

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

JUN 26 1989

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name MISSION BREWERY
other names/site number AMERICAN AGAR COMPANY; AMERICAN AGAR AND CHEMICAL COMPANY

2. Location

street & number 1715 Hancock Street N/A not for publication
city, town San Diego N/A vicinity
state California code 06 county San Diego code 073 zip code 92101

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	2	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	2	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Kathryn Guatieri Date 6-22-89

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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 Bruce J. Noble, Jr. Date of Action 7/6/89

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTIONmanufacturing facilityprocessing siteHEALTH CAREhospital

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

MISSION REVIVAL

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETEwalls STUCCOBRICKroof ASPHALTother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The American Agar Company building, formerly the Mission Brewery, is actually two buildings, a small single-story structure in front of a large multi-level tower structure. The buildings are connected by an archway composed of brick and faced, along Washington Street, with stucco. Originally built in 1913, they are joined examples of large-scale industrial Mission Revival architecture. Although the buildings have served various functions, they have retained the integrity of their Mission Revival design.

The property sits on the southwest corner of Washington and Hancock Streets. Originally sited on San Diego Bay, successive landfills have resulted in its present location, approximately one mile distant, separated from the bay by Lindbergh International Airport.

Small Building

The small building sits in front of the large building and faces onto Hancock Street. The original office section, it is separated from the tower building by a 14-foot wide driveway, connected by the aforementioned archway. Initially set farther back from Hancock Street, a forward section was added recently, 1940-50, virtually doubling the building's size and extending it toward the street. An espadana parapet runs continuously down Washington Street, starting at the corner of Hancock on the small building, progressing to the archway, and spanning the east elevation of the tower building.

Tower Building: Exterior

The tower building, an imposing, coral colored structure of industrial design, was largely constructed of brick masonry. The ground floor was faced with stucco and the upper floors were painted, leaving the masonry exposed to view. The March 17, 1912 San Diego Union noted that the purpose of the first level stucco was to emphasize the Mission Revival architecture. The east ground floor elevation consists of a series of large arched windows and an arched vehicular entrance midway between the tower and office buildings on the east. Arched windows are also seen at various points on all elevations, and on the west, east, and north facades of the fifth floor tower.

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Roof espadana parapets occur at all levels. This pattern is repeated on all but the south and west facades, beginning at the roof line and continuing along the north and east facades of the tower. The entire first floor, except for the southern "rear" elevation is delineated by espadanas. The second floor west addition of the tower section (to be discussed in detail below) does not include this Mission Revival element.

The actual square footage varies among the floors of the tower section. The ground floor is divided into three main sections partitioned on a north/south line across the structure. This interior division was repeated in each of the upper floors, although the square footage encompassed by each varies. The tiered look of the building, when viewed from the east and north, reflects this variation.

The southern elevation of the tower building reaches to one and one half stories, with an espadana roof line similar to the others. It is exposed to the railroad spurs, some of which were installed at the time of construction to access the brewery. Fenestration on the south elevation is more standard without the extensive use of arches; a double door entrance is in the eastern section. On this elevation, both of the lower floors were stuccoed. At the west end of the south elevation, a loading dock area with elevated entrances and overhead cables (the rear section of the nonextant western addition) once assisted the loading and unloading of cargo.

Tower Building: Additions

There were two additions to the tower building. The ground floor of the main section was extended west, and a second story was added (the one briefly referred to above). These additions probably occurred at the same time, in 1941, after the War Production Board identified a significant lack of agar production and the second agar operation, the American Agar and Chemical Company, moved back to the Mission Brewery site. In January 1988, when the current architects first inspected the premises, they found no remnants of either brewery or agar production equipment in the extended western section. Only storage racks were found, located along the westernmost wall. Through photographic evidence, we can document that the addition was not present in 1928. We know what happened in October 1929 and its impact on the business climate. Through the title records we can document that the decline of the first agar era was clearly underway in 1932. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the American Agar Company would have undertaken expansion construction during this time period which was also just prior to its relocation to National City in 1934. The western addition is no longer extant.

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The second story was previously mentioned as the addition which does not include a roof espadana. This addition will be retained.

