

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUL 6 1979
DATE ENTERED SEP 4 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC SETO BUILDING (preferred) site #30-08-9379
AND/OR COMMON
Quality Market/Big Save Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Kuhio Highway
CITY, TOWN Kapaa
STATE Hawaii
VICINITY OF CODE COUNTY Kauai
CODE
NOT FOR PUBLICATION CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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 type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: None

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Jack and Diana Seto
STREET & NUMBER 836 Winthrop Road
CITY, TOWN San Marino VICINITY OF California STATE 91108

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Hawaii State Department of Taxation (Kauai Branch)
STREET & NUMBER 3016 Umi Street
CITY, TOWN Lihue STATE Hawaii 96766

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Kauai Historic Building Survey
DATE 1976
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Kauai Historical Society
CITY, TOWN Lihue STATE Hawaii 96766

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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 building occupies a triangular lot created by the less than right angle intersection of Kuhio Highway and Lehua Street. Because of this, the plan of the building is in the form of a trapezoid, with a triangular portion of the property at the apex of the street intersection left in open space occupied by a large False Kamani (Terminalia catappa) tree.

The two story building is of wood frame double walled construction, built on a concrete slab foundation. The exterior walls are covered with striated staggered wood shingles; and the interior walls and ceiling are covered with pressed fiberboard. The Mansard roof has exposed curved rafters at the eaves sheathed with beaded tongue and groove boards and covered with staggered wood shingles of random exposure to the weather. The first floor is largely open space interrupted by wood columns and used for commercial purposes. Access to the second floor is by an interior straight run stair.

The Lihue elevation has a row of double hung four-lite horizontally divided (typical at the second floor) windows at the second floor and miscellaneous window and vent openings at the first floor. A large 12" plus diameter sheet metal exhaust vent with an inverted flat cone cap rises from ceiling height of the first floor to the roof. At this elevation the roof eave is clipped flush at the wall line. Cornerboards trim the wall ends (typical of all elevations).

The makai elevation is the major facade of the building. The four windows on the second floor are symmetrically placed to both sides of what appears to have been a central recessed porch, which is now boarded and opened to the exterior by a triple sliding sash six-lite horizontally divided windows. Originally these windows were reputed to be 8" x 13" multi-lite side hinged sash. The four windows are ornamented with curved crossed wood elements over the window head which forms a pediment that is an oriental expression (typical second floor except Lihue elevation). The shed canopy roof that

(continued)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

August 24, 1929

BUILDER/ARCHITECTY. Watada/R. Brooks Taylor

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Seto Building is a fine example of early commercial architecture on Kaua'i. The building's owner Ah Doi Seto came to Hawaii as a sugar contract laborer from China in 1888. On March 12, 1929, he began construction on a new market for Kapa'a utilizing the latest in refrigeration methods for keeping meats and produce. The building was a center for community activity, housing a meat and fish market with vegetable and fruit stalls as well as an area where Hawaiian foods could be purchased.

Kapa'a town was founded by immigrant sugar workers who left their sugar mill towns and set up small private businesses. It is one of only two towns on Kaua'i that sprang up independent of sugar production. In the early 1900s the town was given a commercial impetus by the establishment of the Hawaiian Canneries Corporation, a pineapple processing plant.

The Seto Building was designed by Robert Brooks Taylor of Kapa'a, an engineer/superintendent at Hawaiian Canneries. The contractor who built the structure was Y. Watada of Kapa'a. The building was completed on August 24, 1929.

In 1931, the store was leased out as a general food market. Just prior to WWII the store's central staircase was moved to the side of the building, and the small paned front windows were changed to wooden accordian-folding doors. During WWII the store was forced to close down. A new lease was taken out in January 1944 and the store reopened under a new name, the Quality Market. In 1961 the bottom floor was permanently closed. The second floor which had been used as an office and as living space was occupied until 1968. The building is in fair condition and remains unoccupied at present.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Garden Island 3/13/28, 3/26/29, 8/20/29
 Herbert Seto Minour Furugen Tad Miura
 Harry Seto Yoneo Hirata

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3276 sq. ft.

UTM REFERENCES

A	0 4	4 6 7 0 2 5	2 4 4 5 8 3 6	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Seto Building includes the land parcel 4 - 5 - 11 - 31 as well as the building itself.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert J. Schleck/Treasurer and State Historic Preservation Staff

Nathan Napoka and Ralston H. Nagata
of the

ORGANIZATION

Kauai Historical Society

DATE

May 25, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 1778

TELEPHONE

245-6931

CITY OR TOWN

Lihue

STATE

Hawaii 96766

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

Susan Ono

TITLE

Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

6/29/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Carol Shull
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

John
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9-4-79

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9-4-79

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is over the store front is built similar to the Mansard eaves except the shed extends out further from the wall line. At the first floor level, the recessed entry to the stair is located on the Lihue end. There appears to three major store front bays; one bay is closed with corrugated tin roofing; the other two bays appear to have been altered and are each further divided into four smaller sections with a door adjacent to the section at the Hanalei end. Each section consists of a large single-lite window set off the slab on a curb wall and above each large window is a smaller clerestory window.

The Hanalei and mauka elevations are similar to the makai elevation with the exception that the original multi-lite storefront is still intact only in the mauka elevation. The multi-lites are set in seven bays six-lites high by six to eight-lites wide. The center bay has a set of double doors, each with twenty-one-lites, and a fixed sidelight of sixteen-lites.

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THE SETO BUILDING

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE -- ADDENDUM

The Seto Building in Kapaa, Kauai is historically significant on two primary levels: the physical significance in terms of both style and function, and the social impact of the structure on the people of Kapaa for over fifty years.

I. PHYSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally, the structure is a unique combination of the Chinese aesthetic heritage of the Seto Family with the functional requirements of a modern-day supermarket and office building. This physical blending of form and function symbolizes the melting pot heritage of the Hawaii people. Brooks Taylor's design incorporated oriental features such as the "pagoda" style roof canopies, and the "cross swords" over the second floor windows (no doubt to ward off evil spirits) with an industrial post and beam framework. This type of structural system allowed for great flexibility in space planning, and could well accommodate the requirements of a supermarket. The finished product illustrates the obvious impact of James Seto on his engineer/designer.

Some of the unique features of the Seto Building include the use of integral floor color and the scoring of the concrete slab into 12" squares. The concrete curb around the perimeter of the structure was designed to facilitate the cleaning of the floor and to prevent dry rot of the mud sill. It is one of the first commercial buildings in Kauai to have a steel reinforced concrete slab and foundation.

Functionally, the concept for the building was a forerunner to the modern supermarket as we know it today. Formerly, food purchases had to be made at shops specializing in one commodity such as vegetables, fruits, or fish. Since there was no local refrigeration, meat was available only three days a week. Mainland foods were in short supply and, as a result, prices were high. With the opening of the Seto market, meat, vegetables, and fish were all available under one roof. Because of its refrigeration and freezer systems, meat was available every day of the week. Hard-to-find foods from the mainland were featured along with local

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Hawaiian delicacies. Since James Seto was able to buy in bulk quantities, he was able to offer quality foods at lower prices. As a result, this market had a tremendous impact on the shopping and eating habits of the people of Kapaa. The original market is obviously quite large in comparison to the size of "Kapaa Town" in 1929. This was intentional on the part of James Seto.

He ... "wanted the people of Kapaa to look at the building and be proud of the market and the Seto name".*

"It is Seto's plan to make the building up to date ... and the proposed building will be a credit to a community many times the size of Kapaa. The building will be of striking design and will be Chinese in pattern."**

"The market building will be a model of attractiveness and every thought has been given to the design and finish, both inside and out, in order to make the building a thing of beauty. ... The market house will be one of the finest buildings in Kauai. The design is novel in many ways. It suggests the oriental and at the same time is equipped with casement windows ... and large French glass-fixed windows around three sides. ... The market will be equipped to make trading there as comfortable and enjoyable as possible. ... Kapaa is very fortunate in having this building projected there."***

*Telephone Conversation with
Harry Seto, October 1978

... "The Garden Island"
**March 13, 1928
***March 26, 1929

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II. THE SOCIAL IMPACT

Although the Seto Building has many unique architectural features, its greatest significance is its impact on the lives of the people in Kapaa over the last fifty years. It has gone through a unique metamorphosis since August 24, 1929.

During the early 1900's, Kapaa was one of the largest and most important towns on Kauai. Many of the immigrant field workers settled in Kapaa. We have already discussed the initial impact of the Seto market in "Kapaa Town". Unfortunately, the original market was actually short-lived. With the coming of the depression, the Seto's extended credit to many of their friends in Kapaa. When the pineapple cannery closed down, many people were layed off and couldn't pay their bills. James Seto borrowed money to carry his customers and pay the mortgage. His Hawaiian spirit and community pride finally lost out to the depression. In 1931, he was forced to rent out the first floor of the building to Mr. Tadao Miura. "Mr. Miura ran a general food market carrying beef, pork, and canned goods. Olaf Thronas supplied meat from his ranch in Moloaa and pork came from the Japanese who raised pigs in their backyard. Mr. Yoneo Hirata, the store's butcher from 1932 - 1945, remembers it as one of the largest markets with all local beef and pork. He recalls working at the store as an apprentice meat cutter after school and then full time six days a week, 10 - 12 hours a day.

"During the war, it became difficult to operate a store without buying from the black market, due to the price fixing of the O.P.A. Refusing to buy black market products, Mr. Miura decided to give up the business. Being able to supply the store from family and friends, Mr. Minoru Furugen opened the quality market in January 1944. In 1958, Furugen merged with the Big Save, Inc., and the Seto Building housed the Kapaa Big Save until October 1961. Since that time, the first floor has remained vacant. The second floor was used from opening day until 1968 as living quarters and office spaces. Dr. Masunaga opened his dentist office soon after the opening and remained there until 1940."**** He was the only dentist in town. During the depression, it is rumored that there was a notorious numbers racketeer in the building, and gambling was commonplace. Although this is well known, Harry Seto recently denied this allegation probably to protect the Seto name.

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In 1941, there was a Japanese restaurant in the building. With the outbreak of World War II, the Philippine government set up temporary offices on the second floor. "The last occupant of the building moved from his second floor apartment in 1968, leaving the building to fall into disuse and disrepair. The major damage to the building has occurred on the Kamani tree side where a gutter downspout, which had been built into the side of the building, had rusted out causing dry rot to that section.

"Ownership of the building changed hands from James to his brother Harry in the 1940's or early 1950's, and then to Herbert Seto in 1960 as repayment of earlier loans to his brother James. In 1976, the building was sold to Jack Seto, Herbert's son."****

During the years, the Seto Building has had a tremendous impact on the lives of the people of Kapaa. Relatively speaking, the town of Kapaa has played a much larger role in the growth of Kauai than its size might suggest. The Seto Building and the old church (also by Brooks Taylor) are the two most significant buildings in the history of Kapaa.

Jack and Diana Seto, the current owners, plan to restore the building to preserve the heritage and continue to serve the people of Kapaa.

****"The Seto Building"
A report prepared by
the Kauai Historical
Society, 1977.