

SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOURS



International District Historical Walking Tour



Introduction:

The International District is the home of Seattle's Chinatown and a cultural and commercial center for the city's diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Now protected within a national and local historic district, many of its buildings date from the early 1900s, when the area was regraded as part of the development of the nearby railroad stations and train yards. The core of the neighborhood is bounded by Yesler Way on the north, Dearborn Avenue on the south, Interstate-5 on the east, and 5th Avenue S on the west.

Note: This tour is intended for personal use only and was prepared by HistoryLink for the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development, Tourism Division. Copyright 2001, City of Seattle. All references to contemporary businesses in this tour date from June 2001. They are cited for orientation and information purposes only and do not imply recommendation or endorsement by the City of Seattle or by HistoryLink.

To learn more a International District history, visit www.historylink.org.

History:

Seattle's first Chinatown emerged on the eastern fringe of Pioneer Square in the 1880s as immigrant Chinese workers were recruited to help lay the area's first railroads, dig its coal mines, and can its salmon harvests. Initially welcomed and admired, the Chinese became the target of white resentment all along the West Coast during the economic recession of the mid-1880s. Discriminatory laws were passed to restrict immigration, and a mob of angry whites rioted and forcibly expelled some 300 Chinese residents from Seattle in February 1886. The Chinese community gradually rebounded but most of the

original Chinatown was later leveled to build the 2nd Avenue Extension.

In the early 1900s, work began to fill the vast tide flats that extended south of Pioneer Square along the western slope of Beacon Hill to the mouth of the Duwamish River. The city's major railroads agreed to locate their Seattle passenger terminals and marshalling yards in the reclaimed area, and engineers went to work lowering the steep grades along and south of Jackson



Street S for development of a new business district. Numerous hotels were built in this area to house railroad passengers and workers.

Thanks in large part to one businessman, Chinese consul Goon Dip, the area became the cradle for Seattle's second Chinatown. Other Asian immigrants soon followed, notably Japanese and Filipinos attracted by the area's inexpensive housing and storefronts for their own businesses and restaurants.

By the late 1930s, Chinatown was established as a distinct neighborhood along with the West Coast's second largest "Japan Town" on and around Yesler Way. Asian American truck farmers also spread through Rainier Valley and became major suppliers to the Pike Place Market and local grocery stores. These communities prospered in their de facto ghettos despite the



lingering racism of their white neighbors.

Relations soured after the Pearl Harbor attack, and few protested when

thousands of Japanese Americans were rounded up in the spring of 1942 for "internment" at inland camps during World War II. Local Chinese Americans were compelled to wear badges declaring that they were not Japanese.

Large numbers of African Americans arrived in Seattle during World War II for military duty and defense work, and many occupied the former homes of interned Japanese American residents. Jackson Street bistros and dance halls soon became nationally famous for jazz, swing, and the blues.

The Japan Town never regained its former stature after the war, and the area's population further diversified as growing numbers of Filipinos passed through or settled in the area while working in Alaska's booming canneries. Such diversity led Seattle Mayor William Devin to promote a new name in 1951 for the neighborhood, the "International District," although this still rankles some Chinese community leaders.

The International District (and Chinatown especially) gained new clout in 1962 with the election of Wing Luke to the Seattle City Council, the highest post in the Continental U.S. then achieved by a Chinese American.

Although his life was cut short by a 1965 plane crash, Luke was a charismatic champion of human rights, historic preservation, and other progressive causes. He paved the way for many other local Asian American political leaders, including future Washington State Governor Gary Locke, the son of Chinese immigrants.

King County's decision to locate its new Kingdome stadium on the western



edge of the International District created new challenges. The city approved a special review district to protect it from unwelcome development and established the King Street Historic District in the mid-1970s. A variety of programs were also launched to promote low-income housing, social services, and public improvements. These would prove important as the neighborhood and city absorbed new tides of immigration from the Pacific Islands and, following the end of the Vietnam War, from South East Asia.

The Kingdome has since been demolished and replaced by new stadiums for the Mariners and Seahawks. Construction of a nearby terminal for the downtown transit tunnel and Waterfront Streetcar, restoration of Union Station, and new office, housing, and retail development along 5th Avenue S have helped to revitalize the International District economically without sacrificing its unique cultural amalgam of East and West, old and new, traditional and trend-setting.



1. Union Station and Vicinity: Union Station opened in 1911 to serve the Oregon & Washington Railroad, a subsidiary of Union Pacific, and the Milwaukee Road. Daniel J. Patterson's design features a dramatic vaulted Great Hall, which was restored in 1999 as part of a remodeling for the new



headquarters of the Sound Transit system. The older King Street Station on the west was completed in 1906 by the Great Northern Railway and Northern Pacific Railroad and now serves Amtrak.

The downtown transit tunnel's International District Station was completed in 1990 and affords free weekday service as far north as the State Trade & Convention Center. The Waterfront Streetcar line was extended in the same year and terminates at 5th Avenue S and S Jackson Street.

2. 500 Block of S Jackson Street: The southeast corner of S Jackson and 5th Avenue S is filled by the Buty Building, built in 1901 and expanded in 1920 by architect James Stephen. The north side of S Jackson is dominated by the terra-cotta-clad Governor Apartments, designed by J. L. McCauley and built in 1926.

3. Side Trip North on 6th Avenue S: A steep ascent north on 6th Avenue S leads you past the classical wooden facade of the former Main Street School Annex, built in 1910 to serve the area's burgeoning Japan Town. The nearby NP Hotel (1914) and Panama Hotel (1910), around the corner on S Main Street were also major centers for Seattle's Japanese Community.

The Danny Woo International District Community Garden on the north side of S Main Street is one of Seattle's more elaborate "P-Patches." Ascending its winding stairs will lead you to Kobe Terrace Park. It was designed by William Teufel and dedicated in 1975 to honor Seattle's first Sister City, whose residents donated the large Yuki Modoro "snow viewing lantern."

The Nippon Kan ("Japanese Hall") stands at the head of S Washington Street in the original Astor Hotel. This was built in 1909 and designed by the father-son team of Charles and Bennet Thompson, who designed many other International District structures. It was rehabilitated in 1978 and hosts many performances and community events.

Note King County's Harborview Hospital, beyond the freeway. It stands on the original site of the King County Courthouse and atop "Profanity Hill," so named by the lawyers who had to ascend its steep grade from Pioneer Square. The hospital's original Art Deco tower was

designed by John Graham Sr. and opened in 1934. You can return to the main neighborhood via the park and garden.

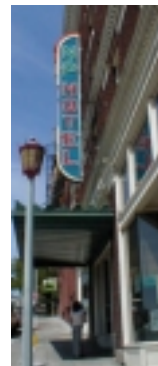


4. S Jackson Street at Maynard Avenue S: The south side of the block is dominated by the Bush Hotel, designed by J. L. McCauley and completed in 1915. It was rehabilitated in

1981 by Arai/Jackson Architects for a new Bush-Asia Center and low-income apartments. The adjacent United Savings & Loan Bank was designed by Woo and Par Architects and opened in 1972 as the new home of the nation's first Asian American-owned thrift institution (established in 1960).

The north side of the block includes the Jackson Building (1910), still home of the family-owned Higo Variety Store, one of Seattle's first Japanese American retailers.

The adjacent Havana Hotel was built in 1908 and remodeled as the Far East Building in 1984 under the guidance of architect Robert Kovalenko, who has guided many restoration projects in the International District.



5. 700 Block of S Jackson Street: The terra-cotta-clad building on the northeast corner was designed by McCauley for the Rainier Heat and Power Company. Later tenants included the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and the national Japanese American Citizens League, established in 1930.

Note the sculpture by the late George Tsutakawa, erected in 1978 on the southeast corner of Maynard S and S Jackson. The nearby Evergreen Apartments were built in 1916 as the Tokiwa Hotel and reflect the work of Thompson & Thompson.





6. South on 7th Avenue S: A short walk south on the west side of 7th Avenue S leads you to the Wing Luke Asian Museum, whose name honors the first Chinese American elected to the Seattle City Council. Its excellent displays

document the history of the area's diverse Asian American communities, and the basement theater offers performances and community events. The rest of the west side of the street is filled by the Milwaukee Hotel, built by Chinese Consul Goon Dip in 1911 and a major impetus for development of Seattle's second Chinatown.

The east side of the 400 block of 7th Avenue S is dominated by the ornate former Lin Yuen Apartments and Republic Hotel, built in 1920, and the older New American Hotel, built in 1916 and home of the Bing Kung Association, an early family association or "tong." Note its elaborate upper story balcony on S King Street. Another such treatment can be seen farther east atop the Hip Sing Association building at the corner of S King and 8th Avenue S.

7. 500 Block of 7th Avenue S: The west side of 7th Avenue S is filled by three hotels built between 1906 and 1909 and taken over by the Gee How Oak Tin Family Association in 1921. The brick facade of the Louisa Hotel features an active

community bulletin board that reflects a tradition dating to 1890 and is itself a designated historic landmark.

The southeast corner of S 7th Avenue and S King Street is anchored by the Kong Yick Apartments (Thompson & Thompson, 1910). Note the faded window lettering on the King Street side for the "Blue Funnel" steamship line.

Immediately south of Kong Yick is the China Garden-China Gate building. This was designed in 1924 by Andrew Willatsen with the assistance of Samuel Chinn, possibly Seattle's first Chinese American architect, to house America's only Chinese Opera company. This tradition is carried on by the Luck Ngi

Musical Club, but the main performance space was later converted into a popular night club, China Garden, and now houses the China Gate restaurant.

The block terminates at S Weller Street with the Chinese-ornamented

headquarters of the Chong Wa Benevolent Association, built in 1929. A side trip one block farther south will lead you to the International Children's Park, designed by Joey Ing in 1981.

8. Side Trip into Maynard Alley: Maynard Alley runs north-south between 7th Avenue S and Maynard Avenue S. The name honors Seattle pioneer David S. "Doc" Maynard who platted the future International District in 1853 when it was still mostly under water. The stretch between S Weller and S King Streets is home to a traditional Chinese pet store and a grim monument: the boarded-up entry of the Wah Mee Club where in 1983 young robbers butchered 13 gamblers in Seattle's worst mass murder.

9. North on Maynard Avenue S: The west side of Maynard S is dominated by Freedman Building (also known as the Adams Hotel), but we have no record of the architect who created its distinctive facade. The recently restored Eastern Hotel stands opposite, near the center of the block. It was designed by David Dow for the Wah Chong Company, one of Seattle's first Chinese businesses, in 1911. It later



became a popular hostelry for Filipino cannery workers, including famous writer Carlos Bulosan, whose memory is honored with a lobby museum.

10. Maynard Avenue S and S King Street: This intersection is the center of the International District. The Hing Hay Park takes up the northwest corner behind the Bush Hotel. It was dedicated in 1975 and features an ornate pavilion built in Taiwan. The northeast corner of Maynard is filled by the large Atlas Hotel, built in 1920.

The Rex Hotel on the southeast corner of Maynard S and S King Street was designed by F. H. Perkins in 1909 and recently remodeled for low-income housing. It is also home to the venerable Tai Tung Restaurant, established in 1935 and the district's oldest continuously operating eatery. The southwest corner is occupied by the Alps Hotel, built in 1910 and designed by John Graham Sr. and his early partner David Myers.

11. 5th Avenue S Between S King and S Dearborn Streets: Most of the block south of 5th S is filled by the former home of Uwajimaya's, a large Asian American emporium established by the Moriguchi Family. The store moved two blocks south in 2001 to a new mixed use development occupying the block bounded by S Weller, S Lane, 5th S, and 6th S.

Opposite 5th Avenue S stands a new complex of office buildings developed by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen and Nitze-Stagen & Company and largely designed by NBBJ architects. A short walk north will return you to Union Station and connections to the downtown transit tunnel and Waterfront Streetcar.

We have only sampled a few of the many attractions of the International District and hope you will now explore on your own.

