

Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE MAY 13, 2019

SOKO HARDWARE

Application No.: LBR-2018-19-043
Business Name: Soko Hardware
Business Address: 1698 Post Street
District: District 5
Applicant: Philip Ashizawa, Owner
Nomination Date: March 8, 2019
Nominated By: Supervisor Vallie Brown
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Soko Hardware opened in 1925 at 1683 Post Street in the heart of old Japantown. The founders of the business, husband and wife team Masayasu Ashizawa and Naka Ashizawa, emigrated from Japan in the early 1920s. "Soko" is the old name used to reference San Francisco. Soko Hardware has been operated by four generations of the Ashizawa family. First Masayasu and Naka, then their son and daughter-in-law Masao Ashizawa and Agnes Ashizawa, and then their grandson and granddaughter-in-law Philip Ashizawa and Eunice Ashizawa, who manages the store today. Philip and Eunice's son, David Ashizawa, is the fourth generation of Ashizawas to work at Soko Hardware.

The store was temporarily forced to close for a period of years during the imprisonment of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast during World War II. After WWII was over, the Ashizawas returned from the Topaz internment camp in Utah to San Francisco to start up the store again in 1946. In 1950, they moved their store across the street to 1698 Post St. Then in the 1960s/1970s, the Redevelopment Agency leveled most of the buildings in the neighborhood and required the Ashizawas to tear down their existing building and rebuild it to the Agency's requirements. The Ashizawas temporarily relocated their hardware store a few doors up on 1674 Post Street where they continued business until their new store was rebuilt to the Redevelopment Agency's forced standards.

Soko Hardware was the first hardware store in Japantown. In addition to carrying all of the general merchandise one would find in a standard hardware store, Soko Hardware carries vital tools and housewares specific to the Japanese culture, such as Japanese woodworking tools, cookware and "Butsudans" (Buddhist shrines for temples and homes). Today, the store still carries many of these same Japanese items, but has also expanded to carrying Japanese knives, bowls, teacups, teapots, appliances, gourmet cookware, books and much more.

The business is located on the northeast corner of Buchanan and Post streets in the Japantown neighborhood. It is within an NCD (Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District.

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?



Yes, the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

1683 Post Street from 1925 to 1950 (25 years)
1698 Post Street from 1950 to 1970 (20 years)
1674 Post Street from 1970 to 1972 (2 years)
1698 Post Street from 1972 to Present (47 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, the applicant has contributed to the Japantown neighborhood's history and identity.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- Soko Hardware is associated with Japanese tools and cookware.
- Soko Hardware has contributed to the history and identity of San Francisco and the Japantown neighborhood.
- The property is listed in the community-prepared inventory of cultural assets published in the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy and it is located within the Japantown Cultural District. The historic resource status of the building is Category C (Not a Historic Resource) as the property is not age eligible for listing in the California Register. However, the property is a contributing cultural asset to the district as identified below.

Events:

The business is associated with three periods of significance as identified in the Japantown Historic Context Statement, prepared May 2011. They are: Early Japantown History, particularly Japanese Settlement in the Western Addition (1906-1920); Japanese Resettlement and Renewal, Nikkei Return to Japantown (1945-1954); and, Redevelopment in the Western Addition (1955-1990).

Persons:

Masao Ashizawa (second generation owner of Soko Hardware) was an active member in the Japantown community and became the founding President of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corp, which functioned from the 1960s through the 1980s to keep Japantown properties in the hands of Japanese Americans. This was very much needed due to the vast turnover of properties during that time (especially after the return from internment camps after WWII when most Japanese American families lost their homes, stores and properties). Masao was also among the early organizers of the first Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco's Japantown, serving as Chairperson in the early 1970s. He was a Board Member and former President of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation, as well as a member of the Optimist Club (a nationwide organization). Masao was well known for his ambition and strong commitment to keeping Japantown vital and true to many of its traditions.

- Soko Hardware has been featured in newspapers articles, newsletters, magazines, Japantown tours and more. Follow are some of the examples of Soko Hardware in the news:





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LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
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- "Talk of the Town" - The New Yorker (December 13, 1976).
- "At Soko Hardware, it's the mix that works" - The New Fillmore (April 29, 2016).
- "Everyday Japanese flair in the home" - Nichi Bei Weekly (August 18, 2016).
- "Japanese-themed Decor in the American Home" - Nichi Bei Weekly (August 23, 2012).
- SF Tourism - Voicemaps Audio Tours (2019).

Soko Hardware has also been the subject of many college essays for American Asian studies over the years.

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, Soko Hardware is committed to maintaining the physical features, craft, art form and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Soko Hardware qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Inventory of hardware needs and Japanese products, including housewares and Buddhist shrines.
- Sign, in English and Japanese Kanji characters and the Ashizawa "mon."
- Historical panel signs.

CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Hardware store.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Soko Hardware currently located at 1698 Post Street in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Program Manager
Legacy Business Program



Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE MAY 13, 2019

SOKO HARDWARE

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. _____

Application No.: LBR-2018-19-043
Business Name: Soko Hardware
Business Address: 1698 Post Street
District: District 5
Applicant: Philip Ashizawa, Owner
Nomination Date: March 8, 2019
Nominated By: Supervisor Vallie Brown
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR SOKO HARDWARE, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 1698 POST STREET.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on May 13, 2019, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore





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CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

BE IT RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Soko Hardware in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Soko Hardware:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Inventory of hardware needs and Japanese products, including housewares and Buddhist shrines.
Sign, in English and Japanese Kanji characters and the Ashizawa "mon."
Historical panel signs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Soko Hardware on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Hardware store.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on May 13, 2019.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

- Ayes -
Nays -
Abstained -
Absent -





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CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

**Legacy
Business
Registry**

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2018-19-043
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Applicant: Philip Ashizawa, Owner
Nomination Date: March 8, 2019
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CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years? Yes No

1683 Post Street from 1925 to 1950 (25 years)
1698 Post Street from 1950 to 1970 (20 years)
1674 Post Street from 1970 to 1972 (2 years)
1698 Post Street from 1972 to Present (47 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community? Yes No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms? Yes No

NOTES: N/A

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: April 3, 2019

Richard Kurylo
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program



Member, Board of Supervisors
District 5



City and County of San Francisco

VALLIE BROWN
浦慧理

Friday, March 8, 2019

Office of Small Business
Small Business Commission
City Hall, Suite 110
San Francisco, CA 94102

To Whom It May Concern,

I write to nominate Soko Hardware, located at 1698 Post Street, for the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.

First opened in 1925 at 1683 Post Street by husband and wife Masayasu and Naka Ashizawa and named "Soko" after the Japanese term for San Francisco, today Soko Hardware remains one of only four original family-owned businesses still operating in Japantown. Soko Hardware is a key contributor to the culture and small business community of Japantown and San Francisco.

With the exception of World War II, when the Ashizawas were forced to close the business due military ordered interment at Topaz, Utah, and several years after they had returned to San Francisco, Soko Hardware has now continuously offered San Franciscans a wonderful and unique assortment of tools and housewares since its founding 94 years ago. Determined to preserve the cultural community of Japantown, the Ashizawas relocated Soko Hardware to its current location at 1698 Post Street in 1950.

People from all over the Bay Area visit Soko Hardware to shop for paper lanterns, authentic teapots, and other specialty Japanese items unavailable anywhere else in the area. The basement at Soko Hardware is filled with a breathtaking selection of Japanese cast iron cookware and knives, an impressive collection of Japanese tools for gardening and woodworking, and a selection of seeds for Japanese plants and books about making shoji screens.

Over the decades, Masayasu and the Ashizawa family have contributed significantly to Japantown. When Japantown was demolished during redevelopment, they worked to build the Japan Center and the Peace Plaza. As the founding President of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation, Masao, Masayasu's son organized to support Japanese American ownership in Japantown. He was also among the early organizers of the Cherry Blossom Festival, serving as chairman in its fourth year in 1971.

For all of these reasons, I can think of no better candidate for San Francisco Legacy status and I'm proud to nominate Soko Hardware for the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry Program.

Should you have any further questions related to this letter, please do not hesitate to reach out to my legislative aide, Juan Carlos Cancino, at (415) 554-7687 or to brownstaff@sfgov.org. For any questions about Soko Hardware more generally, please contact Nikki Yoshikawa of the Japantown Task Force at (415) 269-4765.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vallie Brown".

Vallie Brown
Supervisor, District 5
City and County of San Francisco

Section One:

Business / Applicant Information. Provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address, and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title, and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

NAME OF BUSINESS:		
Soko Hardware Company		
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)		
Philip Ashizawa		
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE:	
1698 Post Street San Francisco, CA 94115	(415) 931-5510	
	EMAIL:	
	sokohardware@att.net	
WEBSITE:	FACEBOOK PAGE:	YELP PAGE
http://sokohardware.com/	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Soko-Hardware/143162735716906	https://www.yelp.com/biz/soko-hardware-san-francisco?osq=soko+hardware

APPLICANT'S NAME	
Philip Ashizawa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business
APPLICANT'S TITLE	
Owner	
APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE:
1698 Post Street San Francisco, CA 94115	(415) 931-5510
	EMAIL:
	sokohardware@att.net

SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):
0158134	

OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff	
NAME OF NOMINATOR:	DATE OF NOMINATION:

Section Two:

Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:	ZIP CODE:	START DATE OF BUSINESS
1683 Post Street, San Francisco	94115	1925
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	1925 – 1950	

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
1698 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94115	94115	Start: 1950
		End: 1970

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
1674 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94115	94115	Start: 1970
		End: 1972

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
1698 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94115	94115	Start: 1972
		End: Present

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

Section Three:

Disclosure Statement.

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for the Business Assistance Grant.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

PHILIP ASHIZAWA
Name (Print):

2/19/19
Date:


Signature:

SOKO HARDWARE

Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

CRITERION 1

a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.

Soko Hardware, presently located at 1698 Post Street, opened in 1925 at 1683 Post Street in the heart of old Japantown. The founders of the business, husband and wife team Masayasu Ashizawa and Naka Ashizawa, emigrated from Japan in the early 1920s. "Soko" is the old name used to reference San Francisco.

Soko Hardware has been operated by four generations of the Ashizawa family. First Masayasu and Naka, then their son and daughter-in-law Masao Ashizawa and Agnes Ashizawa, and then their grandson and granddaughter-in-law Philip Ashizawa and Eunice Ashizawa, who manages the store today. Philip and Eunice's son, David Ashizawa, is the fourth generation of Ashizawas to work at Soko Hardware.

The store was temporarily forced to close for a period of years during the evacuation of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast during World War II. After WWII was over, the Ashizawas returned from the Topaz internment camp in Utah to San Francisco to start up the store again in 1946.

In 1950, they moved their store across the street to 1698 Post St. Then in the 1960s/1970s, the Redevelopment Agency leveled most of the buildings in the neighborhood and required the Ashizawas to tear down their existing building and rebuild it to the Agency's requirements. The Ashizawas temporarily relocated their hardware store a few doors up on 1674 Post Street where they continued business until their new store was rebuilt to the Redevelopment Agency's forced standards.

Soko Hardware was the first hardware store in Japantown and is much more than a typical hardware store. In addition to carrying all of the general merchandise one would find in a standard hardware store, Soko Hardware carries vital tools and housewares specific to the Japanese culture, such as Japanese woodworking tools, cookware and "Butsudans" (Buddhist shrines for temples and homes). Today, the store still carries many of these same Japanese items, but has also expanded to carrying Japanese knives, bowls, teacups, teapots, appliances, gourmet cookware, books and much more. It is a unique hardware store, like no other.

b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?