Five other structures, tin sheds, were at one time on the site. Architects in 1988 found that they were all used for seaweed storage, evidenced by the seaweed storage racks in them. Most of them were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s but the construction date for one shed has been difficult to establish. The buildings on the site were appraised for Commercial Building Records by a San Diego County assessor in the late 1950s. This followed a purging of the county Commercial Building Records which occurred sometime in the 1950s. (A conversation with Mike Neza in the Commercial Building Records Division of the County Assessor's Office on 4/11/89 confirmed this.) At the time of the appraisal, a 1930 construction date was assigned to the tin shed which was virtually up against the western addition to the tower building but the actual date was certainly later and more in line with the post-1941 construction detailed previously. Supporting a later date is the fact that the western wing addition had three windows facing the adjacent shed which was less than four feet from the building wing. If the shed had been constructed in 1930, a wing would not have been added that included windows from which only the metal walls of the shed could be viewed. Therefore, a construction date in the 1940s would be a more appropriate estimate for the construction date for the earliest of the five tin sheds. None of the sheds remain today.

Tower Building: Interior

Most of the structure's interior is vacant with few remnants of the brewery and/or agar processing equipment, and their structural accommodations, still evident. Some interior walls are in poor condition. Storage areas were created out of the western and southeastern sections, including the added western wing which no longer exists.

The northern end of the east section of the tower building was the area where the original sterilizer/ovens were located. The appearance of the roof in this section suggests that it was raised to accommodate the retrofitted equipment. Other evidence of alterations include steel beams, support columns, and the absence of stairs accessing the elevated door on the north wall. Dates for such alterations, as was the case with the aforementioned construction, cannot be ascertained as there is no documentation.

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The second floor of the tower section is accessed via a freight elevator or enclosed stairs. (The freight elevator ascends to the fourth level, and the pulleys are on the fifth floor roof.) The second floor is generally vacant and in poor condition. Vents were located on the west wall in the center section and the western room is in particularly poor condition.

The third floor is also vacant and in disrepair. Brick walls were built to a thickness of approximately one foot. Arched windows of the east elevation have rectangular frames in the interior. A ladder roof access in the southwest corner of the east room exits onto the roof southeast of the laboratory.

As with the second and third floors, the fourth floor is currently vacant, except for the remnants of various platforms and tank supports.

A chemical laboratory was located on the fifth floor. This area was originally used as a laboratory for the brewery and then also served as a lab for the isolation hospital. Eventually, the American Agar Company used it in similar ways. There is a landing, leading to the laboratory, off from which a former office area was constructed, with stained wood walls. Access to the roof was built into the south wall. This is also the access to the fifth floor restroom, which is located in an enclosed setting on the roof.

The spaces on the various roofs were fully utilized for miscellaneous storage and for the required ventilation, ductwork and fire prevention equipment. The roofs behind the espadana parapets are flat and covered with rolled roofing material. The brick masonry of the structure is evident in several exposed walls and along the parapets themselves.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE (Criterion C)
INDUSTRY (Criterion A)
HEALTH/MEDICINE (Criterion A)

Period of Significance

N/A
1913-1918; 1923-1933
1918-1919

Significant Dates

1913

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Griesser, Richard

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Mission Brewery buildings are significant in architecture, health and medicine, and industry.

In terms of architecture, San Diego's Mission Brewery is significant because it is the only example of an application of the Mission Revival style to a purely industrial building design in San Diego, and is also one of a few such applications across the country. According to the April 26, 1912 edition of the San Diego Union, it was the first Mission style brewery to be built in the United States. Built in 1913, the Mission Brewery is a testimony to the broadly-based popularity of this pre-World War I style. The Mission Revival, along with the Craftsman architectural style, reached the peak of its popularity in the decade prior to the 1915 Panama California International Exposition held in San Diego. There were two other public structures built during the same era and of similar scale to that of the Mission Brewery. The first of these, Los Banos, built in 1897 by Hebbard and Gill as an entertainment and health facility, no longer exists. The second, the Santa Fe depot, built by Bakewell and Brown in 1914, still remains, although it has lost the courtyard waiting area from its south elevation. The Mission Brewery and Santa Fe depot, along with two churches, two schools, and several private dwellings, are the only examples of Mission Revival architecture remaining in a city that owes much of its current mystique and traditions to the turn of the century sentiments which brought this style to prominence.

Mission Revival is characterized by solid massive walls, broad unadorned wall surfaces, wide projecting eaves, and low pitched tile roofs. The Mission Brewery includes all of these features as well as more minor details common to Mission Revival buildings. The bank of windows on the east facade suggest an arcade corridor, the three to five story tower has tiered southern and western elevations, and the original cupola upon the tower roof exemplified the lanterns, or small windowed structures adorning

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Continuation Sheets.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 0.36 acres

UTM References

A

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4	8	2	8	5	0
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3	6	2	2	4	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Please see Continuation Sheets.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass all that remains of the historic property, i.e., the office and tower buildings and the driveway area between them, as illustrated on the scale site map submitted herewith.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathleen Wheatley/Historic Research Consultant
organization Marie Burke Lia, Preservation Attorney date April 18, 1989 (revised)
street & number 427 C Street, Suite 310 telephone (619) 235-9766
city or town San Diego state CA zip code 92101

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roofs which were seen on many Mission Revival buildings. The appearance of arched windows in both buildings suggests the pierced campanarios seen in several Mission Revival structures.

The architect, Richard Griesser, purposefully stuccoed the small building and the lower floor exterior of the tower building in order to emphasize the above-mentioned elements. The broad expanses of wall with little or no ornamentation were enhanced by the stucco surface and recall the massive walls of this style. A central area between the buildings creates space similar to verandas seen in many arcade-lined courtyards. The Architectural Record of June 1906, described Mission Revival architecture as being in harmony with its surroundings and that ". . . the exterior shall be in right relation to the interior; the elevations being a natural development of the plan." Tiered floors on the tower building are prime examples of this philosophy.

Richard Griesser was the son of noted architect and engineer Wilhelm Griesser, who had offices in St. Louis, New York, Pittsburgh, Denver, and Chicago, and who specialized in the design of breweries and related buildings. Richard was born in Europe in 1868 and resided there until the age of seventeen, when he was summoned by his father to join into the business as a draftsman. By 1902, Griesser was listed as an architect with his father's firm and in 1912, a contract was awarded to the firm of Griesser and Son for a brewery at a site on the edge of San Diego Bay. Griesser executed plans for the building in Chicago and then came to San Diego to confer with the owners on details of the construction. It was the owners who requested the Mission Revival style, and the brewery was one of the more unusual applications of this style.

The appearance of the Mission Brewery is substantially unaltered from the time of its initial construction, in spite of various owners and industrial uses. That, in conjunction with the facts supporting it as the only example of a Mission Revival style brewery and the only example in San Diego of such a large scale industrial use of this architectural style makes it a locally significant example of early twentieth century Mission Revival architecture.

The Mission Brewery is significant in terms of health and medicine because of its role in the tragic nationwide influenza epidemic of 1918-1919. The brewery itself had closed earlier in 1918. When the flu outbreak arrived in San Diego, Dr. Peter C. Remondino, a prominent physician from

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Corsica, ran the facility as an isolation hospital, housing mostly patients of Italian descent. The former brewery laboratory was employed as the hospital laboratory. Dr. Remondino, whose treatment for the flu included doses of garlic and claret wine, boasted of never losing a patient. The Mission Brewery played an important role in San Diego's efforts to control the flu, which was a notable episode in twentieth century medical history and affected millions of people.

In terms of industry, the Mission Brewery is significant because of the industries that occupied the buildings. Importance is attached to both the brewery and agar operations which were housed in the buildings.

The Mission Brewery was built as brewery in 1912-1913 and opened in June 1913. The brewing industry was pioneered in San Diego by Austrian immigrants Mr. Dobljar and Mr. Wedel who opened many local beer gardens following the opening of the first brewery in 1868. The San Diego Brewing Company was later founded in 1895 by men of German descent, and Gothic style breweries became popular in San Diego.

The man who purchased the Mission Brewery site, block 182 of the Middletown Addition, in 1912, was August F. Lang, a German. The purchase was made in the name of the newly incorporated Bay City Brewing Company, for which Lang had served as president and secretary-treasurer in 1886. A druggist by trade, Lang had previously owned and operated a drug store in the Granger Building, currently recognized as a contributor within the National Register's Gaslamp Quarter District in San Diego.

When the brewery opened, the San Diego Consolidated Brewing Company, formerly the Bay City Brewing Company, had three executive officers: Lang, as president and treasurer, Frederic Handschy as vice president and general manager, and Jacob Guehring as superintendent and brewmaster.

Knowledge that Prohibition and the end of the legal sale of alcoholic beverages faced them, caused the managers to begin production of a non-alcoholic drink dubbed the "Hopski" in 1915. Due to poor sales, caused in part by anti-German sentiments held during World War I, the "Hopski" was discontinued two years prior to ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Passage of the Volstead Act in Congress, which defined "intoxicating beverages", whose manufacture and sale the Eighteenth Amendment had banned, brought Prohibition into effect from 1920-1933. These years had disastrous consequences for the brewing industry, and San Diego's Mission Brewery, as one of its members, did not survive. The brewery closed in 1918 and was eventually sold, in 1923, to the American Agar Company.

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Although the brewery was a short-lived venture, it was the first Mission Revival style brewery to have been built in America, and is now the oldest surviving brewery structure in San Diego.

The American Agar Company which was housed in the Mission Brewery buildings, was the first agar plant in San Diego and one of the first in state. Agar, a product of ocean kelp, is employed in the manufacture of iodine, gels, and bacteriological culture plates. The history of its discovery and production dates back to the fifteenth century.

The earliest record of commercial agar production in the United States was in 1919. Chokichi Matsouka started the first agar plant in the Glendale-Pasadena area at that time. He soon lost his business. The Matsouka Company sold its equipment to John Becker, who began producing agar in the Mission Brewery in 1923. Becker attempted to improve Matsouka's methods, and produced a good quality agar until heat resistant contaminants destroyed his capacity for sterilizing the agar. The factory closed but was reopened in 1932 when Dr. Horace Selby, acting as a consultant, solved the sterilization problem. In 1933, however, competition from imported Japanese agar at one fifth the price of the American product, forced the American Agar company to fold.

Agar production in California was continued on a reduced scale by Mr. Steve Corfield, who opened a family business in National City in 1934. He later became a partner in the new American Agar and Chemical Company, formed at the urging of the War Productions Board in the early 1940s. In the intervening years, the former brewery building was purchased by Lou Small and B.J. Shipman, who operated a Mexican imported sea food business there. Their import business lasted only a short time, for once the United States and Japan were at war, Japanese imports were halted and agar production became a priority of the federal government.

Small became interested in the product, and he and Corfield formed the American Agar and Chemical Company in 1941. The company furnished 95% of the agar required by the War Productions Board, earning commendations for its contribution to the war effort. For twenty-five years the American Agar and Chemical Company was the sole producer of American made agar, and its product proved superior to imports. The company continued production until the factory closed its doors in 1987.

Over the years, the southwest section of the tower building was sub-leased to other tenants such as the New Linen Supply Company. It was the success of continued economic return that saved the Mission Brewery buildings from demolition.

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Additional Resources:

Chicago Historical Society. Correspondence to Ray Brandes relative to information about the architects Griesser. Including city directory details.

San Diego City Directories, 1910-1987, various issues and dates.

San Diego Bulletin, various issues and dates (for background data on other local breweries and architects.)

San Diego County Assessor's Office for assessment records and maps.

San Diego County Recorder's Office for Deed books, Miscellaneous books, lease books and other legal records related to ownership of the property.

Photographs of the Mission Brewery and American Agar and Chemical Company, courtesy the late Dr. Horace and Mrs. Selby.

Photographs of the Mission Brewery, from Dr. Ray Brandes, 1982.

Interviews and telephone research:

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Joseph V. Montijo, November 17, 1976.
Gerald C. Wellington, January 16, 1978.

Research telephone calls; individuals:

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Mrs. C.R. Griesser, Chicago Illinois, 5/18/1988.
Mrs. Marian Black, Chicago, Illinois, 5/18/1988
Will Hasbroke, architect, Chicago, Illinois, 1982.
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Lydia M. Griesser, Chicago, Illinois, 5/12/1988
Bertha Griesser, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 5/22/1988
James S. Griesser, Des Plaines, Illinois, 5/16/1988
Robert J. Griesser, Glenview, Illinois, 5/16/1988
A.E. Griesser, Philadelphia, Pa., 5/21/1988

Research telephone calls; Institutions:

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

The Mission Brewery buildings occupy Block 182 in the Middletown area of San Diego. The dimensions of the two historic buildings and the driveway in between them are: 138.05 feet east to west, 182.33 feet north to south. Beginning at the corner of Washington and Hancock Streets (the northeast corner of the block), the eastern site boundary proceeds south 182.35 feet, then west 138.05 feet, then north 85.68 feet, then east 96.34 feet, then north 96.67 feet, returning east 41.71 feet to the beginning corner. Please see site plan.

KURTZ STREET

Mission Brewery
1715 Hancock Street
San Diego, San Diego Co. Calif.

TOWER



Scale 1" = 40'

— NR boundary

HANCOCK STREET

