

Historic Preservation from the Ground Up: The Harada House



Harada House

The house at 3356 Lemon Street in Riverside, California is not likely to catch the eye of many visitors. The boxy, wood-sided home looks unremarkable. Few would guess that this suburban home was the site of one of the earliest battles in the fight for Asian American civil rights.

In the early twentieth century, husband and wife Jukichi and Ken Harada were business owners in Riverside. They were both *Issei*, Japanese-born immigrants to the United States, and

ineligible for citizenship by U.S. law. Since their arrival in 1905, they ran the Washington Restaurant and Boarding House. They served American fare in a dining room decorated with portraits of American presidents.

The Harada's white neighbors led a campaign to remove them from their home, ending in a court battle. The family refused to give in to pressure. On December 17, 1918 the Riverside County Superior Court decided *The People of the State of California v. Jukichi Harada* in favor of the family. In the first test of the Alien Land Law, the Haradas won the right to own property in America.

Starting the Journey toward Historic Preservation

Despite its significance, it took sixty years to begin preservation efforts at the Harada House. In 1942, the U.S. government forcibly removed and



Jukichi and Ken Harada with their extended family

incarcerated the Haradas and all Japanese Americans on the West Coast. The family was imprisoned at the Topaz Camp in Utah, where Ken Harada died in 1943 followed by Jukichi in 1944.

Unlike most Japanese Americans, the Harada family reclaimed their home after the war. Sumi Harada, Jukichi and Ken's daughter, owned the house. She also maintained the Harada family records, photographs and documents spanning many

decades. In the 1970s, a University of California graduate student researched the Harada House.



Staff at the Washington Restaurant



Newspaper clipping about the Harada court case



Stabilizing efforts inside the Harada House in 2005

Mark Rawitsch consulted the Harada family, other community members, and the Harada family collection. Sumi Harada and Mark Rawitsch were able to show the significance of the Harada House. In 1977, the house became a City of Riverside Landmark. That same year, the State of California nominated the Harada House for the National Register of Historic Places. It was listed on September 15, 1977. The Secretary of the Interior designated the Harada House a National Historic Landmark on December 14, 1990.

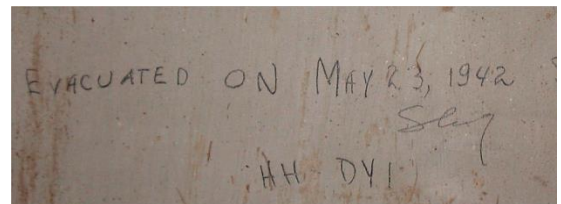
The preservation journey of the Harada House did not end with its local and national recognition. After Sumi Harada died in 2000, ownership of the house passed to her brother, Harold. In 2004, the Harada family donated their home to the Riverside Metropolitan Museum. The Institute of Museum and Library Services found that the building was falling apart. The National Park Service identified the condition of the Harada House as threatened. The Getty Foundation and the California Cultural and Historical Endowment sent funds to improve the condition of the house. The museum began to inventory the Harada Family Collection and started working to preserve the house.

Through a community fundraising campaign, the museum bought the home next door to the Harada House. It serves as an interpretative center for the site. The California Council for the Humanities and the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program also contributed funding. This support has allowed for the Harada House to be part of a larger museum effort to tell the story of returning Japanese

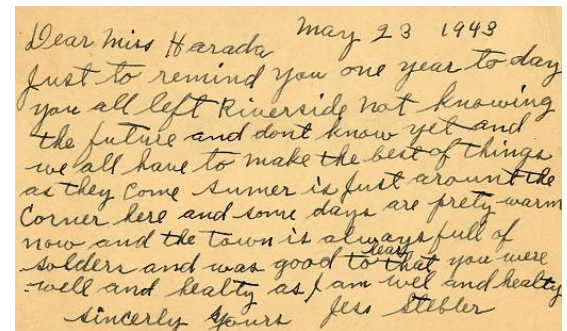
Americans. There is even an effort to gain historic recognition for the building that was the Harada's restaurant. This push for recognition comes from the building's owner and tenant, neither of whom is related to the Harada Family.