Soko Hardware's operations were interrupted by the events of World War II, pursuant to the Executive Order 9066. President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 and subsequent proclamations issued by General John L. DeWitt led to the closure of operations and the eventual forced eviction 120,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast, including the Ashizawa family from March 1942 to 1946. Although some of their hardware store's goods were stolen while they were imprisoned, they were also able to store some of their other goods in the back of a used car dealership on Van Ness Avenue. During their time being held in the incarceration camp in Topaz, Utah, the Ashizawas had a Jewish friend that oversaw and leased out their property. After their release from Topaz, the Ashizawa family returned to San Francisco where Masayasu and Naka worked hard to reopen their hardware store and resumed operations again in 1946. Other than the closure during the WWII imprisonment years, Soko Hardware has remained open for business to the present day.

c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.

Yes, Soko Hardware is a family owned business. The business was first established by Masayasu and Naka Ashizawa in 1925 in the heart of bustling Japantown and is one of only four original family-owned businesses in all of Japantown. When the family was incarcerated during World War II, Soko Hardware was forced to close. After the war ended, Masayasu and Naka reopened the store in 1946. The founder's son, Masao Ashizawa, a graduate in math at UC Berkeley, and his wife Agnes, took over Soko Hardware in 1949, after his father died. Masao's son, Philip Ashizawa, a graduate of UC Berkeley in biophysics, came into the family business in 1979 and has been running the store since with his wife Eunice. Philip and Eunice have two children, David and Lauren. David is currently helping out full-time in the store, which makes him the fourth generation of Ashizawas to run Soko Hardware.

d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.

The original family of Soko Hardware remains as the current owners and has operated as the same family business for three generations of Ashizawas. The ownership history of Soko Hardware is as follows:

1925 to 1949	Masayasu and Naka Ashizawa
1949 to 1979	Masao and Agnes Ashizawa
1970 to Present	Philip and Eunice Ashizawa (and son David Ashizawa)

e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Not applicable.

f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

Soko Hardware's existence has spanned several periods of significance. They are: early Japantown history, particularly Japanese settlement in the Western Addition (early 1900s); Japanese resettlement and renewal (1945-1954); and redevelopment in the Western Addition (1955-1990).

After returning from Topaz internment camp following the end of WWII, the Ashizawas and folks in Japantown faced another upheaval. A portion of San Francisco's redevelopment plan for the Western Addition, adopted in 1948, demolished Japantown and blocks of Japanese and African American homes and businesses in the area. By the 1960s, much of the area south of Bush Street between Divisadero and Gough had been leveled. But the founder's son, Masao Ashizawa, and others were determined to preserve the Japanese character of their neighborhood. Masao relocated Soko Hardware from its original home at 1683 Post Street and worked with the City to get Japan Center and the Peace Plaza built in its place on the south side of Post Street. Masao took over the space across the street at 1698 Post Street, formerly occupied by the *Goshado Bookstore, and then carried out business for Soko Hardware there, until the Redevelopment Agency forced Masao to knock down his building and rebuild to the Agency's requirements. Masao relocated his business up the street on 1674 Post Street for a couple of years, then moved it back to 1698 Post Street, where it remains today.

(*From SFPlanning.org's site: San Francisco Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan Historic Context, 1880s-1980s)

CRITERION 2

a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.

Soko Hardware sits on a prominent corner on Post and Buchanan streets, which is in the very center of Japantown. It was the first, and is now the only, hardware store in all of Japantown. This is the only place that provides the Japanese, imported, professional quality tools (such as woodworking, saws and chisels) that are hard to find anywhere outside of Japan. Not only is Soko Hardware one of very few places that carries these type of tools, but it is the only place where one can get the Japanese tools, paper and brushes, along with other hardware, housewares, appliances, etc. all in one place! Japanese housewares remain their biggest sellers to this day. Soko Hardware has always been the "go to" place that everyone in the community goes to first, not only for hardware needs, but for any Japanese-related product or goods.

b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?

As San Francisco's Japantown was the first in the United States, Soko Hardware was also one of the only places where people could buy both hardware and hard-to-find Japanese goods (woodworking tools, cookware, painted screens, tansu parts, paper lanterns, etc.) all in one store since its founding in 1925. For years, Soko Hardware has provided the goods and tools essential to execute successful parades, festivals and events in Japantown (such as the Cherry Blossom Festivals and parades).

c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?

Soko Hardware has been featured in newspapers articles, newsletters, magazines, Japantown tours and more. Follow are some of the examples of Soko Hardware in the news:

- "Talk of the Town" - The New Yorker (December 13, 1976).
- "At Soko Hardware, it's the mix that works" - The New Fillmore (April 29, 2016).
- "Everyday Japanese flair in the home" - Nichi Bei Weekly (August 18, 2016).
- "Japanese-themed Decor in the American Home" - Nichi Bei Weekly (August 23, 2012).
- SF Tourism - Voicemaps Audio Tours (2019).

Soko Hardware has also been the subject of many college essays for American Asian studies over the years.

d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?

Masao Ashizawa (second generation owner of Soko Hardware) was an active member in the Japantown community and became the founding President of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corp, which functioned from the 1960s through the 1980s to keep Japantown properties in the hands of Japanese Americans. This was very much needed due to the vast turnover of properties during that time (especially after the return from internment camps after WWII when most Japanese American families lost their homes, stores and properties). Masao was also among the early organizers of the first Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco's Japantown, serving as Chairperson in the early 1970s. He was a Board Member and former President of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation, as well as a member of the Optimist Club (a nationwide organization). Masao was well known for his ambition and strong commitment to keeping Japantown vital and true to many of its traditions.

From a customer perspective, singer/songwriter Boz Scaggs was a regular customer that used to come into Soko Hardware during the '70s/'80s. Singer/songwriter James Taylor had been known to come in as well.

e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

The Ashizawas have demonstrated a strong commitment to Japantown by maintaining stock of various Japanese products since its start in 1925. For years, Soko Hardware has provided the

goods and tools essential to carry off successful parades, festivals and events in Japantown. Also, Soko Hardware still carries many of the traditional Japanese housewares, which remain their biggest sellers to this day.

Another strong commitment that cannot be overlooked has been their ability to stay in business for 94+ years. To stay in business through all of the adversities that the Japanese Americans had to endure – through the WWII internment; through redevelopment of the Western Addition in the 1960s and 1970s; through the presence of mega hardware stores like Home Depot and Lowes; and through the ease of online buying in recent years – Soko Hardware has committed to keeping their presence in the community through strong family pride and perseverance of the four generations of Ashizawas.

Also over the years, Soko Hardware has always been a generous donor to community organizations such as the Nihonmachi Little Friends, SF Buddhist Church, Konko Church and the Christ United Presbyterian Church.

f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.

San Francisco's Japantown was the first, and remains the oldest, of the three remaining Japantowns in the United States. Established in the Western Addition right after the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire from ethnic enclaves from South Park, Chinatown and the Mission, Japantown remains at the same location within the blocks bordering Octavia, Fillmore, Laguna and Geary Boulevard. What was once about 40 blocks of Japantown is now only about 4 blocks. And what were businesses and properties primarily owned by Japanese Americans is now run mostly by non-Japanese owners. Due to the circumstances of WWII internment and redevelopment in the '60s/'70s, most Japanese Americans were displaced to other areas in the Bay Area, or elsewhere.

While many of the third, fourth and fifth generation Japanese Americans no longer live in Japantown today, it continues to hold immeasurable symbolic and cultural meaning. It is the place where Japanese Americans still come to for cultural and educational events. The streets in Japantown are the site for annual events such as the Cherry Blossom Festival, Nihonmachi Street Fair, Bon Odori, Sumo Events, etc., which bring the regional community together.

And now alongside many of the Japanese businesses in Japantown, you will also find Korean, Chinese, Hawaiian and other Asian-based retail shops and restaurants. These days, the majority of patrons in Japantown are primarily not Japanese, but mostly represent the diverse population of San Francisco and its tourist industry. But Japantown still remains the unique place to get a taste of the Japanese culture, without having to take a trip to Japan.

g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?

In the early 1960s federal funding was secured to establish Japantown and Western Addition redevelopment projects labeled A-1 and A-2. Although opposed by leaders in both the Japanese American and African American communities, these projects eventually moved forward, resulting in extensive demolition of Victorian-era buildings and displacement of established residents. Redevelopment forced the demolition of Soko Hardware's store. Redevelopment took control of the buildings, forced rebuilding to their standards and dictated the look and architecture of the new building and their current store located on 1698 Post Street. During that time of forced redevelopment, Soko Hardware relocated up the street to 1674 Post Street temporarily while the original building on 1698 Post Street was being built. Due to the redevelopment and "urban renewal" of years past, the area has been, and is, defined by its cultural significance more than its architectural identity.

h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

Soko Hardware remains as only one of four family-owned businesses in San Francisco's Japantown and has served the community for 94 years. If the business were to be diminished, sold, relocated or shut down, there would be no more local hardware store within the community or, more importantly, the all-in-one shop that offers many of the hard-to-find Japanese woodworking tools, Japanese housewares and cookware, Japanese Butsudan (Buddhist shrines for homes) and many, other unique and traditional items.

Soko Hardware is a large building that stands prominently on a key corner in the heart of Japantown and has been a business that all of the community has been familiar with for generations. If it were to go away, it would definitely remove a huge part of Japantown history.

Just looking at a few of the Yelp reviews and comments, one can tell how loved Soko Hardware is to so many people:

- "One of my favorite places in San Francisco. Incense. Pottery. Household hardware. Paper lamps."
- "I swear if you are looking for a certain Japanese item, look here first!"
- "This has been one of our favorite places to visit in Japantown!"
- "Coolest hardware store. Overall it is less of a hardware store and more of an all purpose shop."
- "Felt like a child in a candy store when I first visited Soko - rice paper, donabe ceramic pots, tea pots, excellent cutting boards, delicate temple bells, black ink for sumi painting!"
- "Soko Hardware is one of my favorite places to shop in San Francisco!"
- "We can't go to San Francisco without coming here."

CRITERION 3

a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.

Soko Hardware has been run by the same family for four generations, and the Ashizawas and the business are well known in the Japanese community. The business is known not only for carrying most of your typical hardware needs and general merchandise, but items with an emphasis on Japanese products all in one store. One would be hard pressed to find any other store like it in the United States. The ability to find saws, hammers, nails and gardening supplies, as well as Japanese bowls, teapots, cups, sake sets, cookware, appliances, cookbooks, Buddhist shrines and more, is a unique and defining character of Soko Hardware.

b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)

Philip Ashizawa, his wife Eunice and son David over the years have maintained a commitment to providing the same product mix of hardware, plus Japanese goods, tools and housewares as they always have for many generations. They have also run the store with the same friendly "family run" feel as it always has since 1925. The Ashizawas have put a lot of care into the selection of their merchandise, as well as into their customer service.

c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).

On the exterior of the building, the Soko Hardware signage written in both English and large, Japanese Kanji characters along with the Ashizawa "mon" (Japanese family crest/emblem) has been hanging outside of the building on Plexiglas ever since the Ashizawas moved back to 1698 Post Street (their current location) in the early 1970s after their building was forced to be rebuilt by the City's Redevelopment Agency. Soko Hardware's exterior also has two panels that light up at night, which are a part of the Japantown Historical Walk.

d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Not applicable.





soko
HARDWARE COMPANY

[ABOUT US](#) [OUR PRODUCTS](#) [CONTACT US](#)



1698 Post St
San Francisco, CA 94115
b/t Laguna St & Buchanan St
Japantown, Lower Pacific Heights

Phone: (415) 931-5510

Monday - Sunday 9:00AM - 5:30PM
Sunday: Closed

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gettyimages
Rick Gerharter

148763005



Let's get your dinner table (or office desk) decorated!

There are many ways to choose your dinner table set. You can choose from a variety of styles, colors, and materials. You can also choose to mix and match different pieces to create a unique look.

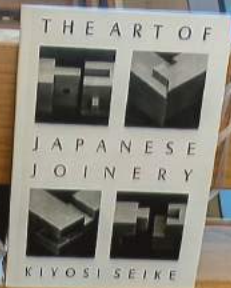
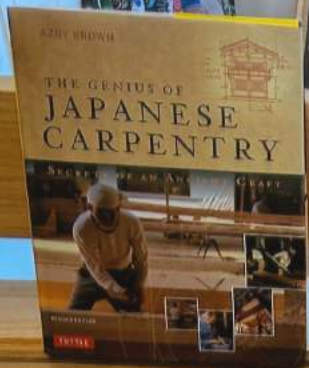
Our dinner table sets are made from high-quality materials and are designed to last. They are also easy to clean and maintain. So you can enjoy your dinner table for years to come.

Visit our website at www.example.com to see our full range of dinner table sets.













NK1

NL 104
\$425

NK 2
\$120

1092 AD
\$220

1092 AD
\$220

DL 2008 AD
\$278

NL 105
\$425

NL 103
\$425

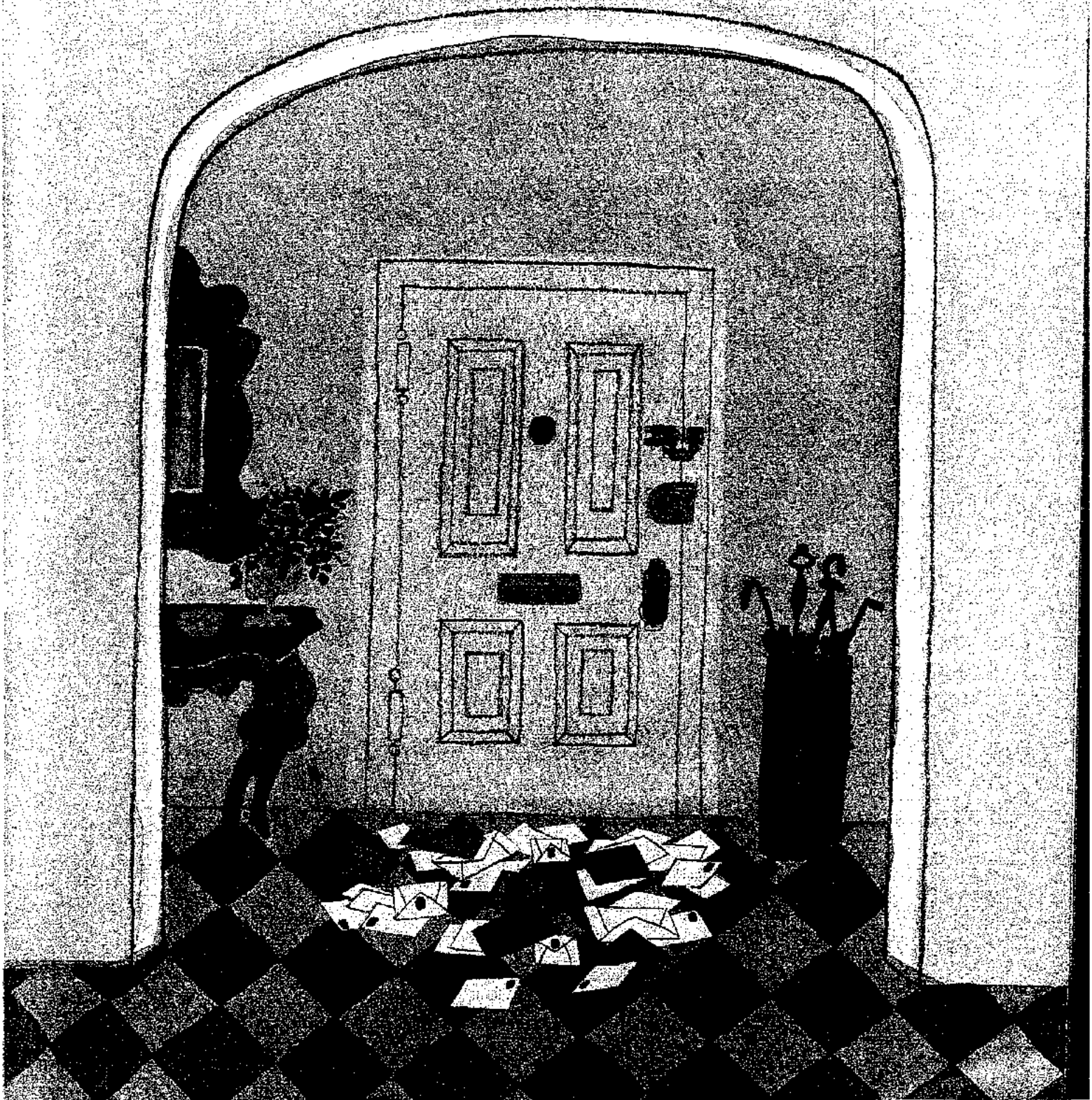
Paper Lantern Prices			Paper Lantern Prices			Paper Lantern Prices		
Lantern	Dimensions	Price	Lantern	Dimensions	Price	Lantern	Dimensions	Price
120-80	12" x 8"	4.50	100-110	10" x 11"	6.50	100-110	10" x 11"	6.50
120-80	12" x 8"	6.00	100-110	10" x 11"	8.00	100-110	10" x 11"	8.00
120-80	12" x 8"	8.00	100-110	10" x 11"	10.00	100-110	10" x 11"	10.00
120-80	12" x 8"	10.00	100-110	10" x 11"	12.00	100-110	10" x 11"	12.00
120-80	12" x 8"	12.00	100-110	10" x 11"	14.00	100-110	10" x 11"	14.00
120-80	12" x 8"	14.00	100-110	10" x 11"	16.00	100-110	10" x 11"	16.00
120-80	12" x 8"	16.00	100-110	10" x 11"	18.00	100-110	10" x 11"	18.00
120-80	12" x 8"	18.00	100-110	10" x 11"	20.00	100-110	10" x 11"	20.00
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120-80	12" x 8"	24.00	100-110	10" x 11"	26.00	100-110	10" x 11"	26.00
120-80	12" x 8"	26.00	100-110	10" x 11"	28.00	100-110	10" x 11"	28.00
120-80	12" x 8"	28.00	100-110	10" x 11"	30.00	100-110	10" x 11"	30.00
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120-80	12" x 8"	34.00	100-110	10" x 11"	36.00	100-110	10" x 11"	36.00
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120-80	12" x 8"	56.00	100-110	10" x 11"	58.00	100-110	10" x 11"	58.00
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120-80	12" x 8"	64.00	100-110	10" x 11"	66.00	100-110	10" x 11"	66.00
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120-80	12" x 8"	72.00	100-110	10" x 11"	74.00	100-110	10" x 11"	74.00
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120-80	12" x 8"	80.00	100-110	10" x 11"	82.00	100-110	10" x 11"	82.00
120-80	12" x 8"	82.00	100-110	10" x 11"	84.00	100-110	10" x 11"	84.00
120-80	12" x 8"	84.00	100-110	10" x 11"	86.00	100-110	10" x 11"	86.00
120-80	12" x 8"	86.00	100-110	10" x 11"	88.00	100-110	10" x 11"	88.00
120-80	12" x 8"	88.00	100-110	10" x 11"	90.00	100-110	10" x 11"	90.00
120-80	12" x 8"	90.00	100-110	10" x 11"	92.00	100-110	10" x 11"	92.00
120-80	12" x 8"	92.00	100-110	10" x 11"	94.00	100-110	10" x 11"	94.00
120-80	12" x 8"	94.00	100-110	10" x 11"	96.00	100-110	10" x 11"	96.00
120-80	12" x 8"	96.00	100-110	10" x 11"	98.00	100-110	10" x 11"	98.00
120-80	12" x 8"	98.00	100-110	10" x 11"	100.00	100-110	10" x 11"	100.00

Dec. 13, 1976

THE

Price 75 cents

NEW YORKER



erson, even talked the studios in Radio City into giving him broadcast time on Saturday afternoons. This bailed out a lot of musicians. It also told a lot of listeners what Condon music was like, and it enabled them to hear that wonderful, ruminative, cloudy voice of Lee Wiley, who to most of us was the queen bee that Mabel Mercer is today. Going on the road with a Condon band when he was barnstorming practically everywhere between Boston and Chicago and was wisecracking with interviewers even more glibly than Jimmy Walker, who was for a while his mayor and mine, was a twenty-four-hour-a-day treat. Soon some of the boys in the Village who were engaged in certain laudable but illegal practices during Prohibition became interested in him, not only as a friend but as a product. And they set him up a few years later in the first place to bear his name, a block south of Washington Square, then moved him up near Sutton Place. His greatest moment, I guess, was the night he brought his bandsmen into Carnegie Hall, then rather stiff-necked about jazz, and was introduced to the audience by Fiorello LaGuardia.

The other afternoon, the first person I encountered after saying hello to Phyllis was Milt Gabler, who between 1926 and 1958 ran the Commodore Music Shop, opposite the Commodore Hotel, on East Forty-second Street. Any jazz record ever made anywhere, it seemed to me, was on his shelves or could be got by him, even if sometimes a trifle pockmarked. I had not seen him in twenty-six years. "Days of the United Hot Clubs of America," I said to Gabler, "and the Sunday-afternoon sessions the local chapter gave on The Street." "Your membership-card number was eighty-eight," said Gabler, "and, even though I was president of the New York chapter, my number was down at one hundred." The reasons for the Hot Clubs, now long disbanded, were the collecting of records, the listening to records, and the organization of jam sessions. The Commodore Music Shop was really a post office. Anyone who wanted to get in touch with a roving musician and didn't have the address sent a letter to Gabler, who either kept it until the musician came to town or sent it forward when he got a new address from the rover. As far as I know, nothing was ever lost in transit.

The present Eddie Condon's is owned by Red Balaban, whose father was the B. of Balaban & Katz, who had a big string of Chicago movie houses. Red came to New York with

& Cats, and has been in business ever since. His band was on and off the platform with agreeable frequency during the wake. And now and again musicians who had stopped by to pay their respects to Phyllis sat in. Marian McPartland, who is now at the Carlyle, and Jimmy McPartland sat in together, though the jazz she plays is hardly Condon—we used to call it progressive jazz. Jimmy's jazz is. At the Condon wakes, you see people you never expect to see. For one, Minerva Pious, whose curious voice adorned the Fred Allen radio show for those many years. She and her voice are unchanged.

Jimmy McPartland came down off the stand and sat beside me. He said, "Well, it's been like this for fifty years. Do you remember when I was in the Ben Pollack band back in 1928, when we were playing downstairs at the Park Central at Seventh Avenue and Fifty-sixth Street?" "In between shootouts," I said. "That's right," said Jimmy. "That was the year they picked off Arnold Rothstein, the gambler, during the poker game. And that pretty Irish girlfriend of his—what became of her?" "I was out on the town with her two weeks before it happened," I said. "She had permission to run around with us the nights he wasn't seeing her. Next day, no one could remember ever having heard of her." "That was life in those days," Jimmy said, "I think that's life now," I said.

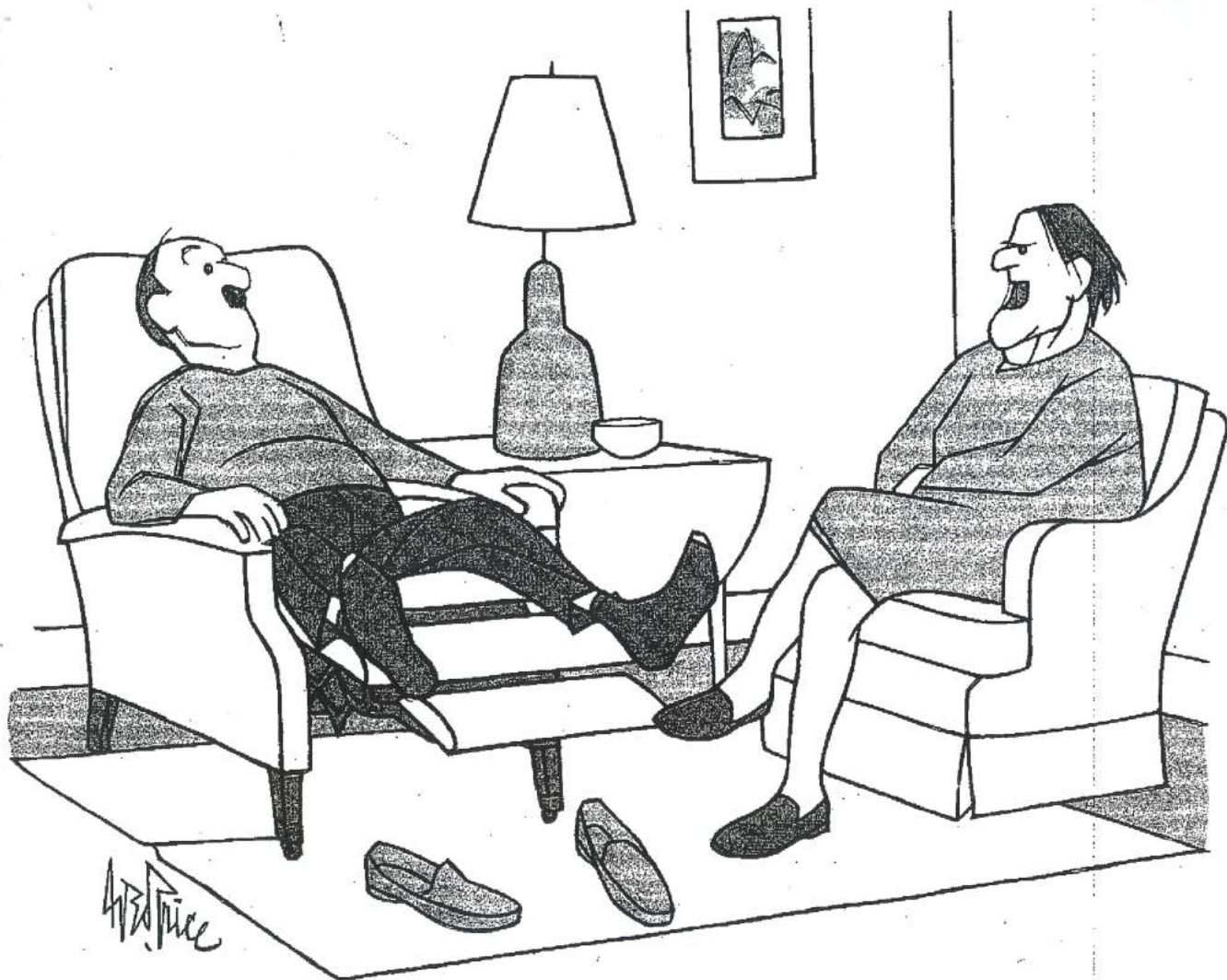
Frisco

HERE in the Bay Area—Frisco to you (wires an easily transplanted New Yorker)—the roses were blooming on Thanksgiving Day and everyone says the weather's cold, meaning it gets up to about sixty degrees. Patty Hearst is back home on Nob Hill, BART is functioning smoothly, the Oakland Raiders have the best record in the National Football League, there is beautiful light in the cloudless skies, and there's a cottage in Berkeley with a Franklin stove and a plentiful supply of eucalyptus logs which I would buy today if I weren't flying back to New York tomorrow. In four days here, I've discovered the best Chinese restaurant in the world, the best store for Christmas shopping, and the most interesting scientific news of the year. See what I mean? You

can get out of town, forget about the holidays, find a new town, adopt it, and celebrate it for a few days.

The Ashizawa family's Soko Hardware Store, on the corner of Post and Buchanan, in Japantown, opposite the Japan Center, the only Japanese shopping mall in the country—and not far from two eateries: the Donut Hole ("World Famous Donut Hole") and the Golden Peacock Pizza Place ("Home of Original Big Foot Subs")—looks deceptively Occidental from the street, with Hoyt-heater emblems and Dutch Boy Paints emblems on the redwood panels over the store's plate-glass windows. And inside there's a complete line of American hardware and appliances and gardening tools and teapots and San Francisco posters neatly crammed, in the manner of hardware stores, into a couple of good-sized rooms, which sounds ordinary enough. What makes Soko amazing—and well worth any Christmas shopper's time—is that stashed amidst the indoor-outdoor thermometers, screwdrivers, wallpaper, and toggle bolts is an equally complete line of traditional and quite exquisite Japanese hardware and household utensils, all of which, according to Mrs. Ashizawa (part of the second of three generations that run Soko), are in great demand: both by the Japanese community in San Francisco, which, because it is already American, sees no reason to have to try to be American and holds to nineteenth-century Meiji customs that are hard to come by in up-to-date Tokyo, and still speaks a kind of Dickensian Japanese that doesn't have a lot of modern modish words taken from English and French (in modern Japan *abekku*, from *avec*, means two couples who go around together); and by a lot of young American craftsmen—carpenters, hobbyists, sculptors, street artists—who find, for instance, that they can make a much finer cut through a piece of wood with a traditional Japanese saw than they can with a modern American saw. A Japanese saw—Soko also sells Japanese planes, *nomi* (Japanese chisels), *kebiki* (ancient Japanese gadgets for marking lines parallel to the edge of a piece of wood), and Japanese whetstones—looks like a samurai woodsman's tool; it has a bamboo handle and a thin, delicate-looking blade about a foot long with teeth on both sides. The blade is made of carbon steel, which is a steel that can be ground to an extremely sharp cutting edge; and, unlike all other saws, it cuts on the pull stroke instead of on the push stroke, which gives you a





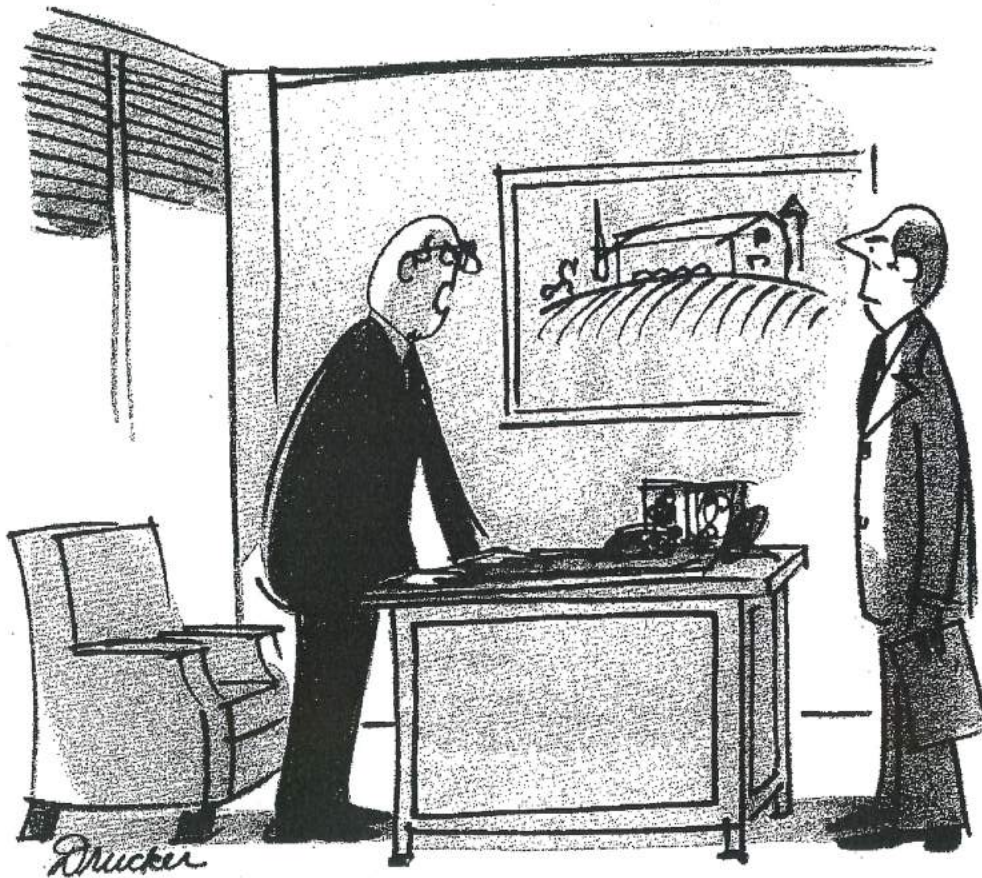
"Well, you certainly look relaxed. What the hell is that all about?"

cut, because when you pull on a blade it stays in tension and stays straight, and when you push a saw, it tends to buckle.

What else has Soko got? Japanese and Mainland Chinese kitchen knives, which have finer and thinner blades than the celebrated European Henckels knives (which Soko also stocks) and can be used for *hikukagiri*, a form of Japanese legerdemain: you take a vegetable you want to decorate, hold it between two chopsticks (Soko, of course, stocks chopsticks), and score it with a series of cuts one-eighth of an inch apart; then turn ninety degrees and make another series of parallel one-eighth-inch-apart cuts. One of the Soko knives comes with a printed guarantee that says, "GUARANTEE VOID IF HONED OR GROUND. The only attention 'MAC' knives may need—occasional few strokes at ten degrees angle across unglazed ring on the bottom of a piece of china, or use a fine butcher's steel." Then, there's a Poliflon-coated, no-stick *tamago-yaki nabe*,

a rectangular omelette pan; everything you'd need to construct a Japanese room, including tatami mats, decorated *tokonoma* pillars, which stand to one side of the alcove in a room that contains a flower arrangement and a scroll, and *shoji* paper, the traditional rice-paper covering for partitions, though partition coverings are now also available, Mrs. Ashizawa told me, in more practical fibre glass, which is much harder to punch a hole through; twenty-four different ink brushes for drawing and calligraphy; beautiful etched and inlaid finger pulls for sliding doors and closets; Buddhist altars; special hibachis for the tea ceremony; ceramic charcoal stoves with Mongolian cookers, which are little round metal hats with holes in the dome-shaped crown, and a curly brim (the stove sits on the table, and you grill your own meat over the holes and then dip the meat in the juice that has collected on the brim); a Japanese kiddies' carpenter set, which comes with small-sized saw, T square, hammer, file, mallet, and

wood plane, and a couple of chisels and screwdrivers; seeds (fifty-nine cents a packet) for growing Chinese okra, Chinese bitter melon, Chinese celery, Chinese spinach, Chinese chives, Chinese kale, and chrysanthemums (they all come either from Taiwan or from the Kitazawa Seed Company, in San Jose, California); and, of course, all kinds of Oriental dishes, such as *sake* cups and pitchers, and donburi, which are big bowls for rice or noodles, and things like planters, teapots, small rice dishes, teriyaki plates, and baskets. And then, most fascinating to me, a complete line of bonsai tools, which look like something found in a hobbit surgery or dentist's office. There are special nippers and shears for cutting buds or leaves or roots or twigs, tourniquets for shaping branches, tiny trowels for repotting, little whiskbrooms for brushing away gravel. I bought myself my first Christmas present: a pair of trimming shears with curved handles—they're smaller than a standard pair of sewing scissors and have a blade a couple of inches



"It just so happens, Perkins, I do believe in Santa Claus. You're fired!"

long—to use on my miniature roses back in N.Y.

Mrs. Ashizawa says her family, who come from Yamanashi, which is slightly to the south of Tokyo, sold their Frisco laundry about fifty years ago and bought Soko, already a going concern. They were interned during the Second World War, and most of their stock was stolen before the government put what was left in a warehouse, but they went right back into business after the war; they've been at their present site since 1950. Soko accepts BankAmericard.

DR. CHARLES T. TART, a professor of psychology at the University of California at Davis, is already well known in his field for three projects: in 1969, when interest in altered states of consciousness was running high, he brought out the first scholarly book on the subject, "Altered States of Consciousness," which has sold about seventy thousand copies and has served as a focus for organizing university courses in the subject (practically every major university in the country now has at least one small course in the field as a

juana intoxication, which established a general map of the effects of marijuana use in American culture and served as a guide for doing lab studies that were representative of what went on in the real world (Tart discovered that laboratory results at the time often bore little relation to the effects experienced in other settings; nausea, for instance, was common in the lab and rare anywhere else, and this suggested that investigators were routinely overdosing their subjects or doing something wrong); and in 1975 he published a book entitled "States of Consciousness," in which he presented a new theory on the nature of consciousness. Now he has published a study, "Learning to Use Extrasensory Perception," available from the University of Chicago Press, in which he addresses the three main problems encountered in previous serious scientific experiments to detect ESP and describes an experiment of his own that he thinks provides a solution. The three problems have been: a lot of the experiments haven't worked; even those experiments that report what is considered a statistically significant amount of ESP (a subject will for in-

on the backs of cards that he can't see at all and be right fifty-one per cent of the time, where chance would predict only fifty-per-cent accuracy) show the presence of what Tart calls "such low level ESP as to be practically trivial;" and experimenters have occasionally reported discovering talented subjects, or percipients, but have invariably found that as they kept working with these percipients the talent declined and eventually disappeared. "That was discouraging," Tart notes.

Tart, who is thirty-nine, unruly-haired, talkative, and friendly, and who drives a motorcycle, told me at lunch at the Hunan Restaurant, the best Chinese restaurant in the world (more about the Hunan in a minute), "We've been at the stage where the science of electricity was during practically all its history. Before the battery was devised, people working with electricity had only two phenomena to consider. One was lightning, which was spectacular but over in an instant—which existed primarily in memory. The other was that if you rubbed a piece of amber with some fur, and if the weather was just right (and they didn't even know at the time that the weather had to be just right), you could pick up a feather with the amber. This was piddling. What was needed was a reliable, steady flow of electricity that was available any day of the week. When that became available—through the battery—we were able in practically no time, considering the length of time that had gone before, to develop electronics. That's what I think I've found—a way of stabilizing ESP performance over a long series of tests on the part of people who have previously demonstrated a certain amount of ESP talent in rigorous shorter tests, and a way of helping percipients with quite a bit of demonstrated ESP talent to increase their performance over a long series of tests. In the standard ESP tests, a percipient was never scored or told how he'd done until he'd completed a run through an entire deck of, generally, twenty-five randomly shuffled cards. In 1966, I published a theory to the effect that the only way an organism—a rat, a pigeon, a person—learns something and gets better at it is by getting immediate feedback about his performance, so that if he's right he can proceed along the same lines and if he's wrong he has a chance to figure out where the error was. In an ESP experiment, you sit down and try to quiet the noise in your head and get an im-

Japanese-themed decor in the American home

By TOMO HIRAI
Nichi Bei Weekly

Choosing furniture that is right for the home can be a challenge. When basing interior décor on “Japanese aesthetics,” a variety of questions come up. A major concern, especially today, is price. Others include authenticity or how Japanese décor can be functional to American living.

The *Nichi Bei Weekly* researched a number of options consumers have when decorating their homes.

The Varietal *Tansu*

One of the largest pieces of Japanese furniture available is the *tansu*. The wooden chests come in a variety of styles, depending on their intended use, and can run anywhere from \$600 to \$6,000, based on their size, quality and age. There are many types of *tansu* and their price depends on the type of wood used, the amount of decoration and its condition.

A typical set of *isho tansu* (clothing drawers) from Asakichi, located in San Francisco's Japantown (Japan Center West Mall, 415-921-2147, www.asakichi.com), for example, can be \$800 or \$1,700 depending on whether the item is a new reproduction or an antique. The price can also differ according to the amount of embellishments, age and style.

Jiro Nakamura, owner of Narumi Japanese Antiques & Dolls (1902B Fillmore St., San Francisco, 415-346-8629, www.narumiantiques.com), said his *tansu* run anywhere from \$600 to \$5,000, based on age, quality, and how much iron is used to decorate them.

Wayne Sanders, owner of Mashiko Folk Craft (located in San Francisco's Japantown, second floor of the Kinokuniya Building, 415-346-0748), warned buyers to carefully examine what they are purchasing. “The kind of finish and craftsmanship of authentic Japanese antiques are completely

gano, travels to Japan once a month to purchase Japanese antiques from auctions in Tokyo, Nagoya and Kyoto and is knowledgeable enough to identify the origin of furniture through specific and minute features.

“We have a warehouse and workshop on the second floors and restore or redesign items to meet American needs,” Gomi said. “Sometimes we'll be asked to take a *tansu* and take out the shelves so a TV will fit; other times, we might cut a large kitchen *tansu* in half and make a buffet countertop instead.”

Gomi keeps costs down by driving his own truck to pick up and transport merchandise in Japan, and does the restoration in-house to the customer's specifications. A typical *kimono tansu*, popular among *Nikkei* customers, costs anywhere from \$750 to \$875, according to Gomi.

Gomi also said his business is popular with those who are eco-conscious, as what he sells is, in a sense, similar to recycling.

Similar to Kiku, another importer, Kuraya Japanese Antiques (2425 California St., San Francisco, 415-885-3313 and 2345 Harrison St., San Francisco, 415-285-2011, www.kurayaantiques.com), sells furniture pieces primarily from Kyoto. “Jin,” a salesperson at Kuraya, said it cheaply purchases old furniture from the Meiji or Taisho period and restores them. “It's like recycling,” Jin said. “Many people throw away perfectly good *kiri tansu* (*tansu* made from Paulownia wood). We purchase them cheap, restore them ... and they're good for another hundred years of use.” According to Jin, Paulownia is commonly used to build *tansu* in Japan because of its faster rate of growth compared to other woods.

Kuraya, which also restores its own antiques, generally sells their larger *tansu* for an average of \$2,000, which

whole new set of *tansu* might not be needed. Soko Hardware Company (1698 Post St., in San Francisco's Japantown, 415-931-5510), which not only sells *byobu* (painted screens) and paper lanterns, also offers replacement parts for *tansu* and *shoji* screens. The relatively affordable metal parts for *tansu* cost anywhere from \$2.50 to \$40 and can spruce up an old *tansu* or replace missing parts as needed.

A Decorative Flair

While *tansu* and other larger pieces of furniture represent major components of a room's décor, they alone do not create the room. *Byobu* and wall scrolls are tasteful decorations for the home and can range in price depending on how elaborate or old each piece is. Soko has a collection of *byobu* from \$300 to \$1,000. Kiku, Kuraya, Mashiko and Narumi also sell wall scrolls. Scrolls can cost anywhere from \$70 to hundreds of dollars.

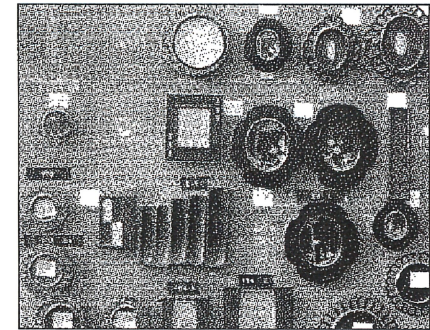
“The price of scrolls and prints depends on the age and condition of the piece,” Sanders said. “But it also depends on the artist as well.”

Sanders' Mashiko, which offers scrolls and woodblock prints, also has a large collection of traditional pottery on sale. The store, named after a town in Japan that is known for its pottery, has a large selection of traditional pottery. Sanders pointed out the variety of styles Japanese artisans produce — from brown and green tones from Oribe, the two-toned Kamakura style, and a lacquer based on persimmon juice.

Meanwhile, Nakamura sells Japanese-themed stained glass among his antiques at Narumi. The Kyushu native first came to the U.S. in 1973 as an art student and studied stained glass. After going back to Japan after school, he returned to San Francisco and started Narumi Antiques in 1981.

FOLLOWING JAPANESE DECORUM — Interior

decorating with Japanese aesthetics can be as simple as adding new *shoji* handles from Soko Hardware (right) or purchasing a new center piece for the room, such as a step *tansu* from Kuraya Japanese Antiques (below right).
photos by Tomo Hirai/Nichi Bei Weekly



The stained glass decorations, running anywhere from \$100 to \$400, feature designs containing *geisha*, *samurai* and flowers.

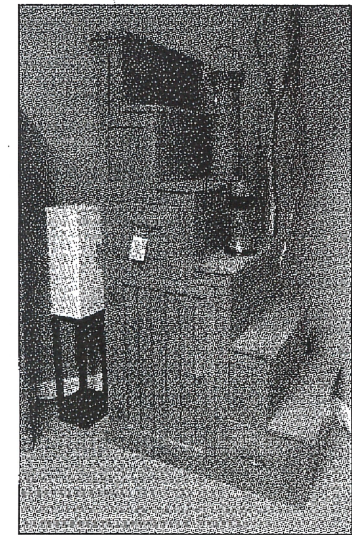
Wall to Wall Décor

While furniture and decorations are central to the décor of a room, further remodeling can add more Japanese aesthetics to the home. Aspen Ten, which operates a showroom at 140 East Jackson St., San Jose's Japantown, inside Nichi Bei Bussan (408-923-4902, <http://aspentent.com>), is a *shoji* (paper screen door and window) company owned by Henry Nakata Jr. The company installs an innovation of the traditional Japanese *shoji* design.

First developed in 1981, the Solar-Ji is a *yukimi* style *shoji* that features a movable grill panel within the *shoji*-frame. Nakata said he found his business as a window insulation company and only added *shoji* screens and *shoji* shades later.

“I tried to make them function as an insulated device, an improvement from traditional *shoji*,” he said. He initially got his idea to do so after energy costs skyrocketed in the late 1970s.

Nakata builds the Solar-Ji to order, and thus charges based on how much



he needs to make. For regular *shoji*, Aspen Ten charges \$24 per square foot, while the Solar-Ji is \$29.

There are a variety of businesses catering to Japanese aesthetics in the home in the Bay Area. Through careful selection of antiques and refurbished goods from local dealers and artisans, an American home can take on a uniquely Japanese air.



San Francisco's Japantown サンフランシスコ日本町

SHOPPING IN J-TOWN: Take home a souvenir

By BETH HILLMAN TAGAWA
Nichi Bei Weekly Contributor

If you've chowed down on *ta-koyaki*, soaked up some culture and still have energy to brave the crowds, why not participate in San Francisco Japantown's signature activity: shopping?

Many unique stores, inside the malls and along Buchanan Street, are great places for souvenirs and gifts. Some have been around for decades, making them true local institutions.

The San Francisco branch of **Kinokuniya Book Store** (1581 Webster St. in the Kinokuniya Building, (415) 567-7625), a Japanese chain, opened in 1969, but according to Satoshi Ida, the assistant manager, the store is constantly innovating. "We're trying to be as unique as possible," Ida says, "So you always find something new and exciting." In addition to an impressive stock of Japanese books and magazines, Kinokuniya sells fun gifts like an original totebag with a cute, blob-like character reading a "Bird Book" (\$5.95) and plastic toys like a kewpie doll wearing a variety of fruit as hats, like melon, peach and pineapple (\$6.99). Kinokuniya has recently lowered prices on some imported goods based on the exchange rate, so it's an opportune time to shop.

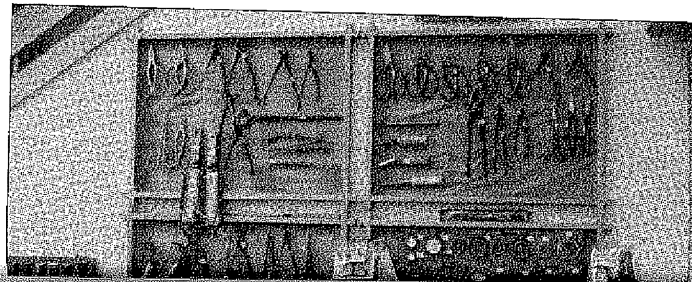
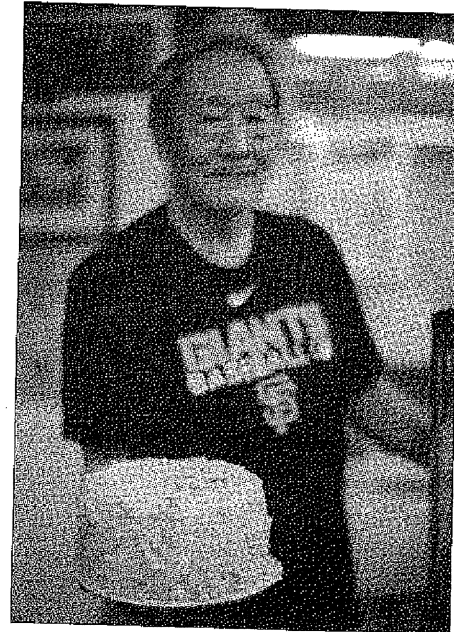
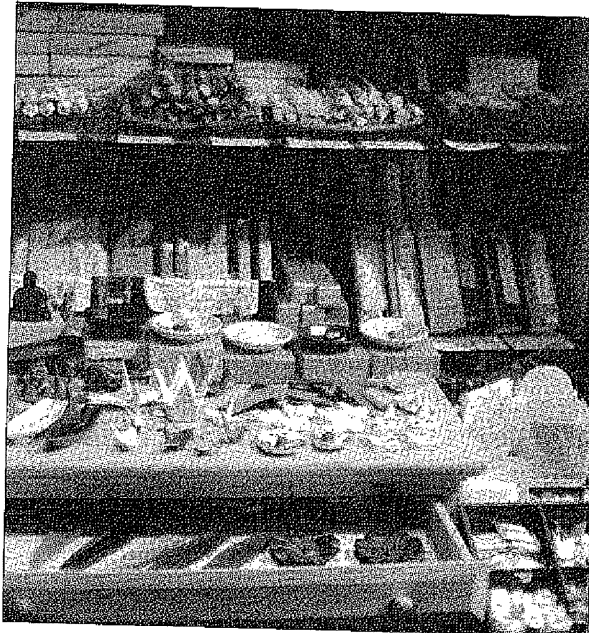
Just across the mall, **Mitsukoshi** (1501

nese carpentry tools, are imported directly from Japan and simply can't be found elsewhere, Ashizawa says. In addition to typical housewares, Soko also stocks an array of Japanese dishware and lunch boxes.

The Face Shop (1737 Post St., Suite 300, between Webster and Buchanan in the Japan Center West Mall), a popular Korean beauty shop open for two years in Japantown, boasts a variety of moisturizing face masks made from ingredients like kelp, bamboo and ginseng (\$2). But, according to an employee, its most popular item by far is the CC Cream, a cover-up made with sunblock that brightens skin, improving the user's complexion (\$47). Staff will happily discuss your skin type and needs to help you choose the most appropriate product.

At **Daiso** (22 Peace Plaza, Suite 400 in the Japan Center East Mall, (415) 359-9397), everything is \$1.50 (except for a small number of goods that are otherwise marked). The cavernous shop holds a plethora of cooking items and cleaning supplies like whisks in neon colors, frog-shaped kitchen timers and microfibre mittens that look like hedgehogs.

Just upstairs, **Ichibankan** (22 Peace Plaza, Suite 540, (415) 409-0472) is another variety goods shop known for its low prices. They stock



SOMETHING SPECIAL — Whether you're looking for a gift (Asakichi incense shop, top left), something sweet (Yasukochi Sweet Stop, above), or even basic household goods (Soko Hardware, left), the shops in San Francisco's Japantown have you covered.

photos by Daisuke Tagawa

so it's an opportune time to shop.

Just across the mall, **Maido** (1581 Webster St. Suites 185 and 260), a stationery and gift shop with a history of more than 20 years, sells "goods that are really hard to get anywhere else besides this store," according to the manager, Tetsu. Their most popular item? Japanese Hi-Tec-C gel pens, which come in a stunning variety of colors (\$3.95) and, Tetsu says, are of much better quality compared to some American brands. All stickers are \$2.50, including felt squirrels with chestnuts and fuzzy pink alpacas. Other *kawaii* merchandise, like tiny clips shaped like pigs (\$7.15 for four), would immediately brighten up any office.

The **Asakichi** incense shop (1730 Geary Blvd., Suite 209 on Webster Bridge) offers an amazing variety of the fragrant sticks, with scents including frankenscense, sandalwood and, perhaps most appropriate for the season, cherry blossom. The shop's owner, Asakichi himself, recommends the Shuyei brand, a traditional incense made in Kyoto of all natural ingredients, with scents like Moss Garden, Golden Pavilion and White Cloud. Asakichi says that he's been selling incense for 25 years and has gradually seen Japanese brands grow more popular, as compared to less expensive incense from India, which used to dominate the market. You can also find a variety of incense holders, in whimsical shapes like an owl, cat, frog or *origami* crane.

Soko Hardware (1698 Post St. at Buchanan, (415) 931-5510), is a true Japantown institution, around since 1925. Philip Ashizawa attributes his store's success to the wide variety of merchandise and the unique items they sell. Some goods, like Japa-

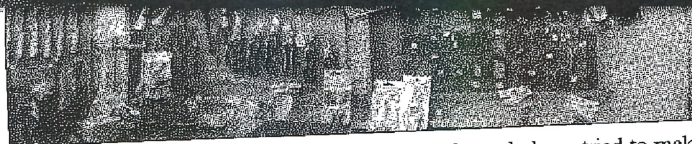
knows for the variety of Japanese foods, like chips, bread and gummies (lychee, yuzu, peach, watermelon, \$2.49). You can find Japanese grooming products such as hair gel and shampoo, and stuff that's cute as well as useful, like a polar bear print cooling tote bag (\$2.25).

And don't forget dessert! Enjoy the Festival a little longer by coming home with a sweet treat.

Coffee Crunch Cake from Yasukochi's Sweet Shop

This rich, crunchy cake looks deceptively simple, but the flavor and texture are something special (\$30). More than 40 years ago, Moses Ya-

sukochi got the recipe from a former employee of Blum's bakery, where the cake had been a popular item before it closed. **Yasukochi's** (1790 Sutter St., (415) 931-8165) crunch cake was featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle* about 10 years ago "and from then it just snowballed," Yasukochi says. So what's the secret to the melt-in-your mouth crunch coating? "I don't even tell my grandson," Yasukochi says with a smile.



"A lot of people have tried to make the crunch. They say, 'How come mine don't come out like yours?' There's a knack to it. I ain't gonna tell you."

Strawberry Mochi from Benkyodo

At **Benkyodo Co.** (1747 Buchanan St., (415) 922-1244), you can get fresh, homemade mochi in a variety of flavors all year round. But come springtime, they start making

something special: red bean *mochi* with a half strawberry tucked inside (\$1.35). Benh Nakajo, a longtime employee, says that he thinks its uniqueness attracts people, as the strawberry *mochi* consistently sells out. As with all of Benkyodo's products, the strawberry *mochi* is freshly made and, given the fruit inside, it must be eaten within a day. Don't worry — you probably won't be able to resist it for long anyway.

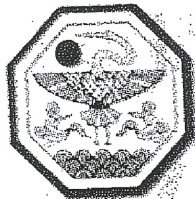


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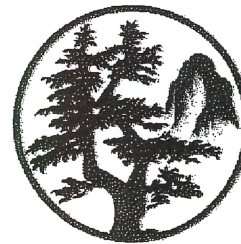


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Regional/National

'Mas' Ashizawa, S.F. J-Town businessman, dies at 90

By TOMO HIRAI
Nichu Bei Weekly

Japantown business leader Masao "Mas" Ashizawa passed away March 31 in San Francisco, his son, Philip Ashizawa, said. He was 90.

Born May 31, 1925 in San Francisco, he was the son of Masayasu and Naka Ashizawa, who opened Soko Hardware in the city's Japantown in 1925.

Upon returning from the Topaz (Central Utah) concentration camp, Ashizawa took over the family business. Additionally, he became a leader in Japantown's development as the president of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation during the neighborhood's redevelopment, spanning from the 1960s through the '80s.

Allen Okamoto, a local realtor, said Soko Hardware is "one of the best-known businesses in Japantown." Currently run by Philip Ashizawa, Okamoto said the business serves as both an independent hardware store and a tourist attraction to the neighborhood. "They've been pretty stable, a rather strong business," Okamoto said.

"Mas" Ashizawa, however, was also known for his work redistributing and developing properties taken by the city under eminent

domain during the 1960s through '80s. Community members credit Ashizawa for keeping Japantown properties within the Japanese American community and for reshaping the neighborhood to what it is today.

Following the redevelopment of Japantown to build the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center on the south side of Post Street in 1964 as part of the city's A1 redevelopment area, the Japantown community organized the NCDC to work with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency to redevelop the A2 neighborhood north of the center with greater community input.

"The city suggested the creation of an entity that gave structure to the Japantown community's property owners during redevelopment," Okamoto said. "Mas helped distribute the property among the property owners and was the main voice of the NCDC."

Okamoto said that Ashizawa dissolved the NCDC after the final parcel of land was developed and created the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation to oversee the shared parking lots the NCDC created in lieu of onsite parking for the commercial properties on Buchanan and Post streets.

"He is one of the very few people who (it) can be said ... their efforts resulted in Japantown as we know it today," said George Yamasaki, a longtime volunteer for San Francisco's Cherry Blossom Festival and former legal counsel for National Braemar, the company responsible for constructing the Japan Center.

Yamasaki characterized Ashizawa as "solid, honest, hard working, quiet and brilliant" and was recognized "for better or for worse," the leader by both supporters and detractors during his tenure as president of the NCDC. He was also an early organizer for San Francisco's Cherry Blossom Festival and was the festival's committee chair during its fourth year.

"Mas really had a sincere desire to continue the vibrancy of Nihonmachi," Yamasaki said. "He lived in the area and wanted it to thrive and prosper. That kind of love of community is hard to describe and rarely found anymore."

A memorial service is planned for Sunday, May 15 at 3 p.m. at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco, located at 1881 Pine St. in San Francisco's Japantown. The family requests no gifts or *koden* be given.

Adachi and ACLU call for stronger civil rights probes of police department

Bay City News Service

San Francisco's public defender and the American Civil Liberties Union both called April 5 for independent governmental investigations into alleged racist text messages and use-of-force policies in the city's Police Department.

Public Defender Jeff Adachi asked California Attorney General Kamala Harris to undertake a state probe.

Adachi said in a letter to Harris that a collaborative review currently being conducted by the U.S. Justice Department and a review by a commission established by District Attorney George Gascon both lack mechanisms for enforcing any recommendations that may be made.

A civil rights investigation by Harris's office, on the other hand, could result in a stipulated court order or consent decree requiring reforms under state supervision, Adachi said.

"I believe strongly that the path to reform is through accountability and an independent investigation," Adachi wrote.

Harris press secretary Rachele Huennekens said, "We are reviewing the letter."

The ACLU, meanwhile, asked the federal Justice Department to ratchet up its current collaborative

lying on a collaborative review of policies," said ACLU attorney Alan Schlosser.

The current federal review is a so-called collaborative reform process sponsored by the Justice Department's Community Oriented Policing Services, or COPS, office.

In that process, federal officials work collaboratively with local authorities. Compliance with the agency's recommendations is voluntary.

Adachi's letter asks Harris to look into a new set of allegedly racist text messages exchanged among officers and into three fatal police shootings of young men of color who were suspects or were being pursued by officers since March 2014.

The new messages, revealed last month, were sent by at least four officers, according to Gascon.

Another set of such messages, found in connection with the federal prosecution of a police corruption case, was revealed last year.

The ACLU's letter asks the federal Justice Department to investigate the newly disclosed text messages, and supplements a previous Jan. 29 letter asking for a probe of the fatal shootings.

Also April 5, Board of Supervisors President London Breed and Supervisor Malia Cohen urged the

Anti-nuclear energy groups hold meeting in S.F.

By TOMO HIRAI
Nichu Bei Weekly

No Nukes Action Committee.

protests larger issues, including the Japanese government's attempt to revise its war-renouncing constitution

denialism of nuclear hazards in Japan joins the denialism his administration had regarding the

<http://newfillmore.com/2016/04/29/at-soko-hardware-its-the-mix-that-works/>

THE NEW FILLMORE

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE HEART AND SOUL OF SAN FRANCISCO

At Soko Hardware, it's the mix that works

By FRAN MORELAND JOHNS

Posted on April 29, 2016 by editors



Eunice Ashizawa and her nephew Aaron Katekaru help run Soko Hardware in Japantown.

After Masayasu Ashizawa came from Japan to San Francisco nearly a century ago, he opened a hardware store in 1925 in the heart of bustling Japantown and named it Soko — Japanese for “that place.” Soko Hardware’s founder could not have imagined the family business would be thriving in that place today under the management of his grandson Philip, born years after his grandfather died.

Soko Hardware, at 1698 Post Street, thrives not just as a local hardware store, but also as a destination for Bay Area residents and visitors who come for the paper lanterns or the authentic teapots or the delicate china — sometimes even for the hardware.

“I think of going to Soko as a special treat, like going to a museum and finding things I didn’t know existed,” says Mill Valley resident Sue Steele. “I go for so many things, but foremost the flower vases. And the frogs used for arranging flowers — I can’t find them anywhere else. The scissor collection for Ikebana is wonderful, too.”

Nob Hill resident Julia Held goes for the teacups she likes to use and to give as gifts. “But it’s terribly hard to make a choice because they are all so lovely,” she says.

The store stocks basic hardware, from nuts and bolts to fancy tools. “But there’s also a lot of housewares and imports,” says third generation owner Philip Ashizawa. “It’s the mix that works.”



Philip Ashizawa is the third generation owner of Soko Hardware. Photos by Erik Anderson.

The mix includes appliances, gourmet cookware, paint, plumbing and electrical supplies, toothpick holders, note cards and additional unexpected delights. The store also stocks an impressive collection of Japanese tools for gardening and woodworking, plus seeds for Japanese plants and books about such topics as making shoji screens.

The founder’s son, Masao Ashizawa, then a graduate student in math at UC Berkeley, took over Soko Hardware in 1949 after his father died. Only a few years after returning from internment camp during World War II in Utah, he and his fellow *Nisei* — second generation Japanese Americans — faced a new upheaval. A portion of San Francisco’s redevelopment plan for the Western Addition, adopted in 1948, demolished Japantown and blocks of Japanese and African American homes and businesses in the area. By the 1960s, much of the area south of Bush Street between Divisadero and Gough had been leveled.

But Ashizawa and others were determined to preserve the Japanese character of their neighborhood. He relocated Soko Hardware from its original home at 1683 Post and worked

with the city to get Japan Center and the Peace Plaza built in its place on the south side of Post Street. He became founding president of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corp., which functioned from the 1960s through the 1980s to keep Japantown properties in the hands of Japanese Americans. Ashizawa was among the early organizers of the Cherry Blossom Festival, serving as chairman in its fourth year in 1971.

Fusaye Kato, a Post Street resident, was sent to the same Topaz internment camp in Central Utah during World War II and was one of Ashizawa's classmates. She recalls his mother with great fondness, and remembers him as a man of ambition. "I think he was president of the student body," she says.

When Ashizawa died on March 31 at age 90, he was hailed for his commitment to keeping Japantown vital and his love of the community. A memorial service will be held on May 15 at 3 p.m. at the San Francisco Buddhist Church at 1881 Pine Street.

His son Philip Ashizawa came into the business in 1979 after graduating from college, where he majored in biophysics. It was, he says, as good a background as any for running a hardware store.

It's unclear whether yet another generation of Ashizawas will take over Soko Hardware. "Our son has gone on to other things after college," says Philip Ashizawa. "Our daughter helps out part time."



Lauren Ashizawa works part time in her family's hardware store in Japantown.

But for now, the care and customer service that are hallmarks of the unique shop are continuing.

An elderly Japanese woman recently came into the store and approached the counter holding four packets of pumpkin squash seeds.

"Which one?" she asks in heavily accented English.

Ashizawa lay the seed packets out on the counter. They're all similar, he explains, but this one has a slightly different flesh, this one differs in other ways.

"So I should buy this one?"

"Well, no, it's kind of late in the season," he says. "You probably want this one, with a shorter growing season."

The home gardener smiles, reassured, and leaves with her packet of seeds.

Several young women carrying artists' portfolios glided through the door and down the stairs, presumably to buy new brushes for their calligraphy, or elegant imported papers. Soko Hardware carries an assortment of Japanese papers and brushes. As they were disappearing downstairs, a tall, burly, bearded man wearing a black T-shirt with Vet*er*an in bold letters on the front approached the counter. He seemed to be a regular customer. Phil Ashizawa's wife Eunice, who helps run the store, had been working with the customer to find what he sought: a cast iron incense holder. "The kids can't break this one," he says to those gathering at the counter. "They're 7 and 9."

He also had in hand about \$150 worth of tools. "I don't buy everything at once," he says. "I slip it in a little at a time so the wife doesn't complain."

JAPANTOWN HISTORY



San Francisco History Center | San Francisco Public Library

Soko Hardware — which opened in 1925 at 1683 Post Street in the heart of old Japantown — is pictured above from Post and Buchanan circa 1930. In the 1960s, the Redevelopment Agency leveled most of the buildings in the neighborhood and the Japan Center complex and Peace Pagoda were built. Soko Hardware moved across the street to 1698 Post Street, where it continues today.

<https://www.nichibei.org/2016/08/everyday-japanese-flair-in-the-home/>

Nichi Bei

Everyday Japanese flair in the home

August 18, 2016 by [TOMO HIRAI](#), [Nichi Bei Weekly](#)

A visit to one's local Japantown can help refresh any home with furniture and decorations that give it a distinctly Japanese aesthetic. Whether it be a kotatsu (heated table) or a hand-crafted tea bowl, there are various options to decorate the home.



Asakichi specializes in Japanese tea ceremony supplies, its selection of hand-crafted tea bowls can serve a decorative purpose. photo by Tomo Hirai/Nichi Bei Weekly

In San Francisco Japantown's Japan Center West Mall, Asakichi sells a variety of small to mid-sized goods. While the store offers specialized goods for advanced levels of Japanese tea ceremony, they can also be used as decoration. The store carries Japanese lacquer ware (\$12 to \$48) and handcrafted Japanese tea bowls (around \$100). While primarily meant for tea ceremony, a hand-crafted tea bowl can serve as a decorative piece, along with some finer tea pots recently stocked from Japan (\$100 to \$200). Also in stock are several Japanese antiques and folk crafts from Japan. The store has a selection of antique porcelain, such as an Imari porcelain basin for washing sake cups (\$325) and hand-loomed and hand-printed decorative strips of fabric from Kyoto (\$65), to add a pastel streak of color to any wall.

Etsuyoshi Shimada once worked as a travel agent, but now brings Japan to the home through Neat Asian Things. Opened in 2011, Shimada took over the space from Masao Konishi who ran Townhouse Living on the first floor of the Kinokuniya Building. The store specializes in Japanese decorations and furniture, most notably, pillows, cushions and tatami products.

According to employee Tom Suzuki, noren are also popular. Ranging in price from \$20 to \$100, the store carries a wide selection of 20 or so designs for short, medium and long noren lengths. "You can use the longer ones as a room divider in the place of a door," Suzuki said. "If you have a little window, a shorter one is good for them."

Other popular items include the tatami bed (\$688), zabuton (seat cushions) (starting at \$30) and buckwheat pillows (starting at \$24).

The store also sells more than 20 different kinds of Isamu Noguchi lamps (\$105-\$1,000). "We're the only ones around here that has such a wide selection," Suzuki said.

Sanko Kitchen Essentials, located on the northern corner of the Buchanan Street Mall at 1758 Buchanan St., sells a wide variety of household goods, especially for the kitchen. After 35 years, the store changed its name from Sanko Cooking Supply to Sanko Kitchen Essentials as it came under new ownership by JPT America in July 2016. The former owner, Mariko Suzuki, continues to work today as an employee.

Suzuki said some items for the home include Japanese vases (\$48 to \$300), or wall scrolls (\$28). The store also carries decorative masks (\$100) and kimono style wine bottle covers (\$36).



While no longer purchasing new stock, Soko Hardware carries imported furniture such as tansu and tables from Japan. photo by Tomo Hira/Nichi Bei Weekly

Soko Hardware, located at 1698 Post Street, is the last family-owned hardware store in the ethnic enclave. Outside of the tools and materials typically found in a hardware store, the business has a selection of kitchen appliances and decorative items for the home.

A colorful selection of paper lanterns (\$1.95 to \$25.50), and decorative furoshiki (wrapping cloth) (\$55) worthy of being put up on the walls are on display at the store. Also in stock are decorative items such as tanuki (raccoon dog) statues (\$63.20), byobu (painted partitions) (\$20-\$1,000) and tatami goza mats (mats made of woven rice stalks) (\$28 to \$170).

Eunice Ashizawa, the hardware store's co-owner, noted that bathroom accessories have also been popular. The store carries wooden bath mats (\$23 to \$66), bath stools (\$29.95 to \$243) and buckets (\$11) for the furo (Japanese bath) made of fragrant Japanese cypress.

While specializing in smaller goods, Soko once dealt in larger pieces of furniture as well. During the '80s Agnes Ashizawa, the late matriarch of the family, started Soko Interiors further up the street at 1672 Post St. While Ashizawa said Soko no longer actively stocks larger pieces of furniture, the Ashizawas have several imported pieces of furniture in stock.

There are a number of keyaki (Japanese elm) pieces, including chadansu (Japanese tea cupboard) (\$1,668 to \$2,265) and a table (\$720). Also available is an oak geta bako (shoe storage box) and a wadansu (Japanese armory closet) made of white oak (\$2,595).

San Jose Japantown's Nichi Bei Bussan is a storied Japanese American department store dating back to 1948. Located at 140 Jackson St., it sells bedding and cushions for the home.



Nichi Bei Bussan offers a selection of decorative and functional items such as zabuton, futon, byobu and noren. photo by Arlene Damron

Popular staples include zabuton (starting at \$69.95), buckwheat hull pillows (\$24.95 to \$59.95) and a tri-fold foam folding bed (from \$230).

Store owner Arlene Damron recommends a tri-fold foam folding bed, which is “especially good for kids going back to college or temporary bedding for people,” paired with a tatami bed (available by special order).

The store also sells other tatami products such as tatami goza mats (\$54.95) and tatami mats (by special order).

Among other larger items, Nichi Bei Bussan stocks shoji screens (\$120.95 for three panels) and kotatsu (from \$350).

Damron also said a “Uniquely NB” line of products are available, including tsuzumi pillows (\$18.95) featuring some fabrics that are no longer available. She went on to say that her store takes custom orders for noren, zabuton and pillows using these fabrics.

From a throw pillow to a full-sized armory, stores in California’s Japantowns can offer a touch of Japanese decor to any room. To add a flair of Japanese aesthetics to any home, visit any of these stores today.

Asakichi Antiques, Arts, & Tea Ceremony, 1737 Post St., Suite 365, in the West Mall of the Japan Center Malls, (415) 921-2147.

Neat Asian Things, 1825 Post St, in the Kinokuniya Building, (415) 563-1417.

Sanko Kitchen Essentials, 1758 Buchanan St, (415) 922-8331.

Soko Hardware, 1698 Post St., (415) 931-5510.

San Jose’s Japantown

Nichi Bei Bussan, 140 E. Jackson St., (408) 294-8048.

February 7, 2019

Richard Kurylo
Legacy Business Program
City and County of San Francisco
Office of Small Business
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 110
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mr. Kurylo,

It is with my pleasure that I write this letter in support of Soko Hardware's application to the City's Legacy Business Registry.

Soko Hardware has been a very important part of Japantown's history since 1925. The four generations of Ashizawa's have provided our community with not only hardware supplies, but with many of the traditional Japanese tools, goods and housewares that are hard to find elsewhere. And it is one of only four family run businesses left in Japantown that have been in business for over 50-years+.

Many people in the community have been longtime patrons of the store, and depend on it for everyday needs, as well as for supplies to help with our community events, festivals and parades. And now tourists and people outside of SF have been coming to Soko Hardware for years as a destination for buying traditional Japanese and other unique items.

It is a main staple of Japantown, and for that reason, I strongly recommend Soko Hardware to the Legacy Business program, which is rightly deserves.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Steve Nakajo
Executive Director
Japantown Task Force
1765 Sutter St, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94115
sknakajo@japantowntaskforce.org



February 11, 2019

Richard Kurylo
Legacy Business Program
City and County of San Francisco
Office of Small Business
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 110
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Letter of Support for Soko Hardware

Dear Mr. Kurylo:

It is with pleasure and pride that I offer a letter of support for Soko Hardware as a Legacy Business in San Francisco's Japantown.

I was first introduced to Soko Hardware 48 years ago when I became an active member of the Japanese American community in San Francisco. As a recent graduate of UC Berkeley, I moved to San Francisco in 1971 and served on many non-profit boards of directors serving the Japanese and Japanese American communities.

From my community involvement perspective, Soko Hardware has demonstrated, to this day, to be a generous donor to community organizations such as the Nihonmachi Little Friends, the San Francisco Buddhist Church, Konko Church, and Christ United Presbyterian Church. They provide goods and tools essential to support successful parades, festivals, and events in Japantown.

As a homeowner, I count on Soko Hardware to provide a consistent mix of quality hardware, plus traditional Japanese goods, tools, and housewares which are essential to Japanese households. It is the only establishment that provides Japanese-imported, professional, quality tools (e.g., woodworking, saws, chisels), which are hard to find anywhere outside of Japan. Their unique mix of products and exceptional customer service have spanned multiple generations. The fact that they have been family-owned for four generations – 94+ years -- demonstrates their importance to the community – and that has not waned in the face of war, internment, the emergence of big-box stores such as Lowe's and Home Depot, the recession, or the one-click ease of online purchasing and free delivery.

Soko Hardware continues to hold immeasurable symbolic and cultural meaning while providing basic hardware services to the now-diverse local community. It is an integral part of our community and a living and enduring legacy to our heritage.

I urge you to support Soko Hardware as a Legacy Business.

Kind regards,

Rhonda Hirata
VP, Marketing
San Francisco Design Center

Filing Date: April 3, 2019
Case No.: 2019-004952LBR
Business Name: Soko Hardware
Business Address: 1698 Post Street
Zoning: NCD (Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District
50-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0686/034
Applicant: Philip Ashizawa, Owner
1698 Post Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
Nominated By: Supervisor Vallie Brown, District 5
Staff Contact: Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625
shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org
Reviewed By: Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822
tim.frye@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Soko Hardware opened in 1925 at 1683 Post Street in the heart of old Japantown. The founders of the business, husband and wife team Masayasu Ashizawa and Naka Ashizawa, emigrated from Japan in the early 1920s. "Soko" is the old name used to reference San Francisco. Soko Hardware has been operated by four generations of the Ashizawa family. First Masayasu and Naka, then their son and daughter-in-law Masao Ashizawa and Agnes Ashizawa, and then their grandson and granddaughter-in-law Philip Ashizawa and Eunice Ashizawa, who manages the store today. Philip and Eunice's son, David Ashizawa, is the fourth generation of Ashizawas to work at Soko Hardware.

The store was temporarily forced to close for a period of years during the evacuation of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast during World War II. After WWII was over, the Ashizawas returned from the Topaz internment camp in Utah to San Francisco to start up the store again in 1946. In 1950, they moved their store across the street to 1698 Post St. Then in the 1960s/1970s, the Redevelopment Agency leveled most of the buildings in the neighborhood and required the Ashizawas to tear down their existing building and rebuild it to the Agency's requirements. The Ashizawas temporarily relocated their hardware store a few doors up on 1674 Post Street where they continued business until their new store was rebuilt to the Redevelopment Agency's forced standards.

Soko Hardware was the first hardware store in Japantown. In addition to carrying all of the general merchandise one would find in a standard hardware store, Soko Hardware carries vital tools and housewares specific to the Japanese culture, such as Japanese woodworking tools, cookware and "Butsudans" (Buddhist shrines for temples and homes). Today, the store still carries many of these same Japanese items, but has also expanded to carrying Japanese knives, bowls, teacups, teapots, appliances, gourmet cookware, books and much more.

The business is located on the northeast corner of Buchanan and Post streets in the Japantown neighborhood. It is within an NCD (Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District and within a 50-X Height and Bulk District.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1925.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Soko Hardware qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. Soko Hardware has operated continuously in San Francisco for 94 years, with the exception of 1942 to 1948. From 1942 to 1946, the Ashizawa family was held in concentration camps as part of the US government program to incarcerate people of Japanese ancestry after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.
- ii. Soko Hardware has contributed to the history and identity of San Francisco and the Japantown neighborhood.
- iii. Soko Hardware is committed to maintaining the physical features, craft, art form and traditions that define the business.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with Japanese tools and cookware.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. The property is located within a the Japantown Cultural District and is a contributing cultural asset to the district as identified in the community led asset inventory.

Events

Yes. The business is associated with three periods of significance as identified in the Japantown Historic Context Statement, prepared May 2011. They are: Early Japantown History, particularly Japanese Settlement in the Western Addition (1906-1920); Japanese Resettlement and Renewal, Nikkei Return to Japantown (1945-1954); and, Redevelopment in the Western Addition (1955-1990).

Persons

Masao Ashizawa (second generation owner of Soko Hardware) was an active member in the Japantown community and became the founding President of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corp, which functioned from the 1960s through the 1980s to keep Japantown properties in the hands of Japanese Americans. This was very much needed due to the vast turnover of properties during that time (especially after the return from internment camps after WWII when most Japanese American families lost their homes, stores and properties). Masao was also among the early organizers of the first Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco's Japantown, serving as Chairperson in the early 1970s. He was a Board Member and former President of the Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation, as well as a member of the Optimist Club (a nationwide organization). Masao was well known for his ambition and strong commitment to

keeping Japantown vital and true to many of its traditions.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No. However, the property is listed in the community-prepared inventory of cultural assets published in the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy and it is located within the Japantown Cultural District. The historic resource status of the building is a Category C (Not a Historic Resource) as the property is not age eligible for listing in the California Register.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

Yes. The business is recognized in the Japantown Historic Context Statement.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. Soko Hardware has been featured in newspapers articles, newsletters, magazines, Japantown tours and more. Follow are some of the examples of Soko Hardware in the news:

- "Talk of the Town" - The New Yorker (December 13, 1976).
- "At Soko Hardware, it's the mix that works" - The New Fillmore (April 29, 2016).
- "Everyday Japanese flair in the home" - Nichi Bei Weekly (August 18, 2016).
- "Japanese-themed Decor in the American Home" - Nichi Bei Weekly (August 23, 2012).
- SF Tourism - Voicemaps Audio Tours (2019).

Soko Hardware has also been the subject of many college essays for American Asian studies over the years.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

- 1698 Post Street

Recommended by Applicant

- Inventory of hardware needs and Japanese products, including housewares and Buddhist shrines
- Sign, in English and Japanese Kanji characters and the Ashizawa "mon"
- Historical panel signs

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution No.

HEARING DATE: MAY 1, 2019

Case No.: 2019-004952LBR
Business Name: Soko Hardware
Business Address: 1698 Post Street
Zoning: NCD (Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District
50-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0686/034
Applicant: Philip Ashizawa, Owner
1698 Post Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
Nominated By: Supervisor Vallie Brown, District 5
Staff Contact: Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625
shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org
Reviewed By: Tim Frye - (415) 575-6822
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ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR SOKO HARDWARE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 1698 POST STREET, (BLOCK/LOT 0686/034).

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on May 1, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that Soko Hardware qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Soko Hardware.

Location(s):

- 1698 Post Street

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- *Inventory of hardware needs and Japanese products, including housewares and Buddhist shrines*
- *Sign, in English and Japanese Kanji characters and the Ashizawa "mon"*
- *Historical panel signs*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations** are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2019-004952LBR to the Office of Small Business May 1, 2019.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: