

**CASTROVILLE JAPANESE SCHOOL
NATIONAL REGISTER of HISTORIC PLACES**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Japanese School (Nihon Gakko)

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 11199 Geil Street NA not for publication

city or town Castroville NA vicinity

state California code CA county Monterey code 053 zip code 95012

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Japanese School (Nihon Gakko)
Name of Property

Monterey County, CA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/School

Religion/Religious Facility

Social/Meeting Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other/Hipped Temple Roof

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete Piers

walls Wood/Shiplap

roof Wood/Shingle

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☒ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ 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 Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

National History

Education

Social History

Period of Significance

1936 - 1942

1944 - 1945

Significant Dates

19 February 1942

17 December 1944

1936

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

() Kobayashi/Master Carpenter

Keizo Motokane/Master Carpenter

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Monterey County Assessor's Office

Monterey County, CA
County and State

Acreage of Property 2 acres

1 Zone Easting Northing

2

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

DESCRIPTION

The Castroville Japanese School is located in a small rural town of Castroville. Castroville is located in the north westerly end of the very rich Salinas Valley. The town is in the poor end of the valley. The area just south is the rich artichoke growing region. The northern side from the town is rather poor in soil and resources. The Castroville Japanese School is located across the street from the Castroville Elementary School on the corner of Pajaro and Geil streets. The block on which the Japanese School sits is practically undeveloped. It has been in this condition historically. The building has never been moved or changed in any significant manner. The building is a very simple wood frame construction. There is no architectural or design significance in the whole building, except possibly for its roof. The building is just plain rectangular, 28 feet in front and 55 feet along the side with a short stoop on each side. The building gives a feeling of loneliness, abandonment, and neglect, because it was abandoned in 1942, and never occupied again except for a brief period when it was used as a hostel by returning Japanese from concentration camps. The building was abandoned in 1942 due to the mass forced evacuation of all Japanese whether American citizens or not, by Executive Order 9066 signed by President Franklin Roosevelt, February 19, 1942. The fate of the building and the lives of all Japanese and Japanese Americans were destined by this Order.

The building was intended to be multi-purpose. There is nothing special about this building except for its plainness and an indication of its use evidenced by a slightly hipped temple roof. A ridge beam runs down the middle the full length of the building with a medium pitch, shingled, saddle roof. The building is single story on a rectangular floor plan, 35 feet wide and 55 feet long. The whole building is constructed of wood, common to the period of the nineteen thirties.

DESCRIPTION (continued)

It is a very simple rectangular wood frame construction, showing the dearth of funds available in the depression era. The funds were drawn from no more than a dozen very poor farming families. Its simplicity of design and construction shows a kind of Quaker elegance. The slightly hipped roof of the Buddhist Temple style is very understated, as though the community wanted to keep a low profile. This was the era of high discrimination against the Japanese Americans. The truncated roof in front which covers the simple portico area runs the width of the building to form an elongated eave. The pitch of this portion is the same as the saddle roof and it forms only the lower portion of a typical hip roof with the upper portion truncated. This part of the roof meets only on its ends, where it is slightly elevated to give a suggestion of a temple. Very elaborate forms of this design can be found in the Jingoji and Ginkakuji Temples in Kyoto, Japan. In these temples the roof coverings are either thatch or tile. The extensions of the rafters on the Castroville building are exposed, which also gives the feeling of a temple. Ends of rafters in Japan are sometimes covered with continuous rectangles which appear the same. The end covering of the roof material in the case of tile is a special end cap which make it appear as log ends. At the apex of the roof there is an extremely simplified version of a finial. Possible origins of this design may be found in the Todaiji and Muroji Temples in Nara, but it is most like the one on Ginkakuji in Kyoto. More grander finials are found in practically all temples in Japan. The triangular section below the peak and at the end of the saddle roof of the Castroville building is covered with crossed lathing which provides ventilation in the attic space. This method of attic ventilation is typically used in the Japanese archipelagos, because of general high humidity. It is typical of ornamental latticework found in practically all temples in Japan. In the side elevation, the fenestration of the windows and doors is purely western. Also it gives the sense of a public building.

