

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Eng, Suen King and Sue Fong, House  
other names/site number Eng Family Homestead

## 2. Location

street & number 611 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  not for publication  
city or town Seattle  vicinity  
state Washington code WA county King code 033 zip code 98104

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

   national    statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria

X A    B X C    D

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
WASHINGTON STATE SHPO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

   entered in the National Register    determined eligible for the National Register  
   determined not eligible for the National Register    removed from the National Register  
   other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

private  
 public - State  
 public - Federal

building(s)  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1		<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single-dwelling

VACANT/NOT IN USE

WORK IN PROGRESS

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals:

foundation: CONCRETE

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

walls: CONCRETE

roof: ASPHALT

other: BRICK, METAL

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### **Summary Paragraph**

The Suen King and Sue Fong Eng House is a one story, three bay Mission Revival house with a rectangular plan. The exterior walls are constructed with unreinforced cinderblock masonry units with light interior wood framing. The property is situated on an L-shaped, 8,312 square foot lot on the western side of 8th Avenue South between South Weller and South Lane Streets, in the southeast corner of Seattle's Chinatown-International District. The house is a block and a half south of South King Street, one of the primary commercial thoroughfares of the neighborhood. The east elevation is raised roughly three feet above street level, while the west elevation of the property meets street grade and the house's partial basement level is fully visible. The western perimeter of the property faces Canton Alley. In 2025, Wing Luke Museum completed substantial rehabilitation work to prepare the property for public exhibit and educational use. As a result of this work, much of the exterior and interior have been preserved or reconstructed to their original appearance.

### **Exterior**

The house's cinderblock walls are currently painted a smooth white color and accented with green trim on its windows and roofline, matching the original exterior paint scheme. The east (primary) elevation is symmetrical and has the most architecturally distinct features compared to the house's other elevations. Its flat asphalt roof is hidden from street level behind a short parapet wall, which is capped by green-painted galvanized sheet iron coping. The central bay features a slightly pedimented parapet that rises roughly one foot above the rest of the parapet wall. The southern and northern bays each have three ganged wood picture windows (altogether, 6' wide and 3'8" tall), each divided vertically into three windowpanes. Moving closer to the center of the elevation, both side bays also have a fixed, four-pane wood window divided horizontally that measures 2'7" wide and 4'4" tall. These four windows have been replicated to match the original appearance from the 2025 rehabilitation work. An irregular brick course runs above the windows and doors across all elevations, which is also painted white. Octagonal metal tie rods, added in the 2025 rehabilitation work, run along the top of the wall in pairs at regular intervals. Replacement green louvered opening vents (installed after 1941 and before 1990) accent the north and south top corners of the east elevation. A white-painted brick entry vestibule, added over the original central entry door in 1941, contains an arched entryway on its south elevation and an arched 3/1 hung window on its east and north elevations. The arched windows have three radially divided lights in the upper sash and a single pane on the lower sash. Both windows and entry doorway are accentuated by white-painted brick voussoirs. The original arched entry wood door and arched windows were repaired in 2025 and remain in their original configuration. The vestibule's east roofline features a stepped parapet which is roughly two feet below the main building roofline.

The south elevation abuts a pathway sectioned off by a steel gate that leads westward to the rear yard and has an entryway into the kitchen. The original side entry door leading into the kitchen from this pathway – which was bricked in at a later, unknown date – was restored in 2025. The restored original door is white-painted wood, with two rectangular windowpanes on its top half. Outside of the side entry door, the south elevation continues the octagonal tie rods pattern present on the east

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elevation. Similarly, the north elevation has no windows or ornament except for the tie rods. The north elevation shows the entire massing of the house's first and partial basement floors. Both the north and south elevations feature raised parapet walls at the height of the east elevation's central pedimented parapet wall.

Unlike the other elevations, which have retained a similar appearance to the house during the period of significance, the west elevation has had the most alterations. The north portion of the west elevation shows the historic exterior walls of the house, which contain two ganged bedroom 1/1 hung wood windows and one smaller bathroom 1/1 hung wood window, which were restored to their original configuration in 2025. This portion of the west elevation also has two fixed, six-pane windows installed in 2025 on the basement level, the southernmost of which restores its original configuration.

On the southern portion, a 1938 and 1962 garage addition and extension (respectively) are attached to the main house. Since the west side of the house meets the street level directly, the garage sits on a lower grade, and the garage roofline meets roughly at the main house's ground floor. The garage features unreinforced cinderblock construction and a flat roof consisting of north-south tongue and groove wooden decking, which was at one point accessible from the southwest bedroom window. The garage has a chimney on the west side of its north elevation. The west elevation of the garage features a non-historic aluminum door leading to a paved rear yard on its northern half and a wooden garage door on its southern half, original to the 1962 garage extension. A non-historic addition from 2025 sits on top of the eastern portion of the garage and directly abuts the southwest bedroom wall of main house. The addition is clad in dark brown vertical wood slats. Its west elevation features a bank of fixed aluminum windows that runs nearly the entire span of the wall, while the north elevation features an elongated aluminum slit window on its eastern edge. This new addition houses an ADA access lift leading from the garage into the house, where two windows for the southwest bedroom were demolished to create direct access to the house.

### **Interior**

The Eng Family house retains much of its original interior configuration. The main vestibule entryway leads to a restored original wood door, which in turn leads into the living room. The living room serves as the house's central space. To the south is the kitchen, which has a wooden staircase leading down to the partial basement. Three bedrooms are located in the northeast, northwest, and southwest corners of the rectangular plan and each have a modest closet, except for the northeast bedroom. One shared bathroom is situated in a small hallway separating the northwest and southwest bedrooms. While this original room configuration has largely been retained, the 2025 rehabilitation work created non-historic openings in the east wall of the southwest bedroom leading into the living room and through the closet space of the northeast bedroom to provide circulation into the northwest bedroom.

The partial basement occupies the western half of the house and has access to the attached garage. The basement has exposed cinderblock masonry construction walls, uncovered ventilation ducts and electrical, and a concrete floor. The garage, subject to much interior renovation in 2025, still has exposed wood beam ceilings and a concrete floor original to its construction. The 2025 ADA access lift and adjacent (south) stairwell is clad in vertical wood slats, which visually separates the new addition from the older garage. A walkway directly north of the lift leads into the basement. The lift and staircase both lead to the main floor of the addition – visible on top of the garage and attached to

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the main house on the west elevation. This landing space leads into the master/southwest bedroom of the house.

Original features that have been preserved include the smooth-finished plaster walls, cornice trim, painted chair rail, and baseboards throughout much of the interior. The plaster ceiling was replaced in-kind in the 2025 rehabilitation work. The interior has been repainted to its original colors, which include dark pink walls, ivory white trim on baseboard and window/door surrounds, and light green crown molding and painted faux chair rail in the living room. The entryway and room doors still have their original hardware from the date of construction. The ganged picture windows on the east wall and the vestibule door have wide, wood horizontal blinds. The kitchen has a replica of the original ceramic tile countertop, cast iron enamel top-mount sink, ceramic tile backsplash, linoleum flooring, and painted plywood kitchen cabinets with exposed hinges and pulls. The bathroom contains the original sink, original green linoleum tile flooring, and original wainscoting on a portion of the north wall, which was repainted green with white lines in 2025.

