



DRAFT

# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## Peace Pagoda & Peace Plaza Peace Plaza, Japantown

Draft Article 10 Landmark Designation Report submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission, XXXXXXXX

City and County of San Francisco  
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Landmark No.  
**XXX**

Cover: Peace Pagoda, 2013.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is a seven-member body that makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding the designation of landmark buildings and districts. The regulations governing landmarks and landmark districts are found in Article 10 of the Planning Code. The HPC is staffed by the San Francisco Planning Department.

*This Draft Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the initiation and designation process. Only language contained within the Article 10 designation ordinance, adopted by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, should be regarded as final.*

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# Peace Pagoda & Peace Plaza

## Japantown

**Built:** 1968  
**Architect:** Yoshiro Taniguchi

### OVERVIEW

The Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza are located in what was historically the heart of San Francisco's *Nihonjinmachi*, or "Japanese people's town." Japanese residents began moving to this area of the Western Addition soon after the 1906 Earthquake, and by the 1920s had established a thriving and self-contained community. By 1940, Japantown embraced more than a dozen blocks and was home to more than 200 businesses owned by Japanese Americans. At the outbreak of World War II, however, all persons of Japanese ancestry in the neighborhood were forcibly removed and sent to incarceration camps.<sup>1</sup> Their former homes were soon occupied by thousands of newly-arrived war workers, most of whom were African American.

Following the war, many Japanese returned to the Western Addition and worked to reestablish themselves within the neighborhood. The area's aging building stock and multi-racial, multi-ethnic demographics, however, led some civic leaders to characterize the area as "blighted." This opened the door to the federally-funded Western Addition Redevelopment projects A-1 and A-2, administered by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. Though vigorously opposed by many leaders of the African American and Japanese American communities in the Western Addition, these projects would eventually demolish dozens of blocks and displace thousands of residents.

The Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza are products of Western Addition Redevelopment Area 1, which demolished the core of historic Japantown. In its place was constructed the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center, a bi-national corporately-funded endeavor largely tenanted by prominent Japanese companies. The Peace Pagoda was deliberately placed at the center of the development, but unlike other elements of the project, its construction was funded through donations drawn largely from San Francisco's sister-city, Osaka Japan. It was given to San Francisco as a symbol of friendship and peace between Japan and the United States.

From the beginning, Peace Plaza and the Peace Pagoda have served as focal points for an array of community cultural events, most notably the Cherry Blossom Festival and Nihonmachi Street Fair. Thus, although their construction was intimately associated with the bitterness of redevelopment, the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza have in many ways transcended their origin and today serve as the most emblematic features of Japantown. In particular, the Peace Pagoda is an iconic visual landmark, and in no small measure can be viewed as a physical manifestation of the community's identity and perseverance. It is a remarkable duality—that the signature element of the neighborhood's redevelopment has been reclaimed by the community as a place to bear witness to both its past and future.

Part of this embrace may spring from the refined aesthetic qualities of the Peace Pagoda, which is an architecturally significant work by Japanese master architect, Yoshiro Taniguchi. Its design is based on a pagoda form developed during the 8<sup>th</sup> century during a period of artistic blossoming in Japan. Taniguchi deliberately chose this design because of its associations with an act of Buddhist piety by the Japanese Empress Koken, and by proxy its associations with prayer and peace. Yet, despite the ancient origin of its form, the design of the Peace Pagoda is also decidedly Modern; it is a pagoda born of reinforced concrete and advanced engineering techniques. Thus, the Pagoda also has a dual nature that combines history and modernity in a way that mirrors the identity of Japantown itself.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "incarceration camp," or "concentration camp" are preferred by the Japanese community rather than "internment camp."

## BUILDING DESCRIPTION

### Peace Pagoda

The Peace Pagoda (APN 0700/023) is a reinforced concrete structure, approximately five stories in height and one hundred feet tall. It is located in the southwest quadrant of Peace Plaza (APN 0700/022) a 160' x 197' public park at the center of the block bounded by Laguna Street, Webster Street, Post Street and Geary Boulevard. The plaza is flanked by buildings constructed as part of the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center development.

Designed in a Modernist interpretation of a traditional Japanese pagoda form, the circular-plan structure consists of a core of twelve, vertical concrete posts supporting a series of five broad, circular, conical roofs clad in copper plates. Exposed concrete beams, resembling rafters, radiate from the central core to support the conical roofs, which decrease in diameter from 46 to 34 feet as they increase in height. The Pagoda is crowned with a nine-ringed bronze spire, or "kurin," surmounted by a golden flaming head, or "hoshu," topped with a ball finial.

The structure rests on a five-sided concrete podium composed of two inner concrete steps and three concrete outer steps. Further out is another concrete platform with three concrete steps. A copper plaque is located near the north end of the second step of the podium and reads: "THE PEACE PAGODA – Presented in Friendship to the People of the United States by the People of Japan – March 28, 1968." Another copper plaque with Japanese writing is affixed to one of the concrete posts of the central core. Translated it reads: "This Peace Pagoda was given to People of America from People of Japan as a token of friendship between two countries - March 28, 1968."



*Plaque located at the base of the Peace Pagoda*



*View north of the Peace Pagoda podium*





*Detail of the central core of the Peace Pagoda*



*Detail of the Japanese dedication plaque attached to one of the piers*



*Looking up in the central core of the Peace Pagoda*



*Detail of the kurin and hoshu*

The northwest and southwest portions of the Peace Pagoda podium are intersected by a waterfall (currently non-functioning), consisting of a raised platform featuring rectangular slate panels interspersed by natural stones. On the back wall is a dimensional letter sign reading "Japantown Peace Plaza." Immediately north of this lettering is an eternal flame of Peace, located behind a glass block inserted within the wall.

A portion of the waterfall also wraps the southwest portion of the Peace Pagoda podium, and features identical cladding materials. This area also features an accessible path of travel marked by a curving concrete wall with a metal railing



*View west showing a small portion of the waterfall located south of the Peace Pagoda podium.*



*View west showing the main portion of the waterfall located north of the Peace Pagoda podium.*



*Detail of the back wall of the waterfall showing the eternal flame.*



## Peace Plaza

The Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza stand atop a partially subterranean parking garage. As originally designed, the Peace Pagoda stood within a keyhole-shaped reflecting pool decorated with large stones which held the English and Japanese language dedication plaques for the Peace Pagoda. An eternal flame of peace was also located within the reflecting pool. The current form of Peace Plaza is the result of a 2000-2001 renovation project which removed most of the Plaza's original features. Today the Plaza is characterized by a large, open area featuring pastel, polychrome stone pavers and a variety of landscaping elements, light standards and sculptural elements. Generally speaking, the Plaza is divided into northern and southern halves by a guardrail and concrete steps leading to a sunken plaza located at the south end. Both of these halves feature linear arrangements of planters and light standards.

The eastern edge of Peace Plaza is lined with low concrete planters backed by a wall clad with slate veneer. The landscaping consists primarily of pine trees, bamboo and shrubbery. The west end of the Plaza also features linear concrete planters, although these are arranged on a slight northwest to southeast diagonal. They are planted primarily with cherry trees.



*Aerial view north of Peace Plaza and the Peace Pagoda. Geary Boulevard is at bottom. (Bing Maps)*

The center of Peace Plaza is aligned with the north-south axis of Buchanan Street. At its northern end along Post Street, this central axis is flanked on either side by three light poles crowned with circular disks. Marking the center of the Plaza's entrance is an obelisk installed in 2005 featuring various bronze bas reliefs which represent the Issei, Nisei and Sansei generational history of Japantown. The monument was built following the passage of SB307, the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project, and with funds provided by the California State Library's Civil Liberties Public Education Program. Text on the obelisk notes that it is one of three semi-identical landmarks placed in the three remaining Japantowns in San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles. The reliefs were created by artists Louis Quaintance and Eugene Daub. A poem entitled "Footsteps lead to destiny" by Janice Mirikitani is also included inscribed on one of the obelisk faces.



Behind this obelisk is a plaque inset on a stone face. It describes the origins and challenges that have confronted San Francisco's Japantown, and was sponsored by the California Japanese American Community Leadership Council and the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California.



*View south from Post Street showing the obelisk and plaque at the entry to Peace Plaza.*



*Details of scenes on the obelisk depicting (left to right) the Issei, Nisei and Sansei generations of Japantown.*



Semi-circles of mosaic paving radiate outward from these memorials into the Plaza. To the south of the memorials are two parallel rows of metal light standards inspired by Japanese *tōrō*, or lanterns. These light standards are in turn flanked by parallel rows of raised planters clad with a tiled stone veneer and landscaped with Japanese plum trees.

The entire east end of the Plaza is lined with a concrete wall clad with slate veneer. The northeast quadrant of the plaza includes a square concrete planter with wood bench seating, and two rectangular seating benches clad with a tile veneer. Located nearby is a large boulder that originally stood in the Peace Pagoda's reflecting pool. The southeast quadrant features two parallel lines with an alternating sequence of circular concrete planters, and circular planters ringed by bench seating. A third planting bed at the east end features a serpentine concrete retaining wall. Between the circular seating areas and the Peace Pagoda are four tubular light standards. The northeast and southeast quadrants are separated by a wall with metal guardrail aligned with the walkway and entrance to the East Mall of the Japan Center. At the west end of this guardrail are several boulders, one of which includes a plaque stating: "Japantown Peace Plaza Renovated and Dedicated on this 21<sup>st</sup> Day of April, 2001 Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr. City and County of San Francisco"



*View of light standards and planters in the northeast quadrant of Peace Plaza*



*View of light standards and planters in the southeast quadrant of Peace Plaza*



*View of the southwest quadrant of Peace Plaza*



*View of the northwest quadrant of Peace Plaza*

The northwest quadrant of Peace Plaza includes circular planters, concrete bench seating and large, sculptural stones. The planter wall at the west end is clad with a stone veneer. The southwest quadrant is accessed via a series of concrete steps. At the west end is the raised platform of the waterfall described above. Behind the rear wall of the waterfall is a linear planting bed landscaped with cherry trees. Concrete bench seating is located adjacent. To the west of this wall is the Kinetsu Center, or West Mall of the Japan Center. To the south of the mall's entry are three circular plaques painted with images related to Japanese history and culture.



*The southern edge of Peace Plaza along Geary Boulevard (Google Maps)*

The southern edge of Peace Plaza abuts Geary Boulevard. A tall concrete wall and *Tōrō* light standards line the sidewalk. Behind the wall is a planting bed. Adjacent to the Peace Pagoda is a rounded concrete wall with a ribbed concrete finish. A dimensional letter sign is affixed to this wall facing Geary Boulevard and reads “Japantown Peace Plaza.” The east end of this wall is accessed from Peace Plaza by a metal door.



*View west near southeast corner of Peace Plaza.*

At the southeast corner are concrete entry stairs which rise to meet a wall clad with red-colored tile veneer with an entry portal. Dimensional metal signs with stylized Japanese calligraphy are affixed to both sides of this wall and read: *Hei Wa*, or “Peace.” Three flagpoles are located immediately east of the entry stairs. These flagpoles are original to the Plaza, although they have been relocated from their original location fronting Post Street. Immediately west of the portal, within a planting bed, is a boulder that originally stood in a reflecting pool for the Peace Pagoda and was subsequently relocated here.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Richard M. Hashimoto, Corporate Manager, Japan Center Garage Corporation, personal communication April 1, 2015.

## CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Construction of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza was a product of the redevelopment of the Western Addition by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) during the 1960s. As discussed in greater detail later in this report, the area that is now Japantown was part of a larger multi-racial, multi-ethnic neighborhood that had begun to take root after the 1906 Earthquake. During World War II, the incarceration of the area's Japanese American residents opened up housing opportunities for thousands of newly-arrived African American war workers, further intensifying the neighborhood's diverse demographics. As Japanese Americans sought to reestablish themselves in the area during the post-war period, they were again subject to removal by powerful economic interests which viewed the Western Addition as ripe for redevelopment. This included the demolition of hundreds of homes and independent businesses at the heart of Japantown, to be replaced with a new commercial center constructed with corporate financing. As related in the *Japantown Historic Context Statement*:

A prominent feature of SFRA's redevelopment plan for the area was the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center. The first major project undertaken by SFRA director, Justin Herman, the Center was designed to solicit investment from Japan and to create a retail destination that would appeal to San Francisco's tourists. National-Braemar, a firm backed by investors from San Francisco and Hawaii, was selected by SFRA to be the master developer for the large mall complex, with the Center's structures to be operated by four different entities upon completion. In 1962, National-Braemar brought Kintetsu Enterprises Company of America, a new investment arm formed by Japan's Kinki Nippon Railway, into the project. The Center's design, like its funding, was a bi-national project.<sup>3</sup>

In keeping with the SFRAs vision for the neighborhood, the Japan Center would showcase Modern design and materials. Conspicuously, though, its design was also overtly Japanese. Prior to redevelopment, very few buildings in the neighborhood featured any architectural flourishes that announced the ethnic identity of the residents. In 1939, writer Charles Caldwell Dobie had even criticized the neighborhood for not looking sufficiently Japanese: "It is a shabby, gray part of town of which the Japanese have brought nothing in the way of charm or beauty .... They adapt themselves to any drab surroundings that come to hand."<sup>4</sup> However, as pointed out by Donna Graves, most of Japantown's businesses were "operated out of buildings that had been constructed and altered by others and often were originally intended for other uses. These structures, like most found in early 20th century urban ethnic enclaves, did not announce the identities of their immigrant residents – they did not "look Japanese."<sup>5</sup>



View north from Post Street showing the east side of Buchanan Street. 1942.  
(Dorothea Lange via the Bancroft Library).

<sup>3</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 59.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Caldwell Dobie, *San Francisco A Pageant*, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939), 270.

<sup>5</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 33.



The decision to include a pagoda as part of the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center's design is credited to Masayuki Tokioka, a Hawaiian financier and President of National-Braemar, developers of the Japan Center. In 1961, seven years before the Peace Pagoda was constructed, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on discussions between San Francisco mayor, George Christopher, and members of the Japanese government about installing a pagoda at the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center. The article mentions Tokioka's involvement, and also shows that even at this early date, the architect Yoshiro Taniguchi was identified as the proposed designer of the Peace Pagoda.

Mayor George Christopher made overtures to the Japanese government this week for the gift of a "Pagoda for Peace," to be put in the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center in the Western Addition. The Mayor said he had learned that Premier Hayato Ikeda and other Tokyo officials had suggested that if San Francisco invited such a gift, the Japanese government would favor it.

The idea of importing a pagoda originated with Masayuki Tokioka, a Japanese born Honolulu banker. He envisioned it as a symbol of Japanese-American friendship in the way that the gift of the Statue of Liberty enhanced Franco-American amity.

Mayor Christopher made his approach through a letter to Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

M. Justin Herman, the City's redevelopment director, said the design of the pagoda would be under the direction of Professor Yoshiro Taniguchi, architect for the Japanese Crown Prince's palace. The pagoda would exhibit Japan's historic and contemporary fine art, he said.<sup>6</sup>



Masayuki Tokioka, shown in the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency's Peace Pagoda pamphlet

Masayuki Tokioka was born in Japan and educated in the United States. According to one source, Tokioka chose the location for the Japan Center because of its historic connection to the Japanese American community. In 1969, the *Nichi Bei Times* reprinted an interview with Masayuki Tokioka that had originally been published in the Honolulu *Star Bulletin*. In it, Tokioka describes the origins of the Japan Center and his inspiration for the Peace Pagoda:

It was in 1960, he recalled, when three influential members of San Francisco's Japanese community came to his office "out of the clear blue sky" and dropped the challenge into his lap. Tokioka said that the center site was the heart of the business district for the Japanese who had settled in the area, known as "Nihon-machi" (Japan town).... According to Tokioka, city officials there wanted to give the Japanese community in San Francisco a chance to develop the site because the scar of the tragic war evacuation remained on the conscience of the city and a center of exchange, they felt, would symbolize that the past was indeed the past. Tokioka said that Japanese groups in San Francisco wanted to undertake the project, but couldn't quite swing it financially. It was at that juncture that Tokioka was approached ....

