

CITY OF BERKELEY
Ordinance #4694 N.S.
LANDMARK APPLICATION

NEEDHAM/OBATA BUILDING

1. **Street Address:** 2525 Telegraph Avenue and 2512–16 Regent Street
County: Alameda **City:** Berkeley **Zip:** 94704
2. **Assessor’s Parcel Number*:** Block 1839 Lot 005
Dimensions: 30 to 40 feet (varies) X 142 to 145.51 feet (varies)
Cross Street: (Nearby) Dwight Way, Blake Street, Parker Street

*Indicate in box above:
location of cross streets
in relation to property,
north arrow*

*Existing Assessor’s parcel 055-1839-005 corresponds to part of original Lot 4 of Block D of Hillegass Tract No. 3.

3. **Is property on any survey?** Preserving California’s Japantowns (www.californiajapantowns.org)
No **Neighborhood** Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey **State Inventory** No
National Register No
4. **Application for Landmark includes:**
 - a. **Building(s)** **Garden(s)** **Other Feature(s)**
 - b. **Landscape or Open Space** **Natural** **Designed** **Other**
 - c. **Historic Site** **d. District**
 - e. **Other** Entire property

5. **Historic Name of Property:** Arcade Building*
Commonly Known Name: Not aware of any*

*However, this application will refer to the property as the “Needham/Obata Building”—reflecting the names of the building’s first owner and of its most famous tenant.

6. **Date of Construction:** 1907 **a. Factual** **b. Approximate**
Source of Information: *Daily Pacific Builder*, January 10, 1907; article in *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, January 19, 1907; comparison of assessed values of improvements in 1906, 1907, and 1908

7. **Builder:** Unknown **Architect:** Unknown
8. **Style:** Mission Revival
9. **Original Owner:** W.G. Needham **Original Use:** Market and other commercial space, and six apartments
10. **Present Owner:** Ali Eslami, Telegraph/Regent LLC **Address:** P.O. Box 4623, Berkeley, CA 94704
Present Occupant: Vacant on first story facing Telegraph and on part of first story facing Regent Street; apartments (some vacant) on second story, and on part of first story facing Regent Street
11. **Present Use:** **Residential:** Single-Family Duplex Multiple x
Commercial*: Office Store Industrial Hotel
Institutional: School Hospital Other

*The commercial spaces are currently vacant.

Current Zoning Status: C-T, R-3 **Adjacent Property Zoning:** C-T, R-3

12. **Present Condition of Property:**

Exterior:	Excellent	Good x	Fair	Poor
Interior:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor x
Grounds*:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

*N/A; the building covers the entire parcel.

13. **Description:** *(Briefly describe the appearance of the proposed landmark. Include notable features and landscaping.)*

Massing. The Needham/Obata Building has always (see Fig. 14) covered all of its irregularly shaped Assessor's parcel. So the building's western portion is 10 feet narrower (as measured parallel to Regent Street) than its eastern portion. The building is basically two stories high, but the first story's portion adjoining Telegraph is quite high—and for much of the building's life accommodated a substantial mezzanine. Sidewalk level is significantly lower on Telegraph than on Regent. Presumably to adjust for this grade difference, the building's upper story steps up by a few feet at the point where the parcel widens. This step-up can be glimpsed near the middle of Fig. 5. The upper story's north side has a roofed but partly open access gallery (partly visible in Figs. 10 and 12). Its south side is interrupted by several narrow courtyards (two of them partly visible in Fig. 5) that are generally covered by plastic or other light material. The building's main roof is flat.

Construction Type and Style. The building is basically of wood-frame construction. Its architectural style is Mission Revival.

Telegraph Facade. The building's Telegraph Avenue facade (see Figs. 1 through 4) is quite symmetrically composed.

At the center and each end of its lower portion there are piers, currently clad in blue tile. In between the piers there are bulkheads (also clad in blue tile) and large storefront-type windows, but with recessed doors immediately flanking the middle pier—and then (running above the doors and large windows) a horizontal clerestory band that consists of small panes set in wood sash, and is bordered bottom and top by plain wooden beams. Above that there are large clerestory windows occupying the spaces below

twin wood-framed arches, which spring from the tops of the piers. These windows have sizable panes set in wood sash.

Most of the upper facade has a smooth stucco surface. At the upper-story level there are three pairs of windows. The middle pair has double-hung, one-over-one metal sashes, which recently replaced original wooden versions. Each of the side pairs has casement-type metal sashes, which recently replaced original double-hung wood sashes. Higher up there is a continuous projecting rooflet, covered by clay tiles and supported by wooden brackets. At the facade's very top there is a prominent scalloped parapet. Centered within the parapet there is a quatrefoil blind window featuring turned wooden spindles.

Regent Facade. The facade on Regent Street (see Figs. 8 through 11 and Fig. 13) significantly resembles the one on Telegraph, though it has always lacked some of the latter's features and is less strictly symmetrical.

This facade's first story has several plain wooden piers, in between which there are sizable wood-framed storefront-type windows (rising above plain wooden bulkheads) and/or doors. Two of the doors are accessed through the noticeable recess seen at the left center of Fig. 10. One of these serves what is now an apartment with the address 2516 Regent, and the other one accesses a staircase leading down toward space fronting on Telegraph. North of the recess there is a door to what originally was meant to be occupied by a separate store. At the first floor's north end there is a doorway (fitted since 1988 with a metal security gate) to the staircase by which the upper story's apartments are accessed. Running immediately above the afore-mentioned windows and doors there is a continuous plain wooden band. Rising above most of that band there is a series of arched big clerestory windows with multiple panes set in wood sashes. The middle one of these arches is wider than the others, and part of its top is flat. Above the security-gated doorway there is a wood-framed porthole window (see Fig. 11).

Most of the upper facade has a notably textured stucco surface. Here there are several windows, which have double-hung, one-over-one wood sashes with ogee stops. Higher up there is a scalloped parapet that looks very much like its counterpart that faces Telegraph. Centered within this parapet there is a quatrefoil blind window, with turned wooden spindles, that is identical to the one on Telegraph.

Other Walls. The other exterior walls generally have metal sheathing on their lower level and horizontal wood siding at the upper-story level—except for the upper story's south wall seen in Fig. 5 that is stuccoed. There are various windows within the south walls.

Interior. The ground floor adjoining Telegraph currently is vacant, and the former mezzanine was recently demolished. Adjoining Regent Street, the southern original storefront now contains an apartment but the northern one is vacant. The building's upper story contains eight apartments (some of which presently are vacant).

The Vicinity. The Needham/Obata Building fronts on Telegraph Avenue in the segment, between Dwight Way and Parker Street, that is often called the Telegraph commercial district's "fifth block." This block contains structures of varied scale, design, and age. But a number of them are at least a century old—including the prominent cluster of two- or three-story ones that is shown in Figs. 6 and 7 and consists of the Needham/Obata Building, the Soda Works Building at 2509–2513 Telegraph, and the King Building at 2501 Telegraph. Also over a century old are the one-story building (visible near Fig. 6's left side) at the northeast corner of Telegraph and Dwight, the tiny structure at the southwest corner of Dwight and Regent, and the J. Gorman & Son Building at the northeast corner of Telegraph and Parker Street.

Several nearby properties have already been recognized as historically significant. The City has designated the Soda Works Building, the King Building, and the J. Gorman & Son Building as landmarks. Though the Center for Independent Living's building at 2539 Telegraph has not been landmarked, it is on the State Historic Resources Inventory because of its connection with the disability rights movement.

14. History: *(Summarize the facts concerning the origins or construction of the proposed landmark, persons and events associated with it.)*

General History of the Building and Its Vicinity. The University of California moved from Oakland to its new Berkeley campus in 1873, and this encouraged development of lands south of the campus. The trend was also spurred by transportation improvements. In the early 1870s a horsecar line was extended along Telegraph Avenue from Oakland to the edge of the campus. This line was converted to steam-dummy propulsion in about 1877, and electrified in 1892. A later improvement was the 1908 construction of an important crosstown streetcar line along Dwight Way that began operating in 1909.

Meanwhile, commercial and mixed-use buildings rose at and near the Telegraph/Dwight intersection. In 1901 the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* commented:

The heretofore quiet and unassuming neighborhood near Dwight Way and Telegraph has evolved into a busy and disquieting scene of commercial activity. The click of the hammer and the hum of the saw has given the old resident a dream of better days, and he fancies that the business center will be transferred from Berkeley Station to Dwight Way and Telegraph....

By 1903 this vicinity had about 18 commercial establishments, or at least storefront spaces. (Among them were a druggist/stationer, a meat market, a plumber, two shoemakers, and at least three grocers.) That total substantially exceeded the number of establishments in the contemporary little cluster just south of today's Sather Gate. Back then, Telegraph's blocks in between the two clusters were virtually all residential or vacant.

(The business cluster near Sather Gate would subsequently expand far southward and, by some time in the 1920s, merge with the formerly separate district around Dwight.)

The 1906 earthquake and fire that destroyed much of San Francisco were a major stimulus to development in Berkeley, as residential and commercial structures sprang up in response to the massive influx of former San Franciscans.

During that boom period for Berkeley, the building at 2525 Telegraph Avenue was constructed in 1907, as an integral part of the Telegraph/Dwight cluster. It was built for W.G. Needham of the firm W.G. Needham Real Estate. That company (whose office was on Shattuck Avenue) appears to have been a family business, as one or more city directories list Adolphus H. Needham as manager or clerk and Clive N. Needham as salesman.

It appears that the ground floor's portion facing Telegraph initially was all used by a single establishment. City directories for 1908 through 1912 list a meat market there, with the name changing from "James W. Eaton" to "Eaton & Bryant" to "Eaton Bros." The frontage on Regent was designed with two storefronts. It appears that the southern one was used in 1908 by a baker named Julius Hoffman and in 1911 and 1912 by a bakery called "Winston & Winston." As a reminder of that long-ago usage, there is still a brick oven underneath the public sidewalk adjoining that storefront. However, the bakery evidently moved by 1913 to a nearby location on Dwight Way. And the Sanborn map for about 1911 (see Fig. 14) actually indicated both Regent Street storefronts as vacant. The building's

upper floor originally had a total of six apartments. City directories for 1909 through 1911 indicate that some members of the Needham family lived upstairs.

Early on, the building acquired connections with Berkeley's growing Japanese American community. A permit issued in 1914 to one T. Morimoto allowed alterations for a barber shop and bathhouse, a commercial establishment typical in early Japantowns. The 1917, 1922, 1923, and 1924 city directories indicate that the building had a grocery called variously "Aki Co.," "Aki Grocery Co.," or "G. Kambara" (who may well have been the Aki Co.'s proprietor). As will be discussed below, the building later was strongly associated with one of California's most prominent Japanese American residents, Chiura Obata. The Obata Studio and Art Goods Store operated there from 1939 to 1941.

From time to time during the building's existence, the ground floor on Telegraph has alternated between having one or two establishments—and/or between having one or two doors from the street. For instance, a permit was issued in 1922 to install a partition inside the ground-floor commercial space on Telegraph. This presumably was to accommodate a second establishment.

Of the storefronts on Regent Street, the larger, southern one evidently was converted to an apartment by 1950, or perhaps much earlier. It appears that the smaller, northern storefront has often been vacant, as it now is, but during some period or periods it was used as an apartment. City records include a 1966 letter saying that its apartment usage was in violation of code requirements.

As for the building's upper story, the Sanborn map for about 1950 showed eight apartments on it rather than the original six. This increase probably occurred during World War II, when there was intense demand for housing. A comparison between 1943 and 1944 permits shows an increase in the total number of "rooms."

On part of the roof there was for a long time a penthouse structure that evidently was installed illegally, and during one period was even lived in. It appears that this penthouse was removed in about 1989.

Even after Obata's departure, the building has had a continued role in Berkeley's cultural life. There seems to have been a pattern of occupancy by artists and culturally oriented commercial establishments. In the 1940s the building accommodated photographer Grant Oliver's studio, which exhibited photos and other visual arts. It appears that in the 1960s and 1970s and perhaps later, various artists, photographers, or writers lived in the building. Probably starting in the early 1980s, the Telegraph frontage held for many years both the prominent bookstore Half Price Books and the well-regarded ethnic restaurant called the Blue Nile.

During the 102 years since 1907, noticeable exterior changes to the building have been largely confined to the Telegraph frontage's elements *below* its large arched clerestory windows. There, the cladding of the bulkheads and piers has changed from time to time and (as mentioned earlier) the number of doors has varied. During some periods signs have hidden the small-paned horizontal band of clerestory windows from view, but this band itself has survived. The building as a whole retains strong historical integrity.

In the 1970s the City converted several streets in the Southside area to one-way operation. In conjunction with that, it created a new wide-radius turn heading south onto Telegraph Avenue from Dwight Way. This necessitated demolition of one of the last historic structures left on the west side of Telegraph that recalled the vicinity's teeming commercial life from the early twentieth century. In contrast, Telegraph's east side near Dwight has seen little physical change in recent decades. There, several structures including the Needham/Obata Building retain a ground-floor-commercial and upper-

floor-residential layout. Together, these buildings convey a strong sense of the area's early-twentieth-century commercial/residential character.

Associations with Chiura Obata. The building at 2525 Telegraph is associated with renowned Japanese American artist Chiura Obata, who with his wife and son used the Telegraph frontage (see Fig. 15) for his personal art studio, for art classes, and for sale of art goods from 1939 to 1941. The Obata studio and store was divided into two parts, one reserved as studio and class space and the other selling Japanese fine decorative arts, paintings, and art supplies.

Obata immigrated to the United States in 1903 and established himself as an artist in San Francisco. His work was exhibited in many prestigious Northern California museums, and in 1924 he was commissioned to design sets for a production of *Madame Butterfly* at the San Francisco Opera. In the 1920s Obata became friends with Berkeley artists Worth Ryder and Robert Boardman Howard. They introduced him to Yosemite Valley, which became one of Obata's most potent artistic subjects.

The Obata family moved to Berkeley in 1930. When Chiura Obata was invited to the UC Berkeley Art Department to teach a summer course in 1932, his class was such a success that the University retained him as a lecturer and, shortly thereafter, assistant professor. (Fig. 16 shows Obata teaching at UC Berkeley's Spreckels Hall ca. 1935). He served on the faculty of the Art Department from 1932 to 1942 and from 1945 to 1954, interrupted only by forced relocation during World War II. He was a respected teacher in the Berkeley community and frequently invited to lecture on Japanese art and demonstrate his painting techniques throughout the state. In 1938 *Time* magazine recognized Obata as "one of the most accomplished artists in the West."

Chiura's wife, Haruko Obata, was also an artist and she taught the traditional Japanese art form of flower arranging known as *ikebana* at the Telegraph Avenue studio. She was one of the first artists in San Francisco to teach *ikebana* and won many prizes for her *ikebana* displays at the annual California Spring Garden Show. She was one of the founding members of the San Francisco area chapter of *Ikebana International*. Her manual *An Illustrated Handbook of Japanese Flower Arrangement* was published by the Obata Studio in 1940 and illustrated by Chiura. (Fig. 17 reproduces the cover of this publication.)

The Obatas' Telegraph Avenue studio and store was about three blocks from their home at 2609 Ellsworth Street. While Japanese businesses were scattered throughout Berkeley's commercial blocks, restrictive covenants meant that in the 1930s the homes of most Nikkei (persons of Japanese descent) were confined to southwest Berkeley (south of Dwight Way and west of Grove Street [now Martin Luther King Jr. Way]) and to a south-of-Dwight area extending east to Telegraph. Despite Chiura Obata's status as a UC professor, and the Obatas' many connections among Berkeley's elite, discrimination was unavoidable. Owning real estate, especially commercial property, was rare for Japanese immigrants and probably influenced their position as renters of this business space.

The Obatas' children, like many Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans), found as they searched for employment that their ethnicity trumped the training they had gained. The eldest son, Kimio, had earned a master's degree in art and design from the University of California, but was unable to secure a job in what was construed as a white-collar profession. After the Obatas leased the space at 2525 Telegraph, Kimio worked as manager of the studio and art goods store.

In addition to teaching classes at their Telegraph Avenue studio, the Obatas hosted exhibitions there during their tenure. (Fig. 18 and Fig. 19 reproduce invitations of exhibits the Obatas organized at 2525 Telegraph Avenue).

The lives of the Obatas were violently interrupted by the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and the legalized discrimination against Americans of Japanese birth or ancestry that followed. The local Japanese community in Berkeley came under close scrutiny and the Obata Studio was itself the target of gunfire shortly after news came of the Pearl Harbor bombing. Fear of espionage and sabotage led to the approval of Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1942, which authorized the forced relocation and internment of Japanese immigrants and their American-born children. Amongst the 120,000 residents removed from the West Coast of the United States and forced into internment camps were Chiura Obata and his family. Although hostility and suspicion rose, Berkeley was one of the rare communities where non-Japanese residents worked against the relocation through the Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play Committee led by Berkeleyans Ruth and Harry Kingman.

Mass evacuation of Japanese Americans throughout California began in March 1942. On April 21 the Obatas, along with about 1,300 other Japanese residents in Berkeley, learned of their fate, and were given a ten-day notice to prepare themselves for “relocation.” Just two days before, Chiura Obata had painted “Struggle,” a *sumi* painting on paper, taken to be his interpretation of “the struggle against the hatreds of war.” “Struggle” would be one of his last paintings completed before evacuation. The studio was closed and merchandise was sold at a loss.

The Obatas were able to store their precious belongings at friends’ houses, and UC President Sproul agreed to keep Chiura’s artwork at his official residence for safekeeping. Up until the day of departure, Chiura was teaching at the University, grading, and conducting painting demonstrations. His last painting demonstration was combined with an art sale, where he sold 120 paintings and used the proceeds to establish a scholarship for a student “regardless of race or creed, who...has suffered the most from this war.” When internment became inevitable, the Fair Play Committee worked to make the registration process—at the First Congregational Church on Channing Way one block west of Telegraph—more humane. The process was documented by Obata through sketches that have been published frequently over the years. (Fig. 20 shows a soldier facing Japanese Americans and their belongings being loaded on a bus in front of the church).

Three days after arrival at Tanforan Assembly Center, where Bay Area Nikkei were held while permanent “relocation centers” were being constructed, Chiura Obata applied for approval to begin an art school. He and Haruko taught their art forms at the Tanforan Art School and another art school that he founded later at Topaz Relocation Center in Topaz, Utah, one of ten such centers operated by the War Relocation Authority. As director of these schools, Chiura developed art programs that provided “one spot of normalcy” and served hundreds of Japanese Americans during those dark years. He gave public art demonstrations to church groups in camp; contributed illustrations for the camp newspaper, *The Topaz Times*; and made hundreds of sumi ink and watercolor paintings of everyday scenes. The works made throughout his internment experience provide crucial and poignant historical documentation of the internment.

The Obatas were released from Topaz after Chiura was beaten by a fellow inmate for his “pro-American” loyalties. The family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where the Obatas’ son Gyo was living. After the war, the Obatas returned to Berkeley and Chiura resumed his post at UC Berkeley. He became a naturalized citizen in 1954, a status that had been denied all Japanese immigrants up to that year.

Most renowned as a Japanese artist who defined the *nihonga* style of painting, a technique that blended Japanese traditional ink painting with Western methods of perspective, Obata influenced a generation of artists that came to form the California Watercolor Movement in the 1920s and 1930s. His watercolor paintings of Yosemite, completed in 1927 during and after a camping trip to Yosemite and the High Sierras with his artist friend Worth Ryder, resulted in one of Obata’s most important and influential

collections of landscape paintings. His national stature is indicated by the fact that the Japanese American Citizens League chose two commissioned paintings by him as a ceremonial gift to bestow upon First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and WRA (War Relocation Authority) Director Dillon Myer.

For Obata, art provided a tool through which cross-cultural understanding could be forged. This interest began early on in his artistic career, having given him motivation in the founding of the East West Art Society, an artists' association based in San Francisco in the early 1920s. The same approach pervaded Obata's outlook on life, and his enduring legacy as an artist and teacher was matched by his lifelong commitment towards fostering cross-cultural relations between the U.S. and Japan. After retiring from teaching at UC Berkeley in 1954, he conducted tours between the U.S. and Japan, in the effort to allow both countries to "achieve better understanding and communication on a better level." In 1965, he was awarded the Emperor's Medal in Tokyo for his contributions toward promoting cross-cultural tolerance and appreciation. Obata died in Berkeley in 1975.

This landmark application's appendix provides a chronological summary of Obata's life and major exhibitions of his work.

15. **Significance:**

The following discussion of significance is organized under pertinent landmarking criteria specified in Section 3.24.110 of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance.

“Architectural merit:...Properties that are prototypes of or outstanding examples of periods, styles, architectural movements or construction”:

The Needham/Obata Building is a locally outstanding example of a surviving mixed-use structure from a century ago, executed in a vernacular version of the then-popular Mission Revival style. The scalloped parapets and quatrefoil ornaments on the Telegraph and Regent facades, as well as the cantilevered tiled rooflet on the Telegraph elevation, are character-defining features strongly associated with Mission Revival architecture.

The Mission Revival style pervaded early-twentieth-century California architecture, inspired by the state's old Franciscan missions. The style became identified with certain building types such as railroad depots but was also widely adopted for public, commercial, and residential buildings. Promoted as the most "appropriate" style for California buildings because of its association with the state's early history, Mission Revival was also cited as suitable to California's particular climate and environment. The only other notable surviving Mission Revival building in the Telegraph Avenue corridor is the Granada Building constructed in 1905 at the southeast corner of Telegraph and Bancroft Way.

The Needham/Obata Building is unique in Berkeley as a mixed-use structure built, on a through lot, with similar facades on two parallel streets.

“Architectural merit:...Architectural examples worth preserving for the exceptional value they add as part of the neighborhood fabric”:

The Needham/Obata Building contributes exceptionally to the streetscape of Telegraph Avenue. Remarkably, it is one of the only four buildings that the 1911 Sanborn map showed on this block face of Telegraph—and all of them still exist. The other three are the King Building at 2501 Telegraph, the Soda Works Building at 2509–13 Telegraph, and the J. Gorman & Son Building at 2599 Telegraph. Those all are City-designated landmarks and in recent years have been sensitively rehabilitated. The Needham/Obata Building importantly resonates with all three.

As Figs. 6 and 7 illustrate, it works especially strongly with the nearest two (the King and Soda Works Buildings) so as to form a sizable and memorable entity: a fine surviving chunk of century-old townscape.

(The effect is not ruined by presence of the Modernist structure that was built some time after 1950 in between the Needham/Obata and Soda Works buildings. That structure's bulk even seems to pull its neighbors together, while its projecting sunshades abstractly echo the historic bay windows north of it.)

“Cultural value: Structures, sites and areas associated with the movement or evolution of religious, cultural, governmental, social and economic developments of the City”:

The building at 2525 Telegraph has had a significant role in Berkeley's cultural life, most notably through its associations with the internationally renowned Japanese American artist Chiura Obata. From 1939 to 1941 he and his wife Haruko used spaces in the building for his studio, for teaching classes, and for sale of art goods (with their son Kimio serving as manager of the store and studio).

Although the Obatas' occupancy at this address was relatively brief, their associations with the building and with Berkeley's cultural heritage are rich. And the end of that occupancy is associated with the crucial historical moment when the family and so many other persons of Japanese birth or ancestry were forced to relocate to internment camps during World War II.

“Educational value: Structures worth preserving for their usefulness as an educational force”:

As it held the studio and art store of the Obata family, 2525 Telegraph is a powerful resource for educating residents and visitors about Berkeley's Japanese American history and the impact of World War II internment. The building is also educationally valuable as an example of a century-old mixed-use structure, rendered in the then-popular Mission Revival style.

It is especially instructive because of its highly visible location on the busy thoroughfare of Telegraph Avenue.

“Historic value: Preservation and enhancement of structures, sites and areas that embody and express the history of Berkeley/Alameda County/California/United States. History may be social, cultural, economic, political, religious or military”:

The Needham-Obata Building significantly embodies and expresses both early and later twentieth-century history.

Along with some nearby surviving contemporaries, it vividly recalls the once-separate commercial cluster that thrived at Dwight Way and Telegraph Avenue a century ago. With its strong historical integrity, it is a valuable example of an early-twentieth-century mixed-use structure.

The building is associated with one of the most dramatic chapters in California and U.S. twentieth-century history—the forced relocation and internment of people of Japanese birth or ancestry during World War II. Its connection to famed artist and University of California professor Chiura Obata underscores the egregious nature of the civil rights violation wrought by Executive Order 9066.

Obata's significance to the history of art in California, and the history of Asian American artists, grows with each passing decade. He was the first artist of Japanese birth or ancestry to achieve faculty status at a prominent California university. His work continues to be exhibited nationally. He was included in the

seminal exhibition “Made in California: Art, Image and Identity, 1900–2000” organized in 2000 by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Obata’s work was featured in the exhibit “Asian/American/ Modern Art: Shifting Currents, 1900 to 1970” organized by San Francisco’s M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in 2008 and currently on view at New York’s Noguchi Museum. His powerful watercolor “Setting Sun: Sacramento Valley” graces the cover of the companion book *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970* published by Stanford University Press.

Historic Value: National x State x County x City x Neighborhood x
Architectural Value: National State County City x Neighborhood x

16. Is the property endangered? Yes x No Explain, if Yes

The building presently has some serious structural problems. The current owner is proposing not only to correct those but also to add two stories to the building and make major interior changes.

17. Photographs(s) or copies of photographs:

Contemporary x **Date** See below **Historic** x **Date** See below
Photographer: See below **Photographer:** See below
Repository: See below **Repository:** See below

Photo	Date	Photographer	Repository
Fig. 1	March 2009	Steven Finacom	Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association
Fig. 2	January 2009	Steven Finacom	Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association
Figs. 3–13	May 10, 2009	John S. English	Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association
Fig. 15	ca. 1939	Ormsby Donogh (or an associate or employee)	Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association
Fig. 16	ca. 1935	unknown	Obata Family

18. Bibliography:

Published Sources: See below **Public Records:** See below
Interviews: N/A **Other:** See below

Alameda County. Assessor. Recent map of block 1839.

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- 19. Recorder:** **Name** Donna Graves with Anny Su, John S. English, and Steven Finacom
Date: May 18, 2009 **Address:** Graves: 1204 Carleton Street, Berkeley, CA 94702. Su: current address undetermined. English: 2500 Hillegass Avenue, Apt. 3, Berkeley, CA 94704-2937. Finacom: 2308 Russell Street, Berkeley, CA 94705.
Phone: Graves: (510) 540-6809. Su: current number undetermined. English: (510) 845-6116. Finacom: (510) 845-3203.

Organization?* N/A **Name:** N/A
Address: N/A **Phone:** N/A

*Preliminary steps toward recognizing this historic resource were taken by the *Preserving California's Japantowns* project, of which Donna Graves is Director. The landmarking was initiated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Appendix

CHIURA OBATA BIOGRAPHICAL CHRONOLOGY AND EXHIBITION HISTORY

- 1885 Born in Okayama-ken, Japan. Raised in Sendai.
- 1899 Studied in Tokyo under Tanryo Murata, Kogyo Terasaki, and Gaho Hashimoto.
- 1900 Joined Kensei-Kai, group of young artists who advocated modern form of Japanese painting.
- 1903 Immigrated to California and settled in San Francisco's Japantown neighborhood.
- 1906 Worked as illustrator for city's Japanese newspapers, *The New World* and *The Japanese American*.
- 1912 Married Haruko Kohashi.
- 1915–27 Illustrator for *Japan* magazine.
- 1920s Spent much of the decade painting landscapes throughout California.
- 1921 Helped establish the East West Art Society in San Francisco.
- 1924 Designed sets for San Francisco Opera production of *Madame Butterfly*.
- 1927 First trip to Yosemite, producing significant body of work of Yosemite scenes. Toured with Worth Ryder and Robert Howard. Produced over 100 new paintings.
- 1928 Returned to Japan, following father's death. Supervised the production of 35 color woodblock prints of California landscapes (most Yosemite subjects) for his World Landscape Series. They were exhibited at the "Eighty-Seventh Annual Exhibition" at Ueno Park, Tokyo; "Lake Basin in the High Sierra" won first prize.
- 1930 One-person exhibitions, primarily of the World Landscape Series: California Palace of the Legion of Honor and California School of Fine Arts, both in San Francisco; Honolulu Academy of the Arts; and Haviland Hall, University of California, Berkeley.
- 1932 Appointed instructor in the Art Department at the University of California, Berkeley. One-person exhibitions: M.H. de Young Memorial Museum and Courvoisier Gallery, both in San Francisco; Stanford University Art Gallery. A four-screen panel of horses was exhibited at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, and four paintings were shown at "Western Watercolor Annual," California Palace of the Legion of Honor.
- 1936 One-person exhibitions: Artists' Cooperative Gallery, San Francisco; Best's Studio, Yosemite Valley. Group exhibition: "International Watercolor and Traveling Show," The Art Institute of Chicago.
- 1937 May-June: taught outdoor sketching classes in Yosemite Valley. One-person exhibition: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- 1938 One-person exhibitions: E. B. Crocker Art Gallery, Sacramento (and demonstration); Best's Studio, Yosemite Valley. Lecture and demonstration: Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite Valley.
- 1939 One-person exhibition of 40 paintings on silk, Yosemite Valley. Lectures and demonstrations: Ahwahnee Hotel and the Ranger's Club, Yosemite.
- 1939–41 Had the Obata Studio and Art Goods Store at 2525 Telegraph Avenue.
- 1940 One-person exhibition: Power House, University of California, Berkeley. Group exhibition: "Twentieth Annual California Watercolor Society Show," Los Angeles County Museum.
- 1941 One-person exhibition: University of Redlands, Redlands, California. Group exhibitions: "Contemporary Art Show of Japan," M.H. de Young Memorial Museum; "Twentieth International Exhibition of Watercolor," The Art Institute of Chicago. Lectures and demonstrations: Wawona Hotel, Yosemite.
- 1942 April: interned at the Tanforan detention center. During stay there, organized an art school with over 650 camp residents as students. September: was moved to Topaz Relocation Center, Topaz, Utah. Appointed director of the Topaz Art School.

- 1943 Leaders of the Japanese American Citizens League traveled to Washington D.C. to present two paintings, specially commissioned from Obata, to Eleanor Roosevelt and WRA director Dillon Myer.
- 1943 Obata released from Topaz Relocation Center and moved with family to St. Louis, finding employment with a commercial art company.
- 1945 When military exclusion ban lifted, reinstated as instructor in the Art Department, University of California, Berkeley.
- 1946 One-person exhibitions: College of the Pacific, Stockton, California; University of Southern California, Los Angeles.
- 1947 Group exhibition: "Eleventh Annual Drawing and Print Exhibition," San Francisco Museum of Art. Summer: sketching and painting trip with the Sierra Club.
- 1948 Promoted to Associate Professor of Art. One-person exhibition: Maxwell Art Gallery, San Francisco. Group exhibition: Fine Arts Gallery, San Diego. Summer: sketching and camping trips to Yosemite and the High Sierra.
- 1949 Taught in summer session at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. One-person exhibitions: Jean Williams Art Gallery, Albuquerque; Santa Fe Art Museum.
- 1950 One-person exhibition: Doll and Richards, Boston. Group exhibition: "Eleventh Annual Exhibition of the Society of Western Artists," M.H. de Young Memorial Museum.
- 1951 One-person exhibition: Museum of Art, Santa Barbara. Group exhibition: "Twelfth Annual Exhibition of the Society of Western Artists," M.H. de Young Memorial Museum. Summer: sketching and painting trip with the Sierra Club.
- 1952-53 Camping and sketching trips to Yosemite.
- 1953 Exhibition: Graves Gallery, San Francisco.
- 1954 Became naturalized citizen. Retired as Professor Emeritus from the University of California. Organized tours to Japan, which introduced many Americans to Japanese aesthetics, through 1969.
- 1955-70 Gave lectures and demonstrations on Japanese brush painting throughout California. Venues included Bakersfield Art Association; Carmel Women's Club; San Bernardino Valley College; San Diego Museum of Art; Diablo Japanese American Club, Concord; and Cherry Blossom Festival, San Francisco.
- 1961 One-person exhibition: Fine Arts Gallery, San Diego. Received Order of the Sacred Treasure, 5th Class, Emperor's Award for promoting goodwill and cultural understanding between the United States and Japan.
- 1975 Died in Berkeley, aged 90.
- 1976 Group exhibition: "A View from the Inside," The Oakland Museum.
- 1977 Retrospective: "Chiura Obata: A California Journey," The Oakland Museum.
- 1981 Group exhibition: "Detention Center: A Day of Remembrance," San Francisco State University.
- 1987 Group exhibition: "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the Constitution," Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History.
- 1992 Group exhibition: "The View from Within: Japanese American Art from the Internment Camps, 1941-1945," Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles.
- 2000 One-person exhibition: "Great Nature: The Transcendent Landscapes of Chiura Obata," M.H. de Young Memorial Museum.
- 2007 One-person exhibition: "Obata's Yosemite," organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum.
- 2008 Group exhibition: "Asian/American/Modern Art: Shifting Currents, 1900 to 1970," M.H. de Young Memorial Museum.

Needham/Obata Landmark Application Illustrations



Fig. 1 Telegraph Avenue façade, March 2009



Fig. 2 Lower portion of Telegraph Avenue façade, March 2009

Needham/Obata Landmark Application Illustrations



Fig. 3 Oblique view of Telegraph Avenue storefront, May 2009



Fig. 4 Oblique view of upper part of Telegraph Avenue façade, May 2009



Fig. 5 Oblique view of one of the south walls, May 2009



Fig. 6 View northward toward buildings on Telegraph Avenue below Dwight Way, May 2009

Needham/Obata Landmark Application Illustrations



Fig. 7 View southward toward buildings on Telegraph Avenue below Dwight Way, May 2009



Fig. 8 Regent Street façade, May 2009

Needham/Obata Landmark Application Illustrations



Fig. 9 Oblique view of Regent Street façade, May 2009



Fig. 10 Windows and doors on Regent Street façade, May 2009

Needham/Obata Landmark Application Illustrations



Fig. 11 Porthole window on regent Street façade, May 2009



Fig. 12 Oblique view of north wall, May 2009



Fig. 13 Quatrefoil detail on regent Street façade, May 2009

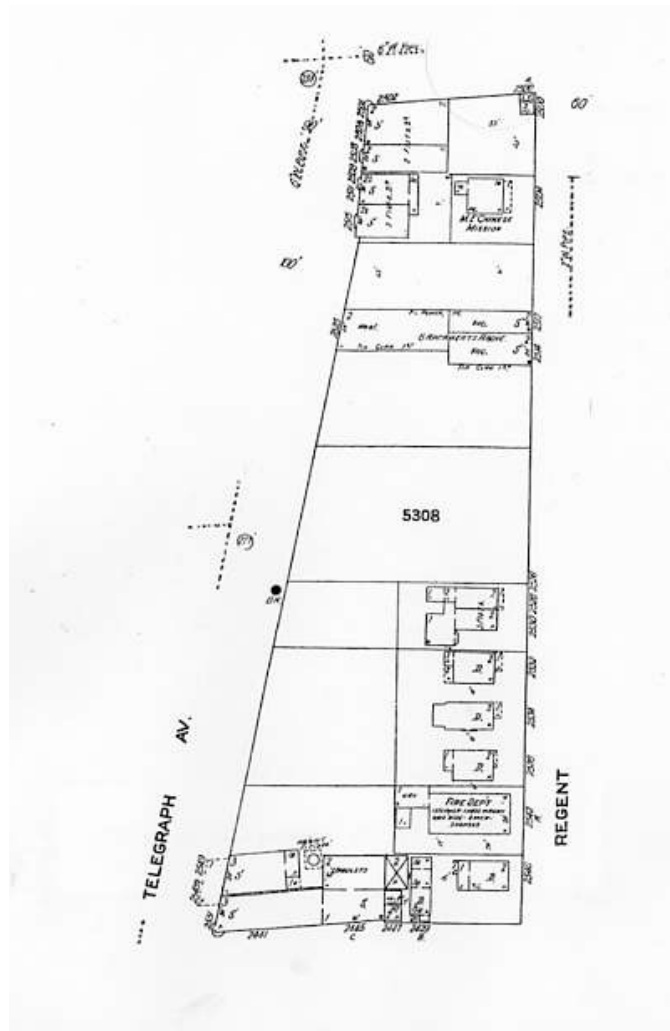


Fig. 14 Portion of Sanborn map for 1911

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Fig. 15 Obata Studio 1939, Donogh Collection, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association



Fig. 16 Obata teaching at UC Berkeley, 1935. Obata family collection

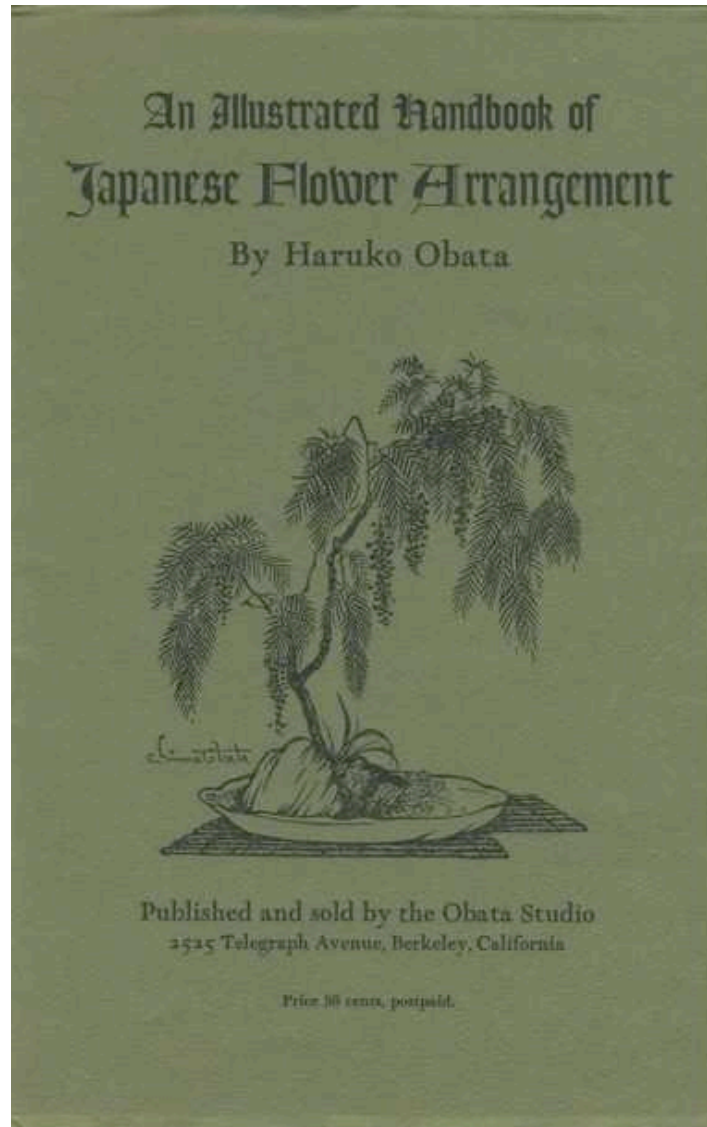


Fig. 17 Haruko Obata's handbook on Ikebana, 1940



Fig. 18 Obata Studio exhibition announcement, 1939



Fig. 19 Obata Studio exhibition announcement, 1939



Fig. 20 Obata sketch of Japanese American "evacuation" from Berkeley, 1942