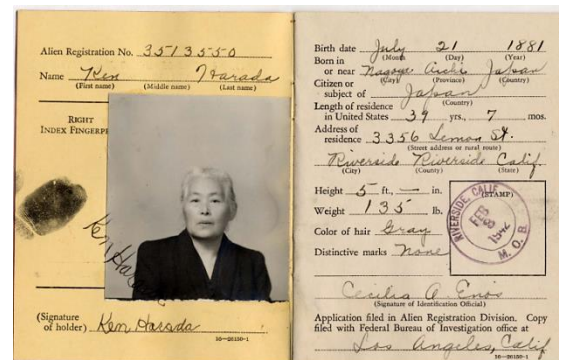
Harold Harada speaking at the Harada House dedication in 2001



Inscription on the walls of the Harada House



Letter from Jess Stabler, a friend of the Harada Family who cared for the house during WWII



Ken Harada's Alien Registration Card

The Harada House National Historic Landmark owes its success to these many partners and programs. The Harada family, Mark Rawitsch, and others found aid from multiple preservation organizations. They secured protections for the property while also

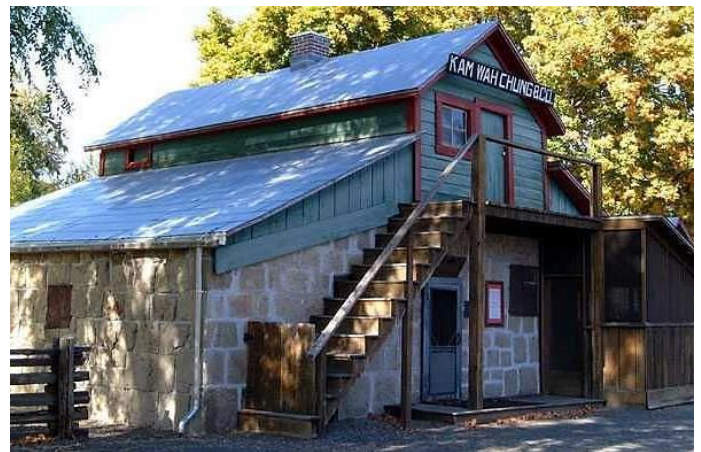
raising awareness of its significance. Riverside Metropolitan Museum reached out to the community and public and private granting agencies. In doing so, it expanded the site and told the story of this remarkable place.

Historic Places in Your Neighborhood

Historic Asian American and Pacific Islander places exist throughout the United States. Some of these sites, like Angel Island in California or 'Iolani Palace in Hawai'i, are dramatic and well-known. Many more, like the Harada House, can go unnoticed. Fortunately, there are programs and organizations designed to preserve these sites and ensure that their contributions to American history are recognized. Through a variety of federal, state, local, and private entities, citizens and communities across the country are leading successful initiatives to document their history through



Nan Madol on Pohnpei Island, Micronesia, now a National Historic Landmark. Photo by NOAA



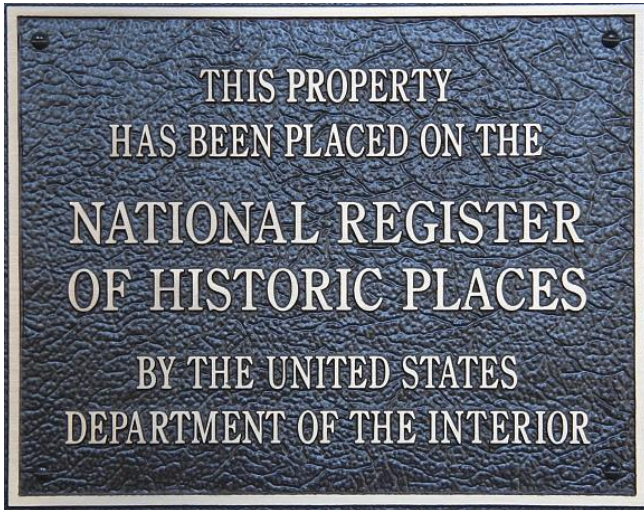
Kam Wah Chung Store in Oregon, now protected by Oregon State Parks. Photo by Oregon State Parks

the preservation of historic places.

Most sites will not be recognized at a national level. Yet, the steps taken in the case of the Harada House are a useful model for those who want to preserve places in their community. Local historical societies and records offices are often good places to begin research. Community organizations may lead to individuals with historic private holdings. Applications to establish historic status are complex and time-consuming. The process requires proper documentation of the site's history. It is often necessary to seek help from professional historians, archeologists, preservationists, or architects. This is especially true when applying for national programs.

If you believe that your local community may contain a site of historical significance, take action! If not for two citizens, Sumi Harada and Mark Rawitsch, the story of the Harada family could have been forgotten. The rules, regulations, and applications can make historic preservation seem daunting. There are technical assistance, grants, and programs available at the local, state, and federal level. These can provide many avenues for recognizing and protecting a historic place. As no two places are the same, there are many preservation strategies that might work best for your property.

Paths to Preservation



National Register of Historic Places plaque

The first step when preserving your site is to set goals for your project. You need to be able to answer the following questions: Why is this place significant? What do I hope to achieve by preserving it? The first question will be essential no matter what direction the project takes. The second question will help you to determine the best course of action.

Preserving a Site

In some cases, the physical protection of historically significant places is the first priority. If properties are damaged, or otherwise threatened, they need to be assessed as soon as possible to care for them. In

this case, organizations exist to help. Applying for recognition from local, state, and national historic register programs is a good first step.

Community Development

Historic preservation is good for community development. It can lead to increased property values and economic activity. Historic properties do not have to serve as museums. In fact, most are residences or commercial properties. By preserving the character of historic districts, preservation encourages heritage tourism and economic development.

Interpretation and Education

It is important to tell the story of your historic site with the community. Often, a plaque or interpretive sign is a cost effective choice. It is even possible to mark sites digitally, raising awareness around the world with websites like HistoryPin (www.historypin.org/project/51-east-at-main-street). Local historical and community organizations could help by including your site in walking tours or literature about your area. If you are an educator in your community, consider incorporating local history and heritage into your lesson plans. The National Park Service's Teaching with Historic Places (www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/index.htm) provides tools and guides for educators. Effective interpretation and communication contribute to the historic character of the local community.



The Certified Local Government Program and the National Main Street Center help preserve character of historic communities, like the Main Street in Riverside, California

Preservation Resources

The National Register of Historic Places (www.nps.gov/nr) is the nation's official list of historic places considered worthy of preservation. Designations can be provided by State Historic Preservation Offices (www.ncshpo.org), Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (www.nathpo.org), and local historic preservation organizations. Sites of exceptional national significance can be nominated for designation as a National Historic Landmark (www.nps.gov/nhl), but a site is much more likely to gain protection through a local preservation organization.



Inside the George Nakashima Woodworker Complex in Pennsylvania, now a National Historic Landmark. Photo from the Nakashima Woodworkers Studio Archives

Many community initiatives to preserve and promote historic sites are already in place. You may want to check if your site lies within a National Heritage Area (www.nps.gov/heritageareas), a Certified Local Government (www.nps.gov/clg) partnership, or a National Main Street Program (www.preservationnation.org/main-street). You might explore the potential for heritage tourism as well. Consider the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Five Principles for Successful and Sustainable Heritage Tourism" (www.preservationnation.org/information-center/economics-of-revitalization/heritage-tourism/basics/the-five-principles.html).

Researching the historic places in your neighborhood can bring you closer to your community and your past. Listen to your local elders and consider recording their oral histories. If you have family collections of objects and documents that could serve other historical researchers, you might preserve or donate those collections for future generations. Learn how to care for them or donate them to an archive or museum using some of the links below.

Preservation Assistance

- National Park Service Technical Preservation Services (www.nps.gov/tps)
- National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (www.ncptt.nps.gov)
- National Trust for Historic Preservation (www.preservationnation.org)
- Preservation Action (www.preservationaction.org)
- National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (www.napcommissions.org)
- National Council for Preservation Education (NCPE) (www.ncpe.us)
- American Library Association, Low-Cost Ways to Preserve Family Archives (video) (www.ala.org/alcts/confevents/upcoming/webinar/042914)
- Northeast Document Conservation Center Caring for Private and Family Collections (www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preserving-private-and-family-collections/caring-for-private-and-family-collections)

For a more detailed overview of the historic preservation process, please explore the extensive NPS toolkit for historic preservation (www.nps.gov/latino/toolkit.html), created as a result of the Latino Heritage Initiative.

What You Can Do

With these tools at your disposal, learn about your neighborhood and its history. Understand its past in the context of our national story. Make meaningful connections with your community and help preserve the heritage of all Americans.



The Chinese Mason Building in Walnut Grove, California's Chinese-American Historic District. Photo by Mary L. Manieri. A lesson plan for the Locke and Walnut Grove communities is available online: www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/www/ps/lessons/locke/locke.htm

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www.nps.gov/history/AAP

All photographs related to the Harada Family were supplied courtesy of the Riverside Metropolitan Museum (www.riversideca.gov/museum/haradahouse).