Under the terms of the agreement, the city sold the land for a nominal \$1.6 million. A bond was floated and largely underwritten by the Bank of America for a \$3 million underground parking

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<sup>6</sup> "Gift Pagoda from Japan Invited," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 23, 1961, 8,

garage for 800 cars. The title to the garage, which runs the length and breadth of the center, is held by the city, but the developers retained the air-rights.<sup>7</sup>

The idea of the pagoda, he [Tokioka] said, grew out of the blistery student uprising in Tokyo in June, 1960, that forced former President Eisenhower to cancel his visit to Japan. As he recalled “how hurt and embarrassed I felt ... The incident made me want to do something to show that the majority—a big majority—of the Japanese people are friends of the Americans.” And so it was that “my dream” for a Peace Pagoda was born.

He felt that the symbol could be meaningful only if the Japanese people themselves made the contribution. So keenly did he feel this that he made several trips to Japan to discuss the matter with business and government leaders, including the late Prime Minister Ikeda, who encouraged the project. Donations have come in from various quarters, particularly from the business community. Among the first contributors was industrialist Taizo Ishizaka, general chairman of Osaka’s Expo ’70 (Osaka and San Francisco are sister cities.)

The pagoda was designed by Prof. Yoshiro Taniguchi, a leading architect-author with a trail of notable credits, including the palace of the Crown Prince. The selection of Taniguchi’s contemporary design ended a brief flurry of controversy between those who favored a traditional design and those who didn’t. The circular concept in Taniguchi’s design was adapted from the pagodas dedicated to eternal peace by Empress Koken 1,200 years ago in Nara, Japan’s ancient capital .... Tokioka said that the pagoda will be completed in several stages and that it will cost over \$400,000 to fully finish the project. He strongly believes that San Francisco is the most appropriate site for the pagoda because Japan’s first envoys to the U.S. landed there and the city was also the setting for the signing of the treaty that ended World War II.<sup>8</sup>



*Drawing of the proposed Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza  
(San Francisco Chronicle, April 3, 1963)*

The design of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza was completed no later than April 1963. A *San Francisco Chronicle* article published that month included a rendering of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza, which appears to be very similar to what was eventually built. The article also confirms that many Japanese officials initially supported a more traditional pagoda for the Center. (A fuller discussion of the features of traditional Japanese pagodas, as well as origins of the Peace Pagoda’s design, is discussed below on page 28.) As discussed in the *Chronicle* article:

The plaza, at Post and Buchanan streets, will include a stylish, five ring concrete pagoda designed by a progressive architect, Yoshiro Taniguchi. The plans were announced yesterday by M. Justin Herman, the city’s redevelopment director, who has just returned from negotiations in Tokyo on details of the \$14 million cultural center. That ultramodern pagoda was his pet idea. He confided yesterday that when he arrived in Tokyo he was greeted as something of a cultural villain for his campaign to scrap construction of a pagoda with a 1000-year old tradition. He had felt that homely

<sup>7</sup> Tomi Knaeffer, “Pagoda of the Dream Come True,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, March 10, 1968. Reprinted in the *Nichi Bei Times’* Japanese Trade Center Commemorative Edition, Spring 1969, 59-60.

<sup>8</sup> Tomi Knaeffer, “Pagoda of the Dream Come True,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, March 10, 1968. Reprinted in the *Nichi Bei Times’* Japanese Trade Center Commemorative Edition, Spring 1969, 52-53.

wooden replica of the Daigo-ji Temple in Kyoto would look odd amid the ultramodern décor of the center.

But nobody told him that across the sea the sensitive Japanese were brooding about this affront to their proud history. And, anyway, a Peace Pagoda Construction Committee headed by Kazune Kato, of the Daiwa Bank, had even organized a “pennies-for-pagoda” drive based on the traditional Buddhist shrine.

The Tokyo committee included such big names as Tarzo Ishizaka, president of the Federation of Economic Organizations of Japan, a utilities magnate. During a week of peace talks, Herman said, he persuaded the committee to listen to the creator of the avant-garde pagoda plan: Professor Taniguchi, whose architectural designs include the new palace for the Crown Prince and the Okura Hotel.

“He was able to show them by photographs that the modern pagoda design was derived from a pagoda much older than the Daigo-ji model they were using,” Herman said. Taniguchi demonstrated a lineage traceable to the Horyu-ji Temple, which was built at Nara in 607 A.D.—350 years before the Daigo-ji Temple was completed, Herman said. Then came the clincher. Not only was the Horyu-ji concept more ancient, it was also more peace-loving. The committee was so pleased with Taniguchi that they asked him to design the entire “peace plaza” here, Herman said. The plaza will also include a reflection pool, gardens and display areas for Japanese works of art.<sup>9</sup>

In May 1963, architect Yoshiro Taniguchi prepared a several page narrative describing his design intent for the Peace Pagoda—later reproduced in a 1965 booklet prepared by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. In it he describes what he feels are the key elements of its design: its cylindrical shape, the *Kurin*, or spire, and the shape of its reflecting pool. Some elements described by Taniguchi, however, were never realized, such as his plans to cover the interior walls of the first story with mother-of-pearl, as well install a sculpture covered with cultured pearls. As described by the architect:

The Peace Pagoda to be placed in the inner court of the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center in San Francisco has been designed as a proper symbol of Japanese interpretation of the time-honored beauty and, at the same time, as a monumental expression of the real heart of the Japanese people, who sincerely aspire to the firm friendship and good understanding of the people of the United States .... [ I ] hope sincerely that the structure will have a congenial appeal to the mind of the American people, inasmuch as the essential spirit of this Pagoda consists in the inmost “Prayer” of human beings to the infinite. The Supreme Existence above us is sure to perform the sacred mission of creating integral peace and harmony by giving her final touch to the top of the Pagoda pointing to Heaven.

The Peace Pagoda lifts up its hundred-feet-high spire to the skies of California. It presents a magnificent view to all esthetically minded people who raise their eyes up to the horizon on the perimeters of San Francisco. The five roofs of the Pagoda are of the round type instead of the usual square shape; and in proportion to the increased height of each storey, the roofs are designed to become smaller in their size. The cylindrical construction of the tower-body will contribute to the sense of stable equilibrium.

The most important part of a pagoda is the “Kurin,” or nine ringed spire placed on the topmost roof, which is intended to designate the highest virtue; and every part of the pagoda below “Kurin” is to serve as a base of this spire. These rings are made of bronze gilded with gold on the surface. And the “Kurin” is given the proper balance by an ornamental ball with a flaming head named “Hoshu” as weight for pressing and arranging the rings in good order.

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<sup>9</sup> Donovan Bess, “A Japanese Gift to City—‘Peace Plaza’,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 3, 1963.



The color of the nine-ringed spire and the decorative weight over it on the topmost roof is gold. Each roof is covered with copper plates on its surface, which is tinged with antique looking green-rust. The body of the Pagoda is of the tuned harmony of black and white.

The interior walls on the first storey are set with resplendent shells, the mother-of-pearl. And in the center of this storey is placed a symbolic image of Peace which is studded with Japanese cultured pearls. A glance must be cast to the clear pool on the foot of this Pagoda. The pool is of the singular form which is named "Zen-po Ko-en" in Japan. The literal translation of this word is "Square-front and Circular-rear shape" ... The idea of this geometrical figure was given from the typical shape of the old burial mounds dedicated to the deceased nobles in the fifth or sixth century .... The Pagoda will be beautifully reflected in the clear water of the pool; and as night draws on, the whole structure will look extremely picturesque with the illumination shedding its soft light on the Pagoda. It looks as if the Pagoda is carved in relief against the nocturnal sky and floating on water in a fairy land. I should be very happy if I could successfully transplant the authentic "Shibui" flavor [intrinsic aesthetic qualities] of the Japanese historical monument on the soil of San Francisco.



*Yoshiro Taniguchi's model of the Peace Pagoda, as shown in a Peace Pagoda booklet produced by the SFRA in 1965. (Collections of the San Francisco Public Library)*

Serious consideration is to be given to the desirable harmony and match of the Pagoda with the surrounding construction in the same area, where Mr. Minoru Yamasaki, one of the most illustrious architects of the United States .... The cylindrical form of the Pagoda will have its place in the midst of linear straight erections of Mr. Minoru Yamasaki, shimming in with each other by creating an agreeable contrast between rectilinear and circular figures....

The Peace Pagoda is a reinforced concrete structure. The body of it is to be cast by the sliding-form system in the site in San Francisco. The pieces of framework of precast concrete are to be attached to each layer as the corresponding roof. The whole surface of the Pagoda is equipped with various sorts of finishing and decorative materials which will be shipped from Japan. These materials include metal and wooden works and fabrics refined up for more than a thousand years in our history of fine arts and also the advanced estheticism and handicrafts of the contemporary times. The stones and rock to be arranged in the pool and the inner court are to be sent from Japan. The Peace Pagoda is, thus, the very product of technical cooperation between the United States of America and Japan concerning the constructive formula, building materials and decorative patterns of both countries.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Yoshiro Taniguchi, "The Peace Pagoda – Its Beauty and It's Spirit," Typewritten manuscript on file at the San Francisco Public Library, May 0, 1963.

Long before construction even began, the Peace Pagoda was being promoted as the defining feature of the Japantown redevelopment. In 1965 the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency published an illustrated pamphlet solely about the Peace Pagoda, extolling the key role it would play in the overall design of the Japan Center.

The Pagoda will form the hub of the new Japanese trade and service area which will include shops, a contemporary theater, a hotel, restaurants, travel services, banking facilities, etc. Contemporary Japanese décor will be used throughout. A sizeable portion of this area will be dedicated to formal presentations of the arts, crafts and services of Japan. Hopefully the Pagoda will mark the axis of a neighboring four-block area to be renewed by Japanese-American residences, businessmen and institutions to be known as Nihon-Machi, or "Japanese Town."<sup>11</sup>



*Sumi painting and calligraphy by San Francisco artist, Mrs. Masae Yamamoto, used as the cover image of the Peace Pagoda booklet produced by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in March 1965. (Collections of the San Francisco Public Library)*

The Peace Pagoda was still under construction when the Japan Center was formally dedicated on March 28, 1968. The new \$20 million development included the 172-room Miyako Hotel, a Japanese consulate building and the Kintetsu Shopping Center.<sup>12</sup> The opening included a procession of Shinto priests and the lighting of an eternal flame in Peace Plaza, and was attended by Japanese Ambassador, Takeso Shimoda, and the deputy mayor of Osaka, Yasushi Oshima. The eternal flame was lit from a torch that had been brought by Japan Airlines from the *Sumiyoshi taisha*, or "Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine," founded in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Osaka.<sup>13</sup> This is the main shrine of all the Sumiyoshi shrines in Japan. The Japan Center dedication was followed by three-days of festivities for the annual Cherry Blossom Festival.

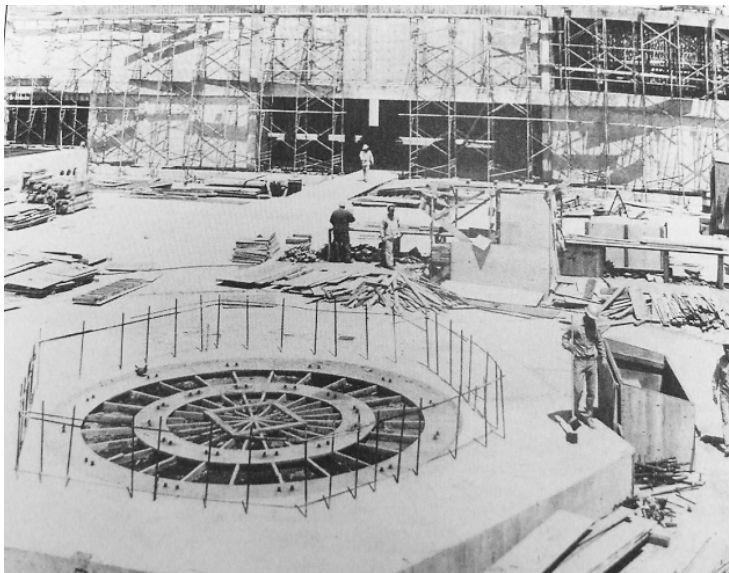
<sup>11</sup> San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, "The Peace Pagoda," San Francisco: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, March 1965.

<sup>12</sup> "Japan Town Opening," *The Argonaut*, March 27, 1968.

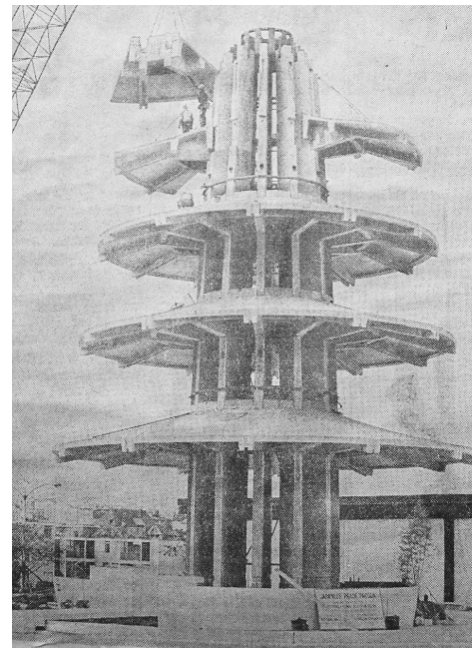
<sup>13</sup> "S.F. Japanese Center Dedicated," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 29, 1968.



*Drawing of the proposed Japanese Cultural and Trade Center from a booklet produced by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in March 1965.  
(San Francisco Public Library History Center)*



*Construction of the foundation for the Peace Pagoda, circa 1967.  
(Japanese American National Library Collections)*



*The Peace Pagoda under construction, July 1968  
(San Francisco Chronicle, July, 13, 1968)*



By July of 1968 the tiered roofs were being installed on the Peace Pagoda, while the *kurin*, or spire, was in the process of being cast.<sup>15</sup> The general contractor overseeing the Pagoda's construction was Martinelli Construction Company of San Francisco. The fabrication and installation of the various component pieces required a number of sub-contractors. According to an advertisement appearing in the a commemorative edition of the *Nichi Bei Times*, published in conjunction with the dedication of the Peace Pagoda, these sub-contractors included the Berkeley Brass Foundry Company, which cast the bronze *kurin*; C. E. Toland & Son of Oakland, which assembled the *kurin*; Hortie-Van Manufacturing Company of Pasadena, which built the center core of the *kurin*; and Terracon Corporation of Hayward, which supplied the pre-cast concrete for the piers and pagoda roofs.

A partner at Terracon, George Lew, managed the concrete casting. Each of the twelve concrete piers forming the central core of the Pagoda were 65 feet tall, weighed 12 tons, and were made with pre-stressed steel reinforcing rods to enhance their seismic resistance. The circular roofs were pre-cast in forms and covered with copper plating designed to weather into a green patina.<sup>16</sup>

The Peace Pagoda was dedicated and the *kurin* ritually blessed during a ceremony held at Peace Plaza on September 15, 1968. The event was attended by a 70-member delegation from Japan, including members of the Japanese Diet and several ministers. According to an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "The Peace Pagoda – Roses, Hope," more than 1000 persons witnessed the dedication:

The 100-foot-tall pagoda, designed by Dr. Yoshiro Taniguchi, is a \$185,000 gift from Japan to the people of the United States. The Rev. Nicholas M. Iyoya called it a "magnificent testimony to man's fervent hope for peace on earth."

Incense was offered, gongs sounded and rose petals tossed in the air by the nine Buddhist priests as "homage to the buddhas of the universe" .... San Francisco Mayor, Joseph Alioto, was quoted as calling the ceremony "a day that will live in glory," and characterized the Pagoda as a "magnificent shrine."<sup>17</sup>

The Peace Pagoda — a symbol of friendship and international good-will — may it always inspire men to their best efforts.  
With great pride, these firms join together in expressing pleasure in contributing to the construction of this outstanding new San Francisco landmark — the Peace Pagoda.

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**  
**MARTINELLI CONSTRUCTION CO., INC.**  
1580 Polson Street  
San Francisco, California

**SUB-CONTRACTORS**

**Casting Ornamental Spire (Kurin)**  
**BERKELEY BRASS FOUNDRY CO.**  
2425 Seventh Street  
Berkeley, California

**Erecting**  
**PATENT SCAFFOLDING CO.**  
1800 Mission Street  
San Francisco, California

**Mixing Concrete**  
**L. SCHAFER & CO.**  
25 - 12th Street  
San Francisco, California

**Hoisting**  
**HUGE CRANE & DRAYAGE CO.**  
15700 Biggs Avenue  
San Leandro, California

**Reinforcing Steel**  
**SOULE STEEL COMPANY**  
1700 Army Street  
San Francisco, California

**Electrical System**  
**HERZOG ELECTRIC CO.**  
855 Townsend Street  
San Francisco, California

**Structural Steel**  
**STRESSTEEL CORP.**  
Union City, California

**Center Core of Kurin**  
**HORTIE-VAN MFG. CO.**  
1820 E. Walnut Street  
Pasadena, California

**Pre-Cast Concrete**  
**TERRACON CORPORATION**  
1918 Ward Village Avenue  
Hayward, California

**Structural Engineers**  
**T. Y. LIN, KULKA, YANG & ASSOCIATES**  
15 Vandewater Street  
San Francisco, California

**Kurin Assembler**  
**C. E. TOLAND & SON**  
2625 Pacific  
Oakland, California

Made for Times Commemorative Edition Spring 1968

<sup>15</sup> "Pagoda Roofs," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 13, 1968.

<sup>16</sup> "A Unique S.F. Peace Pagoda," *San Francisco Examiner*, April 11, 1968.

<sup>17</sup> "The Peace Pagoda – Roses, Hope," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 16, 1968.

### The Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza as Constructed

The Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza were constructed above a parking garage accessed from the southeast end of the Kinetsu Center, or West Mall, of the Japan Center. As originally designed, Peace Plaza was substantially different than its contemporary appearance. The entirety of the design was distinctly Modernist, while simultaneously rooted in traditional Japanese forms. A fuller discussion of these influences is discussed later in the report on page 30. A large pavilion with an adjacent reflecting pool was installed along the northern portion of the Plaza. The pavilion featured a metal roof with flared eaves and was supported on rounded concrete posts. A paved walkway bisected the reflecting pool and included bench seating at the sides. Immediately north of the reflecting pool was a linear strip of landscaping and at least 12 flagpoles arranged in groups on either side of the entry gate.

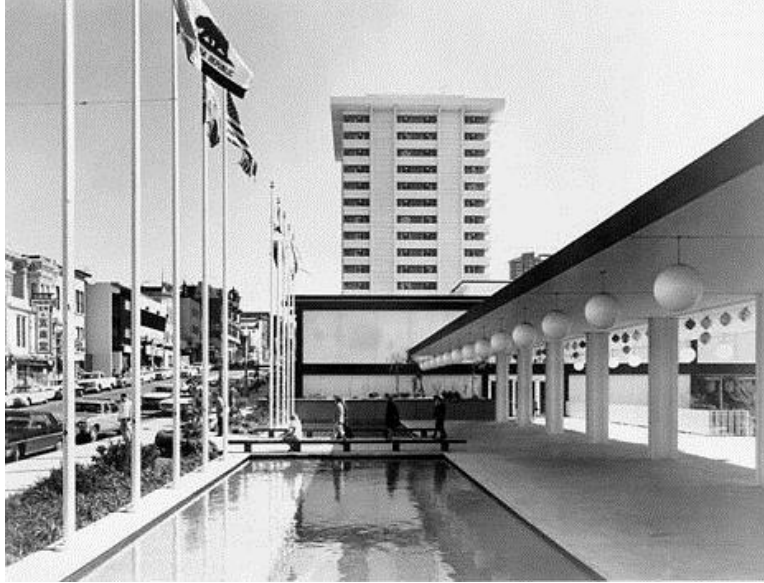


*Circa 1970s postcard view looking south across Post Street toward Peace Plaza and the Peace Pagoda. The ornamental wooden gate is a yagura, or wooden tower, that appears to have been erected prior to Japanese Emperor Hirohito's visit to San Francisco in October 1975.<sup>18</sup> (Sanfranciscodays.com)*

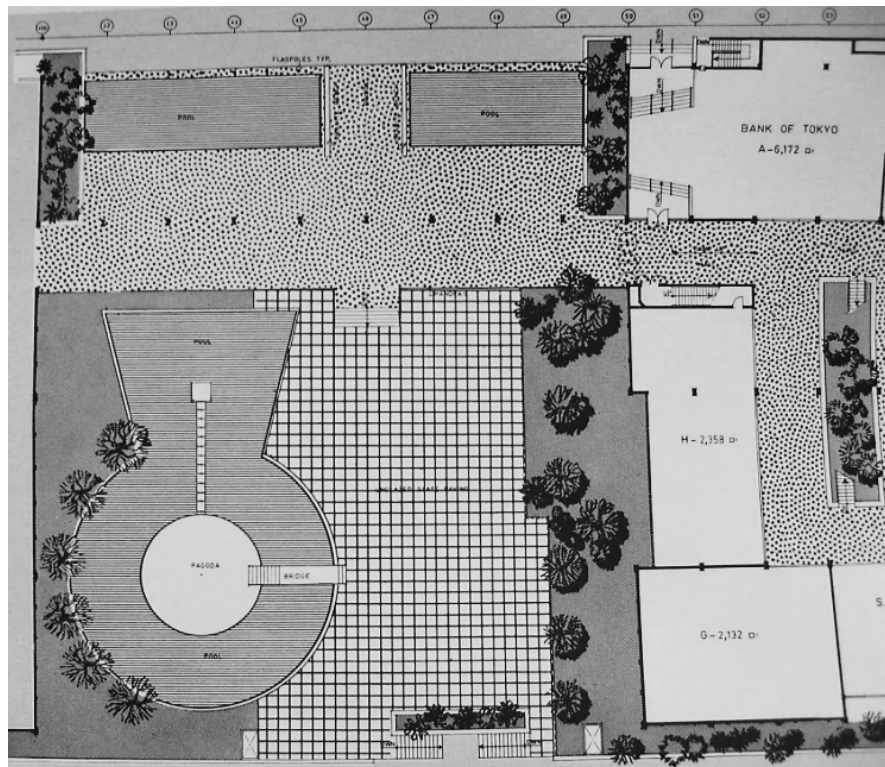
The central portion of Peace Plaza was paved with slate and entered via a series of steps descending from the center of the pavilion. The Peace Pagoda stood at the southern end of a shallow, keyhole-shaped reflecting pool, reflecting the “Zen-po Ko-en” shape described by Yoshiro Taniguchi. Within the pool, directly north of the Peace Pagoda, was a square concrete pedestal veneered with granite housing an eternal flame of peace. Access to the Pagoda was provided by a granite bridge and steps which crossed the pool from the east to meet stairs leading up to the central core of the Pagoda. Small pedestals or stones appear to have been placed at the base of the piers within the central core of the Pagoda. South of this bridge and within the pool were two large stones brought from Japan. At least one of these appears to have included one of the dedication plaques for the Peace Pagoda. The western and southern edges of the reflecting pool's retaining wall were landscaped with trees and shrubbery.

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<sup>18</sup> Rosalyn Tonai, email communication, March 19, 2015.



*Circa 1970s view looking east of the reflecting pool and Pavilion fronting Peace Plaza at Post Street  
(San Francisco Public Library Historical Photo Collection, AAB-9232)*



*Plan of Peace Plaza, as shown in a ca. 1970 brochure, "Nihonmachi,"  
published by National-Braemar, Inc.  
(Collections of the San Francisco Office of Investment & Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA)*



*Circa 1970s views of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza.  
From the top, clockwise: The reflecting pool and eternal flame  
(San Francisco Redevelopment Agency: The Decade Past and  
Decade to Come, p. 21); Cover of a Japan Center Brochure  
(SFRA Archives); Screen capture of video showing Peace Plaza  
from a October 22, 1971 KPIX News report (San Francisco  
Bay Area Television Archive)*





*View north of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza, circa 1970s  
(Hiroyuki Fukuda, via Heather David/Historypin.com)*



*Circa 1970s postcard view north of Peace Plaza. Note the reflecting pool encircling the Peace Pagoda.  
The eternal flame is located within the pool between the Pagoda and pavilion.  
(Private collection)*

The south end of Peace Plaza adjacent to Geary Boulevard was marked by a large concrete wall with twin concrete stairs rising toward the eastern end. Within the Plaza, the area adjacent to the stairs included a raised planter landscaped with shrubbery and a few trees.

### Subsequent Changes to Peace Plaza

Not long after Peace Plaza was constructed, problems became evident with water leaking from the reflecting pools. Indeed, a photo on page 20 indicates that even as early as 1971 the reflecting pools were often kept dry. As related in a memo prepared by SFRA Executive Director, Edward Helfeld:

The original 31,448 square foot Plaza had Japanese gardens and two reflecting pools. The focal point of the Plaza is a unique, 100 foot high, five-roofed cylindrical peace pagoda (most Japanese pagodas have square roofs). The property covered by the key-shaped pool that surrounds the that surrounds the base of the pagoda and the pagoda itself were paid for and presented to the people of San Francisco by the people of Osaka, Japan. The balance of the Plaza area was retained for maintenance by the developer for open space. Apparently due to poor construction, the plaza area had poor drainage, when the pools were filled or gardens were watered, the water would leak into the garage below.<sup>19</sup>

During the mid-1980s ownership of the Japan Center changed hands, leading to speculation that portions of Peace Plaza—which was not publicly owned at the time—might be developed for commercial purposes. This eventually led to the City acquiring the Plaza. As discussed in the memo prepared by Edward Helfeld:

In the mid-1980's National-Braemar, Inc. sold its interest in the Japan Center to others in connection with the bankruptcy proceedings of its parent company – Hawaii-based Manoa Finance Co. This included the sale of the non-city owned portion of Peace Plaza.

The subsequent owners stated that they had no current plans for the Plaza but felt that it was a “buildable piece of property.” However, a community newspaper revealed that in discussions with the new owners they had indicated that they wanted to construct a 8,500 square foot commercial facility on a portion of the Plaza including the stage area used for community performances. Although any change in use required the approval of the Agency Commission, no such plans were ever presented to the Agency ....

Nevertheless, the statement by the new owner galvanized the Nihonmachi community into action to preserve the Plaza as permanent open space. At the urging of the Nihonmachi community, on June 3, 1985, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution urging the Agency to preserve the Plaza as a permanent open space and that resolution was subsequently signed by Mayor Dianne Feinstein. In the light of this resolution and also at the urging of the community, on June 25, 1985, the Agency Commission adopted a resolution reaffirming its position that the Plaza remain permanent open space. Because of concerns that a subsequent Redevelopment Commission could change this policy, the community sought public ownership of the Plaza.<sup>20</sup>

In 1987, the City's Recreation and Park Commission voted unanimously to undertake eminent domain proceedings against the owner of Japan Center Peace Plaza. As noted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: “The Peace Pagoda, which towers over the plaza in Japan Town, was given to the city many years ago. The city has been negotiating to buy the surrounding plaza from owner Sinclair Louie, but Louie reportedly wants to keep a portion of the plaza to develop.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Edward Helfeld, SFRA Executive Directory, Memo regarding a request of funds to renovate Peace Plaza, February 2, 1993, typewritten manuscript on file with the *San Francisco Office of Investment & Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA*.

<sup>20</sup> Edward Helfeld, SFRA Executive Directory, Memo regarding a request of funds to renovate Peace Plaza, February 2, 1993, typewritten manuscript on file with the *San Francisco Office of Investment & Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA*.

<sup>21</sup> “Park Commission Oks Harvey Milk Mural,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 17, 1987.



*Undated postcard view of the Peace Pagoda.  
Note that a planter blocks access to the Pagoda core.  
(Private collection)*

The Japantown community rallied in support of public ownership, and “after a long struggle, in 1989, the Nihonmachi Community was able to persuade the City Recreation and Park Department to buy the Plaza as permanent open space.”<sup>22</sup> Though publicly owned, ongoing problems with water leaking from the Plaza into the garage below led to the permanent drainage of the reflecting pools and the removal of all landscaping in 1990. In 1991, the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted the deteriorated condition of the Plaza:

Few passers-by are enticed to the bleak setting around the five-tier Peace Pagoda, except during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival and Nihonmachi Street Fair. The pagoda’s reflecting pool has been dry for years because of the drought, and nearby concrete pits once planted with cherry trees and shrubs now sit bare. Dead leaves and garbage collect in the empty spots, and other areas are filled with stagnant water from recent rain .... The original Peace Plaza garden was uprooted last year when the city waterproofed a garage underneath.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Edward Helfeld, SFRA Executive Directory, Memo regarding a request of funds to renovate Peace Plaza, February 2, 1993, typewritten manuscript on file with the *San Francisco Office of Investment & Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA*.

<sup>23</sup> “Plan to Renovate Japantown Plaza / Businesses Hope to Draw Pedestrians Back to Tattered Garden,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 11, 1991.

The article also noted that a nonprofit group, Friends of Japan Town Peace Plaza, was in the process of raising funds to restore portions of the Plaza:

The [restoration] scheme would bring back a Japanese-style garden, designed by architect Kimio Kimura, of bonsai trees and native California plants amid a landscape of boulders and gravel. The keyhole-shaped pagoda pool would be converted to a garden and walkway, which could require removing the Peace Flame inside the pool. An 18-foot high wall enclosing the greenery would double as seating for visitors, and new drainage for the garden would be hooked up by the city.<sup>24</sup>

A fundraising brochure prepared around this time by the Friends of Japan Town Peace Plaza provided further illumination of the proposed restoration:

Originally, the Peace Plaza was beautifully landscaped with flowering cherry trees, plants and reflecting pools. These, unfortunately, had to be removed in 1990 as part of a waterproofing project undertaken by the Japan Center Garage which is located beneath the Plaza. It is now time to rebuild the Peace Plaza. Kimio Kimura, an internally acclaimed designer of Japanese gardens is the project's landscape architect. His plan—the winning design in a competition held in 1990—features a wondrously imaginative use of trees, plants, boulders and gravel to create a beautiful garden that will be a source of pride.... Although the Peace Plaza is owned by the City of San Francisco and administered by the Recreation and Park Department, there are not ample funds in the city budget to cover the cost of renovation.<sup>25</sup>



*Yukio Kitagawa, a manager of Sumitomo Bank of California holding plans to rehabilitate Peace Plaza.  
(San Francisco Chronicle, 11/11/1991)*

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<sup>24</sup> "Plan to Renovate Japantown Plaza / Businesses Hope to Draw Pedestrians Back to Tattered Garden," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 11, 1991.

<sup>25</sup> Friends of Japantown Peace Plaza, Japantown Peace Plaza Project, circa 1992 brochure held in the collections of the San Francisco Office of Investment and Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA.





*Pages from an early 1990s brochure produced by the Friends of Japantown Peace Plaza.  
At left a map of proposed landscaping. At right, a donation card.  
(Collections of the San Francisco Office of Investment & Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA)*

At the request of the Friends of Japantown Peace Plaza, the Redevelopment Agency Commission's 1994-1995 budget included \$600,000 from the tax increment funds for renovations to Peace Plaza. The funding was to be coordinated through a resolution by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors stating that redevelopment funds will "eliminate blight upon the surrounding area."<sup>26</sup> In other words, redevelopment funds were now being allocated to rehabilitate a blighted redevelopment, then only sixteen years old.

On February 28, 1995 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 43-95: "Approving a Transfer of \$600,000 to the City and County of San Francisco to be Used for Rehabilitation of the Peace Plaza Western Addition A-1." The Basis of Resolution states in part:

2. The Peace Plaza is an integral part of a culturally diverse Western Addition community and is a gathering place for cultural events and activities within the Western Addition....
4. The Peace Plaza's deteriorated condition is a blight upon the area. Rehabilitation and renovation of Peace Plaza will assist in the elimination of this blighting condition.
5. The rehabilitation and renovation of the Peace Plaza will be an economic benefit to the Nihonmachi Mall as tourists attending events at the Peace Plaza, such as the Annual Cherry Blossom Festival, are likely to shop at the stores located in the Mall.
6. The City and County of San Francisco has committed funds from its Open Space funds and the Friends of the Peace Plaza will contribute funds through its fundraising efforts.

<sup>26</sup> Clifford Graves, Executive Director of SFRA, Memo to John L. Taylor, Clerk of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, March 21, 1995.

By March 1995, Friends of Japantown Peace Plaza had retained H.O.K. Architects (Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum) to rehabilitate the Plaza. Later that same year, it became evident that the leakage of water from the Plaza into the garage beneath it remained a serious concern. This included leaking at drainage pipes and other penetrations into the garage area, as well as evidence of widespread leaking through cracks in the garage ceiling. Various memos, such as that prepared by Hirsch, Wright & Associates, Roofing & Waterproofing Consultants in September 1995, detail some of the issues. In describing the previous attempts to alleviate the leaking, they noted the new waterproofing membrane had been placed over old, and that new concrete had been encapsulated between layers of membrane—neither of which were considered best practices.<sup>27</sup>

It was decided later in the year that The Friends of Japantown Peace Plaza would continue to proceed with the rehabilitation project, but would include the costs for repairing the leakage in the overall project costs. H.O.K. was directed to value engineer the project to accommodate leakage repair.<sup>28</sup>

The rehabilitation project continued to languish until June 1998, when members of the Japantown community requested assistance from San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown. Allen Okamoto, Chair of the Friends of Japantown Peace Plaza, noted that \$800,000 was then available, and asked the mayor to push the renovation project forward. A memo from the meeting states that Mayor Brown related that Peace Plaza was “one of his favorite places to go in the neighborhood,” and that he had announced his candidacy “from this very spot.”<sup>29</sup>

In May 2000, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that the SFRA was on the verge of officially closing Western Addition A-1 as a designated redevelopment area. A photo accompanying the article shows a new wall and stairs located along Geary Boulevard, described as “one of the final projects of redevelopment that has received mixed reviews.”<sup>30</sup>



*The new wall and stairs installed along the Geary Boulevard facade of Peace Plaza, described as one of the final projects of Japantown's redevelopment. (San Francisco Examiner, May 8, 2000)*

Construction of the new wall along Geary Boulevard appears to have coincided with the commencement of the rehabilitation of Peace Plaza. According to Allen Okamoto, the rehabilitation project was carried out by the Department of Public Works (DPW), with the architect, design and materials chosen by DPW.<sup>31</sup> It was this project that resulted in the current appearance of Peace Plaza.

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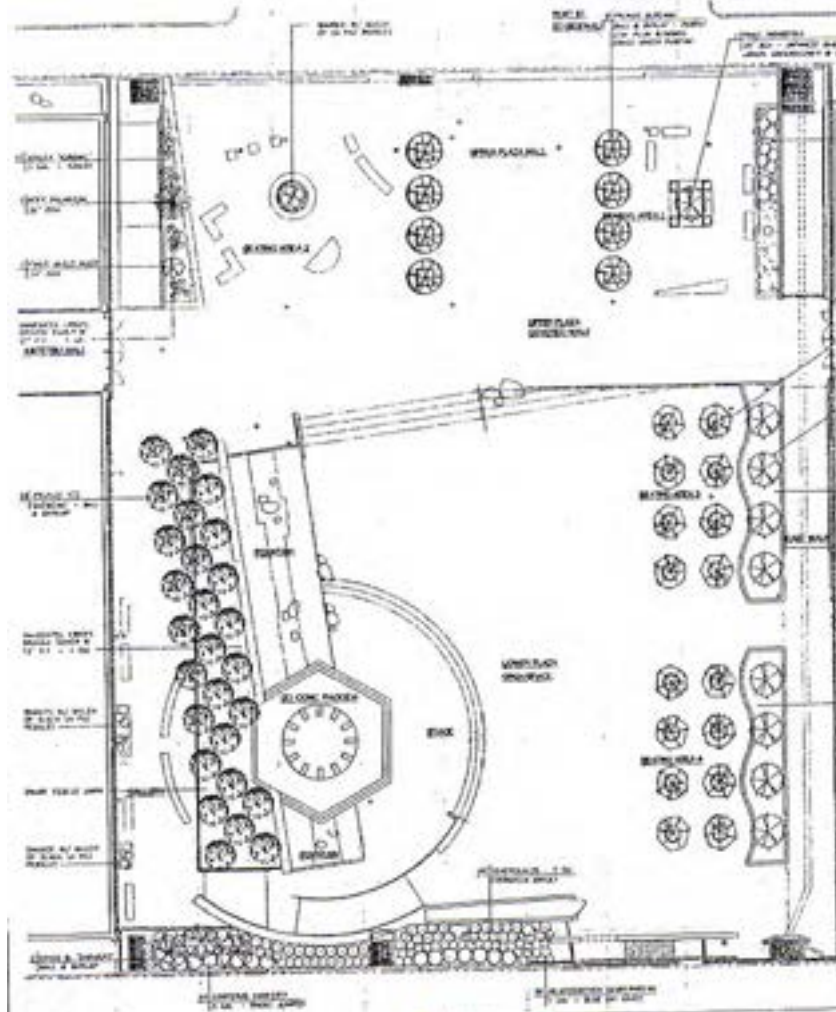
<sup>27</sup> Hirsch, Wright & Associates, Memo to Jeff Mori of The Friends of the Japantown Peace Plaza, entitled “Pre-Design Inspection Japantown Peace Plaza San Francisco, California,” September 8, 1995. Collections of the San Francisco Office of Investment and Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA.

<sup>28</sup> Elena Barnick, SFRA, Memo to Kathy Doi regarding the Japantown Peace Plaza Renovation, January 4, 1996. Collections of the San Francisco Office of Investment and Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Kono, Senior Deputy Executive Director Western Addition, A-2, Memorandum June 11, 1998 discussing a meeting between Mayor Brown and the Nihonmachi community. Collections of the San Francisco Office of Investment and Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA.

<sup>30</sup> Ilene Lelchuk, “Japantown ‘renewal’ leaves scars,” *San Francisco Examiner*, May 8, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> Allen Okamoto, email communication March 19, 2015.



*Circa 2000 plan of Peace Plaza as remodeled,  
attributed to the architect Kenji Murokami*

During the 2000-2001 renovation, two large stone, or boulders, which previously stood in the Peace Pagoda's reflecting pool were relocated. One is located near the northeast corner of the Plaza adjacent to Post Street. This stone originally held the English language dedication plaque for the Peace Pagoda. Another boulder is located in the southeast quadrant of Peace Plaza in a planting bed adjacent to the red-colored tiled wall near the stairs entering Peace Plaza from Geary Boulevard.<sup>32</sup>

Since that time, the most prominent addition to Peace Plaza is the previously mentioned obelisk fronting the Post Street entrance to Peace Plaza. It was installed in 2005 as part of a project to honor the historic heritage of California's three remaining Japantowns. Three monuments were built following the passage of SB307, the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project, and with funds provided by the California State Library's Civil Liberties Public Education Program and funds from Proposition 40. Each landmark stands nine feet high and its faces depict the Issei pioneers, World War II incarceration, and current community life. The San Francisco landmark varies slightly from the others in that its depiction of community life includes an image of the Peace Pagoda. San Francisco's landmark was

<sup>32</sup> Richard M. Hashimoto, Corporate Manager, Japan Center Garage Corporation, personal communication April 1, 2015.

dedicated in June 2005, while the landmark for San Jose was installed in the fall of 2005 in front of the Issei Memorial. The Los Angeles landmark was unveiled at the Union Center for the Arts in Little Tokyo in August 2006.<sup>33</sup>



*Two boulders that originally stood in the Peace Pagoda's reflecting pool. At left, the boulder which held the English language dedication plaque located near the northeast corner of Peace Plaza. At right, the boulder which presumably held the Japanese language dedication plaque located near the entry stairs from Geary Boulevard.*

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<sup>33</sup> California Japanese American Community Leadership Council, "Civil Liberties, accessed March 27, 2015 from: <http://cjaclc-ca.org/2014/03/12/civil-liberties/>



## ARCHITECTURAL INFLUENCES

As originally designed and constructed, the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza were overtly Modernist, yet simultaneously rooted in traditional Japanese architecture and aesthetics. To provide context for this blending of influences, the following explores the development of the pagoda form, as well as the advent of Modern architecture in Japan as an influence on Yoshiro Taniguchi.

### The Origins of the Pagoda Form

The pagoda form originated in India as the stupa, a dome or bell-shaped monument used for the storage of sacred relics. The form was adopted by the Buddhist tradition and came to symbolize the tomb of the Buddha, as well as the spread of Buddhism throughout East Asia. One of the central features of these stupas was the use of a *yasti*, or mast, which rose from the top of the stupa. This symbolized the axis mundi—the point at the center of the universe that connects heaven and earth.

Along with Buddhism, the stupa form reached China by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, where its architecture was blended with that of Chinese watchtowers and pavilions, eventually resulting in a more familiar image of a multi-tiered structure with projecting roofs and a crowning finial. Chinese pagodas were also sometimes built to enhance the *feng-shui* of a given locality. Thus, the pagoda could be used to secure the “geomantic influences for the good of the surrounding district.”<sup>35</sup> Most early Chinese pagodas employed masonry construction and served as important public monuments, as well as the most prominent vertical markers within the landscape.



*The Great Stupa at Sanchi in India, initially constructed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E.  
(Wikipedia)*



*The pagoda at Pizhi, China originally built in 753 and reconstructed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century  
(Wikipedia)*

In Japan, the pagoda form arrived with Buddhism in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and may have been adapted as an extension of the concept of the sacred column. In the central Japanese creation myth, the god Izanagi and goddess Izanami encircle a giant column linking heaven and earth. The concept of a sacred column was frequently applied to Shinto shrines, where tree trunks were installed at the center of the sacred space. Thus, some have described the pagoda—as it applies to Japanese architecture—as being “essentially a ‘splendidly ornamented pillar’ in the same tradition as the

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<sup>35</sup> C.A.S. Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, (Tuttle Publishing: North Calrendon, VT, 1974), 296.

sacred Shinto column.”<sup>36</sup> Some have also opined that the structures have a spiritual mystique because of “their considerable height and metal spires, pagodas are regularly struck by lightning.”<sup>37</sup>

The use of a central pillar in Japanese pagoda design also provided seismic stability. As related by William H. Coaldrake in *Architecture and Authority in Japan*, “In order to stabilize pagodas against earthquake shock they were equipped with a tall, mast-like pillar at the centre known as the *shinbashira*, or ‘heart pillar,’ which runs from the foundation podium through each storey and culminates in the bronze finial.”<sup>38</sup> Some architectural historians have even suggested that Frank Lloyd Wright, following his exposure to Japanese pagodas while building Tokyo’s Imperial Hotel, used this concept of a central mast in his designs for rigid-core high-rise structures.<sup>39</sup>

Japan’s monumental pagodas are constructed from wood with interlocking posts and beams spreading from the central column. Typically, pagodas have either three or five stories with squared roofs featuring flared eaves. Among the earliest and most famed Japanese pagodas is the one at Hōryū-ji (Temple of the Flourishing Law) in Nara prefecture. The pagoda’s central pillar has been dated to 594 A.D., and it is considered one of the oldest wooden buildings in the world. The architectural historian Udo Kultermann has said that Hōryū-ji pagoda “must be the most remarkable work in timber of the world,” characterized by “strength and a vigorous handling of materials.”<sup>40</sup> The pagoda at the Daigo-ji temple in Kyoto, constructed in 951 A.D., is also considered a National Treasure of Japan. As discussed earlier, a replica of this latter pagoda was originally envisioned for the Japan Center.



*The Pagoda at Hōryū-ji temple in Nara prefecture  
(Wikipedia)*



*The pagoda at the Daigo-ji temple in Kyoto  
(japantravelmate.com)*

<sup>36</sup> Kevin Nute, *Place, Time, and Being in Japanese Architecture*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 30.

<sup>37</sup> Maya Nogami, “Pagodas” accessed 3/30/2015 from: <http://thekyotoproject.org/english/pagodas/>

<sup>38</sup> William H. Coaldrake, *Architecture and Authority in Japan*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 126.

<sup>39</sup> M. F. Hearn, “A Japanese Inspiration for Frank Lloyd Wright’s Rigid-Core High-Rise Structures, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (March 1991), 71.

<sup>40</sup> Udo Kultermann, *New Japanese Architecture*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 9.

### **The Origin of the Design of the Peace Pagoda**

Although Japan's monumental pagodas were among the tallest structures of their age, numerous smaller pagodas were also carved from wood and stone. According to Yoshiro Taniguchi, it was actually one of these smaller pagodas that served as inspiration for his design of the Peace Pagoda. As related by Taniguchi in 1965:

The first construction of the Pagoda in Japan dates back to the seventh century; and during its long history extending over 1,300 years, the style of this religious tower has attained its characteristic grace and refinement in the fundamental design and the details. Japanese pagodas were originally intended to symbolize the sense of beauty peculiar to this country and also to give expression to the psychological inner reality of our urge to "Prayer" common to the whole of mankind ....

Contrary to the regular style of the Oriental pagoda which is mostly square or octagonal in its plane, I, the designer of the Peace Pagoda, had a preference for the cylindrical plane, which was devised in the ancient Japan of the eighth century (Nara Period). That era witnessed a flowering of Japan's intrinsic culture. A brilliant civilization flourished and prospered there .... In 770 A.D., Empress Koken was so pious as to contribute a hundred thousand miniature pagodas, not more than a foot high, to each of the ten grand temples designated as representative spiritual strongholds for her subjects. Thus the total number of the cylindrical pagodas donated by her reached as many as a million. Thereafter they were commonly named "Hyakuman-to" or the "Million Pagoda."



*One of the miniature "Million Pagodas" that inspired Yoshiro Taniguchi's design for the Peace Pagoda (San Francisco Redevelopment Agency)*

They showed such a graceful and exquisite quality with their three- or five-storied, round roofs that these pagodas marked a new epoch in the history of Japanese formative art. .... Though confined to her own domain, this Empress' act of religious contribution was ascribable to her heartiest wishes that the world should remain guided by the absolute principle of "Peace" forever

and ever to come. “Prayer for Eternal Peace of the World” – this was the prevailing cult among the Japanese forefathers. Dedication to this principle should not be allowed to diminish in any age.

Needless to say, the new Pagoda is far from the mere replica of the ancestral device of many centuries ago; it is intended to make full use of the advanced architectural technique so that it would be enjoyed by contemporary people equipped with a modern sense to appreciate the architecture in its true light.

The Peace Pagoda is the cream of architectural beauty attained by the sincerity and painstaking effort of our predecessors. The sublimated grace with its historical significance will strike a responsive chord in the hearts of those who lift up their eyes to this Pagoda.<sup>41</sup>

The “million pagodas” described by Taniguchi were carved of wood and included a hollow cavity at center that was accessed by removing the finial. Inside were small scrolls of paper with Buddhist sutras, or *dharanis*, printed on them. They were commissioned by Empress Koken following the successful repression of a rebellion, and are the first instances of mass-produced text in Japan, as well as some of the oldest printed texts in the world.<sup>42</sup>



*The Peace Pagoda at left, and an original “Million Pagoda” at right  
(San Francisco Planning Department / Metropolitan Museum of Art)*

The reflecting pool for the Peace Pagoda also draws upon traditional Japanese influences, such as the mirror pond used at the *Kinkaku-ji*, or Golden Pavilion at Kyoto. There, the stone islands and rock compositions condense the essence of the world into simple elements and evoke a strong sense of nature and place. As related in *Zen Gardens*, “This connection to nature and the sense of serenity and self-reflection that accompany it go back to the inherent role of nature in Japanese culture, born out of the conditions of the natural environment of Japan.”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, *The Peace Pagoda*, (San Francisco, San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, 1965),

<sup>42</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, “One of the One Million Pagodas (Hyakumanto) and Invocation, accessed March 16, 2015 from: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/44955>

<sup>43</sup> Mira Locher, *Zen Gardens: The Complete Works of Shunyo Masuno*, (North Clarendon, VT: uttle Publishing, 2012).



### The Advent of Modern Architecture in Japan

In ascribing influences to the design of the Peace Pagoda, it is also useful to understand the origins of Modern architecture in Japan, which represented a break from traditional methods in use for more than a millennium. As noted by Udo Kultermann in *New Japanese Architecture*, “all traditional Japanese architecture is fundamentally an architecture of wood.”<sup>44</sup> This was both a factor of the country’s forestry resources and frequent earthquakes—but just as importantly of the Japanese affinity for nature. In addition to timber framing, wood products were employed in a variety of ways: as roof shingles, paper screens, plank flooring, etc. The overall aesthetic emphasized simplicity, fluid function, and a desire to showcase the inherent beauty of natural materials.

The traditional construction methods used in Japan remained relatively unchanged until the mid-19th century, when Japan was forced to trade with foreign powers—most notably following the 1853 expedition into Tokyo harbor led by Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy. Japan’s trade and interchange with foreign powers increased dramatically during the Meiji period (1868-1912), as the country embarked on a rapid course of industrialization. This necessitated the need for new architectural methods and engineering expertise. As related by Kultermann, “The light, traditional, Japanese building methods with wood could not be applied to the construction of railway stations, city office blocks and factories. Architects were, therefore, commissioned from Europe, who used their own materials and methods.”<sup>45</sup> At the same time, the traditional arts and architecture of Japan made a strong impression in the West, particularly on the Arts and Crafts movement and its emphasis on natural materials and ‘honest’ construction.

Initially, the prominent buildings designed by westerners in Japan largely copied neoclassical European models and frequently employed masonry construction. Such designs were typical of the British architect, Josiah Conder, who for many years also taught a new generation of Japanese architects at the Imperial College of Engineering. As one critic has noted, “most of these architects, and official Japan as well, were caught in the vicious circle of 19<sup>th</sup>-century architectural pomposity, deluded by ... a false and meaningless version of what Europe had originated and experienced centuries ago.”<sup>46</sup>



*The Hisaya Iwasaki residence in Tokyo, designed by Josiah Conder and completed in 1896.*

If the initial influence of Western architects was tuned to Neoclassical European models, the Japanese would also absorb the influences of the European avant-garde. The late 1910s and early 1920s in Japan were a particularly formative period. Some of the major forces at play were debates between the *Kozoha*, or “structure advocates,” who

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<sup>44</sup> Udo Kultermann, *New Japanese Architecture*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Udo Kultermann, *New Japanese Architecture*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 10.

<sup>46</sup> Udo Kultermann, *New Japanese Architecture*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 11.

felt that good architecture should flow from scientific principles, and those who felt that architecture was an expression that encompassed both structure and beauty.<sup>47</sup>

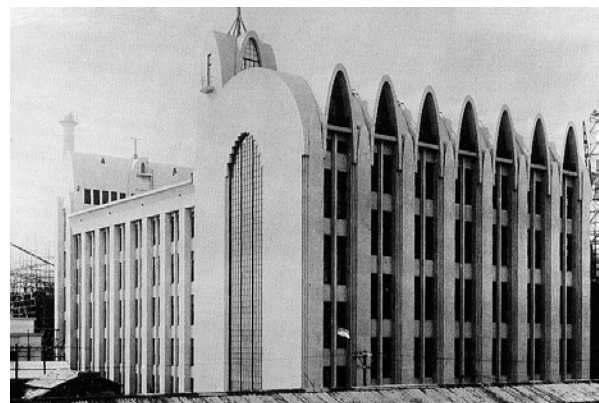
In 1920, a group of architecture students at Tokyo Imperial University founded *Bunriha Kenchiku Kai*, or the Secessionist Architectural Society, a name inspired by the influential Vienna Secessionist movement of the turn of the century. As described by Rosa and Lepik, “The organization came to be perceived as a neo-Secessionist group that rose against the teaching of traditional, historical European building style. Its real inspiration was German Expressionism that in the years after World War I was the most powerful force in German architectural life.”

One of the *Bunriha Kenchiku Kai*'s founders, Ishimoto Kikuji, travelled to Germany in 1922 and became the first Japanese architect to work with Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus school.<sup>48</sup> During this same period, Frank Lloyd Wright was working in Tokyo on the Imperial Hotel where he associated with a number of Japanese architects and draftsmen.<sup>49</sup> A pupil of Wright's, Antonin Raymond, arrived in Tokyo in 1919 to assist with construction of the hotel and would soon establish an influential and longstanding practice in Japan.

Perhaps no other event was more important to the development of modern Japanese architecture than the great Kanto earthquake of 1923 which set off devastating fires in Tokyo and the port city of Yokohama. The earthquake clearly demonstrated the seismic and fire resistant qualities of reinforced concrete construction, including the survival of Wright's Imperial Hotel. As such, the ideas of the *Kozoha* “structure advocates” resonated with many Japanese. In 1923, Japanese Consul General Oyama stated, “The nations of the world will go on progressing. We shall rebuild Tokio more as a modern city. Our architecture is not as safe in a big city. We must have reinforced concrete and the stable designs of the modern engineer.”<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, during the rebuilding, some of the major buildings constructed in Tokyo were designed by members of the *Bunriha Kenchiku Kai*, including the Shirokiya Department Store, by Ishimoto Kikuji, and the Central Telegraph Office by Yamada Mamoru, both completed in 1925.<sup>51</sup>



Postcard showing Tokyo's Shirokiya Department Store, redesigned by Ishimoto Kikuji in 1925. (Private collection)



The Central Telegraph Office in Tokyo, built in 1925 and designed by Yamada Mamoru. (Wikipedia)

The members of the *Bunriha Kenchiku Kai* continued to hold exhibitions through 1928, though increasingly Japanese architectural ideas focused on rational architecture, as espoused by the *Nihon Kokusai Kenchiku Kai* (Japan International Architectural Association), founded in 1929. During this period a number of Japanese architects

<sup>47</sup> Amani Daiki, “The Founding of Bunriha Kenchiku Kai: “Art” and “Expression” in Early Japanese Architectural Circle, 1888-1920,” *Aesthetics*, No. 13 (2009), 235-236.

<sup>48</sup> Irde Rosa and Andres Lepik, “The Berlin-Tokyo connection from late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to late 1920s,” Mori Art Museum, accessed 3/13/15 from: [http://www.mori.art.museum/english/contents/tokyo-berlin/about/img/Architecture\\_the\\_Berlin-Tokyo\\_connections.pdf](http://www.mori.art.museum/english/contents/tokyo-berlin/about/img/Architecture_the_Berlin-Tokyo_connections.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Kathryn Smith, Frank Lloyd Wright and the Imperial Hotel: A Postscript,” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (June, 1985), 300.

<sup>50</sup> Robert H. Willson, “Japanese,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 23, 1923.

<sup>51</sup> Peter McNeil, “Myths of Modernism: Japanese Architecture, Interior Design and the West, c. 1920-1940,” *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1992), 283.

traveled to Europe to train with leading figures in Modernist architecture. These included Iwao Yamawaki and Bunzo Yamaguchi, both of whom worked with Walter Gropius between 1928 and 1932, and Junzo Sakakura who worked with Le Corbusier between 1928 and 1936.<sup>52</sup> These architects all returned to practice in Japan, bringing with them new ideas, as well as books and journals.

European Modernists also visited Japan, including Richard Neutra in 1930, and the German Expressionist, Bruno Taut in 1933. Ironically, both Neutra and Taut gravitated to traditional Japanese design, with Neutra mourning that it “will quickly disappear without trace, when the new construction methods and materials are enlisted, like concrete, steel, glass windows.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Yoshiro Taniguchi, Architect**

It is during this period of architectural ferment that the architect of the Peace Pagoda, Yoshiro Taniguchi (1904-1979), received his degree in architecture and began practicing. Mr. Taniguchi was born into a family of prominent ceramics makers in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan. He entered the architectural department of Tokyo University in 1925 and graduated in 1928. Among his classmates were city planner Kunio Maekawa, structural technician Fugaku Yokoyama, and architect Junzo Sakakura. In time, their various careers would prove so productive that they earned the nickname “the golden generation.”<sup>54</sup>



*Yoshiro Taniguchi as pictured in the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency's 1965 Peace Pagoda pamphlet*

In 1931, Taniguchi became an assistant professor at Tokyo University. The following year he received considerable acclaim for his design of a Hydraulics Laboratory for the Tokyo Institute of Technology. Devoid of any ornamentation, the design of the Laboratory was decidedly Modernist and exhibited many hallmarks of what would come to be known as the “International Style,” a name coined for a seminal exhibition on Modern Architecture held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932.

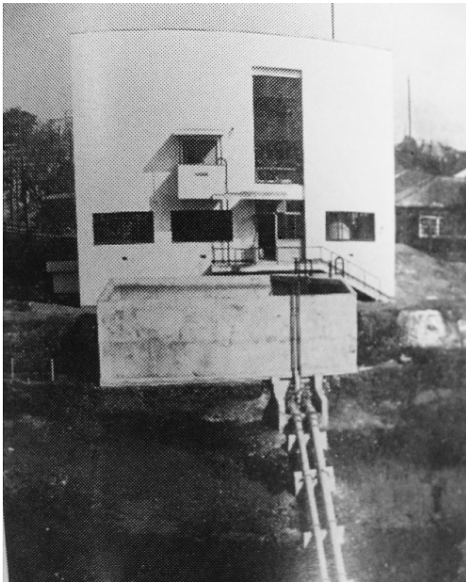
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<sup>52</sup> Peter McNeil, “Myths of Modernism: Japanese Architecture, Interior Design and the West, c. 1920-1940,” *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1992), 282-283.

<sup>53</sup> Peter McNeil, “Myths of Modernism: Japanese Architecture, Interior Design and the West, c. 1920-1940,” *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1992), 282.

<sup>54</sup> Hiroki Onobayashi, “A Profile of Yoshiro Taniguchi,” *The Japan Architect*, May 1966, 14.

In 1938 Taniguchi traveled to Germany to work on the Japanese Embassy in Berlin where, according to Hiroki Onobayashi, he was greatly impressed with both the architecture of Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Classical architecture.<sup>55</sup> In 1942, Taniguchi received the Japan Institute of Architects' Arts and Science Prize, and the following year received his doctoral degree in engineering and became a professor at Tokyo Industrial University.<sup>56</sup> During this early period of his career, Taniguchi was frequently associated with the designs for International Style institutional buildings. These included several buildings for Keio University in Tokyo, including the Yochisha Main Building (1937), and later the Student Hall and Third School Building for Keio University's Mita campus (1949). The latter two were awarded the Architectural Institute of Japan's Prize in 1949.<sup>57</sup>



*The Tokyo Institute of Technology  
Hydraulics Laboratory (1932)*  
(*The Japan Architect*, May 1966, page 15)



*Yochisha Main Building at Keio University (1937)*  
(*Keio University*)

In 1947, Taniguchi designed a memorial hall for the author Toson Shimazaki in the town of Magome, Gifu Prefecture. The design of this building blended the form of a traditional Japanese house with contemporary architecture, a feature that would become a hallmark of Taniguchi's subsequent career—especially in the design of memorials and cultural monuments. Indeed, Taniguchi's work during the 1950s, though varied, was marked by a string of important memorial commissions that earned him widespread acclaim.

<sup>55</sup> Hiroki Onobayashi, "A Profile of Yoshiro Taniguchi," *The Japan Architect*, May 1966, 14.

<sup>56</sup> James Philip Hoffsingere, Ph.D., "Yoshiro Taniguchi: Artist-Architect of Japan," *Vance Bibliographies Architecture Series: Bibliography A-436*, February 1981, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Keio University, "The Architecture of Keio University." Accessed February 12, 2015 from: [http://www.keio.ac.jp/en/keio\\_in\\_depth/keio\\_view/2014/09.html](http://www.keio.ac.jp/en/keio_in_depth/keio_view/2014/09.html)





*The Toson Shimazaki Memorial designed by Yoshiro Taniguchi in 1947  
(The Japan Architect, May 1966, page 15)*

In 1952, Taniguchi joined Japan's Cultural Properties Specialists Council. That same year, sculptor Isamu Noguchi teamed with Taniguchi on the design of a faculty room and sculpture garden at Tokyo University's Mita campus called *Shin Banraisha*, or "New Building of Welcome." Described as a "landmark of postwar modernism in Japanese art and architecture,"<sup>58</sup> and a "milestone in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese cultural life," *Shin Banraisha* was designed to honor Noguchi's father, Yone Noguchi, a Japanese poet and instructor at the university.<sup>59</sup> Of interest, Yone Noguchi had lived in San Francisco between 1893 and 1897, where he published two books of poetry.



*The Shin Banraisha faculty room at Keio University, designed by sculptor Isamu Noguchi and Yoshiro Taniguchi. (ArchNewsNow)*

<sup>58</sup> Japan's Architectural Functionalist, Tokyo Institute of Technology Bulletin, No. 4, 2007, accessed 3/10/15 from <http://www.lapis.co.jp/bulletin/archives/no4/history.html>

<sup>59</sup> The Noguchi Room at Keio University: Saved or Destroyed?, ArchNewsNow, July 15, 2003, accessed 3/10/15 from <http://www.archnewsnow.com/features/Feature116.htm>

Following his work on *Shin Banraisha*, Taniguchi designed a number of additional monuments, including a memorial for poet Kyūkin Susukida (1956); a memorial for pianist Nobu Koda (1958); a memorial for author Mokutaro Kinoshita (1958); a memorial for Japanese Prime Minister Kei Hara (1959); and the Chidorigafuchi War Memorial (1959). The latter was based on the shape of a Buddhist temple in Kyoto known as the Rokkaku-dō for its hexagonal shape.



*Chidorigafuchi War Memorial, built in 1959  
(The Japan Architect, Jan-Feb 1959, page 28)*

By this time, Taniguchi had earned a reputation as “a link between the newer school of modern architects and the more conservative school that based its work more directly on Japanese vernacular traditions.”<sup>60</sup> It is abundantly clear that Taniguchi was interested in traditional Japanese architecture during this period. In 1955 he authored “Today’s Focus on the History of Japanese Art” for an exhibit at the National Museum of Art. The following year he wrote an article for *Japan Quarterly* entitled “The Traditional Japanese House and its Contemporary Significance.” He also published a book about his impressions of the Shugakuin Imperial Villa in Kyoto, of which he said: “These ideas continue to impress people for many years to come. Such a power may be attributed to the life of beautiful designs expressed in the formative art of the past.”<sup>61</sup>

Visiting the Shugakuin Villa over a period of many years and during different seasons, Taniguchi was sometimes poetic in his praise, focusing on senses such as touch and sound:

The moss is so beautiful that it looks like a work of art, inducing us to refrain from walking on it. We feel like removing our footgear and walking on it barefooted to get the feel of the moss directly on the soles.<sup>62</sup>

The sounds of water in this garden are different from natural ones. They are artificial in a way, having been so devised as to be pleasing and cleanse our ears. This is an important design premeditated in constructing the garden ... Katsura Imperial Villa too has a pond, and due consideration is given to the plan for the water that pours into the pond and flows out of it. But the primal importance there was laid on the surface of the pond and the views of the buildings, the sound of water being a secondary matter.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> “The Architects,” *Japan 1962, A Special Issue of the Architectural Review*, Vol. CXXXII, No. 787, September 1962, 222.

<sup>61</sup> Yoshiro Taniguchi, *The Shugakuin Imperial Villa*, (Tokyo: The Mainichi Newspapers, 1956), preface.

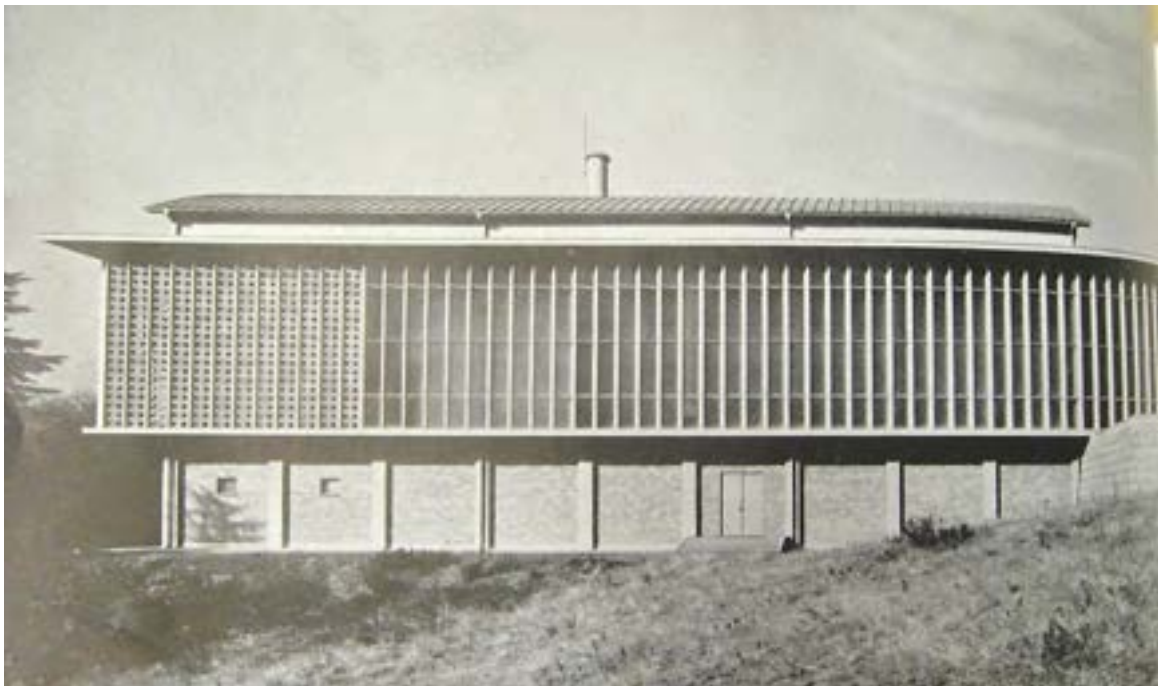
<sup>62</sup> Yoshiro Taniguchi, *The Shugakuin Imperial Villa*, (Tokyo: The Mainichi Newspapers, 1956), 2.

<sup>63</sup> Yoshiro Taniguchi, *The Shugakuin Imperial Villa*, (Tokyo: The Mainichi Newspapers, 1956), 3.

Whereas with one hand Taniguchi was interested in designing memorials that captured deep, historic cultural tones, he was also able to make monuments of raw industry. In 1956 he designed the Chichibu Cement Factory No. 2, described “a masterly example of the use of iron and concrete.”<sup>64</sup> Writing in *Architectural Review*, Hiroki Onobayashi states that Taniguchi’s “use of simple clear forms and rows of columns in some parts of the buildings, and the buildings’ proportions suggest they are actually a part of a background of Renaissance spirit and principle. It is true that Le Corbusier and the modern architecture influenced Taniguchi, but he is also in sympathy with Classical, particularly Renaissance, architecture.”<sup>65</sup>



*The Chichibu Cement Factory No. 2, constructed in 1956  
(The Japan Architect, May 1966, page 15)*



*Tokyo Institute of Technology Auditorium, built in 1959  
(The Japan Architect, Jan-Feb 1959, p.32)*

<sup>64</sup> Udo Kultermann, *New Japanese Architecture*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 29.

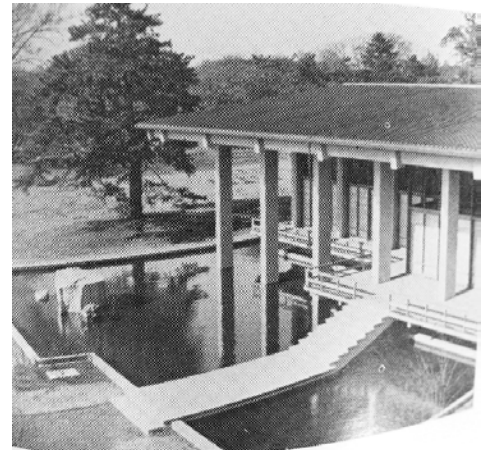
<sup>65</sup> Hiroki Onobayashi, “A Profile of Yoshiro Taniguchi,” *The Japan Architect*, May 1966, 14.



At the close of the 1950s, Taniguchi designed one of his most famed works, the *Tōgū-gosho*, or palace for the Japanese Crown Prince, Akihito, at the Imperial Akasaka Estate in Tokyo (1959). As described by Hiroki Onobayashi, “Rows of columns and a placement centering on a pond like those in the mansions of medieval aristocracy characterize this palace ... On the interior the structural members are clearly exposed in a rational architectural expression.”<sup>66</sup> In his work on the Togu Palace, Taniguchi used devices that would be repeated in his designs for the Peace Pagoda, including the use of a reflecting pool with islands of stone, as well as a flat bridge and steps.



*Model of the Togu Palace for the Crown Prince  
(The Japan Architect, May 1966, page 15)*



*Detail photo of the Togu Palace  
(Keio University)*

Fresh from the acclaim for his work on the Palace, and with his reputation for building memorials and monuments, it is not difficult to understand why Taniguchi was a natural choice as architect for the Peace Pagoda. Writing in 1960, Udo Kultermann stated:

Yoshiro Taniguchi must be regarded as one of the most widely known, and, in the best sense, popular architects in Japan, whose work can by no means be described as avant-gardiste. Conservative would be a better term.... Taniguchi is also well known for his writings and has made a name for himself as a designer of tombs, monuments and memorials which are all exquisite in themselves and suited to their surroundings.<sup>67</sup>

In 1961 Taniguchi was awarded by the Japan Academy of Arts and the following year was asked to join the organization. His work during this decade included a number of prominent institutional and commercial projects, including the Hotel Okura in Tokyo (1962), the Yamatane Art Museum (1965), and the lobby of the Imperial Theatre in 1966. He was also promoted to Professor Emeritus of Tokyo Industrial University in 1965. Taniguchi would close out the decade with the design of the Toyokan wing of the Tokyo National Museum (1968), and a redesign for the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (1969).<sup>68</sup> A contemporary article in *The Japan Architect* offered Taniguchi high praise: “Not only is he today one of the leading architects of the nation, he also occupies a unique position as a representative artist-architect of highly literary ideas. He is also known as a writer, and several of his many essays have won awards.”<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Hiroki Onobayashi, “A Profile of Yoshiro Taniguchi,” *The Japan Architect*, May 1966, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Udo Kultermann, *New Japanese Architecture*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 29.

<sup>68</sup> *The Japan Times*, “Yoshio Taniguchi: Thriving in the Shadows of Greatness,” accessed February 12, 2015 from: [http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2014/09/06/style/yoshio-taniguchi-thriving-shadow-greatness/#.VN1A\\_ZJ958E](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2014/09/06/style/yoshio-taniguchi-thriving-shadow-greatness/#.VN1A_ZJ958E)

<sup>69</sup> Hiroki Onobayashi, “A Profile of Yoshiro Taniguchi,” *The Japan Architect*, May 1966, 14.





*The Hotel Okura in Tokyo  
(Wikipedia)*



*The lobby of the Hotel Okura in 1964  
(Domus)*



*The Toyokan wing of the Tokyo National Museum  
(Wikipedia)*

During the final decade of the architect's life, architectural bibliographies indicate he remained active. This included collaborative work on the Kanazawa Sky Building and the Hotel Okura in Amsterdam, as well as a guest house annex for the Togu Palace and a Cemetery for the Temple Josen-ji. In 1973 he was awarded the Order of Cultural Merits for "his work in preserving the Japanese style in construction."<sup>70</sup> Taniguchi died of cancer at a Tokyo hospital in February 1979, and it appears his only commission built in the United States was the Peace Pagoda. His son, Yoshio Taniguchi (1937- ) is also a prominent architect, best known for his redesign of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2004.

<sup>70</sup> Anthony C. White, "Yoshiro Taniguchi: A Selected Bibliography," *Vance Bibliographies*, Architecture Series: Bibliography #A 2360, 1990, 1.

In some respects, Taniguchi's career during this period was symbolic of a larger trend in Japanese post-war architecture—that of the need to find meaningful cultural expression while still using contemporary materials. As described by Udo Kultermann in 1960:

A new recognition is emerging in structural techniques of the particular “Japaneseness” of Japan, and this has led to a critical attitude toward Western developments. In concrete frame construction—although often reflecting recent works by Le Corbusier—forms have been devised essentially suited to the Japanese climate, which correspond better to their traditions than the functionalist designs of the twenties. It is characteristic that today not only one side of Japanese tradition, that of the tea house and of the palace of Katsura is considered important, but also the other, recorded in the majestic temples and towers of the Nara period. The one-sided approach to building, which was a product of a European attitude of mind, has been overcome in Japan, and a complete expression of the innate character and spirit of the peoples is now sought.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Udo Kultermann, *New Japanese Architecture*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 13.

## THE FORMATION OF JAPANTOWN

The following narrative is largely reprised from the 2011 *Japantown Historic Context Statement* prepared by Donna Graves in association with a historic survey by Page & Turnbull. This document traces the evolution of *Nihonjinmachi*, or “Japanese people’s town,” from the Japanese settlement of the Western Addition through World War II, followed by the redevelopment of the Japantown area. As noted in the document:

The historic Japanese community of San Francisco, centered for the past century in Japantown, is the first and oldest urban community of its kind in the continental United States. Japanese began to arrive in California in 1869, when a handful of men and women migrated to San Francisco .... After Japan liberalized emigration restrictions in the mid-1880s, the number of Japanese coming to the United States climbed more rapidly as young men sought to leave sparse economic opportunities in their home country.

.... Early Japanese immigrants to San Francisco had settled in Chinatown. This co-location of Asian immigrants fit a pattern that was replicated across the Western United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Communities of Japanese and Chinese immigrants have distinctive but related histories shaped by immigration policies, changing demands for cheap labor, restrictions on land ownership, and racial animus .... Areas of town already inhabited by Chinese immigrants, who began arriving in the California during the Gold Rush, were often the only neighborhoods that permitted the first waves of Japanese immigrant men to find residences and set up small businesses.<sup>72</sup>

The primary catalyst for the formation of San Francisco’s Japantown was the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, which destroyed the northeastern portion of the city and displaced hundreds of thousands of residents. Many took refuge in the Western Addition, a large area in north-central San Francisco that had largely been spared by the disaster. Laid out in a grid pattern, the Western Addition was created in the 1850s and expanded the city’s original boundaries westward from Larkin to Divisadero streets. Although formal development of the area was initially sparse, more concentrated development arrived in tandem with the extension of new privately-owned streetcar lines during the final quarter of the nineteenth century. These included the Geary Street Railroad and Sutter Street Railroad, as well as the Metropolitan Electric Railroad running out O’Farrell Street and the California Street Cable Railroad.

With direct connections to downtown and the financial district, the Western Addition emerged as a “streetcar suburb,” with much of the new construction geared to meet the demands of the city’s growing middle class. This included rows of semi-identical row houses developed by firms such as The Real Estate Associates, as well as enclaves of larger, architect-designed homes for the more affluent. Demographically, the area was dominated by persons of European ancestry, with most non-Europeans residents employed as domestics. Notably, the area also included a large Jewish population as evidenced by the construction of Congregation Ohabei Shalom’s temple at 1881 Bush Street (1895), as well as Congregation Sherith Israel’s temple at 2266 California Street (1904).

### *The Development of Nihonjinmachi*

In the wake of the 1906 disaster, portions of the Western Addition underwent a rapid demographic shift as displaced residents sought places to live. As related in the *Japantown Historic Context Statement*:

Many of the neighborhood’s stately pre-disaster buildings, which had previously functioned as single-family dwellings, were divided into flats and rooms and let to boarders to satisfy the acute housing shortage. As the neighborhood became more densely occupied, it also grew more racially and ethnically diverse and more working class in character. In addition to the Japanese population formerly of Chinatown and South Park who sought new homes in the Western Addition neighborhood, the Jewish population grew, and Mexican Americans,

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<sup>72</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 25, 27-28.

African Americans, Filipinos and other ethnic groups also gravitated to the Western Addition-Fillmore area.<sup>73</sup>

... San Francisco's Japanese population relocated here [the Western Addition] in significant numbers. This process was recorded and encouraged by editorials in *Shin-Sekai* (The New World newspaper, originally a publication of the Japanese YMCA until it split off in 1897), which predicted that rents in the area would soon be forced down as ruined parts of the city were rebuilt. The publication encouraged Japanese to establish a new and permanent community in the Western Addition.



View east on Geary Street at Webster Street, December 8, 1911. The future site of the Japan Center is at left. (SFMTA Photo Archives)

By the time of the 1910 Census, the core area of Japantown, bounded approximately by Bush Street (north), Geary Street (south), Webster Street (west), and Laguna Street (east), was home to more than 50 Japanese-owned commercial establishments, and to most of the 4,700 Japanese residing in the city. The commercial infrastructure included ethnic mainstays such as Japanese grocery stores, importers, and restaurants. Support for the still largely single male population was visible in several Japanese pool halls, residence hotels, and employment agencies. The growing presence of families was reflected in a Japanese kindergarten, a dressmaker, and several midwives. However, property records from the same time show no Japanese owners in the area, even though the Alien Land Law restricting Asian immigrants from owning property did not occur until 1913. Rather, Japanese Americans at that time typically lacked the accumulated capital to purchase property. Later, when the Alien Land Law did restrict Asian immigrants to three-year leases on property, the practice of recording property ownership in legal trust under the name of a cooperative (non-Asian) partner who could legally own property became common ....

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<sup>73</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, Japantown Historic Context Statement, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 16-17.



Japanese names began to appear as property owners in the area in the 1920s, as the *Nisei* generation took ownership of their family homes and businesses. By 1930, at least 55 parcels were Japanese owned. Prior to American entry into World War II, this number had more than doubled to 122. While some Japanese purchased property and recorded it in the name of their American-born children, many continued to use the convention of land trusts with cooperative partners because of the ongoing political agitation against the Japanese, which included efforts to divest American-born children of Japanese descent of their U.S. citizenship.<sup>74</sup>

As with many other immigrant communities, the residents of Japantown did not announce their ethnic identity with architectural monuments or colorful displays, but rather sought to blend in with the fabric of their adopted country. This fact seems to have perplexed Euro-American residents of San Francisco, possibly because they were comparing the Japanese colony to the Chinese and their more readily identifiable enclave in Chinatown. Foreshadowing the comments of Charles Caldwell Dobie a decade-and-a-half later, Robert Willson wrote in the *San Francisco Examiner* of December 1923:

The Japanese colony has secured a firm footing in the very heart of San Francisco. Geary, Post and Sutter streets between Van Ness and Fillmore Street, have become a Japanese district. Stores and shops for the Japanese are in this district. Japanese stores for the American trade cling to Grant Avenue and share in the business of Chinatown even to the extent of Chinese wares.

It is the picturesque that the outsider looks for in a foreign land or in a foreign colony. "Little Tokyo" – you may have heard of it, and imagined some quaint locality of Oriental architecture, kimono-clad butterflies and strange temples. But the Japanese have never built in San Francisco, and have sold kimonos to others for the drab costume of "civilization" ....

The Japanese race once stood as an example among races of the poetic, fanciful, picturesque and aesthetic, made a part of everyday life and environment. These aspects are passing in Japan as they are laid aside here, apparently with little regret. The practical side of life – business, commerce and political ambition – have taken firm possession of the Japanese mind.<sup>75</sup>

The practical side of the residents of Japantown served them well as San Francisco and the rest of the nation entered the depths of the Depression during the 1930s. On the eve of World War II, the neighborhood was in some ways as prosperous as it had ever been. As related in the Japantown Historic Context Statement:

.... Hard work, frugality, and a largely family-based labor pool allowed Japantown businesses to weather the Depression ... By 1940, Japantown boasted more than 200 Japanese-owned businesses and a population of over 5,000. The thriving community included its own professionals – doctors, dentists and lawyers – as well as Nisei architect Gentoko "George" Shimamoto, whose practice at 1534 Geary Boulevard had designed Buddhist churches in San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose. There were stores to fill every need – dry goods, groceries, books, bicycles and hardware. Hungry diners had choices of American-style soda fountains, sushi and chop suey restaurants and freshly made manju. Nikkei auto mechanics, plumbers and cobblers worked on cars, houses, and shoes. It was not uncommon to find a diverse, multi-racial group of patrons eating side-by-side at the family-run businesses such as the Mikado Cafeteria, which served hot dogs and ham-and-egg sandwiches, as well as its popular fried noodles. Japantown of 1940 was part of the web of modern American commerce, but still featured four traditional *sentos*, or public bathhouses. Employment agencies still helped Issei newcomers find connections to prospective employers.

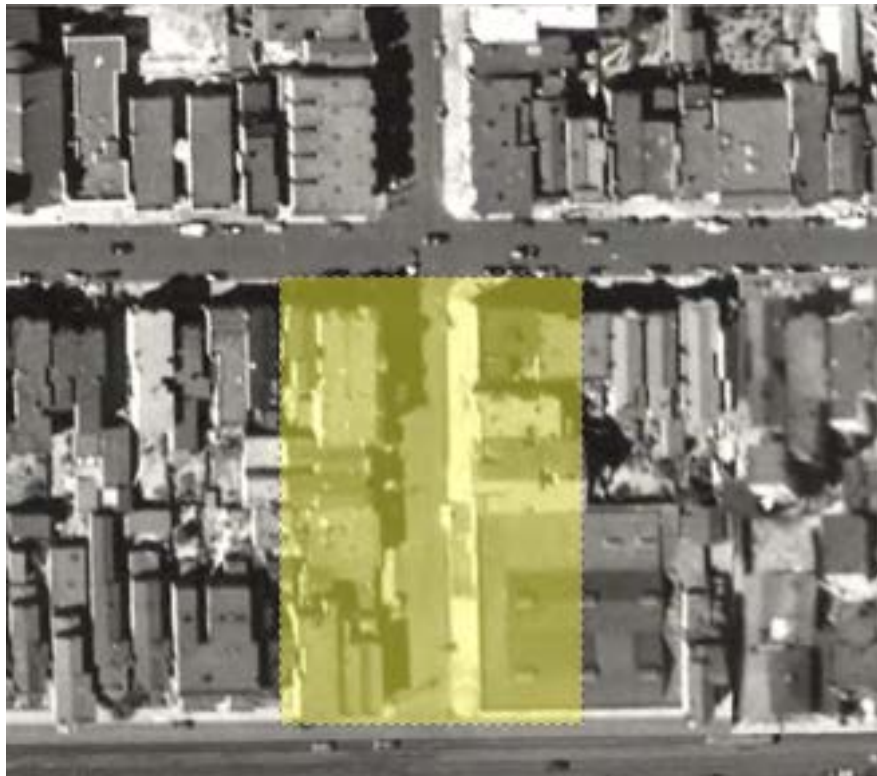
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<sup>74</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 29-30.

<sup>75</sup> Robert H. Willson, "Japanese," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 23, 1923.



*Japantown merchants Dave Tatsuno and his father shortly before removal, April 4, 1942.  
(Dorothea Lange, via the U.C. Berkeley Bancroft Library)*



*1938 aerial photo with the approximate location of Peace Plaza highlighted  
(Harrison Ryker via David Rumsey Map Collection)*

## World War II and Its Aftermath

Two months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942 which allowed for the establishment of restricted military zones on the West Coast. At the headquarters of the Western Defense Command at the Presidio of San Francisco, General John L. DeWitt issued a military proclamation that “all enemy aliens and all persons of Japanese ancestry” were subject to military regulation.<sup>76</sup> As related in the *Japantown Historic Context Statement*:

By late March 1942, DeWitt began issuing Civilian Exclusion Orders expelling “all persons of Japanese ancestry, including aliens and non-aliens” from the West Coast military zones. In a little over 4 months, more than 120,000 Americans of Japanese Ancestry were forced from their homes and interned by the government under the guise of national security. Forty years later, after extensive research and testimony, the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians would find that Executive Order 9066 and the internment of Japanese Americans was “a grave injustice” arising from “race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership.”

The entire Japanese community of San Francisco, both citizens and foreign-born, was ordered to register and eventually report for processing to various sites throughout San Francisco including the Kinmon Gakuen building on Bush Street, the YMCA Building on Buchanan Street, and Raphael Weill School (now Rosa Parks Elementary), from which the last busloads of Japanese Americans departed the City. By April, they were sent to various “Assembly” centers, like Tanforan, a hastily and poorly converted racetrack in San Bruno that was used as a temporary detention camp. From there, they were shipped out to permanent internment camps in rural areas throughout the Western U.S., where they lived under armed guard in temporary housing and surrounded by barbed wire. Most San Francisco residents were relocated to a camp known as Topaz, located near Delta, Utah ....



*A bus loaded with persons of Japanese ancestry bound for the Tanforan Assembly Center, April 29, 1942. (Dorothea Lange, via the U.C. Berkeley Bancroft Library)*

<sup>76</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 42.

Following the war, many Japanese Americans returned to Japantown, which had largely become occupied by wartime defense industry workers. Starting over was a particular hardship for most Japanese American families who did not own property, as temporary housing was often full.... The War Relocation Authority coordinated formal resettlement of San Francisco's Japantown after Proclamation 21 of December 18, 1944 rescinded the West Coast ban on persons of Japanese ancestry. From its San Francisco base, the Northern California WRA office oversaw resettlement of evacuees from San Jose to Santa Rosa up until May of 1946, when the WRA regional office in San Francisco closed ... Approximately 2,500 Japanese resettled in San Francisco in the first months of 1946, nearly half of the pre-war population, and almost two-thirds had arrived by October of that year to begin the complex task of rebuilding individual lives, businesses and community organizations ....

By 1949, Japantown had regained a lively, if reduced, commercial sector centered at Post and Buchanan streets. A 1948 Evacuation-Resettlement Directory published by the *Nichi Bei Times* listed over 150 Nikkei businesses and services, down from pre-war listings of more than 400 businesses .... Nikkei were rebuilding the Japantown community within a neighborhood that had witnessed a dramatic transformation during the war years. The area was still multi-racial, but was now widely known for its African American population, and especially a thriving nightlife supported by Black jazz and blues clubs.<sup>77</sup>



*Geary Boulevard just east of Buchanan Street, 1949. This block would be redeveloped as the Japan Center, with the east end of Peace Plaza replacing the building at far left.  
(San Francisco Public Library Historical Photo Collection, AAX-0177)*

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<sup>77</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 42-52.



## Redevelopment

The multi-racial, multi-ethnic nature of the Western Addition stood apart from many other San Francisco neighborhoods. The aging and crowded building stock was frequently neglected by absentee landlords, and racial animus hampered efforts by would-be buyers to obtain loans. In just a few years, the influx of war workers had more than quintupled the number of African Americans residing in the city, from approximately 5,000 in 1940 to 32,000 in 1945, with most living in the Western Addition.<sup>78</sup>

As early as 1942, while many of its residents were being interned, Japantown was being targeted for “slum clearance.” In April of that year, the *San Francisco News* announced that civic and business leaders “went all out to find a suitable plan that will prevent the Japanese district from turning into the worst slum in the history of the city.” ... In 1948, a portion of San Francisco’s Western Addition including much of Japantown was selected as one of the first large-scale urban renewal projects in the nation. The National Housing Act of 1949 set forth federal policies designed to address areas of “urban blight,” which were defined as neighborhoods with major influxes of new residents, overcrowding, cases of tuberculosis, and populations other than those of European descent—all characteristics of the Japantown-Fillmore area. San Francisco’s Planning Department had already begun establishing a case for rebuilding older neighborhoods with maps of blighted areas and a pilot study of redevelopment possibilities for the Western Addition...

The Western Addition fit the needs of city planners and downtown developers, who saw the neighborhood as the best site for new commercial and housing developments that would increase tax revenues and provide new vehicle access through the city, connecting downtown with the middle-class neighborhoods of the Richmond and Sunset districts. By cataloguing the Western Addition’s “substandard and slum housing conditions, overcrowding, lack of recreational space and intermixture of deleterious influences,” eligibility for federal redevelopment funds was established, and economic and social arguments were made for removing the businesses, residences and residents of the neighborhood.

From its inception, leaders of the ethnic communities that now called the neighborhood home were alarmed and worked to rally opposition to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency’s (SFRA) plans. In July 1948, the Buchanan Street YMCA hosted a meeting of over 300 residents, who heard NAACP President and publisher of the *Sun-Reporter*, Dr. Carleton Goodlett, speak about the threats posed by urban renewal. *Progressive News* publisher, Michi Onuma, cautioned the gathered throng that “no guarantees have been provided that new housing built in the area will not be priced out of the range of the average worker living there” and that “scores of small businessmen would be wiped out by the plan.” The Council for Civic Unity organized a meeting of Japanese American property owners and pledged to fight for “protection of minority groups in redevelopment plans.” The JACL expressed its acute concern about redevelopment impacts and demanded that the SFRA incorporate several points into its plan to protect the rights of residents and small business owners ....

Despite these prophetic voices, and years of delay caused by lawsuits and the complications of developing a plan for relocating residents, the SFRA began acquiring properties in the late 1950s and mass clearance of much of the neighborhood through the use of eminent domain was accomplished within ten years. This undertaking was conducted in two project areas: A-1 and A-2.

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<sup>78</sup> Tim Kelley Consulting, The Alfred Williams Consultancy, VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting, *San Francisco African American Citywide Historic Context Statement 1579-2014*, January 2015, 43,



*Map of Redevelopment Area A-1, date stamped June 1952.  
The arrow at top has been inserted to show the future location of Peace Plaza.  
(San Francisco Public Library History Center)*

The A-1 redevelopment area encompassed an irregular area of 27 blocks, including much of Japantown south of Post Street. The SFRA's Western Addition Project Office was established in the Buchanan YMCA building in 1958 .... Eight thousand residents were evicted by the A-1 phase of redevelopment, displacing the neighborhood's multi-ethnic populace without a comprehensive plan for finding new homes. Nearly all of the area's residents rented or leased their homes and commercial establishments before urban renewal and thus received no relocation assistance or compensation. Additionally, only 686 units of the 2,014 new housing units constructed under the SFRA plan were offered at low to moderate rental prices, making it almost impossible for most previous tenants to return to the neighborhood.

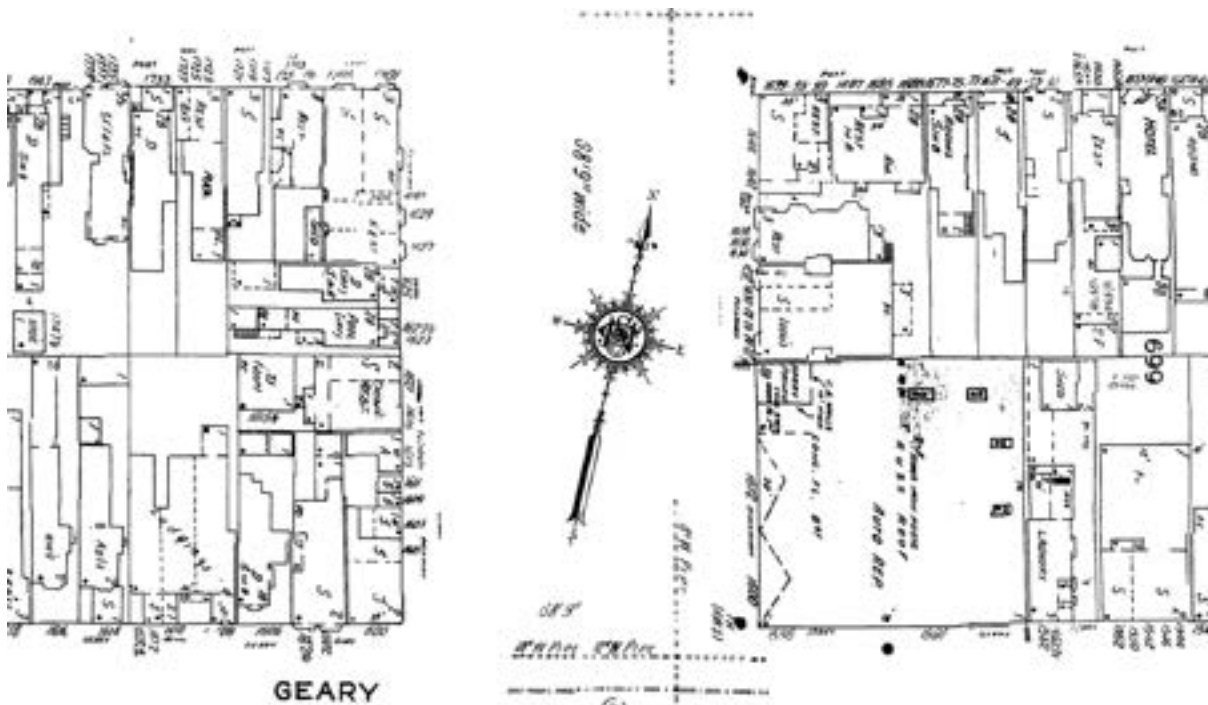
Funds from the federal highway program created the new Geary Expressway, which sliced through what had historically been the Japantown-Fillmore neighborhood with its southern border along O'Farrell Street. Hence, the Geary Expressway became a physical and psychological dividing line between the African American community to the south, where public housing projects intended for low-income populations were built, and the more affluent communities of European ancestry to the north, with Japanese Americans located at what Doris Matsumoto described as the "grey area in the middle."<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 53-59.



View west on Geary Street at Webster Street just prior to widening, December 1958.  
(SFMTA Photo Archives)

The area where Peace Plaza stands today was, in the early 1950s, a thriving commercial district characterized by shops restaurants, dwellings and lodging houses. According to the 1953 city directory, some of the businesses located along the 1600 block of Buchanan Street included Ken's Barber Shop (1603), Lucky Bait Shop (1605), Man Far Low Restaurant (1615), Fuji Hotel (1622), Tosbie's Barber Shop (1629), Mikado Hotel (1645) and the Five Stars Luncheonette (1649). Nearby businesses on the 1600 and 1700 blocks of Post Street included the Tokyo Parlor Restaurant (1669), Spiritual Record Shop (1673), Mt. Trinity Baptist Church (1681), Soko Hardware (1698), Nakagawa Shohinkan Co dry goods (1701), Gosha-Do Books & Stationary (1705), the Nakashima Theatrical Agency (1711) and Minato Japanese Dishes (1715) .

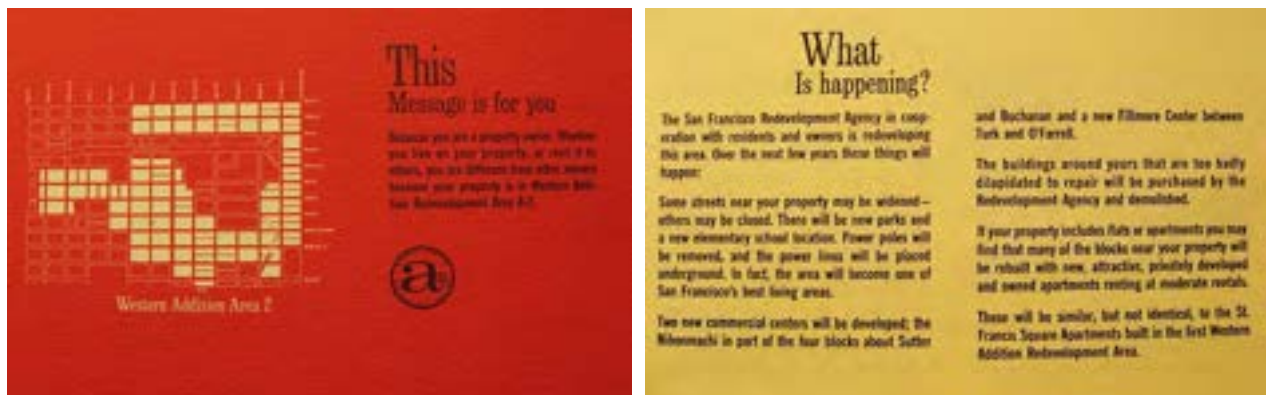


1950 Sanborn Map showing the approximate future location of Peace Plaza.  
Note the concentration of restaurants and shops along Buchanan (middle) and Post streets (top).

## Western Addition Project Area A-2

The A-1 Redevelopment was followed by the A-2 phase, approved in 1965. The A-2 project area encompassed a larger portion of Fillmore Street and the surrounding blocks, and led to the displacement of approximately 13,000 persons.<sup>80</sup> While much of the A-1 Redevelopment was completed relatively quickly, the A-2 Redevelopment was even more divisive and would take nearly 25 years to fully complete. As related in the *Japantown Historic Context Statement*:

Planning for the A-2 phase of redevelopment began even before ground was broken on Japan Center, and encompassed an even larger area of seventy blocks and 277 acres surrounding the A-1 area and extending from Bush to Grove streets and from Broderick Street to Van Ness Avenue. As the SFRA announced plans for the launching of the A-2 phase, community members who had witnessed the ongoing mass evictions and clearance of the neighboring A-1 area became concerned and alarmed at the possibility of the same occurring in the remainder of Japantown. SFRA director, Justin Herman, stated his commitment to preserving existing buildings in the project area “as much as possible.” In part at the urging of the SFRA, the United Committee for the Japantown Community (UCJC) was formed in 1962 with over 200 members. The group’s “Statement of Policy” included retention of Japanese American residents and businesses as the highest priority. After negotiations with the SFRA, the UCJC formed the Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation (NCDC) in 1964, which became responsible for “allocating development sites to its members, undertaking the financing and development of shared facilities, [and] coordinating community interests” with the Agency. “Nihonmachi” became the formal designation for the four-block area bounded by Webster, Sutter, Bush and Laguna streets.



Back cover (left) and page from a SFRA pamphlet, “Rehabilitation Western Addition Area 2,” produced in September 1966 and distributed to owners and residents (San Francisco Public Library History Center)

The architectural team of Rai Y. Okamoto and Van Bourg/Nakamura, was selected by the SFRA from a list of consultants drafted by the UCJC to prepare concept plans envisioning a new “village-scale” development and a community center for Nihonmachi. Okamoto and Van Bourg/Nakamura’s urban design study for Nihonmachi describes “the wishes of the local citizens” for an environment characterized by an “intimate scale of buildings and spaces.”

<sup>80</sup> Ilene Leichuk, “Japantown ‘renewal’ leaves scars,” *San Francisco Examiner*, May 8, 2000.





*Plans for Nihomachi Western Addition Area 2 by Van Bourg/Nakamura and Rai Y. Okamoto, from a March 1968 SFRA pamphlet (Collections of the San Francisco Office of Investment & Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA)*

These objectives were clearly a response to the massive scale of Japan Center and its erasure of historic Japantown. The report devoted several pages to discussing the implications of the SFRA and UCJC's expressed desire that "ethnic character" be encouraged wherever possible. Rather than propose that particular eras or styles of Japanese design be the model for a new Nihonmachi, the authors listed aspects of traditional and contemporary design in Japan as "critical areas where sensitivity and good judgment should be applied." Attention to Japanese use of materials, structure, space, modularity, roofs and gardens by "gifted architects and landscape architects" would "serve the special needs of a Nihonmachi."

Not surprisingly, Buchanan Mall, the central component of the A-2 phase, designed by Okamoto's firm in the 1970s and completed in 1976, reflected these qualities. The central plaza was framed by two-story commercial structures that referred to traditional Japanese villages through scale, massing and decorative patterns on the facades. Okamoto invited sculptor Ruth Asawa to create two fountains that punctuated Okamoto's "cobblestone river" as it meandered from a decorative gate at Sutter Street through the center of the Buchanan Mall and into the Peace Plaza of Japan Center across Post Street. Asawa's Origami Fountains, like the architecture surrounding them, echoed Japanese cultural traditions in modernist form. Asawa also added bas-reliefs to cast concrete benches along the mall – the panels, created with local children, depicted figures and scenes from Japanese folk tales.



*View south along Buchanan Mall with Ruth Asawa fountains in foreground, February 2015.*

Van Bourg/Nakamura and Okamoto advised that “the retention of existing commercial enterprises together with selected new activities” would create the optimum mix for achieving neighborhood and SFRA goals. Ultimately, redevelopment dramatically raised property values, and increased rents prevented many small businesses that previously served the neighborhood from returning to Japantown after being displaced for construction. Newspapers at that time reported property taxes tripling in areas adjacent to the new Japan Cultural and Trade Center. As more and more affordable housing and small family businesses were removed to make way for hotels and larger businesses, the tightly woven historic fabric of the neighborhood was further unraveled.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Donna Graves & Page & Turnbull, *Japantown Historic Context Statement*, Revised May 2011, (San Francisco, Page & Turnbull), 60-62.

## SISTER CITIES: SAN FRANCISCO AND OSAKA

It is certain that donations for the construction of the Peace Pagoda came from across Japan, and the official dedication plaque states that it is a gift from the Japanese people. Nevertheless, most contemporary sources describe the Pagoda as a gift from San Francisco's sister-city, Osaka, Japan. Sister-city partnerships, also known as "twin towns," have their origins in the aftermath of World War II, when a number of English cities began sending aid to European cities which had shared similar experiences during the war. For example, Coventry, which had been heavily bombed by the Germans, formed a link with the Soviet city of Stalingrad. The university town of Oxford likewise partnered with the Dutch university city of Leiden.<sup>82</sup> Sister city arrangements were also made with German municipalities. While these partnerships initially focused on supplying relief aid, they soon grew into mutual exchange programs which helped foster international cooperation and encouraged reconciliation.

The sister cities program as we know it today was an outgrowth of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's White House Conference on citizen diplomacy, held in September 1956. The conference included the formation of a number of "People to People" committees, designed to diffuse Cold War tensions through cultural exchange and mutual understanding. As stated by President Eisenhower, the value of cultivating international relationships was "based upon the assumption that no people, as such, wants war; that all people want peace."<sup>83</sup>

On October 7, 1957, San Francisco formed its first sister-city partnership with Osaka, Japan, which was also the first sister-city relationship between the United States and Japan. The ceremonies were held in Osaka and attended by Japanese Foreign Minister, Aichihiro Fujiyama and the U.S. Consul General at Kobe, George Emery, who acted on behalf of San Francisco mayor, George Christopher.<sup>84</sup> The following year Osaka shipped a variety of gifts to San Francisco, including large Japanese lanterns and a collection of paintings by Osaka school children.<sup>85</sup> Historic newspaper indexes do not reveal extensive documentation regarding the San Francisco – Osaka Sister City relationship. Articles in the *San Francisco Chronicle* point to various exchanges over time. In 1963, San Francisco sent a delegation to Osaka led by San Francisco's Chief Administration Officer. Mayor George Christopher also attended a Mayor's Conference in Kobe, Japan that year. In 1965, October 29 was declared "Osaka Day" in San Francisco to celebrate the eighth anniversary of the program.

Following the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the citizens of Osaka donated approximately \$425,000 dollars to help fund relief efforts—the most of any city in Japan.<sup>86</sup> Similar donations were organized in San Francisco by the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) following the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake that devastated Kobe in 1995.<sup>87</sup>

Most recently, in 2007, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved a resolution to designate Osaka Way as an honorary street name, located on Buchanan Street between Sutter and Post streets. Today San Francisco has 19 sister cities across the globe, including Paris, Seoul, Manila, Sydney, Barcelona, Taipei, Ho Chi Minh City, Amman Jordan, Cork, Ireland and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Though not associated specifically with the sister-city program, San Francisco has two historic streetcars that were built in Osaka during the late 1920s. The first is streetcar No. 578(J), used in the cities of Kobe and Hiroshima before coming to San Francisco in the mid-1980s. Streetcar #151 was acquired by the city circa 1988. Neither are currently in operation, although No. 578(J) is undergoing renovation for use as part of the city's F-Market streetcar line.

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<sup>82</sup> Rolf D. Cremer, Anne De Bruin and Ann Dupuis, "International Sister-Cities Bridging the Global-Local Divide," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Jan, 2001), 380.

<sup>83</sup> President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Press Conference Speech, September 11, 1956. Video clip accessed February 13, 2015 from: [http://d.lib.ncsu.edu/collections/catalog/AV2\\_FM\\_296-people2people](http://d.lib.ncsu.edu/collections/catalog/AV2_FM_296-people2people)

<sup>84</sup> "S.F., Osaka Now 'Sister Cities,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 8, 1957.

<sup>85</sup> "Gift for City," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 20, 1958.

<sup>86</sup> "Agos Thanks Japanese," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 7, 1990.

<sup>87</sup> Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, "Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund," accessed April 13, 2015 from: <http://jcccnc.wix.com/kokoro4japan#about>



*Two 1920s Osaka streetcars. At left is No. 151. At right is No. 578J.  
(Market Street Railway / Peter Erlich)*



## ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION

This section of the report is an analysis and summary of the applicable criteria for designation, integrity, period of significance, significance statement, character-defining features, and additional Article 10 requirements.

### Criteria for Designation

Check all criteria applicable to the significance of the property that are documented in the report. The criteria checked is (are) the basic justification for *why* the resource is important.

- ☒ Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- ☐ Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

### Statement of Significance

**Characteristics of the Landmark that justify its designation:**

THIS SECTION TO BE EXPANDED FOR SUBSEQUENT DRAFTS.

As described in the introduction to this report, the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza are located in what was historically the heart of San Francisco's *Nihonjinmachi*, or "Japanese people's town." Founded in the aftermath of the 1906 Earthquake, the community prospered despite restrictive policies and racist sentiment. Forcibly removed from their homes during World War II, the residents of Japantown nevertheless returned to the neighborhood and within a few years had made great strides to reestablish their community.

Almost immediately, though, the neighborhood—which was then the most ethnically and racially diverse in San Francisco—was targeted for redevelopment. As acknowledged by the Redevelopment Agency itself, "the removal of Japanese American residents and commercial establishments from this area so soon after returning from World War II concentration camps is known by some in the Community as the "Second Evacuation." <sup>88</sup>

The heart of Japantown was demolished and divided by Redevelopment Project A-1. The widening of Geary Boulevard sliced the neighborhood in two, creating what the SFRA called a "barren corridor between massive concrete walls." <sup>89</sup> In place of the neighborhood's shops, hotels, restaurants and homes rose the new blocks-long Japanese Cultural and Trade Center which, despite its overt associations with Japanese identity, was not an organic product of neighborhood. More upheaval would follow with Redevelopment Project A-2, leading to years of bitterness and resentment.

Although the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza stood at the very center of the redevelopment, they also stood apart. Unlike other elements of the project, their construction was funded through donations. They were devoted not to the commercial, but the contemplative. The open space at Peace Plaza became a natural gathering place for community events and cultural celebrations—as well as community protest. Thus, despite its connection to redevelopment, Peace Plaza was reclaimed as a focal point for the community, with the Peace Pagoda its visual landmark. As with its historical antecedents, the Peace Pagoda marks the axis mundi, serving as a sacred shaft, or even a lightning rod, that fixes sacred ground in Japantown's history. On it can be projected the stories of the neighborhood's birth, the horrors of World War II—both at home and abroad, the perseverance of a community, and friendship between nations.

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<sup>88</sup> Edward Helfeld, SFRA Executive Directory, Memo regarding a request of funds to renovate Peace Plaza, February 2, 1993, typewritten manuscript on file with the *San Francisco Office of Investment & Infrastructure, Successor to the SFRA*.

<sup>89</sup> San Francisco Redevelopment Program, *1995-1996 Summary of Project Data and Key Elements*, 133.

For these reasons, the Peace Pagoda is significant for its association with the redevelopment of Japantown. Though it ranks among the most bitter episodes in the neighborhood's history, redevelopment is clearly a significant historic event. It entirely reshaped the architectural fabric of the neighborhood, while simultaneously creating a significant disruption of its social fabric.

Beyond its symbolism as a marker for the Japantown community, both past and present, the Peace Pagoda is also an architecturally significant work of master architect, Yoshiro Taniguchi. As outlined in this report, Taniguchi's career was informed by a deep appreciation for traditional Japanese architecture, though his works were realized using modern engineering techniques and materials. As Taniguchi stated: "the new Pagoda is far from the mere replica of the ancestral device of many centuries ago; it is intended to make full use of the advanced architectural technique so that it would be enjoyed by contemporary people equipped with a modern sense to appreciate the architecture in its true light."<sup>90</sup>

The Peace Pagoda is significant as an extraordinary example of Taniguchi's ability to fuse the ancient and contemporary. Although the genesis of its design was born in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Peace Pagoda is nevertheless a greatly refined work of Modernism. As a property type, it is virtually unique to the city. While wooden pagodas exist in Golden Gate Park and elsewhere in the Bay Area, none but the Peace Pagoda are monumental works in steel and reinforced concrete. As such, it significantly embodies the distinctive characteristics of a period and method of construction.

Significantly, Taniguchi was associated with the design of numerous memorials—particularly during the decade leading up to his work at Peace Plaza. These memorials were greatly admired by the Japanese people as places of reflection and renewal. With this understanding, the Peace Pagoda can in some respects be viewed as a memorial for the people of Japantown. The idea for the Peace Pagoda originated with Masayuki Tokioka, who was sincerely devoted to the idea of peace and friendship between Japan and the United States. But he was also acutely aware of the bitter experience of the Japantown community during World War II. And it is almost certain that Yoshiro Taniguchi likewise understood where the Pagoda would be constructed. Thus, although there is nothing in Taniguchi's writings about the Peace Pagoda that suggest it is anything other than a symbol of peace, his desire to create a space that performs "the sacred mission of creating integral peace and harmony" is one that has deep resonance for the neighborhood.

## Periods of Significance

The period of significance for the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza is defined here as 1968, marking the year the Plaza and Pagoda were completed.

## Integrity

### *Peace Pagoda*

The seven aspects of integrity are location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association in relation to the period of significance established above. Considered as an independent structure, the Peace Pagoda clearly retains five of the seven aspects of integrity, including location, design, materials, workmanship and association. Its integrity of setting, however, has been degraded owing to a redesign of Peace Plaza undertaken in 2000-2001. The project removed the keyhole-shaped reflecting pool and its eternal flame at the base of the Peace Pagoda, and substituted for them new features and materials. As a result, integrity of feeling was also affected to some extent. Nevertheless, as a work unto itself the Pagoda retains more than sufficient integrity to convey its architectural significance as a work of master architect, Yoshiro Taniguchi, as well its associations with the redevelopment of Japantown.

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<sup>90</sup> San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, *The Peace Pagoda*, (San Francisco, San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, 1965),

#### *Peace Plaza*

As discussed above, Peace Plaza has been substantially modified. Several key elements of the Plaza's original design were removed, including the reflecting pool and pavilion adjacent to Post Street. The site wall along Geary Street was also modified and a new wall constructed. Nevertheless, Peace Plaza does retain several general features that allow it to be understood as an open space and setting for the Peace Pagoda.

## ARTICLE 10 REQUIREMENTS SECTION 1004 (b)

### Boundaries of the Landmark Site

Encompassing all of and limited to Lots 022, 023 and 035 in Assessor's Block 0700, located along the axis of Buchanan Street between Post Street and Geary Boulevard.

### Character-Defining Features

Whenever a building, site, object, or landscape is under consideration for Article 10 Landmark designation, the Historic Preservation Commission is required to identify character-defining features of the property. This is done to enable owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark. The character-defining features of the property are identified as follows:

#### *Peace Pagoda*

The entirety of the Peace Pagoda is character-defining, including the following:

- A central core of reinforced concrete piers
- Rounded roofs clad with copper plates
- Nine-ringed bronze spire, or "*kurin*," surmounted by a golden flaming head, or "*hoshu*," topped with a ball finial.
- Bronze dedication plaques in English and Japanese (but not their current location)
- The podium platform, including only a single perimeter step, as shown in historic photographs.

#### *Peace Plaza*

As discussed above, the integrity of the Peace Plaza has been degraded by prior alterations. Thus the following are general, rather than specific character-defining features:

- An open space characterized by a combination of hardscape paving and planters, combined with landscaping elements including shrubbery and, specifically, cherry trees
- A main entrance aligned with Buchanan Street
- A sunken plaza in the southern half of the Plaza which provides the setting for the Peace Pagoda
- The presence of an eternal flame in proximity to the Peace Pagoda
- The presence of a water feature(s)
- The use of large stones as a landscaping element
- The presence of perimeter flag poles (originally along Post Street, now along Geary Boulevard)
- A presence of a raised wall along the Geary Boulevard elevation, as well as stair access to the Plaza from the Geary Boulevard sidewalk



## PROPERTY INFORMATION

**Historic Name:** Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza

**Popular Name:** n/a

**Address:** 1610 Geary Boulevard

**Block and Lot:** Peace Pagoda (0700/023); Peace Plaza (0700/022)

**Owner:** City and County of San Francisco

**Original Use:** Architectural monument and open space

**Current Use:** Architectural monument and open space

**Zoning:** NC-3 Neighborhood Commercial Moderate Scale

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## TO BE COMPLETED FOR FINAL DRAFT

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More references to be added for final draft.

### NEWSPAPERS + PERIODICALS

To be completed for final draft.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

To be completed for final draft.

### PUBLIC RECORDS

To be completed for final draft.

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Original blueprint drawings prepared by Minoru Yamasaki & Associates  
and Van Bourg / Nakamura & Associates  
dated May 4, 1964. The western portion of the plaza is at left, the  
eastern at right.  
(Collections of the City of San Francisco Japan Center Garage  
Corporation)