



LANDMARK REGISTRATION FORM

PART I: PROPERTY INFORMATION

1. Name of Property

historic name: AUBURN PIONEER CEMETERY
other names/site number: Faucett Family Cemetery, Slaughter Precinct Cemetery, Auburn Japanese Cemetery, KI00851

2. Location

street address: 802 Auburn Way North
parcel no(s): 0721059020
legal description(s): E 214.5 FT OF W 247.5 FT OF S 214.5 FT OF SE 1/4 OF SW 1/4 LESS POR LY NWLY OF SELY MGN ST RD # 5 [Section 7, Township 21, Range 5E]

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal
Category of Property: building(s), district, site, structure, object
Name of related multiple property listing: (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

4. Property Owner(s)

name: City of Auburn
street: 25 West Main Street
city: Auburn state: WA zip: 98002

5. Form Prepared By

name/title: Holly Taylor
organization: Past Forward Northwest Cultural Services date: June 30, 2016

6. Nomination Checklist

- Site Map (Required)
Photographs (Required)
Continuation Sheets
Other

## PART II: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### 7. Alterations

Check the appropriate box if there have been changes to plan, cladding, windows, interior features or other significant elements. These changes should be described specifically in the narrative section below.

- |                              |  |  |                              |                              |  |                |
|------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No | Plan (i.e. no additions to footprint, relocation of walls, or roof plan) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No  | Interior features (woodwork, finishes, flooring, fixtures) N/A |                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No            | Cladding   | N/A                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No                                    | Other elements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No            | Windows  | N/A                          |                              |  |                |

### Narrative Description

Use the space below to describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance, condition, architectural characteristics, and the above-noted alterations (use continuation sheet if necessary).

#### PROPERTY LOCATION

The Auburn Pioneer Cemetery is a triangle-shaped parcel of .77 acres (33,541 square feet) located approximately one-half mile north of Auburn's East Main Street historic commercial district. The cemetery parcel has a right angle at the southeast corner, making the eastern parcel boundary a straight north-south line, and the southern boundary a straight east-west line. The west side of the parcel is a SW to NE diagonal line with a truncated northern tip. It is bounded on the west by Auburn Way N (a major arterial), on the east by a dirt parking lot and 8th Street NE, and on the south by commercial and multi-family residential buildings and paved parking strips. The surrounding area is characterized predominantly by commercial development to the north, west and south, and residential development to the east.

#### LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS AND PLANTINGS

The property's topography is relatively flat, and slightly elevated relative to the level of the adjacent streets. The entire parcel has an open, park-like appearance characterized by mown lawn with sparsely planted shrubs and deciduous trees, primarily around the perimeter. A single tall spreading mature maple tree located near the center of the property provides a visual focal point in the landscape. A secondary multi-trunk maple tree is located at the southern edge of the property near the southeast corner. Numerous Autumn Blaze maple trees planted in 2011 replaced older deteriorated trees, and these young maples maintain the historical pattern of widely-spaced, broad-leafed shade trees marking the perimeter of all three sides of the property. A small lace-leaf Japanese maple is located near the southwest corner.

In addition to the maples, a cluster of holly trees, hawthorne, and other species in a planting area measuring approximately 36' x 10' anchors the center of the parcel's southern edge; these trees are under-planted with rhododendrons. A mature coastal redwood is located near the southwest corner. A pair of flowering dogwood trees frame the main entrance at the northern tip of the property, flanked by a small-leafed vine maple, a cluster of pine trees, and several rhododendron, azalea, heather and other flowering shrubs and ground covers. A mixture of shrub and ground cover plantings including rhododendron, barberry and kinnikinnick fill the planting strip between the cemetery's western

boundary and the adjacent sidewalk and road. These border plantings offer little visual or auditory screening from surrounding commercial and residential development and traffic.

## CEMETERY PLOTS AND GRAVE MARKERS

Use of the property as a family burial ground dates back to at least 1866, and the property was formally platted as a community cemetery in 1889. The Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter, dated February 1889, divides the property into five double rows of rectangular plots organized on a north-south axis, with open space between each double row. The eastern most double row runs along the entire length of the eastern boundary of this site. Moving west, each successive double row is shortened to conform to the parcel's diagonal western boundary, leaving a pair of triangular plots at the north end of each double row. Additional open space occasionally bisects the rows on an east-west axis. The Plan identifies a total of 91 numbered plots of various shapes and sizes. Plot numbers follow an unusual pattern beginning with No. 1 in the southwest corner, with subsequent numbers running east along the southern boundary, then back toward the west boundary in blocks of four. Plot numbers then shift to a north-south orientation, running up and down individual rows, with the highest numbers located in the two eastern-most double rows. Plot No. 91 is associated with members of the Faucett family (who owned the property before the cemetery was formally established), and this plot includes what are likely the oldest burials in the cemetery, dating to 1866.

The grave markers may be categorized into four distinct groups, identifiable by variations in location, orientation, and other characteristics reflecting the ethnic background and cultural values of Auburn's diverse population through time.

*Group one:* The first group is comprised of approximately fifteen grave markers (associated with at least seven different families) sparsely distributed across the western half of the property, identifying Euro-American burials from the 1860s through the 1930s. A single grave marker for Muckleshoot tribal member Angeline Seattle is also included in this group. Most, but not all, of the markers in this group are oriented toward the west, and generally identify the locations of full-body casket or coffin burials. Markers are made of cut or cast stone with incised lettering or attached brass plaques, and include a range of common late nineteenth and early twentieth century styles identified in the "Survey of Cemeteries and Burial Places in King County." These include plaque, pillow, slant, or upright (tablet or pulpit) headstones; obelisks; and large stone block monuments identifying family plots. The relatively small number of grave markers in this group, distributed across more than half of the property, represent just a portion of the cemetery's early Euro-American burials. Many of these early burials were disinterred by relatives and moved to Auburn's Mountain View Cemetery, approximately two miles west above the floodplain, following the opening of that cemetery in 1890. Additional research and subsurface testing may identify more remaining pioneer-era graves which are unmarked, due to relocation, destruction, or theft of grave markers.

*Group two:* The second group of markers is located in the southeast corner of the property, and this group is predominately associated with the Natsuhara family. Three rows of markers (24 markers in all) extend from the eastern boundary on an east-west axis. These markers are oriented to the north, the only group of markers in the cemetery having a northern orientation. Markers are inscribed variously with English letters and with Japanese kanji characters. The northern-most of the three rows,

approximately 30 feet in length, is comprised of eleven closely-spaced markers primarily of granite and marble, in a variety of styles, surrounded by stone or concrete curbs demarcating the edges of the Natsuhara family plots.

The two rows closest to the southern boundary of the property are comprised primarily of a uniform type of cast concrete marker described in detail below. The middle of these three north-facing rows includes approximately ten markers, and extends approximately four feet from the eastern boundary. The back row, located eight feet away from the southern boundary fence, is comprised of just three markers. This group of markers is associated with members of the White River Buddhist Temple, and markers identify the locations of cremated remains in keeping with traditional Buddhist practices. A swath of mown lawn approximately seven feet wide separates this second group of markers from the third group described below, and provides an informal (unmarked) pathway from the parking area outside the property's eastern boundary, to the first group of grave markers described above.

*Group three:* The third group of markers is the most visually prominent group in the cemetery. Three long rows of closely spaced markers extend up to 175 feet along a north-south axis, parallel to the eastern boundary of the property. Each of the three rows is comprised of 25-35 markers oriented toward the west. The dominant marker type, accounting for more than two-thirds of the markers in this section, is an upright concrete marker with a gently pointed top and three vertical rows of inscribed Japanese kanji characters running down the front. These simple markers are set in concrete bases which also include small recessed pipes for holding flowers. These markers, which are also found in the second group described above, were all installed in 1928 by members of the White River Buddhist Temple, to replace earlier deteriorated markers made of wood. The simple uniform style of the markers and the absence of English lettering strongly identifies this section with the traditional cultural practices of the Japanese American Buddhist community.

The other markers in this section of three long rows are also predominantly associated with Japanese American members of the White River Buddhist Temple, and their descendants, although the forms of the remaining markers are generally consistent with typical twentieth century granite and marble headstones found in other community cemeteries. Some of these more contemporary grave markers represent post-World War II burials, the most recent of which occurred in 2011. Other contemporary markers were selected by families to replace earlier markers that were deteriorated, damaged or stolen. These contemporary markers tend to be located toward the north end of cemetery, close to the main entrance, and are inscribed primarily with English letters. While nearly all of the grave markers included in this third group are associated with Japanese American families, at least one pioneer-era, Euro-American family grave marker is interspersed among the Japanese American family names, and other pioneer-era, Euro-American burials may remain without associated grave markers.

*Group four:* Separated by open space from the three groups of grave markers described above is a small cluster of markers on the western boundary of the cemetery, near the northern tip of the property. One small child's grave marker remains in this area, and other children's markers were likely present historically and may have been damaged or stolen. Along with the remaining grave marker, this section includes a pair of *Jizo* statues, traditional Japanese figures flanking a small inscribed cast stone block. Rather than identifying individual graves, these figures represent guardian spirits in the form of Buddhist monks, and are traditionally placed in noteworthy locations where they may provide

protection for children and travelers. Five *Jizo* statues were placed at this location in the late 1930s or early 1940s, one on top of the stone block and two on each side; bare stone bases identify the locations of missing statues that are presumed stolen. The *Jizo* statues were originally placed in the cemetery to honor Tora Kato and her four children who died in tragic circumstances; the Kato family grave marker is located toward the north end of the eastern most row in group three described above.

#### OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

The cemetery as a whole does not exhibit a formally demarcated circulation system of paths or roads, nor does it include any structures or major furnishings (such as planters, fountains or benches). Space between grave markers in rows is generally covered in gravel, and space between rows of plots is covered in mown lawn. Plot boundaries are not formally demarcated by fences or curbing, with the exception of the Natsuhara family plots described in group two above. No vaults, mausoleums, or other above-ground tombs are present on the property. One notable landscape feature is a large granite boulder near the center of the property's western boundary. A bronze plaque affixed to the boulder bears the inscription "In Memory of the Pioneers of Slaughter," recalling the name by which the town of Auburn was known prior to 1893.

A cast-metal fence of closely-spaced thin vertical bars set in ten foot panels between finial-topped posts encloses the property along its east and west boundaries. Fence panels are approximately four feet tall. This fence replaced an earlier metal pipe fence visible in historic photos of the cemetery, which had itself replaced an even earlier wood fence. In 1997, the City of Auburn public art program commissioned artist Deborah Mersky to create an integrated artwork at the cemetery's open main entrance providing pedestrian access at the property's northern tip. Mersky's artwork features a metal arch approximately ten feet tall and ten feet across, incised with the words "Pioneer Cemetery 1878." Extending approximately twenty feet on both sides of the arch are a series of decorative metal fence panels with an intricate design of vines, other plants, birds, and Japanese symbols. Outside the arched entryway, four broad low-rise steps of rubble stone connect the cemetery to the slightly lower sidewalk at the intersection of Auburn Way N and 8th Street NE. Just outside the arch to the east, a polished black marble marker inscribed with gold lettering reads "In Appreciation of the Chiyokichi Natsuhara Family for their service to the community in the care and maintenance of Pioneer Cemetery 1928-1962, Charles A. Booth, Mayor, May 21, 1998."

A large open gravel lot adjacent to the cemetery's eastern boundary is part of City of Auburn's road right-of-way. This lot provides parking for cemetery visitors, and has also been appropriated to serve as overflow parking and storage for an adjacent business. The lot is unimproved except for concrete parking bumpers evenly spaced along the outside of the cemetery's eastern metal perimeter fence. Two undecorated metal gates provide pedestrian access to the cemetery from the parking area. A basic chain-link fence runs along the cemetery's southern boundary, and connects to the decorative fence on both the eastern and western boundaries. No openings are provided in either the southern or western boundary fences. Inside the southern boundary fence near the center of the southern boundary is a small service area which includes an electrical box, water faucet and garbage can.

## SETTING

The surrounding community has changed dramatically during the past 150 years since the cemetery was first used as the Faucett family burial ground. The floodplain landscape surrounding the former confluence of the White and Green Rivers offered rich farm land, and the settlement-era agricultural landscape surrounding the cemetery lasted well into the twentieth century. Post-World War II suburban development associated with Auburn's northward expansion gradually engulfed the cemetery. In the twenty-first century, the property is surrounded by busy arterials, large-scale commercial developments, and dense residential development.

## CHANGES OVER TIME AND ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRITY

The Auburn Pioneer Cemetery retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; it does not retain integrity of setting. Its location and boundaries have remained unchanged since at least 1889, when the Plan of the Cemetery was formally recorded with the King County Auditor. While the property may not be considered a conventional designed landscape in the sense of representing the intentional creative work of a landscape architect, its layout continues to reflect the design of plots established in the 1889 Plan. Materials and workmanship may be evaluated with regard to the cemetery's plant material and grave markers, both which have evolved in consistent and incremental patterns reflecting life cycles (in the case of deciduous trees, in particular) and changes in taste and availability (in the case of markers). These changes over time in plant material and grave markers reflect 150 years of consistent use of the property as a cemetery.

Integrity of feeling and association may be evaluated in relation to the property's significant association with not only the pioneer Euro-American settlers in Auburn, but also with continuing use and stewardship by the Japanese American community for more than a century. This property remains a relatively peaceful oasis in the midst of a sprawling suburban city, evoking integrity of feeling through its connection to the community's history and its role as a place of respite and reflection. Integrity of association may be understood primarily as a long-standing connection between the cemetery and Auburn's Japanese American community in general as well as the White River Buddhist Temple membership in particular. The intangible cultural heritage associated with the Japanese American community's traditional and ongoing use of the cemetery is expressed in elements of the property's permanent physical fabric, and are also represented in ephemeral ceremonies and other traditional practices. As noted in the previous section, the setting has been altered dramatically by commercial and residential development, and does not contribute to the property's integrity.

**PART III: HISTORICAL / ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**8. Evaluation Criteria**

**Historical Data (if known)**

Designation Criteria:

- A1 Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of national, state, or local history.
- A2 Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in national, state, or local history.
- A3 Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style, or method of design or construction or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- A4 Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.
- A5 Property is an outstanding work of a designer or builder who has made a substantial contribution to the art.

Criteria Considerations:

Property is

- a cemetery, birthplace, or grave or property owned by a religious institution/used for religious purposes
- moved from its original location
- a reconstructed historic building
- a commemorative property
- less than 40 years old or achieving significance within the last 40 years

Date(s) of Construction: 1866	Other Date(s) of Significance: 1878, 1889, 1914, 1928, 1962, 1965	
Architect: N/A	Builder: N/A	Engineer: N/A

**Statement of Significance**

Describe in detail the chronological history of the property and how it meets the landmark designation criteria. Please provide a summary in the first paragraph (use continuation sheets if necessary). If using a Multiple Property Nomination that is already on record, or another historical context narrative, please reference it by name and source.

The Auburn Pioneer Cemetery is significant under Criterion A1 for its association with Auburn’s nineteenth century settlement and community development, as a domestic homestead graveyard that evolved into a community cemetery. It is also significant under Criterion A1 for its association with the traditional cultural practices of the Japanese American community and members of the White River Buddhist Temple from the early twentieth century to the present.

**CEMETERY ESTABLISHMENT AND EARLY EURO-AMERICAN USE**

The Auburn Pioneer Cemetery, first known as the Faucett Cemetery, served as a family farmstead burial ground starting in the 1860s. Rachel Ann and John T. Faucett (often misspelled Fawcett in

historical records) claimed 160 acres on the White River in 1864. Less than a decade earlier, several Euro-American settlers in the immediate area had been killed in conflicts with Native Americans in 1855.<sup>1</sup> The Faucetts had fourteen children, five of whom died in infancy, including two daughters Harriett (October 15, 1865 – February 26, 1866) and Mariae J. (December 19, 1850 – March 22, 1866), who were buried on the Faucett property. These are the earliest recorded burials in what became known as the Faucett Cemetery.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that earlier Euro-American casualties from the 1855 conflict were also buried on the property, given that the Faucetts owned a portion of what had been the Brannan family claim – historical records indicate only that nine people (adults and children) including members of the Brannan family were killed and buried nearby, and the exact locations of their burials were not recorded.

The Faucetts sold a portion of their claim that included the burial ground to Charles A. and Mary Williams in 1871. The Williams, in turn, separated out an approximately one acre parcel surrounding the burial ground and sold it in 1878 for the sum of one dollar to “L. W. Ballard, Thomas Christopher, and J. R. Stark as Trustees of the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery, King County, Washington Territory, and to their successors in office of said Slaughter Precinct Cemetery.”<sup>3</sup>

The trustees legally recorded a Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter in February 1889 that divided the triangular parcel into 91 plots. The configuration of plots is described in Part II of this nomination form. This 1889 plan, notarized and recorded with King County by Auburn attorney James Hart, included a statement mirroring the deed language quoted above, “This land was donated on the 14th day of January, 1878, by Charles A. Williams and his wife Mary Williams, both of Linn County, Oregon, for a cemetery and deeded over to L. W. Ballard, Thomas Christopher and J. R. Stark, all of Slaughter, King County, Wash. Territory, aforesaid and their successors in office forever.” The 1889 plan also identifies several individuals who were entitled to the respective plots upon which their names were written, including James Hart, Munroe Keevey, Mrs. Fawcett (sic), Tho’s Christopher, Dr. L. W. Ballard, Hanson, Jas. A. Stark, Hopkins, and the family or heirs of Charles A. Williams.<sup>4</sup>

This original, recorded plan served as the base document for a more detailed and elaborate cemetery plot map that is perhaps the most remarkable artifact associated with the site’s history. Also titled the Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter, this second version contains several hand-written declarations in the margins outside the cemetery boundaries, and a multitude of annotations on individual plots regarding family names and burial dates.<sup>5</sup> Annotations were likely recorded by James Hart and George W. Scott, an undertaker who lived near the Pioneer Cemetery in the early twentieth century and took an interest in its operations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ezra Meeker, *Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound*, Chapter XXXVII “The White River Massacre,” (Seattle, WA: Lowman & Hanford, 1905), 289-303. Digitized by the Washington State Library, 2003, [www.sos.wa.gov/library/publications\\_detail.aspx?p=7](http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/publications_detail.aspx?p=7) accessed 5/21/16.

<sup>2</sup> Joy Scarr, “Grandma Faucett was helpful in community,” (WRVM cemeteries file, incomplete citation, no date) and US GenWeb Archives, Auburn Pioneer Cemetery, Transcribed by Roberta Tower, October 31, 1999, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/wa/king/cemeteries/slaughttr.txt> accessed 5/21/16.

<sup>3</sup> Faucett-Williams deed: King County Archives recorded documents Volume 4, page 759-760 (1871); Williams-Trustees deed: King County Archives recorded documents, Volume 16, page 103-104 (1878). The cemetery was not sold to the Town of Slaughter or Auburn at this time, as is erroneously stated in several published sources.

<sup>4</sup> “Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter,” King County Archives, Volume 3 Plats, page 64.

<sup>5</sup> This later, heavily annotated Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter is part of the White River Valley Museum Collection, #MP0017.

<sup>6</sup> Hilda (Hemmingson) Meryhew, “Pioneer Cemetery” *White River Journal*, newsletter of the White River Valley Museum, July 1997.

Several external factors impacted the use of the cemetery in the late nineteenth. Dr. Levi W. Ballard platted the Town of Slaughter south of the cemetery in 1887, and named it in honor of Lieutenant W. A. Slaughter, a casualty of the 1855 conflict. The town had attracted a sufficient number of settlers to incorporate in 1891, and in 1893 the name of the town was changed to Auburn.<sup>7</sup> Concerns about flooding led to the establishment of Mountain View Cemetery approximately two miles southwest of the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery in 1890. According to Auburn historian Josephine Emmons Vine, “At the instigation of social societies including the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias, the Mountain View Cemetery Association was formed for the purpose of purchasing land well removed from the White River’s annual floods which were damaging Slaughter Precinct (Pioneer) Cemetery.”<sup>8</sup> After Mountain View Cemetery was established, many pioneer families had the graves of loved ones exhumed and moved uphill to the newer facility. Unfortunately, Mountain View’s records do not exist before 1907; meaning that burial information from its initial seventeen years of operation is missing, making it difficult to determine which graves were actually relocated.

Diversion of the White River in 1906, and subsequent flood-control projects on the Green River, greatly diminished the threat of flooding in the Auburn area; however, Euro-American families rarely buried their loved ones in the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery after 1895. One member of the Muckleshoot Tribe was buried in the cemetery: Angeline Seattle, who died in 1907. She had many relatives at Muckleshoot, and was married to John Seattle who held an allotment at Puyallup; however, neither Angeline nor John was related to Chief Seattle as some sources erroneously claim.<sup>9</sup>

In 2016, grave markers remaining at the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery identify fifteen Euro-American individuals associated with seven families: Boyd, Brooks, Faucett, Hart, Hopkins, Pautzke, and unknown, spanning a period from 1866 to 1935. Chiyokichi Natsuhara noted that many early grave markers for non-Japanese graves were made of wood, which rotted away leaving graves unidentified. The *Auburn Globe-News* estimated in 1959 that “there are something like 75 unmarked graves of white people.”<sup>10</sup>

## JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY HISTORY AND STEWARDSHIP OF CEMETERY

Japanese immigrants first settled in the Pacific Northwest in 1882 at the Port Blakely Mill on Bainbridge Island, and quickly established both urban enclaves and rural settlements associated with the region’s logging, mining, railroad, and mill camps. Japanese laborers found work on farms in the White River Valley starting in the 1890s, and established a community support network based on *kenjinkai* or prefecture associations. Census records indicate a population of 118 Japanese Americans the White River Valley in 1900, almost all men. By 1910 there were 432 including both first generation immigrant

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<sup>7</sup> Josephine Emmons Vine, *Auburn: A Look Down Main Street*. (Auburn Centennial Commission and City of Auburn, 1990), 23, 26; and Roberta Crisp Morley, “Mountain View Cemetery,” *City of Auburn 1891-1976* (Auburn: City of Auburn, 1976), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Vine, *Auburn...*, 40-43 and Meryhew, “Pioneer Cemetery.” Ownership of Mountain View Cemetery was transferred to the City of Auburn in 1946.

<sup>9</sup> Gilbert and Tallis King George, “Remember to Remember Our Old Ones,” *Muckleshoot Monthly*, May 15, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Johnson, “Elderly Japanese Citizen Observes 30th Year of Care for Auburn’s Pioneer Cemetery,” *Auburn Globe-News*, July 2, 1959, and “Auburn Japanese Return, Clean Up Cemetery,” *Seattle Times*, November 13, 1946, by a staff correspondent.

(*Issei*) men and women, and their American board children (*Nisei*).<sup>11</sup> This increase is notable in spite of the so-called Gentleman's Agreement of 1907-08 between the U.S. and Japanese governments that enacted voluntary restrictions on Japanese emigration. Anti-Japanese activism increased sharply after World War I, culminating in passage of Washington State's Alien Land Laws in 1921 and 1923. In spite of these challenges, many Japanese American farmers prospered through hard work and mutual support. According to historian David Takami, more than half of all Japanese farms in Washington State were located in the White River Valley, and in the 1920s, Japanese farmers supplied seventy-five percent of the region's vegetable and half the milk.<sup>12</sup>

The history of the White River Buddhist Temple is an important element of the cemetery's history, and is closely related to the settlement of Japanese Americans in the White River Valley. The White River Buddhist Temple belongs to the Jodo Shinshu or Pure Land sect, one of three sects of Japanese Buddhism along with Zen and Nichiren.<sup>13</sup> Nishi Hongwanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan, is the mother temple for Jodo Shinshu, and is where both early missionaries and current ministers received training. Historian Ronald Magden noted that conducting memorial services was the first activity of lay Japanese Buddhist immigrants in nineteenth century Washington State, before a minister had been sent from Japan or a temple had been established in the region. Shortly after a temple was established in San Francisco, Rev. Gendo Nakai founded a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Mission in in 1901 Seattle's *Nihonmachi* or Japantown. Rev. Nakai performed memorial services for Japanese living in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia, and also traveled around the region annually to perform memorial ceremonies and clean grave sites.<sup>14</sup>

To serve the Japanese farmers spread throughout the White River Valley, Reverend Nakai organized them in 1902 into five *howakai*, or private home gatherings, in Orillia, Christopher, Kent, O'Brien and Thomas. These groups later merged into one *sangha* or community. The *Shirakawa Bukkyokai* (White River Buddhist Temple) was formally established in 1912 as a branch of the Seattle Buddhist Church, with approximately 100 members who held services in a rented hall. It was the second Buddhist congregation in Washington State and the eighteenth on the West Coast.<sup>15</sup> In 1917, the congregation purchased six acres of land on the north side of the Meredith Road in Christopher, purchased the former Thomas Grade School building from the Thomas School District, and moved the building one mile south to their property. Members renovated it to serve as the second White River Buddhist Temple, which they dedicated in 1918.<sup>16</sup> The third (and current) Temple was built in 1964 and is discussed in the context of the post-WWII era.

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<sup>11</sup> Stan Flewelling, *Shirakawa: Stories from a Pacific Northwest Japanese American Community* (Auburn: White River Valley Museum, 2002), 23-24, and Gail M. Nomura, "Washington's Asian/Pacific American Communities," *Peoples of Washington: Perspectives on Cultural Diversity*, ed. Sid White and S.E. Solberg (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1989), 135. Census data cited in Stan Flewelling, "Issei in the White River Valley: Early Japanese American Experiences," *White River Journal*, newsletter of the White River Valley Museum, April 1997.

<sup>12</sup> David A. Takami, *Divided Destiny: A History of Japanese Americans in Seattle* (Seattle: Wing Luke Asian Museum, 1998), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ronald E. Magden, *Mukashi Mukashi. Long Long Ago: The First Century of the Seattle Buddhist Church* (Seattle: Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple, 2008), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ronald E. Magden, "Buddhism Comes to Seattle," *More Voices, New Stories: King County, Washington's First 150 Years*, Mary C. Wright, ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 176.

<sup>15</sup> Magden, "Buddhism...", 176 and Magden, *Mukashi...*, 46.

<sup>16</sup> Flewelling, *Shirakawa...*, 53-54, and Koji Norikane, *A Pictorial Album of the History of the Japanese of the White River Valley* (Auburn: White River Valley Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, 1986), 35.

According to data compiled by genealogist Roberta Tower, the earliest recorded Japanese burial at the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery occurred in 1890.<sup>17</sup> This may have been unknown to other members of the community, as Chiyokichi Natsuhara later wrote, “Back in May, 1906, when we lost our one-month-old daughter, we held a funeral for her with a few of our friends, with Rev. Gendo Nakai officiating... At that occasion I remember finding another tombstone of a Japanese named Suketa Kumano who had been killed in 1903 by a railroad accident in Kent.”<sup>18</sup>

Thus began Chiyokichi Natsuhara’s stewardship of the cemetery, which continued for more than half a century. Chiyokichi, also known as Charlie, left Shiga prefecture in 1898 for Canada, and began farming in Auburn 1902. His wife Sen, a picture bride also from Shiga, arrived in Seattle in 1905, and they were married on board the *Kamikawa Maru* in Smith Cove before Sen was allowed to disembark.<sup>19</sup> A 1959 published account of Chiyokichi’s long-standing role as the cemetery’s caretaker explained the sense of obligation that he felt for the cemetery:

Several of his relatives are buried there, and there are, according to his son, Frank, two stones that represent the graves of his parents who died many years ago and are buried in Japan. The elderly gentleman ‘pays his respects’ at these two stones, symbols of an attitude of veneration and sensitivity seldom encountered today... His care of the cemetery has been animated by a traditional respect that Japanese accord their deceased ancestors, and grew out of quasi-obligation placed on the Japanese of Auburn when a 25-foot strip at the rear of the cemetery was deeded to them in 1914.<sup>20</sup>

What this refers to is a handwritten note by James A. Hart, the Auburn attorney who legally recorded the 1889 cemetery plan (plat map) for the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery trustees, and who later become a trustee. On the annotated copy of the cemetery plan that recorded family ownership of plots, Hart wrote in red ink “This 25-foot strip granted to Japanese Church, Christopher, for Jap burials, 13 August, 1914 to keep fence up and plot clean & orderly & comply with the law. access this tract J A Hart, Trustee.”<sup>21</sup> Hart’s handwriting is challenging to decipher, and several sources list 1917 instead of 1914; however, newspaper articles published in 1946 and 1959 that relied on interviews with Chiyokichi and Frank Natsuhara identify 1914 as the date of the assignment of both property rights and stewardship responsibilities.

In contrast to the Euro-American community that had largely abandoned the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery in favor of Mountain View Cemetery, the Japanese American community actively maintained the graves of their relatives and community members at the Pioneer Cemetery. Formal establishment of the White River Buddhist Temple in 1912 meant that a community institution had a relationship to the cemetery. Hart and the other trustees may have recognized that the Japanese American community was likely to maintain their stewardship commitment in perpetuity, not just for the graves

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<sup>17</sup> US GenWeb Archives, Auburn Pioneer Cemetery, Transcribed by Roberta Tower, October 31, 1999 includes Baby Ito who died July 24, 1890, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/wa/king/cemeteries/slaughttr.txt> accessed 5/21/16.

<sup>18</sup> Kazuo Ito, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*. Translated by Shinchiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard (Seattle: Executive Committee for Publication of *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*, 1973), 885.

<sup>19</sup> Ito, *Issei...*, 192-93.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, “Elderly Japanese Citizen...”, 1959.

<sup>21</sup> This annotated Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter is part of the White River Valley Museum Collection, #MP0017.

of their ancestors but for the entire property. Because Hart legally recorded the initial cemetery plan in 1889, it seems likely that he also would have recorded the “granting” of the eastern portion of the cemetery to the “Japanese Church” (i.e. the White River Buddhist Temple); however, a legal record of this agreement has not yet been identified.

By 1928 there were more than sixty Japanese Americans whose cremated remains, in keeping with Japanese Buddhist custom, were buried in the Pioneer Cemetery.<sup>22</sup> In a written recollection, Chiyokichi Natsuhara noted that most were infants and children. “At that time we had no midwife in this place and were quite ignorant of child care and of preventive measures against disease. Since there were no vaccinations for whooping cough, diphtheria, polio, measles and such, diseases really threatened the lives of infants and children and their mortality rate was extremely high.”<sup>23</sup>

Most graves were marked with wooden posts (*bohyo*), and each year on Memorial Day family members and other volunteers cleaned up the graves. In the fall of 1928, Temple members made concrete tablets at the Natsuharas’ warehouse to replace the deteriorating wood markers. Chiyokichi described the process: “First a wooden box was made and cement was poured into the box. Before the cement dried, we had Rev. [Giryō] Takemura...inscribe in the wet cement with a stick the name of the deceased along with the posthumous Buddhist name. As there were sixty-two tablets altogether, Rev. Takemura could not help finally complaining, ‘My arm aches!’ Then we carried those sixty-two tablets to the cemetery by truck.”<sup>24</sup> The *Auburn Globe-Republican* praised the Japanese work crews that transformed the cemetery “from an unkempt weed-grown desolate plot of ground,” and noted that in addition to replacing the wood markers, volunteers also leveled the ground, put in grass seed, cleaned up the brush and weeds, and replaced an old wood fence that had partly fallen down with a new iron-rail perimeter fence.<sup>25</sup> The area around the cemetery remained a predominantly agricultural rural landscape until after World War II.

## WORLD WAR II AND INTERNMENT ERA

Following the Executive Order 9066 issued in February 1942, Nikkei (all people of Japanese ancestry) living throughout the West Coast Exclusion Zone received orders to evacuate. Most people from the White River Valley were sent first to the Pinedale Assembly Center in California, and later to the Tule Lake Relocation Center in California or Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho for the duration of World War II.<sup>26</sup> A few families were able to leave homes, farms and businesses in the care of friends and neighbors, but many lost everything except what they could carry.

During the war, Chiyokichi collected donations each year from Japanese families, and sent the funds to Ray Sonnemann, owner of Sunset Laundry in Auburn and later Auburn City Council member, for Memorial Day flowers and repairs at the cemetery. In a 1944 letter to Ray and Esther Sonnemann,

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<sup>22</sup> Mohan Wijayaratna, “Funerary Rites in Japanese and Other Asian Buddhist Societies,” *Japan Review* (No. 8, 1997), 105-125.

<sup>23</sup> Ito, *Issei...*, 885.

<sup>24</sup> Ito, *Issei...*, 886. Note: Ito’s text incorrectly identifies Rev. Yoshiaki Takemura as the inscriber; according to Charles Natsuhara, it was actually Yoshiaki’s father Rev. Giryō Takemura who did this task.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Johnson, “Elderly Japanese Citizen Observes 30th Year of Care for Auburn’s Pioneer Cemetery,” *Auburn Globe-News*, July 2, 1959.

<sup>26</sup> Gail Dubrow with Donna Graves, *Sento at Sixth and Main: Preserving Landmarks of Japanese American Heritage* (Seattle: Seattle Arts Commission, 2002), 57.

Chiyokichi's son Frank wrote from Minidoka, "Ray, I forgot to write sooner in regards to grass cutting at cemetery. Dad went all over camp contacting people who have graves in Auburn and got together small collection. I had M.O. [money order] made early but forgot again to mail it and write. If you need more write."<sup>27</sup> Chiyokichi also showed benefit movies at internment camps during the war to raise money to maintain the cemetery.<sup>28</sup>

After World War II, the Natsuharas were one of 25 to 50 Japanese American families that returned to the White/Green River Valley, out of an estimated 300 families who lived in the area before the War.<sup>29</sup> An anti-Japanese group called the Remember Pearl Harbor League, based in the Green River Valley, agitated against the return of Nikkei farmers.<sup>30</sup> Of those families that did not return, many settled in vicinity of Ontario in Eastern Oregon and resumed farming. According to Temple member Lily Komoto, after internment ended, Chiyokichi Natsuhara would visit Ontario to collect donations for flowers and upkeep from people who had relatives at the cemetery.<sup>31</sup> Other families gravitated to various urban areas. Those who returned to the Auburn area found the cemetery choked with tall grass and weeds, and vandalized, with some Japanese grave markers knocked over, broken, or stolen. Among the headstones that disappeared during WWII was the marker for Chiyokichi and Sen Natsuhara's daughter Yu, who died in 1911.

Chiyokichi recalled that, after returning from the camps in 1945, Japanese community volunteers resumed their responsibility for maintaining the cemetery. He wrote, "We cleaned it up, the white Americans' graves as well, in the hope of serving for better future relationships between America and Japan."<sup>32</sup> The Seattle Times reported in 1946 that "native-born Japanese returning to their homes after wartime dislocation are doing a commendable service here by cleaning up the long-neglected Auburn Pioneer Cemetery."<sup>33</sup> For their part, the Natsuharas, especially Chiyokichi's son Frank, consistently stated that while many people thought of the place as a Japanese cemetery, it actually was a pioneer cemetery, perhaps as a way to enhance the broader community's respect for the site during the fraught post-WWII era.

## POST-WAR CITY MANAGEMENT AND "RECLAMATION" AS PIONEER CEMETERY

Auburn historian Hilda Meryhew noted that during the 1950s a dispute arose over road right-of-way involving the City of Auburn: "The city wanted to straighten Auburn Way North, trimming a sizable

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<sup>27</sup> August 15, 1944 letter to R.K. and E.E. Sonnemann from Frank Natsuhara, page 2, paragraph 2, collection of Charles Natsuhara.

<sup>28</sup> "Frank Natsuhara, Pioneer Family of Auburn," Interviewed by Hilda Meryhew, April 12, 1983, summary notes in WRVM Cemetery file.

<sup>29</sup> Estimates vary: One source states that about 25 families returned [Keith Seinfeld, "She's A Queen - And WWII Camp Internee - Honoree Recalls Troubled Chapter in Auburn History," Seattle Times July 18, 1996 [community.seattletimes.nwsources.com/archive/?date=19960718&slug=2339764](http://community.seattletimes.nwsources.com/archive/?date=19960718&slug=2339764) accessed 5/21/16]. Another states that 30 families came back to farm again [Norikane *A Pictorial Album...*, 31] and a third states that an estimated 50 families came back to the Temple [Kendall Kosai, "White River Buddhist Temple Celebrates Centennial, Hard Work, and Friends," *North American Post*, January 1, 2012]; all identify 300 as the number of Japanese American families sent from White River Valley to internment camps in 1942.

<sup>30</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny...*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> Lily Komoto (born 1930), interviewed 10/25/15 at White River Buddhist Temple.

<sup>32</sup> Ito, *Issei...*, 886-87.

<sup>33</sup> *Seattle Times*, November 13, 1946, by a staff correspondent, "Auburn Japanese Return, Clean Up Cemetery."

slice from the west side of the little green island, then popularly known as the Japanese Cemetery.”<sup>34</sup> The Washington State Department of Transportation appears to have had a role in the project as well, since Auburn Way was at that time designated as part of State Route 5. Property records indicate a minor adjustment was made in the legal description of the parcel relative to the road right of way in 1955.<sup>35</sup> The City of Auburn annexed the area surrounding the cemetery in 1958, as post-war residential and commercial development expanded northward from the town’s historic commercial district into former agricultural areas.

In 1959, a prominent article in the *Auburn Globe-News* titled “Elderly Japanese Citizen Observes 30th Year of Care for Auburn’s Pioneer Cemetery,” profiled Chiyokichi Natsuhara, then 83 years old, and described in detail the history of the cemetery and Chiyokichi’s role as the property’s primary steward. Reporter Robert Johnson identified 1959 as the thirtieth anniversary of Chiyokichi’s caretaking, which is curious since Chiyokichi’s involvement with the property extended back to at least 1906 when his infant daughter was buried there, and his role as the cemetery caretaker was formalized in 1914 when Trustee James Hart granted the eastern portion of the cemetery to the Japanese American community in exchange for perpetual upkeep of the whole property. In the same 1959 newspaper article, Auburn librarian Betty Roberson suggested that the elderly Natsuhara should be relieved of the burden of caring for the cemetery, and she proposed that the city park department should take care of it as an historical monument or pioneer memorial, since annexation had brought the cemetery within the city limits.<sup>36</sup>

As noted previously, trustees of the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery received title to the property in 1878, and subsequent trustees technically retained ownership until 1962, when the City of Auburn assumed ownership and the Parks Department formally took over responsibility for maintenance. King County Assessor records identify the property owner as the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery (presumably meaning the trustees) through at least 1940; however, ownership records for the cemetery are unclear in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>37</sup>

Between 1960 and 1962, the Auburn City Council, staff, and community members frequently discussed the Pioneer Cemetery’s history and future at City Council meetings. In October 1960, Betty Roberson requested that “something be done about the Pioneer Cemetery,” and said that the Historical Society was interested in the cemetery as a historical site. In requesting that the City Council secure a title report to see who the owners were, she set in motion a process through which the City of Auburn became the legal owner of the cemetery. By December 1960, Auburn City Attorney Robert Smythe determined that there were no known owners of the cemetery, and in August 1961 the City petitioned for appointment of successor trustees in Superior Court. New trustees who intended to transfer ownership of the cemetery to the city were selected by October 1961, and the deed was transferred to the City in February 1962. After settling issues related to a reverter clause in the deed, the City Council voted to formally accept the deed in March 1962, and by June 1962 the deed had been received. The

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<sup>34</sup> Hilda (Hemmingson) Meryhew, *Memorial Records of South King County, Washington, Volume IV: Auburn Pioneer Cemetery* (Kent: South King County Genealogical Society, 1997), 7, in White River Valley Museum Collection, cemetery file.

<sup>35</sup> King County Property Record Card for Parcel #0721059020, Washington State Archives, Puget Sound Regional Branch.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, “Elderly Japanese Citizen...”.

<sup>37</sup> After that year, the county’s tax rolls omit records for non-taxable property such as cemeteries.

White River Valley Historical Society and the Pioneer Daughters of Slaughter sent letters of appreciation to the City Council for their acceptance of cemetery ownership and their guarantee for the site's perpetual care.<sup>38</sup>

A manuscript written by Chiyokichi Natsuhara in the 1960s stated that the cemetery was listed at that time "as the property of a lawyer, Jimmy Hoch,"<sup>39</sup> who may have been the last trustee. A 1981 newspaper article stated that "the cemetery fell under city ownership when the only remaining member of the graveyards' board of directors signed it over about 20 years ago,"<sup>40</sup> confirming an ownership transition around 1962.

By 1965, descendants of Auburn's early Euro-American settlers took a renewed interest in the cemetery, which may have been prompted in part by a threat from another road project, a proposal to straighten and extend Eighth Avenue NE through the cemetery. This road is visible in a 1965 aerial photo running straight to the southeast corner of the cemetery, and then making a ninety-degree turn to the north and running along the cemetery's eastern and northern fence line to its intersection with Auburn Way N. This curve was eventually smoothed out, creating the triangular parking area outside the cemetery's eastern fence line.

With a flourish of patriotism provided by the American Legion, and no apparent sense of irony, the Pioneer Daughters of Slaughter held a dedication ceremony at the cemetery on July 18, 1965. The Daughters dedicated a plaque affixed to a large boulder, which read "In Memory of the Pioneers of Slaughter."<sup>41</sup> Descendants of many of the area's early Euro-American settlers participated in the ceremony, along with Muckleshoot tribal chair Bertha McJoe, in honor of tribal member Angeline Seattle who is buried there, and Sen, Chiyokichi and Frank Natsuhara, representing the Nikkei community. Notably, the Daughters honored the Natsuharas "for the part they and the Japanese-American citizens of this area played in the maintenance of the Pioneer Cemetery before it was incorporated in the city park system."<sup>42</sup> Since the 1965 dedication event, the cemetery has officially been known as the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery.

The installation of the boulder in the middle of the cemetery was apparently intended to thwart the City's plans to extend the road, and was described in one newspaper article as "...a cooperative effort. It was donated by Jack Wadkins and moved to the site by James Shaughnessy, now president of the White River Valley Historical Society," while another account simply noted, "We put a big rock right in the middle of where they wanted to go."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Auburn City Council Minutes: 10/4/60 page 2; 12/20/60 page 4; 8/15/61 page 3; 10/17/61 page 4; 3/20/62 page 5; 6/19/62 page 8; 7/3/62 page 1. City Clerk Archive [www.auburnwa.gov/services/resource\\_library/documents.htm](http://www.auburnwa.gov/services/resource_library/documents.htm) accessed 6/22/16.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Ito, *Issei...*, 885. Jimmy Hoch may have been related to Joseph Koch (1920-2000) who helped organize the White River Valley Historical Society. Chiyokichi Natsuhara wrote: "Since May, 1962, the cemetery has been under the management of the City Park Board," in Ito, *Issei...* 887; Morley incorrectly states that the Pioneer Cemetery "was formally taken over by the city in the 1950s," and also incorrectly notes that Japanese families cared for the cemetery only "during the depression years." [Roberta Crisp Morley, "Mountain View Cemetery," *City of Auburn 1891-1976* (Auburn: City of Auburn, 1976), 54.]

<sup>40</sup> Pat Jenkins, History at Rest: Pioneer Cemetery Stands as Reminder of City's Past on Busy Modern Street," *Auburn Globe News*, no date (ca.1981-82), 58.

<sup>41</sup> Vine, *Auburn...*, 40.

<sup>42</sup> "Pioneer Cemetery Rites Recall Early White River Valley Days," *Auburn Citizen*, Wednesday July 21, 1965, 7.

<sup>43</sup> "Pioneer Cemetery Rites..." and Meryhew, *Memorial Records...*, 7, in White River Valley Museum Collection, cemetery file. It is unclear whether "they" were the city, county or state roads departments, and what exactly "they" wanted to do.

A decade later, Auburn historian (and former president of the Pioneer Daughters of Slaughter) Roberta Crisp Morley wrote, "Much credit has been given local Japanese citizens for their devotion to the spot and places have been provided for representatives on the Cemetery Board."<sup>44</sup> However, without representation from or consultation with the Japanese American community, the Cemetery Board adopted a policy stating that "Only direct descendants of those already buried in Pioneer Cemetery may be interred there."<sup>45</sup>

Given the small number of Japanese American families who returned to the Auburn area after internment, it is noteworthy that the White River Buddhist Temple maintained a strong presence in the community. In 1963, temple members commissioned architect Kichio Arai to design a new building at 37th Street and Auburn Way North, approximately 1.8 miles north of the Pioneer Cemetery.<sup>46</sup> Dedicated in 1964, this facility is one of sixty-three Jodo Shinshu Buddhist temples in the United States. It remains in active use for weekly services and other community functions, and hosts the annual Bon Odori festival in July.

Since assuming ownership more than fifty years ago, the City of Auburn Parks Department has maintained the cemetery and undertaken various improvements, including installation of the cast metal fence and artwork panels described in Section II. Families have repaired and replaced some broken or missing grave markers, and have carefully maintained the area immediately around graves. In a remarkable turn of events, the headstone topped with a heart that marked the grave of three-year-old Yu Natsuhara, stolen while her family was interned during WWII, was unearthed at a construction site in 1990 and returned to the family. The *Seattle Times* reported that workers "found the gravestone about seven feet below the surface after they tore up a driveway to build an addition behind Highline High School, about 10 miles from Auburn. A school gymnasium was completed in 1946, and the vandals who stole the gravestone may have left it in a ditch or trench dug for that project, speculated Jerry Heigh, director of facilities for the Highline School District."<sup>47</sup>

Contemporary genealogical indexes for the cemetery tend to emphasize the Euro-American pioneers originally buried there, in part because those records are in English, whereas a substantial portion of the Nikkei markers (those crafted in 1928) are written in kanji characters that have not been fully translated.<sup>48</sup>

#### CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CEMETERY: *Traditional Cultural Practices and Place Identity*

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<sup>44</sup> Roberta Crisp Morley, "Mountain View Cemetery," *City of Auburn 1891-1976* (Auburn: City of Auburn, 1976), 54

<sup>45</sup> Mountain View Cemetery Board, "Manual of Policies and Procedures," February 8, 2000.

<sup>46</sup> David A. Rash, "Kichio Allen Arai," *Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects*, Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 243.

<sup>47</sup> "Backhoe Unearths Stolen Headstone," *Seattle Times*, July 1, 1990. [community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=19900701&slug=1080023](http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=19900701&slug=1080023) accessed 5/21/16.

<sup>48</sup> For example, the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery Index compiled by Suzanne Livingstone in 2011 includes 93 individuals: "The listings are the stones I was able to transcribe. There are at least another 50+ stones that are all in Japanese and appear to contain only the last name with no first name or dates." [Auburn Pioneer Cemetery Index, Office of Secretary of State, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, [www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Collections/TitleInfo/1559](http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Collections/TitleInfo/1559), accessed 5/21/16. This index incorrectly states that the Cemetery is in T21N R5E S18; it is actually in Section 7.

The Auburn Pioneer Cemetery is associated with two distinct sets of cultural practices that contribute to its significance as a historic site remaining in ongoing use. The first may be understood as an example of intangible cultural heritage associated with annual ceremonial events, and the second is expressed in tangible features such as grave markers and other artifacts in the cemetery. The first set of cultural practices centers around an on-site Memorial Day ceremony conducted by the minister of the White River Buddhist Temple for families of those buried in the cemetery. Such ceremonies are also performed at four other area cemeteries where White River Buddhist Temple members are buried. Other temples, notably the Seattle Betsuin and the Tacoma Buddhist Temple, perform similar memorial ceremonies at other regional cemeteries in association with the summer Obon celebrations.

Prior to the annual Memorial Day ceremony at Auburn Pioneer Cemetery, many families visit the cemetery to clean grave markers and grave sites, and on Memorial Day, graves are decorated with a plethora of plants, flowers, incense, and personal items. This practice of decorating graves was described in 1959 as one in which “flowers, incense, bits of food and remembrances show the attention that descendants of the deceased Japanese pioneers give.”<sup>49</sup> Charles Natsuhara recalls offerings of lit candles and cookies being placed at the graves of family members. Traditionally, these annual activities of cleaning family graves, and holding ceremonies in the cemetery, were done in association with the mid-summer Obon ceremony or Bon Odori, a traditional festival honoring ancestors that continues to be celebrated at the White River Buddhist Temple and other temples.<sup>50</sup> The memorial ceremony in the cemetery modestly mirrors the elements of a temple ceremony, including the tolling of a bell, chanting, and offering of incense.

This combination of the Memorial Day ceremony in the cemetery, and the summer Obon ceremony and festival at the temple, represent American expressions of the Obon tradition in Japan. This tradition involves returning annually to one’s ancestral home, typically during the summer. It brings extended families together to clean and tend family graves, remember loved ones, tell stories, and reflect on where one came from and what one’s ancestors made possible.<sup>51</sup> Both the Memorial Day ceremony at the cemetery and the Obon ceremony at the temple are open to the public, and are attended by families who are members of the Temple community as well as non-Buddhist community residents and descendants of former residents of the White River Valley who return to the community for this occasion.

A second set of cultural practices is expressed in tangible features such as grave markers and other artifacts in the cemetery, which reflect distinct Buddhist traditions. The majority of markers in the eastern section of the cemetery, particularly those crafted and installed in 1928 to replace earlier markers, include three elements: the person’s given name, the date of their death, and their *homyo* or Buddhist name. In the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition, this *homyo* or “Dharma name” is a Japanese name written using kanji script that may be given to individuals during their lifetime by Buddhist officials on special occasions.<sup>52</sup> For example, Frank Natsuhara’s son Charles received his *homyo* during

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<sup>49</sup> Johnson, “Elderly Japanese Citizen...” 1959.

<sup>50</sup> Norikane 37; “Bon Odori Festival,” Seattle Buddhist Temple [seattlebetsuin.org/index.php/bon-odori-festival/](http://seattlebetsuin.org/index.php/bon-odori-festival/) accessed 5/21/16.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Charles Natsuhara (born 1954) at White River Buddhist Temple 6/8/16, and Rev. Patti Usuki, *San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple*, “What is Obon?” Buddhist Churches of America, [buddhistchurchesofamerica.org](http://buddhistchurchesofamerica.org), accessed 5/21/16.

<sup>52</sup> Berkeley Buddhist Temple, “Common Japanese terms - Homyo,” and “What is the difference between Homyo and Kaimyo?” [www.berkeleysangha.org/te/Terms3.htm](http://www.berkeleysangha.org/te/Terms3.htm) and [www.berkeleysangha.org/te/What2.htm](http://www.berkeleysangha.org/te/What2.htm), accessed 5/21/16.

the dedication of the new White River Buddhist Temple building in 1964, from the visiting Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America. Charles's older siblings received their *homyo* in 1952 when the Abbot of the Kyoto Hongwanji-ha visited the White River Buddhist Temple and conducted confirmation rites. Other temple members received their *homyo* in association with the 2012 celebration of the Temple's centennial.<sup>53</sup> If a temple member does not receive a *homyo* during his or her lifetime, it may be bestowed posthumously by the minister of the Temple or other Buddhist leaders at the request of the family of the deceased.

Many grave markers installed after 1928 resemble typical Euro-American markers in form, but often include distinctly Japanese iconography such as the double wisteria which is a symbol of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, or family crests that link current and former White River Valley residents with their ancestors in Japan.

Finally, the presence of *Jizo* statues in the cemetery represents a culturally-specific response to the tragic deaths of the Kato family in 1937. Historian Stan Flewelling wrote, "In the Buddhist tradition, *Jizo* is a guardian deity. Small statues of *Ojizo-sama* (an honorific form of *Jizo*'s name) are often placed where tragedies have occurred, especially when they involve children. Five stone *Jizo* images were installed at the Pioneer Cemetery for the Katos, each inscribed with the name of a deceased family member. The statuettes disappeared during the vandalism of the World War II era. Only two were ever recovered and returned to their original resting place."<sup>54</sup> These expressions of traditional practices in the cemetery's markers and artifacts, part of the historic fabric of the site, may be considered among the site's character defining features.

In addition to its general historical significance as a place associated with Auburn's earliest era of non-native settlement and community development, the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery may hold a specific symbolic value to members of the Japanese American community. The sense of connection that many Japanese American families have to the cemetery must be understood within the historical context of property ownership in Washington State, and the devastating impact of the World War II interment. The state's Alien Land Laws prevented many Japanese and Japanese Americans from owning property between 1921 and 1966; thus, during internment, many tenant families lost homes, farms or businesses.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the anti-Japanese activism by the Pearl Harbor League during the post-World War II era made the White River Valley particularly unwelcoming to Japanese American families seeking a place to settle after their lives had been disrupted by internment, and the vast majority did not return. For many families, whether or not they maintained an affiliation with the White River Buddhist Temple, the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery came to represent a primary point of connection with the region they had once called home.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Charles Natsuhara at White River Buddhist Temple 10/25/15 and 6/8/16. Charles confirmed that *homyo* is the appropriate term used by White River Buddhist Temple members. The term *kaimyo*, or precept name, is used in other Buddhist traditions, but not in the Jodo Shinshu tradition.

<sup>54</sup> Flewelling, *Shirakawa...*, 140-41, and Hank Glassman, *The Face of Jizō: Image and Cult in Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012).

<sup>55</sup> Nicole Grant, "White Supremacy and the Alien Land Laws of Washington State," 2008, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project (University of Washington), [http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/alien\\_land\\_laws.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/alien_land_laws.htm) accessed 5/21/16.

For those families that did return to the White River Valley, and rebuild their lives, their relationship to the cemetery may be regarded as an important aspect of continuity between pre-internment and post-internment community life.

## CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

As noted in King County Code 20.62.040.C, a cemetery generally is not considered eligible for landmark designation unless it derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features or from association with historic events. In this context, the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery may be understood to derive significance from age (in association with both European American and Japanese American settlement eras), and from distinctive design features (including grave marker features and distribution patterns).

## COMPARABLE PROPERTIES

Other historic cemeteries in King County and adjacent counties associated with pre-WWII Japanese American communities may be regarded as comparable properties in some respects. As noted above, the minister of the White River Buddhist Temple typically performs Memorial Day ceremonies at four other area cemeteries that serve Temple members: Hillcrest Burial Park (Kent), Mountain View Cemetery (Auburn), Sumner Cemetery, and Washington Memorial Park (Sea-Tac). At Hillcrest, many Nikkei families purchased plots in the same area, creating a concentration of Japanese American family names; however, the design and distribution of grave markers reflects a more typical Euro-American cultural pattern. Japanese American grave markers at the other three cemeteries are thoroughly integrated among the graves of people of all ethnicities, and do not convey a distinctly Japanese American cultural identity.

Similarly, community cemeteries on Vashon Island and Bainbridge Island (Port Blakely), places having well-established pre-WWII Japanese American communities, also reflect a broad integration of ethnicities in distribution of family plots. Bellevue also had an established Japanese American community of predominantly Nichiren Buddhists, many of whom were buried at the Bellevue Pioneer Cemetery. Unfortunately this cemetery was sold to developers and graves were re-located to the Sunset Hills Memorial Park in 1970.<sup>56</sup> Two large-scale historic Seattle cemeteries, Evergreen Washelli in North Seattle and Lakeview on Capitol Hill, include both dispersed Japanese American plots and concentrated groupings associated with members of the military. At Lakeview, a dramatic granite column known as the Nisei War Memorial Monument, dedicated in 1949, honors Japanese American veterans. Notably, the Nisei Monument at Lakeview Cemetery preceded a national Japanese American monument by more than fifty years.<sup>57</sup> While all of these cemeteries hold special meaning for various families, none are predominantly Japanese American cemeteries, and none has as strong a sense of Japanese American cultural identity as that which is expressed in both physical elements and traditional practices associated with the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery.

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<sup>56</sup> "Bellevue Pioneer Cemetery – Heritage Corner" *Bellevue Reporter*, 8/11/2014 [bellevuereporter.com/community/270835221.html#](http://bellevuereporter.com/community/270835221.html#) accessed 5/21/16

<sup>57</sup> Tony Tsuboi, "Nisei War Memorial Monument" *Nisei Veterans Committee* (May 2013, Volume 63, Issue 5, reprinted with updates from May 2003, Volume 53, Issue 5, *NVC Newsletter*), [www.nvcfoundation.org/newsletter/2013/5/nisei-war-memorial-monument/](http://www.nvcfoundation.org/newsletter/2013/5/nisei-war-memorial-monument/) accessed 5/21/16.

## PART IV: MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

### 9. Previous Documentation

Use the space below to cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form (use continuation sheet if necessary).

Previous documentation on file:

- included in King County Historic Resource Inventory #2427
- previously designated an Auburn Landmark
- previously designated a Community Landmark
- listed in Washington State Register of Historic Places
- preliminary determination of individual listing
- (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings, Survey #:
- recorded by Historic American Engineering, Rec. #:

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- King County Historic Preservation Program
- Local government
- University
- Other (specify repository)

White River Valley Museum

White River Buddhist Temple

(The Temple's death records include some biographical information about individuals buried at the cemetery, as well as memorial programs.)

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## MAPS AND ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

### Aerial Photographs

1937 WPA King County S7 T21N R5E and S18 T21N R5E

1965 King County Roads S7 T21N R5E

### Maps of Township 21N, Range 5E, Section 7 and Section 18

Anderson 1907 p. 15

Kroll 1930 p. 15

Metsker 1940 p. 18

Kroll 1970 p. 15

### White River Valley Museum

Research files: Cemeteries, Obituaries

Oral history: Frank Natsuhara, interviewed & transcribed by Stan Flewelling, July 7, 1997

Photo collection

### Interviews and Personal Communication

Lily Komoto, White River Buddhist Temple, 10/25/15

Kristy Lommen, guided tour of cemetery site 7/31/13

Charles Natsuhara, multiple interviews 2013-2016

## INTERNET RESOURCES

The Auburn Pioneer Cemetery Website [www.auburnpioneercemetery.net](http://www.auburnpioneercemetery.net) maintained by community historian Kristy Lommen contains detailed information about the cemetery, including biographical essays about many people who are buried there.