



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

**LPB 173/24**

### **REPORT ON DESIGNATION**

#### **U.S. Immigration Station and Assay Office 815 Seattle Boulevard South**

##### Legal Description:

Lots 11 through 16, inclusive, Columbia and Puget Sound Railroad Replat of Part of Block 283, Seattle Tide Lands, according to the plat thereof recorded in Volume 12 of Plats, page 88, in King County, Washington; EXCEPT that portion of said Lot 11 for 5th Avenue South under Ordinance No. 23569; TOGETHER WITH that portion of vacated alley pursuant to Ordinance No. 106650 recorded under Recording Number 7708110554, described as follows: Adjoining Lots 7 through 16 of said Replat, lying northwesterly of the southwesterly prolongation of the southeasterly line of Lot 16 of said Replat and lying southeasterly of a line produced southerly from the most westerly corner of Lot 11 of said Replat to the most easterly corner of Lot 7 of said Replat; AND ALSO TOGETHER WITH that portion of vacated 5th Avenue South pursuant to Ordinance No. 106650 recorded under Recording Number 7708110554. EXCEPT that portion of said premises conveyed to the State of Washington by deed recorded under Recording Number 8906140008.

At the public meeting held on June 5, 2024, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the U.S. Immigration Station and Assay Office at 815 Seattle Boulevard South as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- A. It is the location of, or is associated in a significant way with, an historic event with a significant effect upon the community, City, state, or nation.
- C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.
- D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction.

- F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the City and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City.

The Features of the Landmark to be Preserved Include: The site; the exterior of the building, including the exterior courtyard/terraces at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor; the following 1<sup>st</sup> Floor interior spaces: the central entry vestibule and lobby area, the east and west entry vestibules, the corridors the extend off the lobby/vestibules, and the first floor level of stairwells No. 1 and 2; and the painted yellow queuing line and hand prints in the interior basement corridor.

## **DESCRIPTION**

### **Setting and Site**

Located in Seattle's International Special Review District and individually listed to the National Register of Historic Places, the U.S. Immigrant Station and Assay Office (Immigration Station and Assay Office or INS Building) stands along the southwest side of Seattle Boulevard South at the transition to Seattle's industrial district, which extends to the south. The building's scale and massing contrast with surrounding buildings making it an easily identifiable building within the Chinatown International District neighborhood. The building's design and original use contribute to the identity and distinctive qualities of the neighborhood.

Neighborhood commercial buildings to the north, northeast, and east are shorter in height, ranging from one to three stories. Newer (2000s) development within the neighborhood along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S is the exception, with the tallest of these new buildings rising to eleven stories. Industrial buildings to the south are both slightly downhill from and shorter in height than the U.S. Immigrant Station and Assay Office building ranging from one to two stories,. The scale of surrounding building heights allows the taller four-story U.S. Immigrant Station and Assay Office building to rise above and be a visible feature amongst the contextual development. Massing of the U.S. Immigrant Station and Assay Office building further accentuates this contrast with surrounding buildings. The 240-foot front facade along Seattle Boulevard S is substantially longer than most neighborhood commercial buildings, except for newer (2000s) development along S Weller and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. Front facade lengths of most neighborhood commercial buildings are in the 40-to-80-foot range.

The building's design, including the massing, front facade length, front entrance composition, front setback with landscaping rather than built out to the front property line, tall two-story window bays, and exterior finishes convey a monumental government building character. The building's placement and design situate outdoor spaces utilized by detainees at the rear of the building overlooking industrial development where these spaces and their use would generally not be readily visible. This sets up a distinct and important contrast between the front and rear of the building influencing both the identify and distinctive qualities of the building within the neighborhood.

The building is east of but unrelated functionally to the main north to south railway corridor through Seattle formerly operated by the Northern Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad. The building covers six lots and is set back from the property line on all sides. The nominated property encompasses two King County tax parcels: 7669800045 (containing the building and driveways) and 7669800046 (containing an associated parking area). Both parcels are associated with the historic use of the building. The building's height and siting make it a prominent marker along the southwest edge of the neighborhood. The front facade faces northeast overlooking Seattle Boulevard South, and for ease of reference is referred to as the north facade throughout this nomination. Paved asphalt driveway ramps within the property lines descend along the side east (25 feet wide) and west (22 feet wide) facades providing access to the parking area behind (south of) the building.

The site slopes from an elevation of 40 feet along Seattle Boulevard South to 30 feet at the outer edge of the parking area behind the building and leaving the basement day lighted. The concrete sidewalk and associated grass planting strip and five street trees along the front of the building is outside of the nominated property. Foundation plantings within the nominated property consist of a 25-foot-wide planting strip between the front of the building and the sidewalk edge. These foundation plantings consist of low evergreen shrubs, including several Magnolias, against the building with lawn along the sidewalk. Two small Japanese maples are set in the planter spaces within the central walkway leading to the middle entrance on the north facade.

### **The Building and Changes Over Time**

The building has a three-story base with the central portion on the north facade rising to four stories. Due to the site slope, the basement is exposed on the south facade. The main public entrances are on the front north facade, with concrete path connections to the public sidewalk and a parking pull out along Seattle Boulevard South. The entrance (no. 8) formerly used by detainees arriving to the facility is centrally located on the south facade with direct access to the parking area. Basement staff entrances are also located on the south facade. The second and third stories have an E-shaped plan framing two outdoor exercise patios on the south facade for detainees.

### **Foundation and Structure**

The building is carried on wood and reinforced concrete pilings. These support the perimeter reinforced concrete grade beam. The building structure consists of reinforced concrete post and beams supporting concrete floors. Reinforced concrete walls (board formed) comprise the perimeter and most partition walls at the basement level. Hollow clay tile walls at the upper floors comprise the partition walls, and at the perimeter walls are bonded with the exterior brick cladding (Common bond, every sixth course).

### **Exterior Walls**

The building's exterior consists of three vertical parts distinguished by cladding and fenestration patterns. The rear south facade is less ornamented than the primary front

north and east and west side facades. Buff-colored (ranging from yellow to tan) standard size brick and terra cotta clad the building. The smooth finished concrete exterior basement walls provide the base for this composition and are mostly visible on the side and rear facades due to grade. Recessed brick header courses at the first story provides a rusticated character to this rectangular plan base for the upper stories. This rustication wraps the building ends and returns on the south facade but does not extend across the central portion of the south facade.

A prominent terra cotta belt course along the top of the first story marks the transition from the first to second vertical part. This second vertical part is characterized by a vertical emphasis created by tall pilasters flanking slightly recessed two-story openings, which contain windows at each floor and a separating panel at the transition from the second to third floor.

Brick pilasters at the two ends (front and side facades only) have plain terra cotta capitals and plinths. Within the central portion on the front facade, a rowlock brick course outlines the exterior curve and edge of the three, two-story round arched openings which each have a terra cotta keystone. Brick comprises the archivolt (inner recessed band) at the outer openings. The inner three openings utilize terra cotta at the archivolt with a prominent cable molding edge. The central three openings are more deeply recessed to accommodate the engaged marble Corinthian capital columns and pilasters. Decorative panels mark the second to third floor transition, with painted metal panels at the central portion and brick and terra cotta panels at the east and west ends.

The horizontal emphasis of the flat roof sections on the east and west end are capped by a terra cotta entablature (architrave, frieze, and dentiled cornice). A terra cotta belt course with a Vitruvian scroll (stylized wave pattern) on a blue background and the building name caps the central portion of this second vertical part.

The third vertical part consists of the fourth story and has a T-shaped plan. This part is characterized by raised brick panels at the piers between window openings and capped by a projecting terra cotta cornice with an egg and dart molding band at the soffit/wall juncture. The cornice soffit features terra cotta panels with a brightly colored (green and blue) glaze.

## Roof

The building features a central cross-hipped roof flanked by flat roofs with parapets at the ends. Steel trusses support the hipped roof over the building's central four-story portion. Roof decks at the flat east and west third-story roofs and the central elevator penthouse are all concrete. Wood framed shed roof dormers project on the south slope of the hip roof. Copper sheeting clads the dormers. Red Mission tile roofing clads the cross-hipped roof; there are shingles at the dormers and copper flashing at the terra cotta cornice. A gutter is integrated into the cornice at the fourth story. Sheet metal ventilators occur along the ridgeline of the cross-hipped roof. An unfinished attic extends below the cross-hipped roof.

## Windows

Steel sash, multiple-light windows provide daylighting and ventilation for the building. Most original security bars have been removed. Operable sash are awning in function. The window design creates a horizontal emphasis, utilizing thick meeting rails and slender vertical muntins within each sash. Sash are generally configured with 3, 4, and 5 panes. Wider window openings in the front central portion have additional steel mullions supporting the middle multiple-light sash with single lights at the outer edge. South facade windows in the central portion have a central steel mullion. Narrow windows flanking the first story east and west entrances are a single light wide.

Most window openings have flat headers with a steel lintel and are clad with concrete, brick, terra cotta, or steel panel, depending on location. The exceptions are the third story central windows, which have round arched headers, and the soldier course flat headers at the second and third story windows overlooking the patios. Most openings have terra cotta slip sills and are recessed brick jambs. The exceptions are basement openings with concrete slip sills and concrete jambs and soffits.

## Entrances

Several entrances provide access to and egress from the building interior. Front entrances are tied to vertical circulation within the building, as each entrance leads directly to a stairway or the elevator.

### *North, Middle*

Centrally located on the north facade, this entrance opens to the main lobby, which connects to the elevators. Three round-arched doorways open to the building interior. The building's first floor level is slightly above grade and street level on the north facade. A wide set of concrete steps and an added universal access ramp (both with added metal hand railings) bridge this elevation difference. Prominent brick arches and large flanking metal lanterns highlight each of the doorways. Each has paired 10-light painted metal doors with fixed round arched transoms. Terra cotta panels clad each doorway's jambs and soffit. Decorative wrought iron grilles occur at each transom. There are two planting areas within the concrete approach walkway.

The central doorway opens to an enclosed vestibule. Multiple-light wood panels set between slender pilasters enclose the vestibule with a set of 10-light wood doors opening to the main lobby. A prominent frieze and cornice extend along the top of the enclosure. The top edge of the enclosure aligns with the transom bar of the entrance doorway.

### *North, East and West*

Located on the east and west ends of the north facade, each entrance opens to a small lobby with a connection to restrooms and the east and west stairwells. Each is a single door entrance with the configuration matching the middle entrance described above.

Each doorway opens to an inner vestibule with a second set of 10-light double wood doors and a fan light transom. A white glass globe shade pendant fixture provides lighting within the vestibules. The vestibule features terrazzo flooring with a marble border.

### *South*

The south facade features a main central entrance (number 8 below) that opens directly to the central north/south basement corridor. All the other entrances are secondary service entrances that provide direct access to various basement function spaces. Radiators are located above some of the entrances on the interior.

The entrances are described below from west to east, with numbers assigned for ease of cross referencing.

- (1) Pair of added metal doors with wire glass lights and a solid transom. Added framing reduces the opening size at the jambs and header. Original steel angle iron guards remain at the outer wall corners to protect the concrete.
- (2) Wood roll-up door with added framing added at the header. Original steel angle iron guards remain.
- (3) Pair of added metal doors with wire glass lights and an original seven-light transom set below an original painted steel lintel.
- (4) Pair of added metal doors with wire glass lights and an original five-light transom. Concrete framing recessed from the wall plane wraps the inner edge of the opening.
- (5) A former window opening converted to a doorway. A metal door with a narrow wire glass light and a solid transom comprises the doorway with the remaining nine-light window to the east.
- (6) Wood roll-up door with added framing added at the header. Original steel angle iron guards remain.
- (7) A former window opening converted to a doorway. A metal door with a wire glass light is centrally located within the former window opening. Concrete block fills in the opening around the door with a five-light window sash retained as a transoms.
- (8) The main detainee entrance. An added steel-clad, side-hinged doorway with a smaller inset steel-clad personnel door and framing added at the header. Original steel angle iron guards remain.
- (9) Pair of added metal doors with wire glass lights and wood five-light transom. Concrete framing recessed from the wall plane wraps the inner edge of the opening.
- (10) Wood roll-up door with added framing and louvers added at the header. Original steel angle iron guards remain.
- (11) Wood roll-up door with added framing added at the header. Original steel angle iron guards remain.

- (12) Wood roll-up door with added framing added at the header. Original steel angle iron guards remain.

## Interior

The interior layout generally consists of a central double-loaded corridor servicing perimeter spaces and linking to vertical circulation. The east-west corridor on each floor connects to the central freight and passenger elevators and the east and west stairways.

### *Basement*

Layout consists of the standard east/west corridor, as well as a central north/south corridor providing access from the south parking area to the main east/west corridor.

A yellow line marking the route for former detainees to follow extends from one of the south side rooms located to the west of the north-south corridor, continuing east on the east-west corridor, and ending at a location on the corridor's north wall that has two sets of handprints instructing detainees to place their hands on the wall while they were searched. The line and handprints remain as significant elements from the building's original use. Two metal doors opening to solitary confinement cells remain at the west end of the corridor along with at least one associated concrete cell.

Finishes consist of a concrete floor with painted concrete structural elements and ceiling deck. Building systems are exposed. Board formed concrete partition walls are painted. Metal frame doors (paired and single) with transoms provide access to perimeter rooms. Partition walls are set back from the outer face of the structural columns. Added fluorescent tube fixtures provide lighting. Perimeter artist studios may have added floor finishes depending on use.

### *First Floor*

Layout consists of the standard east-west corridor, as well as short double loaded north-south corridors at either end of the floor servicing adjacent rooms. A large central lobby extends from the north entrance south to the former administrative offices. Restrooms are in the northeast and northwest corners of the floor near the east and west stairwells. Smaller offices extend along the perimeter walls with windows, with larger function spaces in the central south portion of the floor. The former citizen swearing in room, east of the central lobby, has been converted for theater use. U.S. Representative Pramila Jayapal is among the many who received their citizenship in this room.

Finishes consist of terrazzo flooring with a marble border throughout the corridor. Corridor walls at the east and west ends are painted plaster with a marble base. The central lobby has glazed hollow clay tile cladding the walls and columns with cove tiles at the base. Darker tile forms a wainscot with lighter tiles at the upper column and wall portions and wrapping the exposed beam sides and soffits. Terrazzo flooring extends south of the corridor at the lobby to the former administrative offices. The lobby north of the corridor consists of quarry tile, with lighter tile forming geometric bands within and at the outer edges.

The ceiling above this lobby features decorative moldings along the top of the wall and along the ceiling beams. All ceilings are painted plaster. Pendant white glass shade light fixtures provide lighting within the corridor and lobbies. Replacement fluorescent fixtures provide lighting in perimeter spaces. Doorways off the corridor have plain casings with marble plinths.

Restrooms feature terrazzo floors with marble borders, glazed clay tile walls, and painted plaster ceilings. Perimeter offices have drop acoustical tile ceilings, painted plaster and gypsum board walls, and a range of floor coverings over the concrete floor.

### *Second Floor*

Layout consists of the standard east-west corridor, as well as short double-loaded north-south corridors at either end of the floor servicing adjacent rooms. Offices are grouped around the perimeter. Two large exterior patios (east and west), originally used for detainee exercise, are located on the south side of the floor. Double doors provide access from the east-west corridor. Cased openings, each with a five-light hopper transom, separate the east-west from the north-south corridors.

Finishes consist of glazed hollow clay tile walls at the east-west corridor, with painted plaster walls at the east and west north-south corridors. Painted plaster ceiling and concrete flooring extend throughout the corridor. Wall mounted radiators are located below the windows along the south side of the east-west corridor.

Doorways off the corridor to offices have flush-panel doors with a large upper light and three-light transoms, with plain casings and plinths. The doorways to the patios feature flush-panel doors with narrow lights and a large single-light transom.

Fluorescent fixtures provide lighting.

### *Patios*

Located at the second floor, these two (east and west) exterior spaces originally provided exercise space for detainees. A masonry parapet (brick with a concrete coping) extends along the outer south edge, originally with metal security fencing. Red tile flooring extends throughout each patio, overlaid on the roofing. Metal counter flashing extends up the walls at the edges. Detainees wrote their own names or each other's names, places of origin, and dates using bituminous roofing mastic on the bricks at each patio. These names and dates handwritten by detainees themselves represent a significant feature and historical record of the detainees' presence.

### *Third Floor*

Layout consists of the standard east-west corridor, as well as short double-loaded north-south corridors at the central portion and ends of the floor servicing adjacent rooms. A restroom is located on the west end. Offices are grouped around the perimeter. Access to the central stairway to the fourth floor is located just west of the passenger elevator.



Finishes consist of glazed hollow clay tile walls (with glazed tile base) at the east-west and west north-south corridors and restroom, with a painted plaster ceiling. The east north-south corridor has painted plaster walls. The corridors have concrete flooring with terrazzo (with a glazed tile border and glazed cove tile base) in the restroom. Wall mounted radiators are located below the windows along the south side of the east-west corridor and at the restroom.

Doorways off the corridor to offices have two-panel doors with a large upper light and plain casings. Doorways off the east-west corridor have three light transoms.

Fluorescent fixtures provide lighting.

#### *Fourth Floor*

Layout consists of the standard east-west corridor that jogs slightly north around the central freight and passenger elevator and central stairway locations. A restroom is located in the middle of the floor on the north side. Cased openings with 10-light transoms separate the central elevator portion from the east and west ends of the building.

Alterations painted the glazed hollow clay tile white throughout this floor. The ceiling is painted plaster with concrete flooring. Doorways off the corridor to offices have two-panel doors with a large upper light and plain casings. Relites in the corridor walls provide additional day lighting to the corridor from the north facade windows. The restroom has terrazzo flooring with painted glazed tile block walls. The former assay office features a doorway flanked by service windows with small counters and a gold vault located at the south end of the former office space.

Pendant fixtures with white glass shades and added fluorescent fixtures provide lighting.

#### Vertical Circulation

Vertical circulation provides access between the building's floors.

#### *Elevators*

The building has two passenger and a freight elevator. All three connect to each floor. The west elevator (in operation) has updated call buttons and floor indicators at each shaft opening. The east passenger (no longer in operation) elevator shaft opening has a semicircular floor indicator located above the doorway with an arrow that moves to show floors. The elevator shaft doors have been painted to mimic multiple-light doors. A small call button is mounted to the wall adjacent to the opening.

The freight elevator cab consists of metal walls with an upper wall and ceiling grill. An original floor indicator is located at each floor with an arrow that moves vertically along the indicator. A small call button is located adjacent to the shaft opening on each floor.

### *East (No. 1) and West (No. 2) Stairwells*

These half-turn stairs provide access between the basement and four floors. Added smoke doors separate the stairwells from the corridors at each floor. The stairways consist of painted concrete carriages with marble tread and metal balusters and newels. A stained wood hand grip runs along the top of the balusters with a round stained wood railing on the outer stairwell walls. The half space landings have terrazzo with a marble border. Pendant (chain) fixtures with white glass acorn shaped bowl provide lighting. Ceilings and the underside of the concrete carriages are painted plaster. Walls are glazed hollow clay tile. Landings at the second and third floors are concrete. The flight of stairs from the half-space landing to the fourth floor are painted steel with metal hand railings. The stairwells at this level have been painted white.

### *Central Stairwell (No. 3), North*

This direct flight concrete stairway provides access between the third and fourth floors. Metal hand railings extend along both sides. Alterations painted the glazed clay tile block.

### *Central Stairwell (No. 4), South*

This half-turn egress stairway was added and provides access between the basement to the third floors. The stairway is painted metal with an added Dryvit-clad enclosure extending into the northeast corner of the west patio.

## Alterations

The following timeline identifies known alterations to the building that altered or impacted historic or original features.

### *Ca. 1990s*

- Painting of original glazed clay tile blocks on the building interior, particularly at the fourth floor. Within common spaces (lobbies, stairwells, corridors) nearly 100% of the glazed clay tile blocks remain visible at the first through third floors. Common spaces on the fourth floor have had nearly all of the glazed clay tile blocks painted. Within perimeter spaces, based on limited access, an estimated 75% of glazed clay tile blocks remain visible on the second and third floors. For the basement, first, and fourth floors nearly all of the glazed clay tile blocks are estimated to have been painted.
- Exterior light fixtures attached to the terra cotta belt course above the second story on the south and end facades to provide down lighting for the parking and ramp areas.
- Universal access ramp added at the front north, middle entrance.
- Original security grilles removed from most windows.
- Installed the added central, south egress stairwell including the added exterior enclosure at the west patio.

- Installation of fluorescent lighting fixtures within the building.

*Ca. 2005–2007*

- Installation of the vehicle pull out space along Seattle Boulevard South, based on King County aerial images.

*Ca. 2009–2012*

Conversion of interior spaces to artist studios. This work included using gypsum board clad partitions to divide and convert dormitory spaces into smaller spaces. This work also converted former dormitory restrooms. Planting of the existing street trees along Seattle Boulevard South, based on King County aerial images.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

The Immigration Station and Assay Office was built in 1931 to house two different offices of the federal government in Seattle: an immigration station to serve as the entry and exit point for immigrants arriving in Seattle and an assay office to analyze and process gold and silver bullion and foreign coins. The building was constructed on the southwestern edge of the Chinatown-International District and was in use by the federal government until 2004.

### **Neighborhood Context: The Chinatown-International District**

The area now known as the Chinatown-International District was primarily developed between 1907 and 1927. Although originally referred to as Chinatown and predominately associated with Asian immigrants, the neighborhood became home to many different ethnic groups with sub-communities formed within the neighborhood. The Chinese business district was located along S King Street, the Filipino along S Weller Street and west of Maynard Avenue S near King Street, and the Japanese business core (Japantown/Nihonmachi) along S Main Street and the north side of S Jackson Street. Seattle's Japantown was largely located in the area bounded by Yesler Way on the north, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S on the west, S Dearborn Street on the south, and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue S on the east. The eastern edge of the present-day Chinatown-International District—now bisected by Interstate-5—was first home to Seattle's Black and Jewish community but in the 1980s became a commercial center for Southeast Asian merchants (following a wave of new immigrants from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) called Little Saigon.

According to Larry Kreisman, author of the historic district's National Register of Historic Places nomination, "The history of the Seattle Chinatown Historic District is inextricably tied to the history of Asian settlement in Washington, and is characterized by alternating periods of immigration and deportation, cultural florescence, and racial discrimination."

Waves of Chinese (1860s), followed by Japanese (1890s) and Filipino (1910s) immigrants arrived in Seattle beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, China was in crisis from the devastating effects of war and famine.

News of a gold strike in eastern Washington in the 1860s spurred Chinese to immigrate to the Pacific Northwest seeking refuge from conflict at home. This first wave of Chinese immigrants to the Pacific Northwest were primarily men and from southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. Construction of a northern transcontinental railroad during the 1870s and 1880s drew Chinese workers to the Pacific Northwest, and many remained in the region after construction was complete, working in other industries, such as canning. Seattle's first Chinatown developed following the Great Seattle Fire of 1889 in the Pioneer Square neighborhood. Chin Gee Hee, a merchant and labor contractor, constructed a brick building to house his Quong Tuck Company on S Washington Street and Second Avenue S, which sparked new development in the area, with Chinese merchants leasing buildings up and down S Washington Street. These businesses included restaurants and shops; the largest merchant shops included the Wa Chong Company, the Quong Tuck Company, and the Ah King Company.

Chinatown continued to grow throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s and S Washington Street became crowded as the number of single male laborers in the district increased. In 1907 the City of Seattle re-graded and widened S Jackson and S King streets, opening up an area east of the railroad tracks and south of the original Chinatown for further development. Goon Dip, a leader in the community and the Chinese Investment group Kwong Kick (Quong Yick) Company had a series of buildings erected on S King Street between Eighth Avenue S and Maynard Avenue S.

While Chinatown was growing, the first Japanese settlers began to arrive in Seattle in 1879, reflecting the second wave of Asian immigration to the United States. Several factors contributed to Japanese leaving their homeland. An American naval delegation, led by Commodore Matthew Perry, arrived in Japan in 1853 to forcibly open Japanese ports to Western trade. As Japan's Meiji government sought to swiftly industrialize the country, many farmers were removed from their land, profoundly impacting the Japanese economy and culture. Japanese arrived in the Pacific Northwest, either directly from Japan or after working on sugar plantations in Hawaii, seeking similar employment opportunities as the Chinese immigrants before them. Filipinos comprised the third wave of Asian immigration to the area, also seeking economic opportunity abroad. The U.S. colonized the Philippines after the 1898 Spanish-American War, which afforded Filipinos status as U.S. nationals (but not full citizenship), allowing them to migrate to the United States more easily than other Asian immigrants.

The Japanese community in Seattle grew quickly, partly due to fewer immigration restrictions than were placed on the Chinese, which included the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (prohibiting the immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years), and anti-Chinese sentiment in Seattle which culminated in a February 1886 riot forcibly expelling hundreds of Chinese from the city. And by the early 1900s the Japanese population exceeded that of the Chinese. Following the regrading along S Jackson and S King streets, the Japanese established what became known as Japantown (Nihonmachi), adjacent to Chinatown, in the area bounded by Yesler Way on the north, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S on the west, S Dearborn Street on the south, and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue S on the east. Japantown's business core was located primarily along S Main Street and the north side of S Jackson Street. Japanese entrepreneurs

established thriving businesses with a range of specialties, including trading companies importing Japanese foods, florists (in connection with Japanese-owned and -operated greenhouses), dry-cleaning shops, restaurants, and hotels.

Japanese, Filipino, and other Asian immigrants faced racial discrimination upon their arrival. This intolerance was codified with the passage of immigration legislation in the 1920s. In 1921, Washington State House Bill Number 79, a result of anti-Japanese agitation, extended the state's constitutional prohibition against alien land ownership to also prohibit leasing or renting land. This forced many Japanese, particularly farmers, to find creative solutions to keep their land—through contract farming, lease extensions before the new law took effect, or leasing or buying their property in the names of their American born (Nisei) children. However, the legislature closed those loopholes in 1923 with the passage of Washington State House Bill Number 70, identifying property owned in the name of a child as held in trust for an “alien.” This placed further burden on Japanese landowners, who “had to take the further step of putting the children’s land in the trust of a white lawyer.” Such restrictions likely triggered the decline in the city’s Japanese population, which dropped from 8,448 in 1930 to 6,975 in 1940. Japanese had also established themselves in communities, many of them farming, throughout the Puget Sound region and would make special trips into Seattle to frequent the Japanese businesses. Although the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 severely limited Chinese and Japanese immigration to the United States, it did not affect Filipino immigration due to their status as U.S. nationals. Chinatown and its single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels were a destination for early Filipino immigrants and migrants arriving as laborers and cannery workers.

Anti-Japanese sentiment further intensified following Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the United States’ entrance into World War II. President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, authorizing the Secretary of War and the military to prescribe exclusion zones to restrict or prohibit anyone from entering, remaining in, or leaving. While EO 9066 did not explicitly call out Japanese, its implementation through military orders in proscribed military zones, curfew, voluntary relocation, temporary assembly and, ultimately, forced relocation of all people of Japanese ancestry. Within weeks of evacuation orders, all of the Japanese in Western Washington, Western Oregon, and California were required to gather at assembly centers—Seattle area residents were gathered at the Puyallup Fairgrounds. Allowed to bring only what they could carry with them to the relocation centers, some Japanese stored their belongings where they could; one such place in Seattle was in the basement of the Panama Hotel, owned by the Hori family. After the end of the war, Japantown, practically empty during the internment, never quite recovered. Many Japanese Americans chose not to return to Seattle and Japanese and non-Japanese laborers working war-related jobs moved into the neighborhood.

Seattle’s Filipino community grew during the 1950s and 1960s, after a decline in the 1930s and 1940s due to the Tydings-McDuffie Act and Filipino Repatriation Act to limit immigration and pressure the return of Filipinos to the Philippines. The Filipino community was centralized in the Chinatown-International District, Pioneer Square, and Beacon Hill

areas, with the office of one of their local newspapers, *Filipino Forum*, on King Street in the heart of the Chinatown-International District.

The construction of Interstate 5 in the 1960s further altered the character of the Chinatown-International District, as it effectively bisected the neighborhood. A major housing project then went in east of Seventh Avenue S, where the pre-WWII Japanese residential area had been. Increasing numbers of immigrants from Korea and Pacific Islands arrived in Seattle and the Chinatown-International District during the 1960s.

Another significant impact on the district (and historic buildings in general) was the passage and enforcement of stricter building and fire codes. In 1973, *Seattle Times* reporter and religion editor Ray Rupert interviewed hoteliers of downtown residential hotels about the challenges of running a residential hotel. The operators shared their struggles with Rupert, from the fixed income of their residents and guests to the rising costs of meeting city codes. Hotel and apartment fires, specifically the 1970 Ozark Hotel fire and the 1971 Seventh Avenue Apartment fire which together claimed 32 lives, led the city to tighten its fire and housing codes.

In 1973, the neighborhood was designated as a historic district, the International Special Review District, by the City of Seattle. The neighborhood was also listed as a historic district, the Seattle Chinatown National Register Historic District, in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. The International Special Review District has been expanded over the last few decades and now includes the historic Chinatown, Japantown, and Little Saigon, including historic resources located east of I-5. The current eastern boundary is at Rainier Avenue S. In 1969, community organizers formed InterIm CDA (ICDA), a nonprofit affordable housing and community development organization based in the Chinatown-International District to serve the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in the district. Since then, InterIm has expanded to serve not only low-income Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, but also refugee and other immigrant communities throughout Puget Sound. In 1975, the community formed the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) to revitalize and preserve the neighborhood, with a focus on three areas: affordable housing and commercial property management, real estate development, and community economic development and community engagement. As of 2023, SCIDpda owns and/or manages nearly 500 units of affordable housing and 200,000 square feet commercial/retail space in the district.

Since the neighborhood's landmark designation and the establishment of SCIDpda, it has continued to grow and evolve.

### **Construction and Use of the Building**

Construction of the Immigration Station and Assay Office at 815 Seattle Boulevard S in Seattle was completed in 1931.

Plans for the new government building were prepared in 1929. The new building was designed to house two bureaucratic functions in one place—the immigrant station and assay office. Prior to combining two bureaucratic offices into one building, each had their

own building. The Immigration Station (1915, City of Seattle Landmark) was in a four-story building between Western Avenue and First Avenue at the foot of Union Street and the Assay Office (1898, City of Seattle Landmark) was in rented space at 613 9th Avenue. The two agencies were completely unrelated, but were both offices of the federal government. The Immigration Station housed the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization serving as the entry and exit point for immigrants arriving in Seattle and providing detention facilities for detained immigrants. The Assay Office housed the Seattle office of the U.S. Assay Commission within the Treasury Department, which was responsible for analyzing and processing gold and silver bullion and foreign coins. The Seattle Assay Office was established largely in response to the Klondike Gold Rush. As Seattle miners returned from Alaska with bullion, the Assay Office established the value of the bullion and purchased it from the miners.

Talk about the construction of a new immigration station circulated Seattle news by 1926. In early 1928, news surfaced that the government planned to build the new immigration station on land previously purchased to house a new post office at Sixth Avenue S and Seattle Boulevard S. Plans for the building included five stories with the assay office to occupy the upper floor. Plans for the new building were completed in October 1929, drawn up in the office of the supervising architect, James A. Wetmore, of the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C. A call for bids to construct the new immigration station went out in early December 1929.

Bids were opened in mid-January 1930 and Eivind Anderson, builder and contractor based in Tacoma, was awarded the construction contract with Otis Elevator Company of Washington, D.C., receiving the elevator contract. Construction began in spring 1930 and was supervised by construction engineer, C. E. Swift of Washington, D.C. Swift was also charged with supervising other federal projects underway in Seattle, including a new federal office building and a U.S. Marine hospital.

The new immigration station and assay office building – larger than the previous buildings – required additional employees and the federal government advertised for new positions including elevator operators, engineman and assistant custodian, fireman, and engineman helper at the new facility in June 1931. The building was completed by fall 1931 and occupied on September 30, 1931. The official moving in day for the immigration station occurred on September 30, 1931. The move was not without drama, as three detainees escaped during the move and two more escaped from the new building itself—apparently sawing through chained, locked, and screened windows—less than a week later.

### Immigration Station

The Immigration Station operated out of the Immigration Station and Assay Office in Seattle from 1931 until it closed in 2004 upon its replacement by the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma. Due to a mistake in the wording of the congressional appropriation, the building was officially named the United States “Immigrant” station and Assay Office. The building was designed to accommodate 250 immigrants with a kitchen, dormitories, laundry, and open air court, as well as offices and workspace for 115 immigration employees.

Luther Weedin served as the Immigration Commissioner during this transition. Weedin was appointed as the U.S. Immigration Commissioner in Seattle in 1921 and served until 1933. After Weedin's tenure, the Bureau of Immigration was combined with the Bureau of Naturalization into a single agency in 1933—the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) within the Department of Labor. Then in 1934, Marie A. Proctor was appointed U.S. Immigration Commissioner in Seattle by the Secretary of Labor. She served in the position until June 1940 when the agency was reorganized by the Roosevelt administration. Proctor was the first woman to hold the position on the West Coast. The year Proctor left the position, INS was moved from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice.

In 2003, the INS was eliminated and replaced by three separate agencies—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP)—within the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Soon after, the Seattle Immigration Station was closed, and the facility's operations moved to the newly constructed Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma in 2004.

### Assay Office

The Assay Office operated out of the Immigration Station and Assay Office in Seattle from 1931 until 1955. Prior to moving into the new building at 815 Seattle Boulevard S at the end of 1931, beginning of 1932, the Assay Office had operated out of a building at 617 Ninth Avenue (demolished). Seattle's Assay Office was established in July 1898 and between its establishment and its move to the new Immigration Station and Assay Office, \$334 million in gold had passed through the office—\$200 million of which came from Alaska, \$94 million from the Yukon Territory, and \$25 million from British Columbia with the rest from mining in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Thomas G. Hathaway was the assayer in charge at the time of the move. The office was set to move into the new building on January 1, 1932, and they were relocated during the first quarter of 1932. *The Seattle Times* noted that when the Assay Office moved to the new location, about \$100 in gold dust was scraped from the cracks between the floorboards in the old building.

Under the new administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a new director of the U.S. Assay Office in Seattle was appointed—George L. (Pete) Swarva of Seattle. During the depression years, the Assay Office saw an uptick in individuals bringing in gold scraps, including jewelry, watches, and even teeth to sell to the U.S. Government. As the government needed at least an ounce to offer the buy-back service, buyers would go door-to-door buying up unwanted gold and taking it down to the Assay Office for inspection and purchase. Some individuals even discovered that the “pokes” or prospector sacks full of gold dust they'd held on to were just full of brass when they went to turn them in for cash from the Assay Office.

The Assay Office was closed in 1955 in a government cost-saving measure due to declining amounts of gold processed at the office. Swarva was still the Assayer at the office at the time, retiring when the office closed.



## Recent Use of the Building - INScape

After the federal government moved out of the Immigration Station and Assay Office building in 2004, the building remained vacant for a few years. It was purchased by private investors in 2008 for \$4.4 million. The building was reopened as INScape in 2010. INScape is an arts and cultural enclave that provides work and studio space to individuals and nonprofit organizations with a focus in arts and cultural use.

## **Immigration in Seattle**

The previous section outlines the general history for the building and how it functioned. This next section covers the people that passed through the building during its role as an immigration station. As Meg van Huygen wrote in a 2017 *Curbed* article, “The main purpose of the building was really to process people, not gold. It was a 77,000-square-foot machine designed for intaking people and often subsequently deporting or detaining them.”

When the new immigration station building was occupied by October 1, 1931, editorial comments in *The Seattle Times* implied that not everyone in Seattle was pleased with the new building or its necessity:

*At long last Seattle’s “new” immigration station, down in the railroad yards, is finished and occupied. Immigration Commissioner Luther Weedon is said to be very much pleased—but then Mr. Weedon doesn’t have to stay at the station except during office hours. Representative Albert Johnson and other citizens who are strong for alien exclusion also should be pleased. After a few sleepless nights amid the shrieks of switch engines and the general clatter of railroad yards, most aliens should be willing to go back home without orders from the court.*

## Chinese Immigration and Political Detainees

While the immigration station processed immigrants from anywhere, there was originally a significant focus on Chinese immigrants. The emphasis on manifest destiny led the country to prioritize economic development in the West in the 19th century. The discovery of gold in California and then in Alaska stretched the region’s pool of white laborers. In need of more workers, the government negotiated treaties with China to allow for immigrant labor to meet the demand. However, as the West developed and the laboring class organized against exploitation, the Chinese became the scapegoats for the conflict. In the National Historic Landmark nomination for Angel Island U.S. Immigration Station in California summarized the resulting anti-Chinese reaction stating,

*In the West, Chinese were attacked as the enemy of the white working class. Debates known as the ‘Chinese Question’ centered on the pros and cons of Chinese immigration but degenerated into racial epithets.*

This question was answered through the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), which was extended via the Geary Act in 1892 and made permanent in 1902. This act marked the first time Congress prohibited entry of a specific ethnic group to the country. These acts

guided immigration policy and, thus, the use of immigration stations throughout the country.

By the time the new Immigration Station and Assay Office opened in Seattle in 1931, the intense focus on anti-Chinese immigration had somewhat lessened, but Chinese remained the primary detainees in the facility. Local newspaper coverage during the 1930s primarily highlighted detainees from China (even children), Eastern Europe, and Canada, as well as political detainees, typically associated with Communist activities. This coverage reflects the range of countries of origins for detainees held at the immigration station. In December 1933 the U.S. resumed processing Russian deportation cases after deferring them as the country established its government following the Russian Revolution of 1917. The continuation of these cases immediately impacted approximately thirty Russian residents of Seattle. In 1936 Duncan Renaldo, a Romanian-born motion picture actor, was released from the station on a \$1,500 bond and allowed to return to Los Angeles pending his deportation. His illegal immigrant status was pardoned by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

### Japanese Immigration and Incarceration

In the 1930s there was a concerted effort by the immigration service to crack down on the illegal immigration of Japanese. This crackdown was an enforcement of the 1924 Immigration Act which excluded any immigrant ineligible for citizenship from entering the country. Japanese citizens had been previously exempted from this rule in an earlier immigrant act from 1917 but the 1924 act removed that provision. Immigration inspector Bela E. Gowen was head of the investigation division in Seattle and led raids on Japanese merchant vessels suspected of smuggling Japanese immigrants, either as extra crew or stowaways, during the 1930s. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan on December 7, 1941, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) conducted sweeps in Seattle and other Pacific Coast cities to round up Japanese who were then taken to the immigration station. Their personal effects were confiscated and stored at the station. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported that Japanese aliens were “grounded” in the area—denied access to bus, road, airplane, and boat transportation. The FBI also arrested and detained U.S. citizens at the immigration station for alleged anti-U.S. acts. It was confirmed that by December 10, 1941, 124 Japanese had been arrested along with 30 Germans and two Italians. Not all the Japanese detained were foreign-born or immigrants—prominent Seattle Japanese men detained included lawyers Thomas Masuda and Kenjo Ito, importer/exporter Yoshima Osawa, and merchant Charles Theo Takahashi.

Brothers Niroku and Shihei Shitamae managed the Northern Pacific Hotel in Japantown. Miyo Shitamae Ike, daughter of Niroku and Moto Okubi, recounted what it was like as the FBI conducted sweeps at the SROs in Japantown:

*That very day, December 7th, we already saw the FBI in person. There were usually two gentlemen, very dark coats and hats, and they would walk in, hand a piece of paper over with a name, and ask my father and the clerk – this person, which room did he live in? They would go upstairs, find the man, and all we saw was this one single man, going out with his toilet articles and maybe a couple pieces of clothing.*

*And he was taken away... That happened to several of the residents in our hotel. [My uncle] also was taken away. I remember he was taken to the Immigration Building... We visited him about two or three times, so [he] must have been [there] about a month... You went in, and signed in, and then you waited until they came to window, and you just talked with them... [My uncle] looked very fragile. I was surprised how he was always such an upstanding, fine figure of a man – he was tall for a Japanese – and it just seemed like he had shrunk... And it was sad... All this makes you feel helpless, because there's nothing you can do.*

Many Japanese who were detained at the immigration station in Seattle were sent for incarceration at Fort Missoula in Montana, which became an Alien Detention Center in April 1941 and run by the INS in the Department of Justice during World War II. The 150 Japanese that were detained at the immigration station as of March 19, 1942, were relocated to King Street Station and transported to Fort Missoula for incarceration during World War II. Fort Missoula incarcerated foreign nationals and resident aliens (i.e., not just Japanese and Japanese Americans like the 10 relocation camps) and between 1941 and 1944 it held 1,000 Japanese resident aliens, 1,200 non-military Italian men, 123 German resident aliens, and 123 Japanese Latin and South Americans. None of the Japanese held at Fort Missoula were ever charged with acts of disloyalty, despite being held as potential security risks and subjected to loyalty hearings for the duration of the war.

Two months after the United States entered World War II, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. The executive order's implementation profoundly impacted the West Coast's Japanese population through military orders in proscribed military zones, curfew, voluntary relocation, temporary assembly and, ultimately, forced relocation and incarceration of all people of Japanese ancestry. Japanese in the Seattle area were sent to Camp Harmony assembly center at the Puyallup fairgrounds by June 1942. But detention at INS did not end with the mass incarceration of Japanese at internment camps further inland. Sanzo Murakami—owner of the Higo 10 Cents Store on Jackson and Maynard—was arrested by the FBI while at Camp Harmony, separated from his family, and detained at the Immigration Station in Seattle. Sanzo Murakami spent months incarcerated at the Immigration Station before rejoining his family for incarceration at the Minidoka Internment Camp. In a letter to his daughter, Ayako, Sanzo sought to reassure his family of his health and care at the facility, telling them not to worry and to take care of themselves and their own health. Many of the Japanese that had been sent to Fort Missoula from the Seattle immigration station were “paroled” and sent to the internment camps.

### Cold War Era Immigration

As World War II ended, a notable detention at the Immigration Station occurred after a navy vessel arrived in Seattle from Manila, Philippines, in mid-August 1945. The vessel carried 160 civilians alongside 1,100 troops, but only 10 of the civilians had the proper passports and visas for entry to the United States. Approximately half were able to provide sufficient evidence to the INS, but 76, primarily Filipino individuals, were detained at the

station. Detainees included children. The detainees had all boarded the naval vessel with permission from the U.S. consulate in Manila, but it took days to sort out the confusion.

Due to increased fears of the spread of Communism, the INS initiated deportation hearings against a number of Filipinos in the late 1940s and early 1950s, alleging membership in the Communist Party. Filipino Ernesto Arcebal Mangaoang, business agent of Cannery Workers' and Farm Laborers' Union, Local 7, was arrested and detained at the immigration station in 1949 after entering the U.S. in 1926. Mangaoang was released 11 days later, but allegations of Communist activity against Mangaoang and other Filipino American union leaders plagued the union, which reorganized under a new national union as ILWU Local 37. Four months into the Korean War, Congress passed the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950, despite a veto by President Harry Truman as critics worried the act violated the first amendment right to freedom of speech and association. The act required communist organizations to register with the Justice Department and allowed the President to authorize the arrest and detention of persons who might engage in espionage or sabotage.

Amid these efforts to root out alleged Communists, the immigration station's detention facilities were closed in early 1950, as a cost-saving measure, and detainees were sent to the King County Jail or relocated to the immigration station in San Francisco. The number of detainees on average had dwindled to an average of 35 with a high of 60. Mangaoang and thirty other Filipino union leaders were arrested in October 1950, along with Russian Boris Sasieff, through warrants issued by District Director John P. Boyd under the Internal Security Act (1950). Due to the closure of the immigration station's detention facilities, these individuals were held at the King County Jail. Mangaoang's case worked its way up to the Supreme Court through the efforts of his defense attorney John Caughlan. In 1953, the Ninth Circuit Court ruled in Mangaoang's favor determining he never technically entered the United States as an alien since he traveled while the Philippines were still an American territory. The INS appeal of the decision to the Supreme Court was denied. This landmark ruling (*Mangaoang v. Boyd*) established residency rights for thousands of Filipino Americans that had arrived in the United States prior to the Philippines' independence in the mid-1930s. The preventive detention provision of the Internal Security Act (1950) was repealed in 1971.

In 1954 new INS policies to reduce detention of immigrants kept the long-term detention facilities at the immigration station closed. The immigration station continued to send any detainees for long-term detention to the county jail. Local newspaper coverage of the immigration station declined significantly after the end of World War II and the deportation efforts related to the Internal Security Act (1950). Although the building's detention facilities were used less than in the past in its later years (in comparison to the building's early years), it was still used for other immigration services, including processing of immigration paperwork, immigration hearings, and citizenship tests and ceremonies.

Significant immigration legislation was passed in 1965 with the Immigration and Nationality Act (or Hart-Celler Act). This law repealed national-origins quotas, which had discriminated against non-European immigrants since the 1920s and replaced it with a preference system for immigrants with familial relationships with U.S. citizens and residents as well as the skills

of immigrants. This law increased the flow of immigrants to the U.S. with a pronounced demographic shift. While the majority of immigrants to the U.S. prior to 1965 were European, after 1965, more than half of immigrants arriving were Latin American and one-quarter were Asian. Concurrently with the passage of this new immigration law, the U.S. ended its Bracero program in 1964, which was initiated in 1942 to recruit temporary agricultural workers from Mexico to fulfill the labor shortage during World War II. The end of the Bracero program, the limits on legal immigration (particularly a lower cap on immigrants from the Western Hemisphere), and civil unrest in Central America, sharply increased illegal immigration and, thus, INS enforcement in subsequent years. The Immigration Station in Seattle bears physical marks of these policies, handwritten by the detainees themselves. The walls of the two second-floor courtyards are covered with the names of Latinx immigrants, painted in asphalt, with their places of origin—Sergio, Pazcual, Regino Lopez. The courtyard spaces were the only access to the outdoors that detainees were allowed. Tar on the ground of the courtyards would get soft in the heat from the sun and then detainees would use the softened tar to mark on the walls. In an oral history interview with the Wing Luke Museum, Jacque Larrainzar described the courtyard graffiti, noting,

*Yeah. I remember there was one-- it stuck to me because it always resonated with this thing about being invisible. But, you know, I always wondered why would you put your name in this place. There is that thing of, I'm here, I was here, and somebody needs to know that I'm here and I'm alive and I exist. And I would go and read the names and try to see if I could figure out who they were.*

In the late 1970s, proposals were made to relocate Seattle's INS office from the Immigration Station and turn the building over to the County or at least use the former detention facilities within the building as a work-release facility. Objections from the International District community, and even INS staff, quashed those plans in 1980. Representatives from the International District were concerned about the impact to local businesses if work-release inmates would occupy the Immigration Station building. In 1987, staffing increased at the INS building (and others throughout the nation) in anticipation of increased applications for permanent residency and naturalization following passage of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Contract Act (or Simpson-Mazzoli Act or Reagan Amnesty). This act allowed undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. prior to 1982 to apply for lawful permanent residence and possibly naturalization.

### Post-Cold War Era Immigration

Rising numbers of detainees during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, due to the immigration law changes, increased use of the Immigration Station's detention facilities, which became crowded. Single beds were turned into bunk beds and mattresses even added to the floor. According to Many Uche, a detainee in 1997, detainees were brought into the basement to await processing. The holding area was so crowded that people had to sleep on the floor and there was no bathroom facility in the holding area. Handprints on the wall were outside a processing room for detainees to be searched. The yellow line on the

floor in the basement guided detainees as they walked. Detainees were held in cells on the second and third floors, with a lunch room and kitchen on the third floor. The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) reframed undocumented immigration as a crime and led to fast-track deportations and mandatory detention for immigrants with convictions. The Immigration Station in Seattle resumed long-term and even indefinite detentions, particularly when it detained individuals from countries that had no agreement with the U.S. to take back citizens. These detainees became known as “lifers” and were often from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, the former Soviet Union, and Cuba. In the 1990s, the INS Director at the Immigration Station collaborated with the Chong Wa Benevolent Association to improve services for new immigrants. The Chong Wa Immigrant Service was founded which helped with on-site fingerprinting and photos for identification cards and passports. These services were discontinued after increased security concerns in the early 2000s.

Racial and ethnic sweeps of immigrants in the U.S. occurred again following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, with INS and other federal authorities arresting and detaining hundreds of people from the Middle East and Arab countries. In 2003, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created, and INS was replaced by three separate agencies—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). In 2004, the Immigration Station was shuttered upon completion of the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma.

## **Architectural Context**

The design for the Immigration Station and Assay Office building in Seattle is credited to the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. The supervising architect was listed as James A. Wetmore. The building was designed in the Mediterranean Revival style. Tacoma contractor Eivind Anderson received the construction contract for the building.

### **Style – Mediterranean Revival**

The Immigration Station and Assay Office was designed in the Mediterranean Revival style and reflects the distinctive characteristics of the style. This style was influenced by Italian architecture but shares many attributes with Spanish Colonial Revival. Stucco as an exterior finish is less frequently used in favor of brick, stone, and terra cotta. The style emerged in the early 20th century and continued in popularity into the 1930s. Mediterranean Revival buildings are typically more restrained with formal, often symmetrical, composition. They have low-pitched roofs, frequently hipped, clad in clay tiles. They have a horizontal emphasis and often have arched doorways and windows. Ornamentation is typically restrained on Mediterranean Revival, rather than the more exuberant or picturesque ornamentation on other revival styles from the period (e.g., decorative shields, swags). The Immigration Station and Assay Office embodies the Mediterranean Revival style with its grand and formal appearance and its use of symmetry, a low-pitched hip roof clad in clay tiles, and the repeated use of arched windows and doorways. The terra cotta belt course

with a Vitruvian scroll (stylized wave pattern) between the third and fourth floors is a restrained form of ornamentation that serves to highlight the center massing of the main facade without detracting from the overall composition of the facade.

Mediterranean Revival was not a typical style used on monumental government buildings in Seattle and, as such, it is a style more often seen on residential buildings (including apartment buildings and large and small residences) or small civic buildings. Civic buildings with a similar style to the Immigration Station and Assay Office:

- Seattle Fire Station No. 23 (1909), 722 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle Landmark
- Yesler Library (1914), 2300 E Yesler Way E (1914), Seattle Landmark
- Cooper Elementary School (1917/1929), 4408 Delridge Way SW, Seattle Landmark
- West Seattle Library (1910), 2306 42nd Avenue SW, Seattle Landmark

In comparison to these other Seattle landmarks embodying the Mediterranean Revival style, the Immigration Station and Assay Office is a much larger and formal building. It stands out as a unique example of the style in the city. Cooper Elementary School is perhaps the closest in style to the Immigration Station and Assay Office, but the school does not have the same level of formality and grandeur of the immigration station building.

### Supervising Architect

The design for the Immigration Station and Assay Office is credited to the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department and its supervising architect—James A. Wetmore. It is unclear who actually designed the building, but it is part of a larger catalog of government buildings designed by the Treasury Department.

James Alphonso Wetmore (1863-1940) was the Acting Supervising Architect with the Treasury Department when the Immigration Station and Assay Office was designed and built. Wetmore, not an architect but rather a lawyer and civil servant, oversaw the construction of over 2,000 government buildings across the country during his career. Wetmore was born in Bath, New York, in 1863. He spent his childhood years in Iowa and western New York where he graduated from high school. He worked abroad in the Netherlands and Scotland briefly, but his career as a civil servant began in 1885 when he accepted a position as a courtroom stenographer in Washington, DC, with the U.S. Department of the Interior. He married his first wife, Hattie Viola Blye in 1883 and they had two children: Viola and William.

While working as a stenographer for the Interior Department—and later the Treasury Department beginning in 1893—he attended law school at George Washington University, taking night classes, eventually graduating in 1896. With his law degree in place and a foothold at the Treasury Department, Wetmore began rising through the ranks. In 1896 he was promoted to head of the Law and Records Division within Treasury, where he served until 1911. He was then promoted to Executive Officer to the Supervising Architect, a position he held until 1915. He was then promoted to Acting Supervising Architect within

the Office of the Supervising Architect, where he remained until retiring in 1934. He retired to Florida with his second wife, Anna, where they lived until his death in 1940.

Designs associated with Wetmore's career with the Treasury Department are too numerous to list here, but other projects in Washington State associated with him include:

- Federal Office Building, 909 First Avenue, Seattle (1933)
- Federal Building, 138 W 1st Street, Port Angeles (1933)
- Post Office, 215 N G Street, Aberdeen (1934, now the Aberdeen School District office)

### Builder

Eivind Anderson was the contractor for the construction of the Immigration Station and Assay Office. Anderson was born in Norway. He immigrated to the United States in 1904 and settled in Tacoma in 1906. He married his wife, Aslaug (also from Norway), by 1910, and was employed as a carpenter. By the 1920 U.S. Census, his occupation was listed as a contractor. Throughout his career as a general contractor, he built numerous buildings throughout Washington and Oregon, including many government buildings. He retired from general contracting in 1942, but then developed the Narrowmoor Addition after purchasing approximately 260 acres of vacant land in 1943 near the newly completed Tacoma Narrows Bridge (1940). Projects attributed to Anderson, in addition to the Immigration Station and Assay Office, include:

- Addition to Western State Hospital, Main Ward #3, Fort Steilacoom (1925).
- Jail addition to Public Safety Building, Tacoma (1929).
- Renovation of Northern Pacific Headquarters Building, Tacoma (1929).
- Quarters and hospital, Fort Lewis (1941).
- Post offices in Wenatchee and Yakima (remodeling, 1939).
- Anderson passed away in 1955 at the age of 73.

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