### **Landscape**

The house is raised roughly three feet from street level on its east elevation with an original wet laid, basalt rock-faced retaining wall capped by concrete, originally installed in 1941. The original exterior circulation has been largely retained. The southern edge of the property facing 8th Avenue South features original steps that lead to an intermediary landing area. From the landing area, the path splits to additional steps continuing along the southern perimeter of the house and northward toward the main entryway on the east elevation, which has its own concrete landing area. The eastern side of the property is fenced in by a green metal fence gate that runs along the eastern perimeter, which was fabricated in 2025 to match the original. On the northern side of this elevation, a non-historic metal fenced gate was installed in 2025, partially resting on a concrete wall that matches the height of the historic rock-faced retaining wall. This gate provides access to another set of steps on the northern side of the property, which leads to the concrete landing area fronting the main entryway.

A loquat tree, planted in 1961, sits on the southeast corner of the property outlined by the retaining wall. This fruit-bearing tree was cultivated from a loquat fruit the Eng family bought from a local Chinatown-International District store.<sup>1</sup> The loquat tree is an evergreen tree native to China that typically thrives in warmer and subtropical climates, making its continued existence in its Pacific Northwest location unique. The loquat itself is an oval-shaped citrus fruit, and staple ingredient in many eastern medicinal recipes. A plant bed lines the northern bay of the primary elevation, which has a camellia tree planted directly in front of the north-facing vestibule window. The backyard features a younger loquat tree on the south side yard.

### **Alterations History and Integrity**

Soon after construction, an attached garage addition (ca. 1938) was built on the west side of the house. A few years later, a formal rock-faced retaining wall and entry vestibule was added on the east elevation (ca. 1941). An 18x19 foot addition to the garage was constructed in 1962. Sometime in the 1990s, a wood fence was erected on the east property line for additional privacy. After serving as the Eng family home for much of the twentieth century, the property eventually became subdivided into apartments after 2005. In 2021, the Eng siblings deeded the property to the Wing Luke Museum, who

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<sup>1</sup> "Loquat Tree," *Ten Thousand Things: Artifacts of Asian American Life*, KUOW, June 11, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCL-CvWlqLs>.

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have rehabilitated the property and plan to open it up for public programming related to the Eng Family and Chinese American history. The property has retained much of its original features, and some missing elements have reconstructed to their original appearance. The Eng House, in large part to the 2025 rehabilitation work, is in good condition and retains a high level of integrity.

**Location:** The Eng House has not been demolished and is in its original location. This is particularly rare in its vicinity, where most of the single-family houses in the surrounding blocks during the Eng House's time of construction have been demolished.

**Setting:** The Eng House is still spatially tied to the larger Chinatown-International District, being one and a half blocks away from one of its main commercial thoroughfares, South King Street. The property sits on Canton Alley, which was a historic north-south alleyway in the neighborhood, providing further connectivity in addition to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.

**Materials:** The original appearance of the principal structural and exterior material, cinderblock masonry units, have been retained and are clearly visible. The cinderblock masonry unit construction underscores the Eng family's adaptation to still build a residential house when the immediate area had been rezoned as industrial during the time of construction. As such, the Eng House was the only cinderblock house in the immediate area, where all others had been wood frame houses built prior to the 1930s. Other materials have also been preserved or replaced in-kind, including the wood windows and doors, interior plaster walls and ceiling, and interior wooden trim.

**Feeling:** While the overall design of the Eng House is relatively modest, most of its original exterior and interior features remain. Through original features such as a metal fence on the east elevation, car garage door on the west elevation, and overall scale and massing, the exterior continues to read as a single-family residence. While the interior configuration has been slightly changed with new openings in the bedrooms for its intended future public education use, the overall layout and feeling of a single-family house has been largely retained.

**Association:** The Eng House has continued association with the Chinese Exclusion era, which directly influenced the property's construction and development. As a rare example of a single-family house owned and constructed by a Chinese American family in the Chinatown-International District, the Eng House stands as a testament to Chinese American adaptation and resilience despite larger legal and social barriers to free movement, property ownership, and economic prosperity.

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**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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: ASIAN

COMMERCE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1937-1964

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1937

1964

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Damm, Theodore H. (architect)

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\_\_\_\_\_

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### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Suen King and Sue Fong Eng House, located within Seattle's Chinatown-International District neighborhood, is historically significant under Criterion A for its direct connections to the ethnic heritage and commerce of Seattle. Constructed in 1937 by Chinese immigrants, the home serves as a direct link to the story of resilience during the era of anti-Chinese discrimination in the United States headlined by the federal Chinese Exclusion Act (1882-1943) and Washington state's Alien Land Law (1886-1967).

Despite these laws, the Eng family found a way to economic success and cultural belonging. The property served as a multigenerational home to the Eng family, who together played a significant role in the growth and development of the Chinatown-International District (current name) during the early-to-mid twentieth century. Their contributions included being one of the first suppliers of bean sprouts in the area to local groceries and restaurants. They also operated a laundromat, knitting factory, and restaurant, and later contributing to the Chinatown-International District's *pailou*, constructed in 2008.<sup>ii</sup>

Additionally, the house is historically significant under Criterion C as a rare surviving example of its type, a single-family dwelling, as found within the boundaries of Seattle's Chinatown neighborhood. Albeit built later than most historic buildings within the Chinatown-International District historic district, the house represents a unique housing development project constructed during an era of anti-Chinese discrimination. Despite legal and socioeconomic hurdles, a Chinese American family managed to build, own, and occupy a single-family residence in an urban Chinatown.

The period of significance begins in 1937, the year the house was built and ends in 1964, the year when Suen King Eng legally obtained ownership of the house. This was a full three years before Washington's Alien Land Law was formally repealed in 1967.<sup>iii</sup> The Eng House is located in Seattle's Chinatown-International District neighborhood, but is outside of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) designated district boundaries from 1986. However, the Eng House is a rare survivor in the neighborhood and serves as a natural extension of the neighborhood fabric which historically extended south to Dearborn Street.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Chinatown-International District History**

Seattle's first Chinese settlers came to the northwestern United States in the 1860s and 1870s, providing a labor force for the booming lumber mills, fishing operations, and railroads of the region. Chinese businessmen in Seattle contracted laborers, built boarding houses for Chinese workers, and opened merchant and manufacturing shops within a small densely populated area south of present-day Pioneer Square (roughly around South Washington Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South with much of it built on stilts over tidal flats). This area became Seattle's first Chinatown. By the mid-1870s approximately 550 people lived in the neighborhood on either a permanent or short-term basis.<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> Tuck Eng interview, interviewed by Jessica Rubenacker, May 1, 2024, Seattle, WA.

<sup>iii</sup> John Caldbick, "Washington Governor Louis Hart signs stringent Alien Land Bill on March 8, 1921," Historylink.org, February 9, 2018, <https://www.historylink.org/file/2124>.

<sup>iv</sup> Lawrence Kreisman, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form for Seattle Chinatown Historic District," National Park Service, May 1, 1986; "International Special Review District," Item 7, 1.

<sup>v</sup> Kreisman, Item 8, 1-2.

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However, the Great Seattle Fire of 1889 resulted in much of this first Chinatown being burned to the ground. After the fire, wealthy Chinese merchant and labor contractor Chin Gee Hee helped start a new Chinatown by constructing the Canton Building at 208 South Washington Street, a permanent brick building that housed his Quong Tuck Company. This helped stimulate the development of a new area and other Chinese businessmen began to lease buildings on both sides of South Washington Street.<sup>vi</sup> The area featured more permanent buildings and established a hub of restaurants and “tongs,” which provided resources for newcomers to Seattle.<sup>vii</sup>

Within ten years the new Chinatown came under threat by new development. By the middle of the 1900s (decade), Seattle had begun a major city regrading project, the Jackson Regrade, which was intended to make the city's roads more accessible. Over the course of three years, construction workers raised, lowered, and reshaped more than one hundred blocks in downtown Seattle before finishing the project in 1910. One of the areas that was regraded was the new Chinatown. The Jackson Regrade project uprooted the Chinese community, forcing a move to nearby King Street on land reclaimed with the fill from the regrade. Soon, Chinese entrepreneurs and investors flocked to the area and opened up new businesses, thus fueling the community's relocation to a third Chinatown.<sup>viii</sup>

Among the early developers was Chinese entrepreneur and diplomat Goon Dip who established the influential Quong Yick Investment Company, a group comprised of 170 Chinese immigrant investors from Seattle and the greater Pacific Northwest. Together they pooled their resources to finance the construction of the first Chinese-built structures on King Street, the East and West Quong Yick Buildings, which served as anchors for the newly relocated community and catalysts for the development of a new Chinatown. The period that followed, between 1907-1925, was marked by rapid growth in the new location, particularly with mid-rise buildings that served as apartments, single occupancy hotels, and ground floor retail spaces.<sup>ix</sup>

By the mid-1920s, the Chinatown District had cemented itself as the heart of the Chinese American community and had grown to meet the cultural, economic, and residential needs for multiple generations of Chinese Americans.<sup>x</sup> A Chinese school had been established in the neighborhood (housed initially in the Chinese Baptist Church, then the Chong Wa Benevolent Association building) in the 1920s. Other amenities ranged from corner stores, laundromats, and specialty shops to banks, a post office, and an opera house.<sup>xi</sup> Despite this diverse social network, the urban fabric tended toward a few building types. An overwhelming majority of the buildings were single room occupancy workers' hotels, low scale retail and commercial buildings, and early automobile garages.<sup>xii</sup> Noticeably absent were any owner-occupied residential housing – particularly single-family residential. The Eng House, albeit a later infill to this era of Chinatown development, is a rare property type.

While the Chinese population in Seattle had grown rapidly in the 1860s and 1870s, this growth began to slow with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which restricted Chinese immigration to the U.S. Other exclusionary laws aimed at Chinese immigrants were passed by the U.S. Congress

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<sup>vi</sup> Kreisman, “National Register,” Item 8, 1.

<sup>vii</sup> Kreisman, “National Register,” Item 8, 2.

<sup>viii</sup> Kreisman, “National Register,” Item 8, 3.

<sup>ix</sup> Kreisman, “National Register,” Item 8, 3.

<sup>x</sup> Kreisman, “National Register,” Item 8, 3.

<sup>xi</sup> Folke Nyberg and Victor Steinbrueck, “International District: an Inventory of Buildings and Urban Design Resources,” Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, 1975.

<sup>xii</sup> Kreisman, “National Register,” Item 7, 2-4.

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between 1888 and 1902, effectively reducing the number of Chinese entering the country. Because of this, Japanese immigrants became increasingly sought after by American businesses and the number of Japanese immigrating to the U.S., particularly to the West Coast, increased rapidly. In fact, by 1900 Japanese immigration surpassed Chinese immigration and the Japanese population eventually became Seattle's largest minority population. The growth was particularly dramatic in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1890, 125 Japanese lived in Seattle; by 1910, 6,127 lived within the city.<sup>xiii</sup>

The Japanese community formed a substantial enclave to the north and east of Chinatown referred to as "Japantown" (*Nihonmachi*), eventually becoming the second largest Japanese community on the West Coast. Although Japanese businesses existed throughout Chinatown, Japanese commercial and family life centered around Japantown with a vibrant community of residences, restaurants, shops, theaters, clubs, hotels, and meeting halls. Other ethnic groups arrived too, including Filipinos who came to Seattle as laborers and farm workers in the 1920s and the 1930s, establishing residences and businesses south of Chinatown. Filipino-owned restaurants, shops, and clubs were established around Maynard Avenue and King Street, giving the area the nickname "Manilatown." By the 1930s over 1,600 Filipinos resided in the district.<sup>xiv</sup>

To the general public, these combined areas became one. Today, the area is known as the Chinatown-International District. Despite the influx of other Asian communities, a core group of Chinese owners and businesspeople remained. Among those who settled into life within Chinatown were the Eng family, who had initially established a foothold in the neighborhood in the 1910s.

### **Eng House Development**

Suen King Eng (September 19, 1899 - November 26, 1976) was born in Taishan, Guangdong, China, and came to America around 1916 at the age of 17 to be his uncle's (Shee Suey Eng) chauffeur.<sup>xv</sup> Eng was one of roughly three hundred thousand Chinese who were able to enter the United States during the Chinese Exclusion Act – in this case, through family relation.<sup>xvi</sup> In fact, the 1920 census notes that at the time Eng had an extensive network of relatives in Seattle. Shortly after his arrival he learned knitting during a trip to Burien, Washington, and then opened the Min Hing Knitting Company on 625 South King Street in the late 1920s.<sup>xvii</sup> In 1921, he traveled back to China to find a wife, and then returned to Seattle with his new bride, Sue Fong (January 26, 1902 - May 18, 1978).<sup>xviii</sup> Together they would raise six children.

Before they lived at the nominated home, the family of eight resided in an apartment building at 418 Canton Alley.<sup>xix</sup> An eviction notice due to their apartment building being deemed substandard led to a search of other housing options for the family.<sup>xx</sup> In a neighborhood dominated by single occupancy hotels and apartment buildings, finding a suitable space for a family of eight proved difficult. An option was to move to Beacon Hill, which several other Chinese families had done. While single-family residential options there were more plentiful, Sue shut down the idea since she did not speak English

<sup>xiii</sup> Kriesman, "National Register," Item 8, 4.

<sup>xiv</sup> Kriesman, "National Register," Item 8, 6.

<sup>xv</sup> Assunta Ng, "Eng family celebrate sale of CID homestead to Wing Luke Museum," *Northwest Asian Weekly*, May 1, 2023, <https://nwasianweekly.com/2023/05/eng-family-celebrate-sale-of-cid-homestead-to-wing-luke-museum/>.

<sup>xvi</sup> Erika Lee, "Chinese Americans," *Immigrant Struggles, Immigrant Gifts*, ed. Diane Portnoy, Barry Portnoy, Charlie Riggs, GMU Press, 2012, page 79.

<sup>xvii</sup> Seattle City Directory, Seattle WA: R.L. Polk & Co, 1931, page 89; Tuck Eng interview, 2024; Ng, "Eng family celebrate," 2023.

<sup>xviii</sup> Ng, "Eng family celebrate," 2023.

<sup>xix</sup> Tuck Eng interview, 2024.

<sup>xx</sup> William Eng interview, 1990.

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or drive a car. While convenience and familiarity certainly played a role in this decision, so too did the framework set out by Chinese exclusion. Branching outside Chinatown meant giving up the social and cultural capital that helped insulate the Eng's and other Asian families from discrimination. If they left the neighborhood, they would certainly face racially restrictive covenants and discriminatory real estate practices.<sup>xxi</sup> Eventually, the Eng's found a plot of land at 611 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. Located at the edge of the commercial area, the 60 x 120' lot was ample in size to construct a modest single-family residence.

Despite being in the midst of the Great Depression, the Eng family had the finances to build such a house in large part due to Suen's knitting business, which brought in roughly \$65 per month.<sup>xxii</sup> Per building permits, the cost for the home was \$2,500. To design the home, they hired local architect Theodore H. Damm. At the time, Damm was just beginning his own independent practice, but would go on to develop a thriving practice in the city.<sup>xxiii</sup> Reportedly, Damm's original plans called for a two-story frame building that matched the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century frame houses in the surrounding blocks. However, a concurrent rezoning in the area to an industrial use and budgetary concerns altered those plans. The rezone demonstrated an indifference from the city to accommodate a growing Chinatown and instead relegated the space for broader economic development.

Despite the new zoning, Suen continued with his housing project and had his architect revise the plans. The new house would be a one-story dwelling with a daylight basement and would be constructed with locally-sourced cinderblock masonry units.<sup>xxiv</sup> Reportedly these changes cost the Eng family an additional \$1,000; and since Suen didn't trust banks, the builder and his uncle each loaned him \$500. This is an example of social capital filling in the gaps created by discriminatory financial institutions.<sup>xxv</sup> To protect the family's investment in the house, during construction Suen often slept in his car in front of the lot with a pistol at hand to prevent any building materials from being stolen.<sup>xxvi</sup> The house was completed in 1937 and was outfitted with the conveniences of a modern home including electric heat, electric stove, and washing machine. In comparison to their former apartment, the three-bedroom, one bathroom dwelling had relatively ample room for a family of eight.

Due to anti-Chinese legal frameworks in place, the house was legally owned by Suen and Sue's son William, who at the time was seven years old. In 1921, Washington state had passed their version of the Alien Land Law, which barred Chinese and Japanese migrants from owning or leasing land. Similar laws had been passed in California in 1913 and other states across the nation.<sup>xxvii</sup> The Washington law was further strengthened in 1923, when it prohibited American-born children of migrants from owning land in trust for their parents. As a United States-born citizen, William had greater legal grounds to own property than his parents, who were Chinese migrants. As a work-around for the 1923 state provisions (and to perhaps further legitimize ownership), despite his young age, William was passed off as a working adult. He can be found in the 1939 city directory with the

<sup>xxi</sup> "Summary for 1536 12th AVE / Parcel ID 7660100215 / Inv #," Seattle.gov, <https://web.seattle.gov/DPD/HistoricalSite/QueryResult.aspx?ID=1890755248>.

<sup>xxii</sup> William Eng interview, 1990.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Michael C. Houser, "Theodore H. Damm," *Docomomo\_us\_wewa*, <https://www.docomomo-wewa.org/architect/theodore-h-damm/>.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Tuck Eng interview, 2024.

<sup>xxv</sup> Tuck Eng interview, 2024.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Assunta Ng, "Eng family celebrate sale of CID homestead to Wing Luke Museum," *Northwest Asian Weekly*, May 1, 2023, <https://nwasianweekly.com/2023/05/eng-family-celebrate-sale-of-cid-homestead-to-wing-luke-museum/>.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Nicole Grant, "White supremacy and the Alien Land Laws of Washington State," Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington, [https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/alien\\_land\\_laws.htm](https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/alien_land_laws.htm).

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job title “clerk,” despite being only ten years old at the time.<sup>xxviii</sup> Additionally, his name (Wm. Eng - Owner) is found on the plans drawn by Theodore Damm, rather than his parents’ names. The ban on property ownership was not officially repealed until 1967.<sup>xxix</sup> However, Suen King Eng was able to legally purchase and own the property and home that he had built in 1964.<sup>xxx</sup>

Despite property right restrictions, discriminatory lending practices, and industrial encroachment of Chinese residential stock, the Eng House serves as testament to the Chinese community’s perseverance during the Chinese Exclusion era. The Eng family thrived in their new home. Soon after construction, an attached garage addition (ca. 1938) was built on the west side of the house. A few years later, a formal rock-faced retaining wall and entry vestibule was added on the east elevation (ca. 1941), which built on the house’s Mission Revival vocabulary. In 1962, an 18x19 foot addition to the garage was constructed which give the additional space.

The lot size also allowed the family to manipulate the landscape to fit their cultural needs, in contrast to relatively cramped apartments with little to no outdoor space. During construction, dirt excavated for the house’s foundation was poured into the backyard and later repurposed in a productive garden that grew Chinese vegetables, such as bok choy and gai lan, for consumption.<sup>xxxi</sup> During the spring, the family bought chicks and raised them for food.<sup>xxxii</sup> The backyard also provided space for larger family dinners and gatherings. A sizable front yard created an opportunity to plant a loquat tree in 1961, which continues to thrive in the southeast corner of the property.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The partial basement and attached garage allowed ample space for their bean sprout business, which used up 200 square feet of space to produce bean sprouts.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

### **Eng Family Businesses**

For over 40 years, the Eng House served as headquarters for several Eng Family businesses. In the basement of the home, Sue grew vegetables for the neighborhood’s various restaurants. Reportedly, she had learned how to grow bean sprouts from Florence Chin Eng, a grocer at Wa Sang Market on South King Street.<sup>xxxv</sup> Compared to other vegetables, bean sprouts required relatively little space to grow, and the dark, cool environment of the basement created the ideal conditions to grow bean sprouts on a large scale. This operation soon grew into a family affair and the Eng’s became one of the first bean sprout vendors in Seattle.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Suen and Sue’s daughters would sell the bean sprouts to various Chinatown-International District corner stores, while the boys would make emergency midnight deliveries to restaurants that had run out during service.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The bean sprouts were sold at 10 cents per bundle, and would make the family roughly forty-eight dollars a month – rivaling (and, at times, surpassing) what Suen made with his knitting business.<sup>xxxviii</sup> At their peak during World War II, together the Eng family would deliver roughly one thousand pounds of bean sprouts on any given Saturday. Some of their bean sprout harvest would even travel to places as far as Port Angeles and

<sup>xxviii</sup> Seattle City Directory, Seattle, WA: R.L. Polk & Co, 1939, page 444, <https://archive.org/details/seattlecitydirec00seat/page/444/mode/2up>.

<sup>xxix</sup> Caldbrick, 2018.

<sup>xxx</sup> “524780-2640,” City of Seattle, Assessor Property Card, ca. 1960s.

<sup>xxxi</sup> BOLA Architecture + Planning, 8; “Loquat Tree,” *Ten Thousand Things: Artifacts of Asian American Life*, KUOW, June 11, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCL-CvWlqLs>.

<sup>xxxii</sup> “Loquat Tree,” 2024.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> BOLA Architecture + Planning, 15.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> William Eng interview, 1990.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Ronald Chew, email message to author, November 14, 2025.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> William Eng interview, 1990.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Tuck Eng interview, 2024.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Tuck Eng interview, 2024.

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Bremerton, via the bus depot on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South. Besides bean sprouts, Sue also successfully experimented with producing and selling other culturally relevant vegetables. This included growing watercress and drying seaweed on the sidewalk in front of their home.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The Eng's also had other businesses in and around Chinatown-International District. Along with Min Hing Knitting Company, Suen operated King's Hand Laundry at 510 South King Street and, later in the 1950s and 60s, the Golden Star Café (at 908½ 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue) with his brother-in-law (True Fong).<sup>xi</sup> Other extended family members operated additional restaurants and stores on South King Street, and would provide food and treats to the Eng children during their bean sprout deliveries.<sup>xii</sup> As eldest son William Eng recalled,

*"they sorta all pooled together so anytime you got hungry, we would go up to the King Fur [restaurant] and my uncle would just give us food. He'd say, 'You guys hungry? Have some of this.' Usually we'd deliver bean sprouts there and he'd have something for us to eat [...] it wasn't a deprived childhood. We had what we wanted just about."<sup>xlii</sup>*

The business acumen was evident in the younger generation as well. Suen's three sons William, Nelson, and Tuck ages of ten, eight, and six years old, respectively operated a shoeshine business called "Three Brother's Shoeshine" in the early 1940s. The three would walk throughout the neighborhood offering their services in order to earn disposable income.<sup>xliii</sup>

These close relationships, evidenced through the Eng Family, showcase the many supportive social networks in Chinatown-International District, which often mixed economic transactions with social and cultural connections. This mutual support and camaraderie within the neighborhood was crucial for social, economic, and cultural survival amidst over eighty years of institutionalized Chinese exclusion and discrimination.

### **Single Family Residential Building Type**

While the Eng House can be seen today as a vernacular adaptation of the popular Mission Revival residential style during the early twentieth century, the property is more historically significant as a unique building type within an urban Chinatown. According to a 1944 analysis of the 1940 U.S. Census, only 10-24% of dwellings in the Eng House's census tract were single-family, fewer than 1% of those were built between 1930-1940, and fewer than 5% of residential buildings were owner occupied.<sup>xliv</sup> This positions the Eng House as an extremely rare example of a single-family house built and owned by its occupants in Chinatown in its first two decades of establishment.

Period maps indicate that the immediate vicinity of the Eng House originally contained a significant portion of single-family residential buildings. At the time of construction, between Weller and Dearborn Streets and Maynard and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues South, roughly twenty-five single-family houses existed.<sup>xlv</sup> However these houses were all wood frame buildings, which is in contrast to the Eng House's cinderblock construction, and primarily built in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

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<sup>xxxix</sup> Ng, "Eng family celebrate," 2023.

<sup>xi</sup> William Eng interview, 1990.

<sup>xli</sup> William Eng interview, 1990.

<sup>xlii</sup> William Eng interview, 1990.

<sup>xliii</sup> William Eng interview, 1990; Matthew Ebnet, "Alan Ting Louie Realized Dream Of Success In U.S.," *Seattle Times*, December 1, 1998, <https://archive.seattletimes.com/archive/19981201/2786479/alan-ting-louie-realized-dream-of-success-in-us>.

<sup>xliv</sup> BOLA Architecture + Planning, "The Eng Homestead Historic Structures Report," Historic Structures Report, June 18, 2024, 15.

<sup>xlv</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Seattle, King County, Washington, Vol. 1, 1950, Plate 27.

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centuries. Of those twenty-five houses, only one other single-family dwelling is extant (610 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South). This home is highly altered and was built ca. 1901. Additionally, most of the twenty-five residential buildings were constructed well before the establishment of Chinatown along King Street – and therefore do not hold the same historic connection to Chinese American property ownership and residential life under the Chinese Exclusion era.

Over the years, the pocket of dwellings which once housed a mix of Chinese, and Japanese residents, most of whom were renters, has been demolished in favor of industrial buildings.<sup>xlvi</sup> The wooden frame homes in the Nihonmachi area north of Chinatown have also been torn down – most for public housing projects during the postwar era, after their occupants were displaced during Japanese incarceration.<sup>xlvii</sup> Today, the Eng House is a lone survivor providing direct evidence of single family homes that once dotted the boundaries of Chinatown. After serving as the Eng family home for much of the twentieth century, the property eventually became subdivided into apartments sometime after 2005. In 2021, the Eng siblings deeded the property to the Wing Luke Museum, who have been working to rehabilitate the property for public programming space relating to the Eng Family and Chinese American history.

### **Conclusion**

The existence of the Eng House speaks directly to Chinese residential life and opportunities (or lack thereof) during the Chinese Exclusion era. The house is a physical manifestation of the resilience that Chinese Americans had during a period of systematic exclusion and discrimination on a cultural, socioeconomic, and legal basis. While the Chinese Exclusion Act did not bar family members of United States residents and Chinese of exempt status from migrating, harsh enforcement during this era did not make it simple. For example, Sue Fong Eng and her daughter, who immigrated in 1929, were held and interrogated by immigration enforcement for nine months before being released in the United States – despite having legal grounds to enter.<sup>xlviii</sup> Despite these hurdles, the property served as the historic multigenerational home for the Eng family, whose presence in the neighborhood reached far beyond their property lines and into Chinatown's commercial, culinary, and social fabric. The Eng House tells a history of the Chinatown-International District absent in its extant building types as one of few historic single-family residential properties remaining in the neighborhood. Through its construction at the height of anti-Chinese sentiment, contributions to the community of its occupants, and unique building type, the Eng House tells an important history of Chinese residential and community development in the mid-twentieth century.

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<sup>xlvi</sup> 1940 United States Census, Seattle, King County, Washington, SD 1, ED 40-261B, *Ancestry.com*, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2442/images/m-t0627-04381-00757?usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=wuu10](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2442/images/m-t0627-04381-00757?usePUB=true&_phsrc=wuu10).

<sup>xlvii</sup> Kreisman, "National Register," 31.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Ng, "Eng family celebrate," 2023.

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Sundberg Kennedy Ly-Au Young Architects, "Eng Family Homestead Renovation," Construction Documents Set, June 3, 2024.

#### **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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**      NAD 1927 or      NAD 1983

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>    </u> Zone	<u>    </u> Easting	<u>    </u> Northing	3	<u>    </u> Zone	<u>    </u> Easting	<u>    </u> Northing
2	<u>    </u> Zone	<u>    </u> Easting	<u>    </u> Northing	4	<u>    </u> Zone	<u>    </u> Easting	<u>    </u> Northing

**Or Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>47.597106°</u> Latitude	<u>-122.322694°</u> Longitude	3	<u>    </u> Latitude	<u>    </u> Longitude
2	<u>    </u> Latitude	<u>    </u> Longitude	4	<u>    </u> Latitude	<u>    </u> Longitude

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated area is located in Section 05, of Township 24, Range 04 East of Willamette Meridian, in King County, Washington, and is legally described as a portion of Lots 7 & 8 of Block 53 of the Maynard's Addition. It is otherwise known as Tax Lot 524780-2655.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel on which the Eng House sits and encompasses the entire urban lot.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Calvin Nguyen, Preservation Services Specialist and Huy Pham, Executive Director (Edited by DAHP Staff)  
organization Asian Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation date January 16, 2026  
street & number 800 Columbia St, Unit 1502 telephone (206) 414-9161  
city or town Seattle state WA Zip Code: 98104  
e-mail [info@apiahip.org](mailto:info@apiahip.org); [calvin@apiahip.org](mailto:calvin@apiahip.org); [huy@apiahip.org](mailto:huy@apiahip.org)

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)



**Google Earth Map**

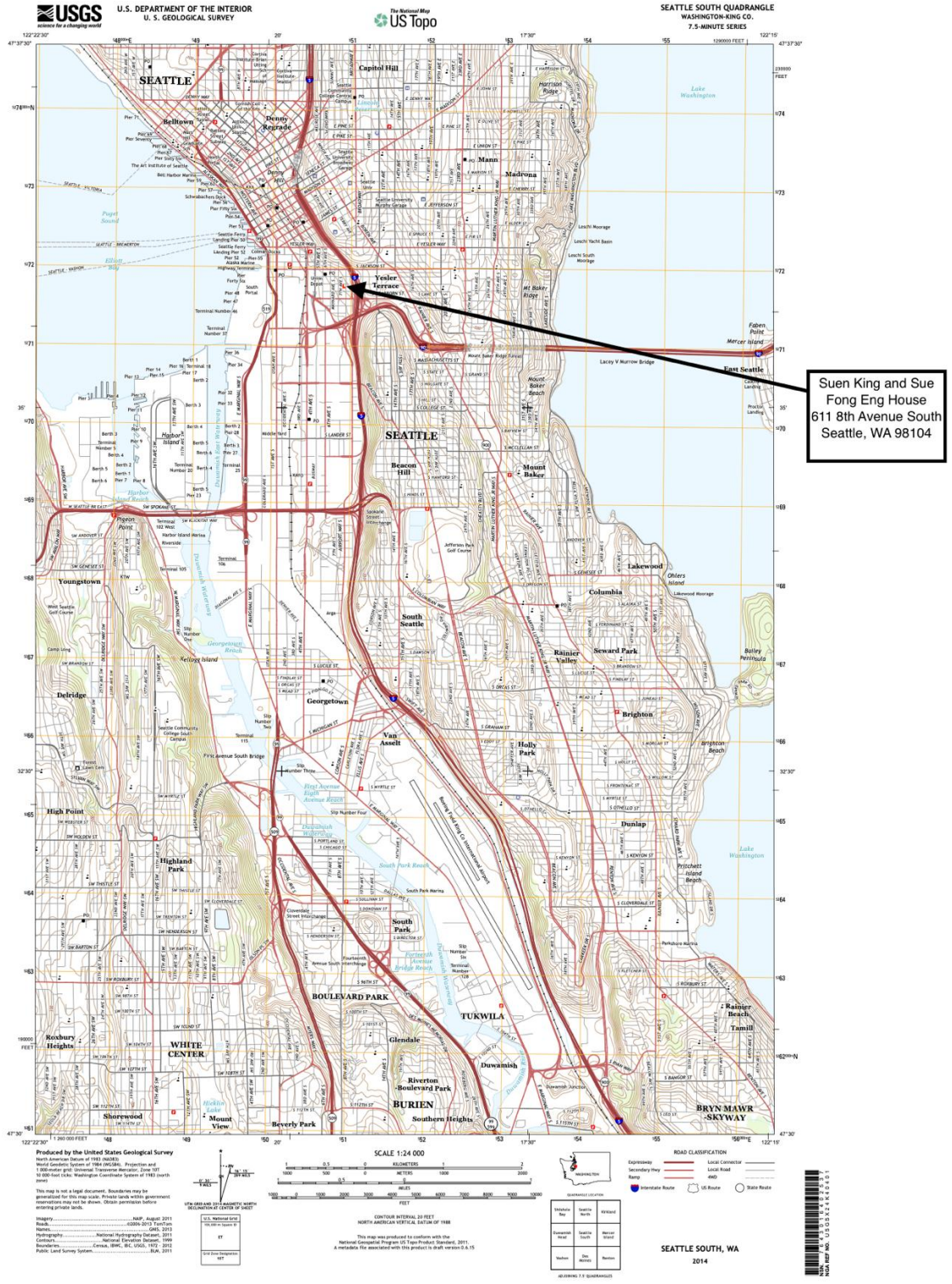
**Eng House**

611 8<sup>th</sup> Ave S  
Seattle, WA 98104



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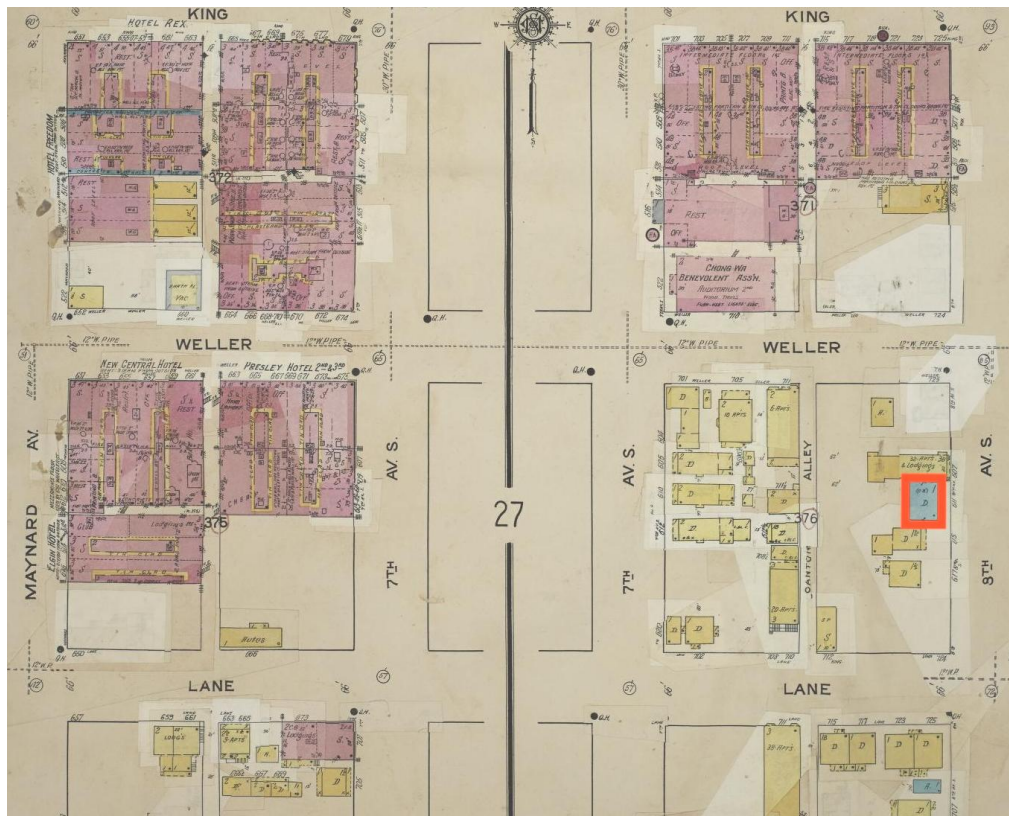
USGS Map of United Seattle South Quadrangle, with annotation for location of Eng House.

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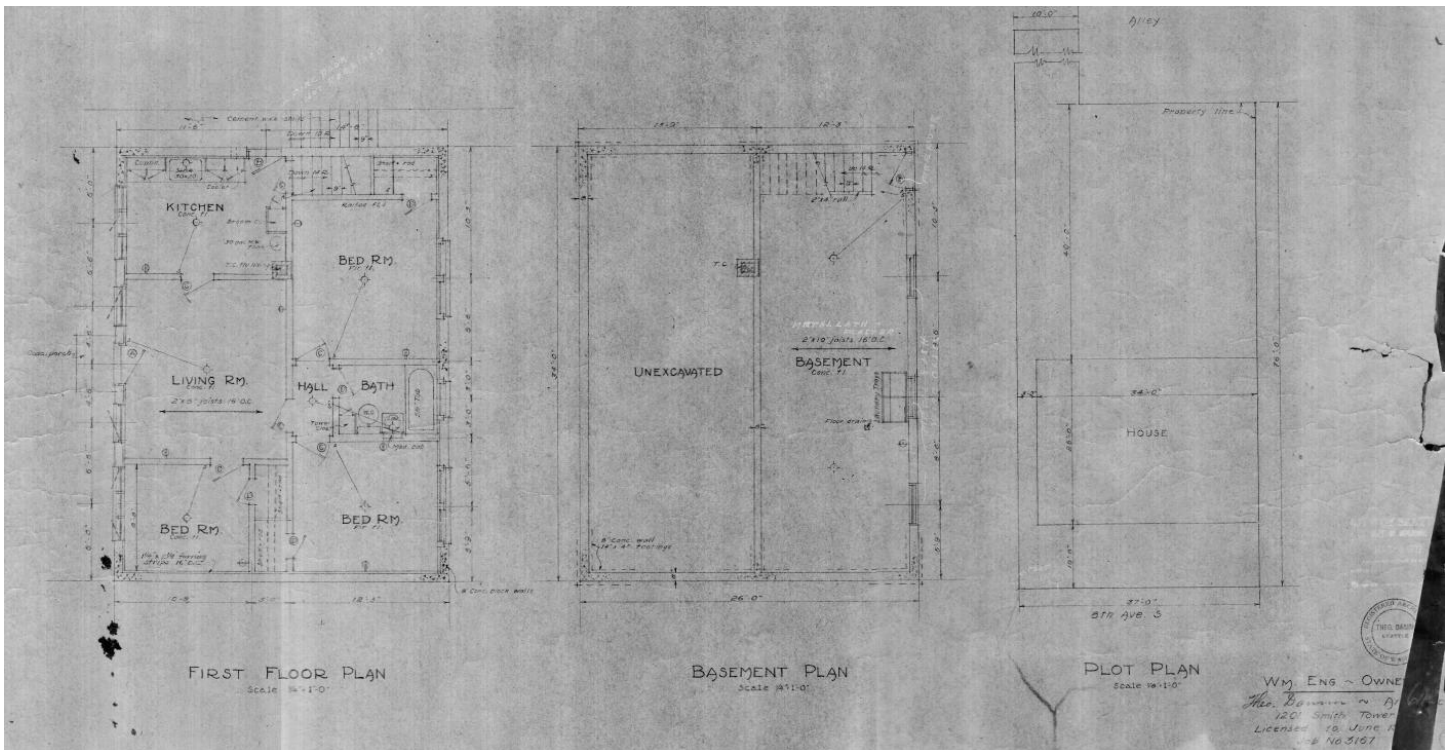
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map – Vol 1., Sheet 27, ca. 1916. Eventual location of the Eng House outlined in orange.



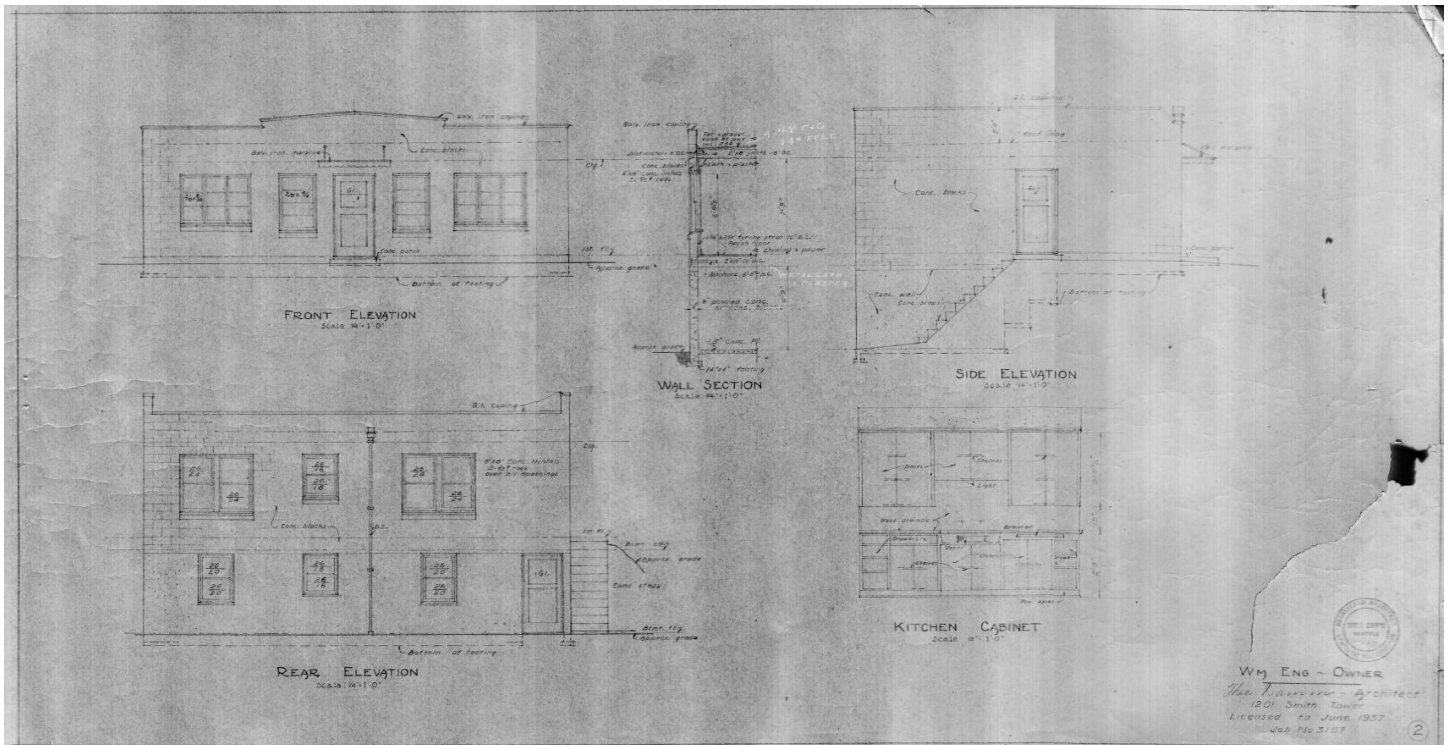
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map – Vol 1., Sheet 27, ca. 1950. Location of the Eng House outlined in orange.

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Plans for the Eng Family House, Architect Theo Damm – Job #3157, ca. 1937.



Elevation Drawings for the Eng Family House, Architect Theo Damm – Job #3157, ca. 1937.

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Eng House under construction, ca. 1937.



Eng House primary (east) elevation of the house, ca. 1938. Note arched entry vestibule under construction.

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Eng House primary (east) elevation of the house, ca. 1940s.



The Eng family enjoying a meal in their paved backyard, ca. 1940s.

**MIN HING KNITTING CO, Eng Suen Mgr.  
Sweater Manufacturers, Dry Goods Retailers  
and Men's Furnishings, Oriental Goods, 625  
King, Tel ELiot 6722**

1934 Polk Directory

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**Main Floor**

**2 Parents' Bedroom/Orientation**

Chiarozona/ID history with Eng parents' story integrated

- 1 Eng family shrine
- 2 CID display
- 3 safe

**3 Kitchen**

Look in door with aully use items on counter/table (e.g. stir fry table)

- 1 Kitchen table
- 2 Utensils
- 3 Wood stove

**4 Living/Dining Room**

Centered around family history with glass top center table w/ images

- 1 Blinds - front facade
- 2 Glass top table

**5 Bedroom/Nook**

"Family tree" generational photos with grandparents at top, branching to 5 families

- 1 Family tree photos
- 2 "6 Families" exhibit

**Garage/Basement**

**1 Garage/Entry Hall**

Tour entry point with display of Uncle Tuck's bowling career

- 1 Bowling career display
- 2 Eng family burner

**B Basement/Bean Sprout Exhibit**

Bean sprout and rice milling exhibit

- 1 Tub
- 2 Sprout cans
- 3 Tub discharge rack
- 4 Back "V"
- 5 Work table "B"
- 6 Work table "C"

**6 Bedroom**

Furnished as a bedroom, with "Growing Up in the Neighborhood" exhibit (Long Chin text)

- 1 Blank beds ex
- 2 "Growing Up in the CID"

**7 Bathroom**

"4 is war" - oblique view from beyond hall

**F Front Yard**

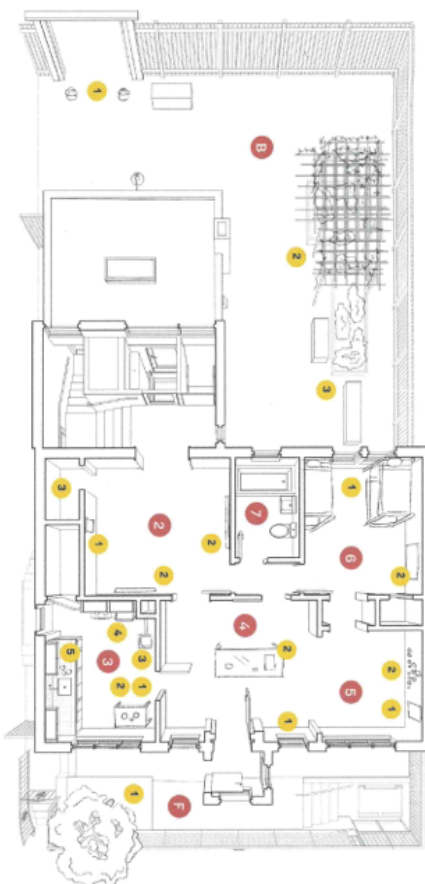
"4 is war" with big logan and restored ceiling

- 1 Logan plaque

**B Back Yard**

Modern courtyard design referencing historical themes

- 1 Concrete "Poo Dog" Llama
- 2 Garden
- 3 Bench



Programming of Eng House for public education with current interior layout, ca. 2025.



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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Eng, Suen King and Sue Fong, House  
**City or Vicinity:** Seattle  
**County:** King **State:** WA

**Photographer:** Jemma Fagler

**Date Photographed:** September 25, 2025 and October 6, 2025

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**



**1 of 16:** Primary (east) elevation of the house, camera facing southwest.

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**2 of 16:** Primary elevation of the house, camera facing northwest.



**3 of 16:** North elevation of the house, camera facing southwest.

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**4 of 16:** West elevation of the house and garage, camera facing southeast.



**5 of 16:** West elevation of the property, showing a clearer view of the garage and backyard space, camera facing southeast.

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**6 of 16:** Interior of the house, looking at the north half of the living room and into the bedroom. The opening has been enlarged for future interpretive use by the Wing Luke Museum. Camera facing north.



**7 of 16:** Kitchen with original or refabricated features in view, camera facing southeast.

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**8 of 16:** Bathroom of the house, camera facing west.

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**9 of 16:** Parents' / southwest bedroom, camera facing east.



**10 of 16:** Detail of front door interior, camera facing east.



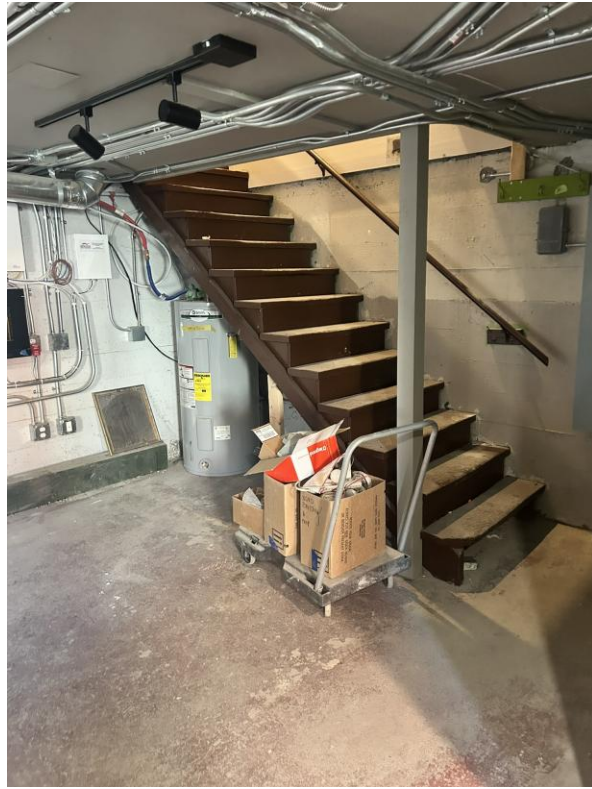
**11 of 16:** Detail of front door on leading into entry vestibule, camera facing east.

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**12 of 16:** Basement space, camera facing northeast.



**13 of 16:** Original stairs from basement leading into kitchen, camera facing southeast.



**14 of 16:** Hallway to basement (left) and new addition ADA lift (right), camera facing east.

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**15 of 16:** New addition ADA lift (left) and new addition stairwell (right), camera facing southeast.



**16 of 16:** Landing area for new addition, camera facing west.

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**Property Owner:** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name WLAM Property Association  
street & number PO Box 3025 telephone (206) 623-5124  
city or town Seattle state WA zip code 98114

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.