DESCRIPTION (continued)

Although the building is simple in design the craftsmanship in construction is very high. Japanese hand carpentry tools were used in its construction, but no joinery technique is visible.

The building was located across the street from the local public elementary school with which it had a kind of symbiotic relation with each other. It is by itself on the corner of a block which was completely open and essentially still is to this day.

The exterior front is symmetrical which seems odd since Japanese esthetics would require asymmetry. The double entry door is in the center with windows on each side. This whole is inset into the front wall to form a simple portico which is roofed straight across the front. The portico area appears western. This arrangement provided small spaces on each side for interior toilets. There are windows and a stoop on each side of the building.

The foundation is composed of concrete piers upon which sits 4x4 sills. The whole structure is wood frame construction of common materials. The floor plan divides the whole into three areas. The front assembly area takes in two-thirds of the total footage. In the center rear of the assembly area is a small niche where the altar was installed. The remaining one-third was divided into two areas. The left section was the kitchen and the right section was used for general storage and storage for funerary urns.

The double doors, the roof, the siding - the whole building is original with exceptions noted below. The roof shows signs of neglect and weather damage, but there is no rain leakage into any area. The floor in

DESCRIPTION (continued)

the assembly area has small spots of damage and destruction due to vandals building a small fire on the floor. This had been repaired at one time. At the time the school district used the building, the floor was covered with a low-cost floor covering. The floor plan has not been changed since initial construction. In the storage area the shelves have been removed. The plumbing fixtures have been changed to more modern models. In general, the historic integrity is good.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Castroville Japanese School building represents and symbolizes the denial of the constitutional rights guaranteed under the United States Constitution. These rights are basic to individuals and held of the highest value by all Americans. There was a pattern of discrimination against the Japanese from the very beginning of Japanese immigration. Starting with the San Francisco "School Board Crisis" over segregation of Japanese-American school children - 1906, the Gentlemen's Agreement - 1907, and the Exclusionary Laws - 1913. So there is this pattern of discrimination on both the National and State level from the early beginning of Japanese immigration, which reached its climax in the Presidential Order 9066. This is the history. The building functioned as a Japanese School, a Buddhist Temple, and a Meeting Hall for the community. The community was composed of small farmers who rented or sharecropped their farms. There was only one family who owned their property. The building was finished in 1936 and was used only six years until the Presidential Order for evacuation of all Japanese regardless of citizenship or due process. The Presidential Act placed all into concentration camps. Upon their return, some internees used the building briefly as a hostel. They had nowhere else to go when displaced from the camps.

The school was open to everyone. There was one Italian-American girl enrolled in the school. The community was primarily Buddhist, but one Christian family sent their children to this school. The primary function of the building was housing the Japanese language school. The teacher of the language school was also the temple Buddhist priest. The attendance of the Japanese-American children of elementary school age was almost compulsory. The Japanese valued education highly. The daily routine for the children was to attend the public elementary school and after school walk across the street to the Japanese school for their language lessons.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

The Japanese-Americans represented approximately 25% of the total student body of the Castroville Elementary School (a public school) at that time. The public school was just across the street from the Japanese school. There are no Japanese-American descendants in this school to this day. There are no Japanese-American farmers in nearby outlying areas. The community was completely wiped out.

The building took on the form of a Buddhist temple in structure. Most of the members of the community were mostly common people. Wedding ceremonies tended to be Buddhist. Funeral services were Buddhist and cremated ashes of deceased members were stored in the rear storage area provided for this purpose. O Bon is the deceased memorial day. It was observed on a Sunday convenient to the deceased family, i.e., it is in tune with the farming activities. Hana Matsuri (Flower Festival) is the celebration of the Buddha's birthday. It was observed on a Sunday close to April 8th.

The community gathered in the building for other social activities and the administration of the school and temple. Administration was simple. It meant keeping the school master and temple priest, who was the same person, paid in some form. Assessments were made up in cash, farm produce, or services. There was no mortgage on the real property. Much of the funds for the real property and the building was borrowed from the Salinas Buddhist Temple. In the Japanese community repayment of loans does not take on the same aspect as repayment of a bank loan. The sense of obligation is partial payment itself.

Celebration of New Years Day is a very important activity and it goes on for about a week. On New Years Day the community feasted together.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

The rest of the week the families visited each other feasting some more and left some token of repayment of obligation. This was in the form of sack of rice, barrel of shoyu (soy bean sauce), sake (rice wine) or anything which one felt appropriate. In this manner, one relieved his obligation whether real or otherwise and all started the New Year with a "clean slate". O Higan is the Japanese Harvest Festival. To the farming community this celebration takes on special meaning. It happens at the Spring and Fall Equinox and is observed on the closest Sunday.

In a small Japanese farming community a building such as the Japanese School would normally be used to work out intra-family problems. During the six year period of use, this kind of problem did not occur. This is stated here because a Japanese community would not take problems and strife to the courts to be adjudicated. The community may be viewed as a small village community where a respected member would lead the community. Meetings would not require Robert's Rules of Order. No formal organization was required.

The building represents the institutions of assembly, education, and religion needed by any society to produce just good human beings and better citizens. Originally the community was renting a small house. With great effort, the new facility was built. One can only imagine the sacrifices made to realize such a goal in the depression era. The real property was held in the name of a second generation Japanese-American, because of exclusionary laws which prohibited citizenship and ownership of property by Japanese.

By 1942 the California Attorney General, Earl Warren, was openly advocating the removal of all Japanese in the "strategic areas". He is

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

considered the prime mover of the removal by some historians. This was the time of his candidacy for Governor of California. He later distinguished himself as one of the best Chief Justices of the Supreme Court. Congressional delegation from California through the Tolan Committee was also hard at work.

The building was completed in 1936 and abandoned in 1942. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. As early as 1936 he had a contingency plan to intern Japanese-Americans in case of war. This Order herded all Japanese and Japanese Americans into concentration camps. The history of this time need not be recited here for there are many repositories for this, the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Japanese American National Museum to name some prominent ones. On December 17, 1944, Major General Henry C. Pratt issued Proclamation No. 21, which allowed the evacuees to return to their former homes. This in effect forced the internees to leave the camps. Many did not have any home to which they could return, and to make it more painful, the communities were hostile. Many internees could not return including the many who served their country loyally and bravely in the armed services under very trying times and were killed overseas.

Patterns of discrimination, beginning with slavery, persecution of religious groups or groups that had different beliefs, and those that acted or looked different were all discriminated against in the United States. This kind of discrimination is the same in all countries. The kind of act illustrated by the building is not different, but it occurred in modern times in a so called developed country, a country which imposes human rights on other countries. This kind of discrimination keeps occurring time and again and there is no reason to believe it will stop. At least the building ought to be preserved for the education of the children attending public school

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

across the street and as a reminder for the public at large. There are many buildings similar to the Castroville Japanese School, but they are generally single purpose structures, such as churches or temples and schools, whereas the Castroville building was intended for multi-institutional use from its inception. It is small, but it represents the life of a poor agricultural community. It represents a hopeful community that was destroyed.

The end of this tragic time is recognized by Congress by the passage on March 3, 1992, Public Law 102-248 Manzanar National Historic Site to represent the ten concentration camps. Included in Public Law 102-248 is Title II Sec. 202 which allows for other sites. The recognition of the Castroville Japanese School would be appropriate because it represents the very beginning of this episode.

The words of Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes seems appropriate here.

"You may think that the Constitution is your security -- it is nothing but a piece of paper. You may think that the statutes are your security -- they are nothing but words in a book. You may think that elaborate mechanism of government is your security -- it is nothing at all, unless you have sound and uncorrupted public opinion to give life to your Constitution, to give vitality to your statutes, to make efficient your government machinery."

The preservation of the Castroville Japanese School is a preservation and protection of our Constitution.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

Japanese School
Monterey County, CA.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The property is Block 35 in the town of Castroville. It is bounded by Geil Street on the south, Seymour Street on the north, Union Street on the west, and Pajaro Street on the east. Dimensions of the block are 300 feet on Geil Street and 292 feet on Union Street.

The property was Block 35 in the same location, the corner of Geil and Pajaro, since it was originally constructed and was always associated with the school. For the purpose of this application the boundary limits are arbitrarily set as 100 feet along Geil Street and 150 feet along Pajaro Street as shown on the Sketch Map.

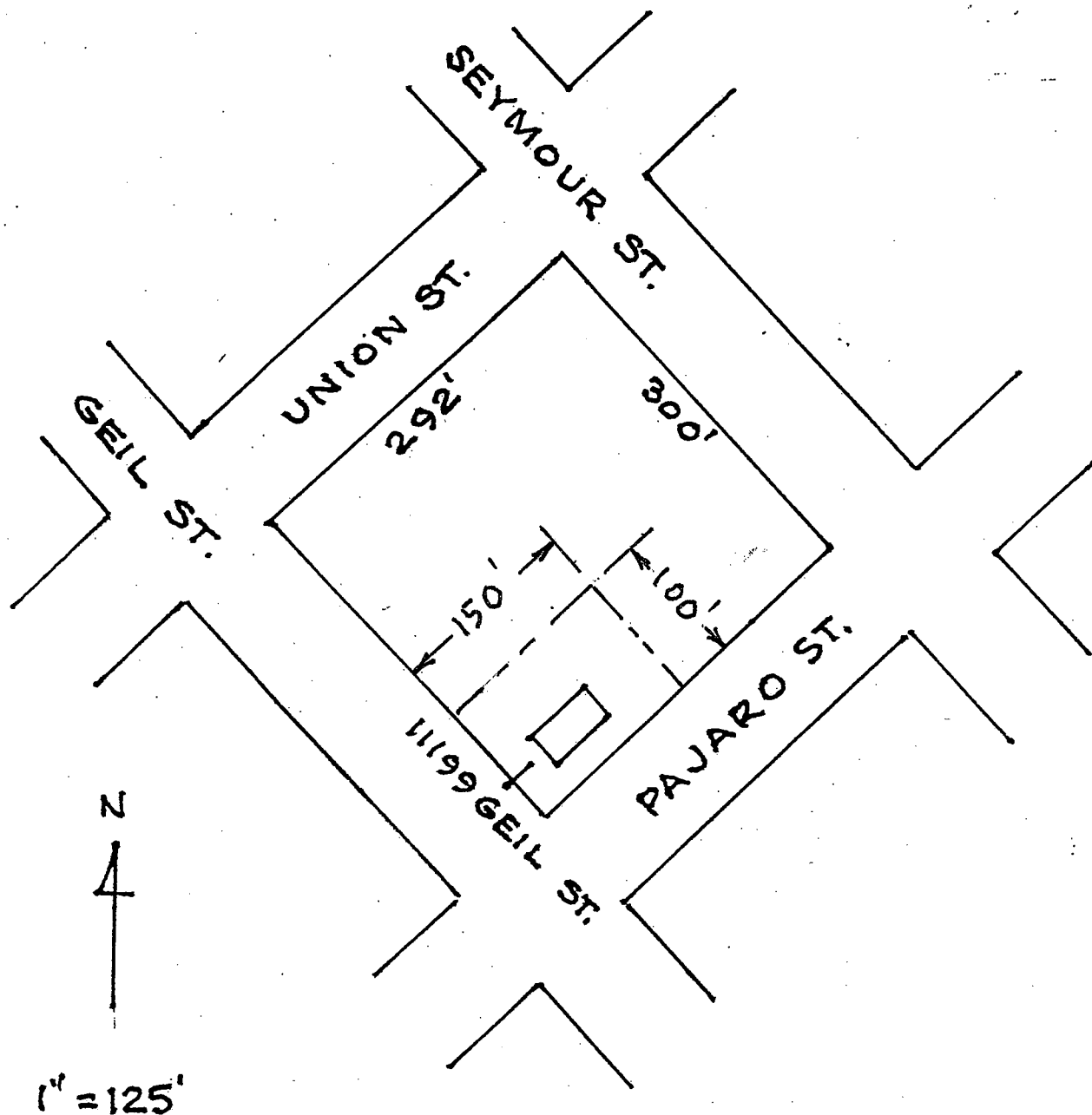
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National Park Service

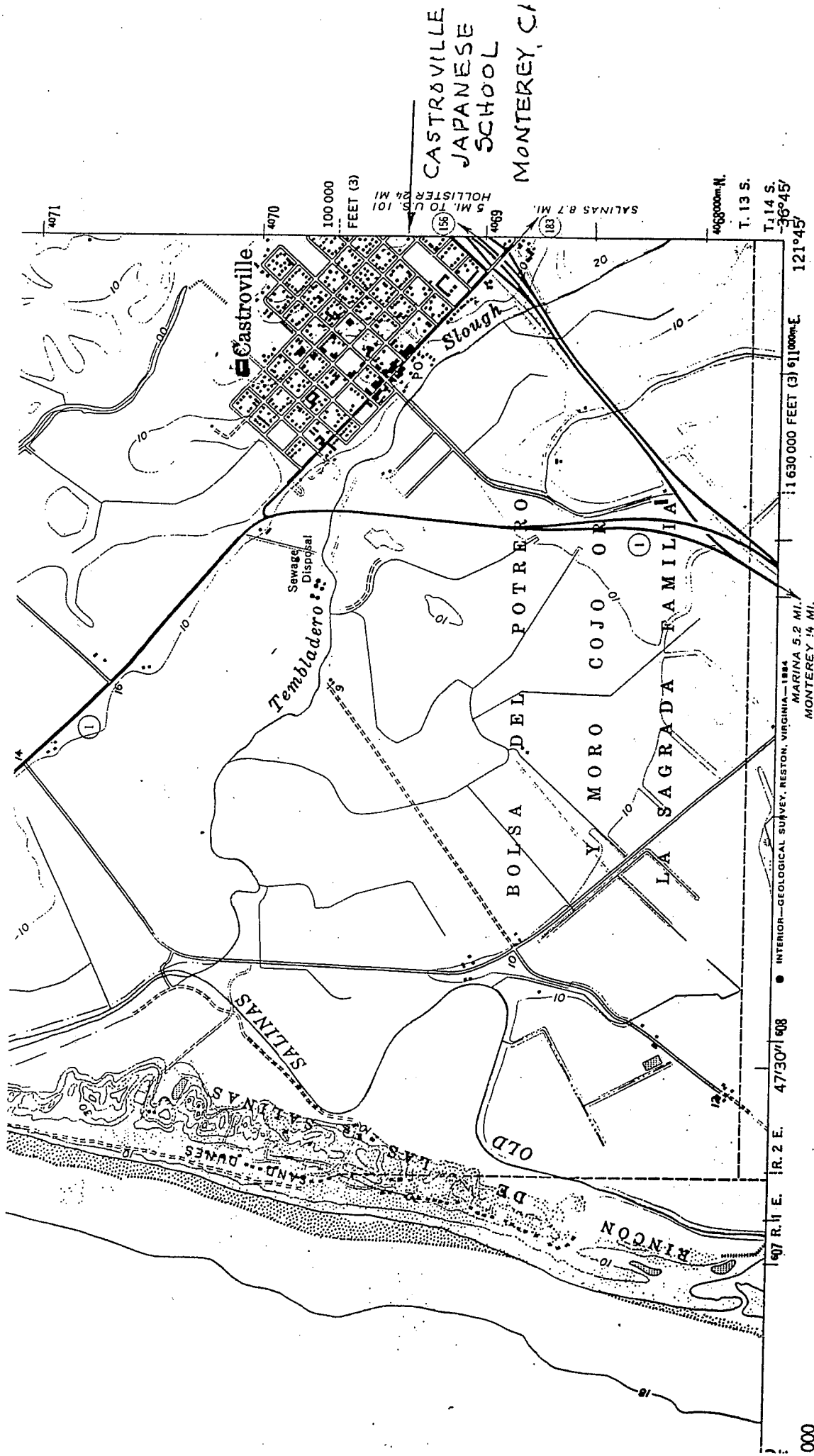
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Section number _____ Page _____

Japanese School
Monterey County, CA.

SKETCH MAP





(SALINAS)
1857 II NW

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty
- Medium-duty
- Light-duty
- Unimproved dirt
- State Route



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

MOSS LANDING, CALIF.

N3645-W12145/7.5

1954
PHOTOREVISED 1980

10 FEET
L DATUM OF 1929
MEAN LOWER LOW WATER
(DATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
APPROXIMATELY 4 FEET

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS