the store from her father. She and her son, Steven, currently own and operate the business (Leung 1984:17-18).

8. <u>Vacant Building</u> - 23 Main Street (25 Main Street). A two story frame building with metal sheathing, this building is in deteriorated condition with the lower story gutted and the front entry missing. The upper facade has a false front with three single pane sash windows, the central one at a lower elevation, and a central front upper louvre. The building has a canopy over the first story front, which originally had a recessed entryway and storefront windows. Originally two separate buildings, the two were connected with a shed-roofed, metal-sided section. This building is another that was owned by Sing Toy and inherited by one of his daughters. It was constructed in 1926 and was used as a dry goods store. Although in deteriorated condition, it retains its original elements and is a contributor to the district.

9. <u>Bing Kung Tong Building</u> - 27 Main Street (29 Main Street). In original condition, this 1926 structure is two stories with an angled, stepped parapet false front with peaked corners and a central flagpole. Tin sheathing covers the frame structure. The upper front facade has a recessed balcony with shed roof, with original lights below, topped with a central louvre. A central doorway, beneath a signboard with Chinese characters proclaiming "Bing Kung Tong," is flanked by single pane sash windows. The lower story has arched entryways on either side with glass and panel doors behind. The central portion of the lower front facade has vertical tongue and groove siding beneath multi-paned windows, now boarded over. The original porch was recently removed due to its deteriorated condition.

This is one of the few buildings in the district that was built by Chinese carpenters and laborers, as opposed to local contractors. The Tong has all of its original furnishings and interior decoration, including a large conference table on the second floor. Sing Toy was president of the Isleton Bing Kung Tong branch for many years; his grandson, Steven Chinn, still maintains the building. The Tong played an important role in the community, providing protection and regulation for Chinese American-operated businesses, a continuing link to China, and organizing social gatherings, such as Chinese New

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10. <u>Vacant Building</u> - 31 Main Street (33 Main Street). Similar in appearance to 23 Main Street, this two story frame building is covered with pressed tin sheathing and was built in 1926. It was used as a gambling hall into the 1950s. The lower front story has been gutted but the upper front facade has a stepped parapet false front over three single pane sash windows, the central one at a lower elevation. The original front facade had a recessed, windowless entryway with several doors, and was barred. The porch was removed when the building was leased for use by those employed in the Bracero Program.

11. <u>Vacant Building</u> - 33 Main Street (35 Main Street). Another in this row of two-story frame buildings with pressed tin sheathing, this 1926 building has a simple false front. A central door flanked by windows is located on the upper front facade, but all are now boarded over. The lower story facade has a small single door in the wrapped tin facade. The original facade had a central recessed entryway with several doors and no windows. The pressed tin sheathing on this building consists of small sections nailed haphazardly all over the exterior. This was altered and the porch removed during occupation by men employed in the Bracero Program. The building housed one of four gambling establishments that remained active in Isleton into the 1950s.

12. <u>Vacant Building</u> - 36 Main Street. This large, rectangular two story frame building with stucco and wooden siding was constructed in 1926 for use as a gambling hall. The facade of the lower story has a central recessed entryway flanked by storefront windows. The upper story facade has a stepped parapet with central front louvre over three single pane sash windows. There is a porch with a wooden railing across the upper front story. The east side wall has rows of single pane sash windows on each story, with an entry on the lower floor. The upper story was used as a rooming house. A modern addition to the rear has plywood siding and aluminum and metal industrial sash windows.

13. <u>Rogelio's Restaurant</u> - 34 Main Street. A frame two story building with tin siding, the front facade has been drastically altered with the addition of redwood siding, a second story balcony and new windows. It is a non-contributor to the district. The building originally housed three businesses; a gambling hall, groceries and meat store, and a hardware store.

14. <u>Yet Siong Cafe, Chop Suey House</u> - 26 Main Street. This two story red brick building has yellow face brick on the facade and was built in 1926 following the fire. The upper front facade has a stepped parapet with a central flagpole above brick cornicing. The lower front facade has a multipaned transom over the recessed double entry and storefront windows. The windows on the sides of the building have relieving arches and are of single pane wood sash. The building is almost identical to No. 13 and No. 22 Main Street, except for a separate front entryway on the east side and wooden

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According to newspaper accounts published immediately following the 1926 fire, the Gardiner Improvement Company, who owned the land the district is located on, planned to build several brick buildings to accommodate the Chinese businesses. It is probable that this is one of those buildings.

15. <u>ANC Market</u> - 24 Main Street. This one story red brick building with yellow face brick and a false front housed a grocery and meat store in the 1920s and 1930s. The west half of the building was constructed circa 1926, while the east side, which matches the original, was constructed in the mid-1950s. The original brick facade has pale blue tile diamond patterns embedded in the false front. There is a modern canopy across the building above the storefront windows and the multi-paned transom. The double entry is recessed.

At the rear of the store is a two story shed with corrugated metal siding and single pane sash windows.

16. <u>Pineapple Restaurant</u> - 22 Main Street. Built just after the fire of 1926, this two-story red brick building has yellow face brick on the front facade and a stepped parapet and originally was a groceries and meat store. The upper story has brick cornicing (identical to No. 13 and No. 26 Main Street) above three single-pane sash windows. The lower story has a recessed double entryway flanked by storefront windows with a multi-paned transom above all. The wainscoting below the windows is of brick. There is a corrugated metal garage, built in 1926, on the rear of the lot; it is a contributor. It is probable that the building was constructed by the Gardiner Improvement Company (land owner in 1926) for use by the Chinese merchants.

17. <u>Delta Daze Inn</u> - 20 Main Street. This two story frame building was recently significantly remodeled with the addition of a wooden facade, new porch, new Palladian windows and entryway, and new signage. Originally used as a restaurant, it is now a non-contributor to the district.

18. <u>Residence</u> - 18 Main Street. In apparently original 1926 condition, this two story frame building has a simple false front covered with composition shingles and originally housed a restaurant. The facade of the lower story, with stucco siding, has a central entry with double doors and transoms flanked by large, storefront windows. A canopy, supported by metal rods, is affixed to

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Section number <u>7</u> (Isleton Asian American Historic District) Page 13 the building above the lower story. The upper front facade has two sets of paired single-pane wooden sash windows.

A modern garage and living quarters have been constructed on the rear and is considered a non-contributor.

19. Lee Brothers Dry Goods - 16 Main Street. One of the few remaining Chinese American owned and operated businesses in Isleton, this 1926 two story rectangular frame building has stucco exterior siding. The front facade has a false front, with two single pane sash windows on opposite sides of the upper story. The lower story has its original recessed glass and panel doors flanked by storefront windows. There is a canopy above the lower story of this building which appears to be original. A corrugated metal garage is located on the rear portion of the property and is considered a contributor. The main building housed a soft drink and restaurant business in the 1920s and 1930s.

20. <u>Susan's Garden</u> - 14 Main Street. This simple, one story frame building with false front and corrugated metal siding once housed a cigar and barber shop and public baths. Constructed in 1926, the front facade has a recessed entry flanked by storefront windows. A recent renovation is the exterior wooden siding on the front facade. A modern, two-car plywood garage is located behind the building and is non-contributing to the district.

21. <u>Paul's Barber Shop</u> - 12 Main Street. This one story contributing building has a false front and stucco siding and was once a soft drinks store and pool hall. Built in 1926, the central double entry is flanked by large windows. A canopy is located above the storefront. There is a corrugated metal garage on the rear of the lot that is a contributor.

22. <u>Isleton Cleaners</u> - 10 Main Street. Built in 1947 (Oyong 1990), this one-story building has a simple false front, now covered with composition shingles. The double entry doors are flanked by storefront windows above black ceramic tile wainscoting. There is a residential unit in the rear of the building. It is a non-contributor due to its age.

23. Lee Bait Shop - 8 Main Street. Constructed circa 1949, this one story frame structure has a stucco facade. The central double entry doors are flanked by large storefront windows above green ceramic tile wainscoting. A metal garage and two-story residence are located on the rear of the building. Because of its age it is a non-contributor to the district.

24. <u>Union Ice House</u> - 2 Main Street. Built as an ice plant immediately following the fire of 1926, a small section on the east rear was added prior to 1931. This one-story industrial building is wood frame with stucco siding. The central entry is flanked by multi-paned industrial sash windows. The rear NPS Form 10-900-a (8-86)

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Section number __7___(Isleton Asian American Historic District) Page 14 portion of the building has corrugated metal siding. Recent additions include a canvas awning and new paint but do not detract from the contributing elements of the plant.

Japanese Section

25. <u>Firehouse/Residence</u> - 35 Main Street (37-1/2 Main Street). Originally a one-story, false fronted frame firehouse, this building has had extensive additions to its original one room configuration and is now occupied as a residence. It is in deteriorated condition. The exterior siding is a combination of wood, asphalt, corrugated metal and tin, while one of the windows has been boarded over. The building is a non-contributor to the district. A two car garage, with corrugated metal siding and roof, is located on the rear of the lot and is also a non-contributor.

26. <u>Residence</u> - 37 Main Street. With the stepped parapet facade of yellow brick and recessed entryway flanked by storefront windows, this building appears to be in almost original 1926 condition except for the addition of an aluminum awning. Once used as a dry goods, boot and shoe store, the sides and rear of the building are of red brick, while the front facade has pale blue tile diamond patterns inserted in the face brick above the cornicing.

27. <u>Dragon Lady</u> - 39 Main Street. A two story false fronted building that has recently been remodeled, this structure has pressed tin siding. The remodeled facade has new wooden siding, window trim, entryway, and storefront windows. Originally used as a hotel/boarding house for Japanese American farm laborers, it is now a non-contributor to the district.

28. <u>Residence</u> - 41 Main Street. This simple one story store building, constructed in 1926, is in its original condition. The frame construction is sided with pressed tin, while the renovated false front has a stepped parapet and a central louvre. The storefront windows flank a central recessed entry with double doors. A soft drinks and notions store was located here in 1928. By 1931 the west front half contained a barber shop and the east front half sold cigars and soft drinks. The back of the structure was used as a residence.

29. <u>Residence</u> - 43 Main Street. Another 1926 single story building with a peaked parapet false front, this simple store building has undergone some renovations to the entryway and the lower portion is now boarded up. The building is of frame construction with tin siding and is a contributor to the district. It originally contained a cigar shop and pool hall.

30. <u>Harmony Shop</u> - 45 Main Street. The facade of this 1926 building has a stepped parapet false front and a central recessed entry flanked by storefront windows. It is of frame construction and has vertical wooden

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Section number <u>7</u> (Isleton Asian American Historic District) Page 15 siding. A recent addition is the aluminum awning on the front. There is a metal shed to the rear of the building, built in 1926 as an auto garage, that is a contributor. A grocery, boot and shoe store operated at this location during the period of significance.

31. <u>Vacant Building</u> - 47 Main Street. Proclaiming its date of construction and use, "1926 HOTEL," on the stucco facade, this two story building has a stepped and peaked parapet false front. The upper story has a cornice molding between the parapet and the three single pane sash windows. The lower portion of the facade has been boarded over with vertical siding and has two entry doors. By 1931 the hotel was confined to the upper story and back of the building; the front housed a grocery store and pool hall. The hotel is a contributor to the district.

32. <u>Delta Computer Enterprises</u> - 49 Main Street. Although the basic two story, rectangular shape of this frame building has been unaltered, the addition of a new wooden facade, shingled canopy, new porch on the rear, and new windows make it a non-contributor to the district. Originally it housed a cigar store and pool room.

33. <u>Book Store</u> - 51 Main Street. Recent renovations to this one story frame building with tin siding and a curved parapet make it a non-contributor to the district. Remodeling included the installation of central panelled entry doors, multi-paned front windows and transom, and wooden vertical siding. The building originally housed a general store.

34. <u>Residence</u> - 53 Main Street. A simple one story frame building with tin siding and a stepped parapet, this building housed a cigar shop and pool hall in 1928 and was used as a boarding house by 1931. It has undergone recent alterations. The storefront windows have been boarded over with vertical panelled plywood and the entryway has been altered, making it a non-contributor to the district.

35. <u>Thrift Store</u> - 55 Main Street. Recent modernization has made this building a non-contributor. The one story frame building is sided with tin and has a stepped parapet false front, but the facade has been covered with plywood, and new windows have been installed flanking the central entry. It housed a cigar store and pool room with barber shop in the 1930s.

36. <u>Residence</u> - 57 Main Street. This one story frame building has a simple false front and tin sidewalls. The recessed entryway is flanked by two small windows and there is a canopy across the front. Recent modifications to the building include a plywood facade and lugsills, making it a noncontributor. It once had public baths in the rear and a grocery and meat market up front. A small wooden shed, located in the rear of the lot, was constructed as an auto garage in 1926 and is a contributor.

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Section number __7___(Isleton Asian American Historic District) Page 16 37. <u>Residence</u> - 59 Main Street (61 Main Street). A simple, rectangle frame building with parapet front, this building has its original 1926 corrugated metal siding, but the front facade has been remodeled and has vertical grooved plywood siding and modern windows. It is a non-contributor to the district. It once housed a fish shop and pool room. A small corrugated metal shed, located in back of the building, was constructed as a garage in 1926 and is a contributor.

38. <u>Metal Auto Storage Building</u> - 61 Main Street (63 Main Street). A non-contributor to the district, this frame garage building has corrugated metal siding, a false front, and a small canopy. It is connected to the adjoining brick building at 63 Main Street.

39. <u>Garage</u> - 63 Main Street (65 Main Street). This flat-roofed, one story red brick building has a brick cornice across its upper front facade. The central entry door is flanked by large six pane windows. Although in poor shape, the building appears to be in its original 1926 condition except for painting.

40. Office Building - 66 Main Street. This two story red brick restaurant building with yellow face brick has a two story porch across the front facade and the east side. The upper story of the porch is original and has turned posts, wooden railing, and a tongue and groove ceiling. The lower support posts are new, as are the entry doors. The central front double doors are recessed beneath an arched brick entry flanked by large storefront windows with multi-pane sash on the upper story and the sides of the building, with the side windows having relieving arches. The original interior double stairway was recently removed due to deterioration.

This building was constructed in January, 1929, by the local Chinese American population. It was operated as a restaurant and the lower floor had separate dining rooms, while the upper had a large banquet room. One long-time Isleton Chinese American resident recalls that when she and her husband were married their reception was held in the banquet room of the restaurant (Chinn, S. 1990).

41. <u>General Telephone</u> - 64 Main Street. A new, one-story metal building houses the telephone company and is a non-contributor to the district.

42. <u>Sports Bar & Grill</u> - 60 Main Street. Remodeling consisting of vertical wooden siding, new windows, and finishing details make this one story frame building a non-contributor. An aluminum-sided residence, with single pane sash windows flanking a central doorway is attached to the rear of the structure.

43. <u>Bar</u> - 58 Main Street. A simple one story frame building with tin siding and a stepped parapet false front, this 1926 building is a non-contributor due to recent remodeling, including new wooden siding on the

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facade, along with new windows. There is a plywood-and-tin-sided residential addition attached at the back. The structure originally housed a cigar store and pool room.

44. <u>Residence</u> - 56 Main Street. Once a cobbler shop, this is a one story frame building with a false front. The central entry is flanked by store front windows and the siding is tin. It has not been altered and is a contributor to the district.

45. <u>Vacant Building</u> - 54 Main Street. A two story frame building with stucco and tin siding, this building was gutted in a fire. The upper front facade has three single pane sash windows, while the lower story has storefront windows and a central entry, all now boarded up. The building on the rear lot is wooden and was a garage in the 1930s; it is a contributor. The building once was used as a dry goods and boot and shoe store.

46. <u>Design Studio</u> - 52 Main Street. This is a one story frame store building with a stepped parapet false front and metal siding. The facade was stuccoed sometime in the 1930s. A recent addition is the metal framing in the storefront windows, which flank a central recessed entry, but do not detract from the overall character of the building. On the rear lot are located an aluminum shed and a plywood sided residence, both non-contributors. The building was a barber shop and pool room during the 1920s and 1930s.

47. <u>River Club</u> - 50 Main Street. This two story frame building has tin siding, with shingles over the upper front facade, and was built in 1926. The upper story has two pairs of single pane sash windows beneath a peaked parapet. The lower story facade has a recessed double entry flanked by storefront windows. There is a multi-paned transom across the front. The building originally housed a restaurant. A metal garage is located in the rear, was built in 1926, and is a contributor.

48. <u>Verco Club</u> - 48 Main Street. A flat-roofed one story brick building with little ornamentation, this 1926 building has a central entry flanked by storefront windows, partially boarded up. The single entry door has a Craftsman-style portico with knee braces and low gable. The rear section is used as a residence. This building originally housed a Japanese restaurant with a residence in the rear.

49. <u>D & L Card Room and Casino</u> - 46 Main Street. A two story frame building with false front, this 1926 structure has a multi-paned transom over a recessed central double entry flanked by storefront windows over paneled wainscoting. A narrow doorway on the west front leads to the second story. The false front has a central louvre in the uppermost portion. Recent alterations include new wooden siding but does not significantly impact the overall character of the building. Originally, this building was a soft drinks and pool hall. A corrugated metal garage is located on the rear of the lot and was built in 1926 as an auto storage facility. It is a contributor to the district.

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50. <u>Hobby Shop</u> - 40 Main Street. One of the brick buildings constructed after the fire of 1926, this one story store has a stepped and peaked parapet false front with pale blue tiles in a diamond pattern in the center of the yellow face brick. A brick cornice separates the upper facade from the multipaned transom. The central recessed entry is flanked by storefront windows. The only alterations appear to be the stucco and plywood wainscoting. A general store was located in this building.

51. <u>Chinatown Wash-Dry</u> - 38 Main Street. This recently constructed one story concrete block building with an Asian-style roof is a non-contributor to the district. A ranch style house is located on the rear of the lot facing Union Street and is also a non-contributing building to the district.

Note on Resource Count: All contributing buildings, including garages, have been counted. Sheds are not included in the count.

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SUMMARY

The Isleton Asian American Historic District is eligible under criteria a and c. Under a, the district served as the commercial and social center for both the residents and for the Asian American laborers working in nearby canneries, farms, and ranches who came into town on their days off or lived in boarding houses during this period. Isleton was the only Asian community constructed in the Delta during the heyday of agriculture in the 1920s, and was the last in a series of Chinese/Japanese American sections of town built on the same site since 1878. It served as the cultural, recreational, and commercial center for farm and cannery laborers. As such, it represents a cohesively constructed enclave of both Chinese Americans and Japanese American in the area and reflects a time when Asians were an essential and major agricultural labor force in the Delta. The district is also eligible under criterion c because, as the only Asian community constructed in the Delta during the 1920s, the architectural style, particularly the use of pressed tin siding, is unique to other Delta Asian communities and to the town of Isleton. The buildings embody architectural elements particular to Asian construction. The use of overhanging balconies, decorative light fixtures, absence of windows on gambling halls, and flagpoles on the public buildings reflect an Asian American A high degree of integrity is present in this district, one that motif. embodies a strong sense of time and place during the peak years (1926-1941) of the Delta agricultural boom before the Chinese Americans were dispersed into the mainstream of economic life in California and the Japanese Americans were incarcerated for the duration of World War II.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Founded in 1874 by Josiah Pool, Isleton's growth has always been directly affected by land reclamation and local agricultural development. The establishment of the town on the southern end of Andrus Island in the Sacramento River Delta was directly related to the reclamation of the Island through the construction of levees and subsequent planting of sugar beets. Pool constructed a wharf by 1875 and Isleton began to grow (Willis 1913:330).

The use of Chinese labor was an essential element in constructing adequate levees and in the reclamation of Andrus and other Delta islands. Isleton's Chinatown was begun by 1878 on land rented from J. Gardiner and consisted of a contract labor office and businesses designed to meet the needs of the workers who came into the town on their days off (Leung 1984:17). The 1880 federal census recorded 880 Chinese in the town of Isleton in that year, most working as farmers or farm laborers (United States Bureau of the Census 1880). By the 1890s the Chinese district of town was well-established with 35 residences, four stores, a laundry, and other businesses (Leung 1984:17). The local newspaper in 1894 reported that the residents were constructing a "joss house" in town and that tong hatchet men were using the quarter as a temporary refuge

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from police raids in San Francisco and other cities (Chu 1970:28). It is probable that the Bing Kung Tong's Isleton branch office was established during the 1890s (Chu 1970:30).

By the late 1890s or early 1900s the Chinese quarters of Isleton began to swell with Japanese workers. The Japanese came into the region partially in response to the need for laborers to replace the dwindling numbers of Chinese and partially because of the asparagus boom that began in the Delta after 1895. Along with the workers came merchants who established businesses in the eastern section of the Chinatown to serve the growing numbers of Japanese transient workers (Chu 1970:29).

The Asian district of town grew rapidly during the first quarter of the twentieth century, aided by the construction of several asparagus canneries and the continued agricultural prosperity. In 1910 there were six asparagus canneries between Courtland and Rio Vista and Chinese and Japanese Americans supplied over 90 percent of the labor force. Three of the canneries were located in Isleton. In addition, Asian-American workers planted, maintained and harvested the majority of the asparagus and other crops grown in the region (Chu 1970:29-30).

The Asian quarter burned down in 1915 but was immediately rebuilt into two separate sections (Leung 1984:17-18). The Chinese American businesses were confined to the area west of F Street, while the Japanese American section was constructed east of F Street. Both sections included boarding houses, rooms, and hotels that housed countrymen working in the canneries or nearby fields, as well as restaurants, grocery stores, soft drink parlors or saloons, and other general businesses. In addition, numerous gambling halls, a "Joss" house, and the Bing Kung Tong building were present in the Chinese section. The Japanese section had several community bath houses, an Association meeting hall, and a movie theater. Aided by the agricultural boom that continued to focus on asparagus and potato production, the Asian population grew by leaps and bounds into the 1920s (Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1919, 1925).

On May 31, 1926 catastrophe once again visited the district. According to newspaper accounts, a fire, started by a kerosene lamp, began at the west end of the district near the Asian school. Aided by fire hydrants that were rusted shut and by the fact that the majority of the men in town were out fishing due to a Memorial Day holiday, the conflagration spread virtually unchecked throughout the district (Chinn, B. 1990). A reported 1,500 people lost their homes and belongings in the fire and the blaze devastated the entire Asian-American district of six square blocks, destroying 110 buildings (<u>Sacramento</u> <u>Bee</u>, June 1, 1926, page 1, column 1; <u>Sacramento Union</u>, June 1, 1926, page 1, column 8; <u>Stockton Daily Evening Record</u>, June 1, 1926, page 11, column 7).

The Asian-American population immediately began plans for reconstruction. The land owner, Gardiner Improvement Company, expressed plans to build several brick structures in the district as a deterrent to future fires (<u>Sacramento</u> <u>Bee</u>, June 1, 1926, page 1, column 1). Other buildings were also constructed

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According to long-time Isleton residents, many of the buildings were constructed by Dutch and German carpenters hired by the local lumberyard. An independent local contractor, H. C. Balsmeyer, was responsible for building the sidewalks, streets and for plumbing the buildings in the Asian district. He may also have constructed several of the buildings as well. Other buildings were built by Chinese American and Japanese American carpenters and laborers, and residents of Isleton (Chinn, B. 1990; Richardson 1990).

A comparison of personal property tax rolls for Isleton from 1925 and 1927 indicates that the fire resulted in a restructuring of the Asian-American district. Before the blaze, 36 Chinese and 31 Japanese were assessed for personal property in town; most of these were business owners (Sacramento County 1925). In addition, in 1925 there were 40 buildings and 8 garages in the Chinese section and only 29 buildings and 7 garages in the Japanese section (Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1925). In 1927 only 15 Chinese owned property in Isleton, compared to 41 Japanese (Sacramento County 1927). A 1928 fire insurance map of the district, however, indicates that there was a near-equal amount of buildings: 24 in the Chinese and 27 in the Japanese. Some of the Chinese-owned buildings, however, were rented out to Japanese and Filipino businessmen (Chinn, B. 1990; Minnick n.d.).

One Chinese American woman, who was born in Isleton in 1911 and still resides in the town, recalled that after the 1926 fire Japanese American families insisted on a more physical separation of the two sections within the Asian-American district as a way to prevent the spread of future fires. In consideration of their feelings, F Street, the roadway between the sections, was widened and the corner lots to the east were left vacant. The Japanese and Chinese American residents of Isleton, however, always got along and intermingled freely within their small community (Chinn, B. 1990).

From the rebuilding of the town in 1926 until the outbreak of World War II in 1942, Isleton enjoyed a period of prosperity, directly related to the asparagus and potato crops that dominated Delta agriculture and to the canneries constructed in the region. By 1929 there were 10 canneries operating between Rio Vista and Courtland; three of these were in Isleton. Isleton had the distinction of having the only Chinese American-built and owned cannery, one that exclusively hired Asians (Chu 1970:32-33). The success of the canneries, even during the 1930s depression era, was reflected in the stable and growing Asian-American population that frequented the district's businesses (Chu 1970:33; Minnick 1988:27). NPS Form 10-900-a (8-86) OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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Also integral to both the Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans during the 1930s in particular, were the four gambling halls that fronted Main Street west of F Street. While gambling kept many an Asian worker in debt, it also provided a social setting and much needed form of relaxation. Customers of the halls were provided with hot cups of tea and were served one or two meals a day, free of charge. This became important during the depression when wages fell below one dollar a day (Chinn, B. 1990; Leung 1984:18; Richardson 1990). In addition to the Chinese workers, Filipinos, Japanese, East Indians, and Caucasians all visited the gambling halls on occasion. Isleton's gambling halls were well known throughout the Delta and were frequented well into the twentieth century; they operated until forced to close by state law in the 1950s (Richardson 1990).

Unlike many of the exclusively-Chinese American districts in the region, the Isleton Asian district was family oriented. Many of the buildings were owned by families, and Asian schools were established to teach Chinese and Japanese languages and customs. At the time of the 1926 fire, for example, over 200 children lived in the district (<u>Sacramento Bee</u>, June 1, 1926, page 1, column 1). These children attended a segregated "Oriental" school during the day and their own language school in the afternoons. There was also a "migratory" school located just west of E Street that was used by children of migrant workers (Sanborn Fire Insurance Company 1928, 1931).

The district continued in its significance into the 1940s. Yet because significance has not been shown to be exceptional, the period of significance has arbitrarily been ended at ¹⁹⁴¹. However, when World War II broke out Isleton was a viable community with an agricultural focus. While more and more Filipino workers had moved into the district, replacing the transient Chinese American laborers, the Asian district was a bustling place, with the businesses owned by the Japanese American and Chinese American merchants and their families. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, however, the Asian American district underwent a dramatic change. According to local residents who lived in town during that time, there was growing tension between the two sections of the district following the incident. This was particularly

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Although a few Japanese returned to Isleton following the war, they found they had little to return to and soon left. Their community Buddhist church, finished in 1934, had been looted and heavily damaged. The members sold the building and disbanded, joining the Walnut Grove Buddhist Church congregation (Kato et al. 1974:337-228). The majority of the buildings in the old Japanese American section were occupied by other Asians or Mexican workers, and the original occupants could not recoup their losses. Only one Japanese American family remained in town in the 1950s but left Isleton in the early 1960s (Chinn, B. 1990).

Today, the district retains the physical feel of the 1920s and 1930s boom period. The gambling halls and Bing Kung Tong buildings retain their flagpoles and Chinese architectural elements. Asian characters are present on a few of the old buildings, particularly in the Chinese section. The Quong Wo Sing Company, owners of the local fish bait and grocery store, has been in Isleton since the 1880s and is still owned and operated by the same family. These connections to the past, combined with the high integrity of the buildings and the well-maintained vegetable and flower gardens, are reminders of another time when the streets bustled with activity every Saturday night and Sunday and the town provided a welcome respite from the hard physical demands of cannery and farm work. All of the buildings have cohesive design elements, workmanship, material, and associations and formed the core of the community in the past. The undeveloped nature of the district and the simplicity of the structures are examples of a cohesive, pre-World War II Asian American district in a rural, agriculturally-oriented community.

PROPERTY OWNERS

Parcel No: 157-0032-001 (River Road) Philip Deback et al. PO Box 118 Isleton, California 95641

Parcel No: 157-0032-002 (3 Main Street) Kathryne H. Dorsey PO Box 578 Isleton, California 95641

Parcel No: 157-0032-003 (5 Main Street) William/Elda Lee PO Box 135 Isleton, California 95641 NPS Form 10-900-a OMB Approval No. 1024-0018 (8 - 86)United States Department of the Interior National Park Service NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET Section number <u>8</u> (Isleton Asian American Historic District) Page 24 Parcel No: 157-0032-004 (7 Main Street) James T./Janet Hustler, et al. PO Box 139 Isleton, California 95641 Parcel No: 157-0032-005 (9 Main Street) James T./Janet S. Hustler PO Box 139 Isleton, California 95641 Parcel No: 157-0032-006 (11 Main Street) Frank Cachola 1270 Cinnamon Court Walnut Creek, California 94596-6402 Parcel No: 157-0032-007 (13 Main Street) Milton S. McDonogh PO Box 901 Tiburon, California 95920 Parcel No: 157-0032-008 (15 Main Street) Ida Pucci PO Box 84 Isleton, California 95641 Parcel No: 157-0032-009 (17 Main Street) Lucille Chan Searle, et al. 2146 Louis Road Palo Alto, California 94303-3453 Parcel No. 157-0032-010 (21 Main Street) Gee/Bessie T. Chinn PO Box 487 Isleton, California 95641 Parcel No. 157-0032-011 (23 Main Street) Gee Chinn and Deck Toy PO Box 487 Isleton, California 95641 Parcel No. 157-0032-012 (25 Main Street) Gee/Bessie T. Chinn PO Box 487 Isleton, California 95641 Parcel No. 157-0032-013 (27 Main Street) Chang Yet Sing Wong/Nam Choy PO Box 487 Isleton, California 95641

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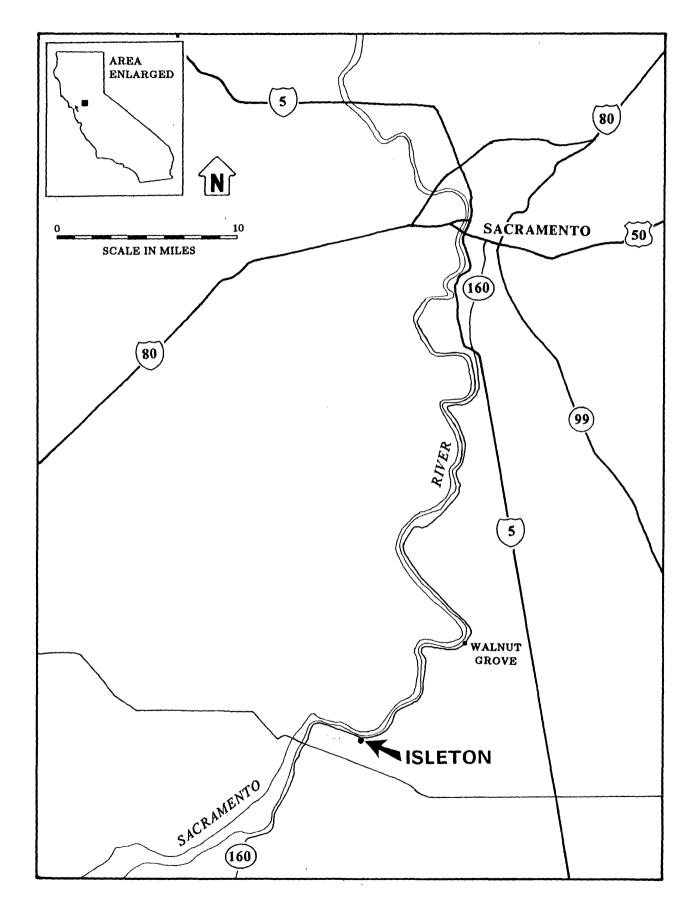
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