

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Standard Oil Building

and/or common Newlin Hall

**2. Location**

street & number 7257 Bright Avenue      not for publication

city, town Whittier      vicinity of      congressional district 33

state California code 06 county Los Angeles code 037

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<u>    </u> district	<u>    </u> public	<u>    </u> occupied	<u>    </u> agriculture	<u>    </u> museum
<u> X </u> building(s)	<u> X </u> private	<u> X </u> unoccupied	<u>    </u> commercial	<u>    </u> park
<u>    </u> structure	<u>    </u> both	<u>    </u> work in progress	<u>    </u> educational	<u>    </u> private residence
<u>    </u> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<u>    </u> entertainment	<u>    </u> religious
<u>    </u> object	<u>    </u> in process	<u> X </u> yes: restricted	<u>    </u> government	<u>    </u> scientific
	<u>    </u> being considered	<u>    </u> yes: unrestricted	<u>    </u> industrial	<u>    </u> transportation
		<u>    </u> no	<u>    </u> military	<u> X </u> other: vacant

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mission Hill Properties

street & number 364 Bush Street

city, town San Francisco      vicinity of      state California 94104

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Los Angeles County Courthouse

street & number 110 North Grand Avenue

city, town Los Angeles      state California

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title None has this property been determined eligible?      yes  X  no

date      federal      state      county      local

depository for survey records     

city, town      state

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### Exterior Description

The old Standard Oil Building is located within the downtown commercial area of Whittier, standing on the corner of Penn Street and Bright Avenue. Across the street on Penn is a garage built by Standard and designed to reflect the architecture of the Standard Oil building. The garage and the adjacent parking lot are slated for replacement by a large office complex in 1980. A new town house complex is under construction at the southeast corner replacing a residence, also built by Standard and rented at one time to employees. With those recent exceptions, the area is primarily one- and two-story commercial buildings.

The old Standard Oil building is a small complex of interconnected buildings arranged around a central courtyard. The original building, built in 1914, faces Bright Avenue and is a one-story rectangular Mission Style structure 32 feet high, 68 feet long and 34 wide on a reinforced concrete foundation. A single story garage stretched along Penn Street for 72 feet until 1922 when a second floor of office space was added above the garage and the garage was extended along the alley at the rear of the lot. The garage addition was connected to the small one-story building (added in the northwest corner of the property in 1918) via a cat walk.

The buildings are constructed of brick covered with smooth light-colored stucco. The baked red tile roofs are gabled and extend beyond the walls, forming roof eaves with exposed heavy timber rafters. The decorative brackets supporting the gable reflect the simple Mission Revival Style. Standing as an example of the romanticization of the Mexican period in California history, the buildings' design is characteristically simple and there is no ornamentation. The arched windows and garage entrances, light-colored stucco, red tile roofs and copper gutters and downspouts are designed to create a unified image, an architectural statement about Southern California in the first decades of the century.

The original building's east facade is symmetrically balanced by 3 arched windows on either side of the entrance. The windows are squared double-hung on the interior, with the arch created in stucco on the exterior. Access from the street level to the slightly elevated entrance is provided by a stairway curving away from the entrance in two directions. A canopy over the doorway further emphasizes the entrance. A large sculpture depicting the Zerolene bear, Standard's motor oil logo, stood for many years at the side of the entrance. The south and north facades are broken up by four arched windows and a small round window near the gable. The roof eaves are particularly noticeable on this facade, creating a rhythm along the length of the building and supporting a copper gutter.

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Attached to the rear of the original administration building and running westerly is the original garage and second floor of office spaces added in 1922. Eight arched garage doors form an arcade, defined by heavy piers with simple, slightly extended bases. The transom window above each garage door is divided into 4 panes. The second floor fenestration consists of plain double-hung rectangular windows, positioned in pairs.

The garage extends north along the alley with five garage doors and arched transom windows, connecting with the small, one-story, flat roof building of 1918 in the northwest corner. The windows in the small building repeat the arch forms, and again the entrance is marked by a canopy. The cornice is simply defined by a parapet and a railing. A small structure was added, probably in 1942, on the roof but is now obscured from view by trees and the railing.

The buildings almost completely enclose the courtyard. The present owners plan to extend a wall and create an interior space, visually distinct from the exterior. The asphalt courtyard is to be paved with tile and a fountain is planned for the center.

Interior Description

In keeping with the simple Mission Style, the interior walls are very plain and made of smooth plaster. The arched windows provide for a well-lit space as well as design interest. During its use as the Producing Headquarters, the original building was divided into 4 private offices, 2 general rooms and a small telegraph office. Two parallel trusses 12 feet high run the length of the building. The top and bottom chords and the compression webs are constructed of 6 x 6 timbers. The small building in the corner of the lot housed private offices, a drafting room and chemists' lab. The office space above the garage was filled by clerks and engineers. The garage stored approximately 20 cars and provided limited warehouse space as well.

When Whittier College bought the building in 1942, they added plumbing and converted the interior into dormitory and office space. The alterations have been minor and are removeable. The present owners intend to develop the interior spaces for mixed-uses, such as offices, retail space, and a restaurant that would open into the courtyard.

DEC-14-2004 TUE 07:23 AM

FAX NO.

19-178609<sup>P.04</sup>

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Constructed 1914,

Specific dates Additions 1918 & 1922

Builder/Architect A.J. Davis/Alfred W. Rea & Charles W.

Garstang

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

### SIGNIFICANCE

The old Standard Oil Building is an important example of an early corporate office building in Southern California. Built in 1914 as the headquarters of the Producing Department for Standard Oil Company of California, the complex stands today as one of the oldest remaining office buildings in Whittier. The structures, arranged around a central courtyard, are a good example of the Mission Revival Style, which was popular from 1890 to the 1920s in Southern California and was particularly significant in that it reflected a new regionalism. The simplicity, unified design and informal quality of the Mission Style were important characteristics of the romanticization of the Mexican era in California history. The style was intended to relate not only to the history of the region, but to the climate and landscape as well. As Standard Oil started its big business boom in Southern California, the company intentionally commissioned architects to design their structures in the Mission Style, a style which they hoped their "neighbors would be proud of" (1) and would symbolize their association with Southern California's past and present, as well as future.

The architects of the Standard Oil Building were Alfred W. Rea and Charles W. Garstang, prominent architects in Los Angeles practicing during the first decades of the century. They were issued a building permit in February of 1914 for an 8 room office and garage, with the contract price listed as \$15,000. The commission was considered to be prestigious, and certainly newsworthy as Standard's operations were chronicled regularly in the Whittier Daily News. The building was described as the "main one among the business blocks" (2) and part of Standard's "plan of making Whittier an oil center". (3) Rea and Garstang received widespread recognition for their design when they were chosen to participate in the Fifth Annual Architectural Exhibit at Los Angeles in 1915. An article appeared in Architect and Engineer, which included a photograph of the entrance to the Standard Oil Building. Both Rea and Garstang were active in the Southern California Chapter of the A.I.A. Rea served as the chapter's treasurer from 1922-24 and was widely respected for his commendable service. He also frequently volunteered for various committees including those for annual building contests. In 1915, Rea and Garstang designed an office building and garage for Standard's competition, The Murphy Oil Company on Greenleaf, the main street in

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Whittier.

The construction of the Standard Oil Building is significant in the history of the Standard Oil Company of California, as their first department headquarters building outside San Francisco and marked the company's stable and rapidly growing interests in Southern California. In 1913, Mr. Fred Hillman, Vice President in Charge of Producing masterminded the largest transaction in Standard's history up to that time, and purchased the Murphy Oil Company's holdings in West Coyote and East Whittier, holdings considered to be "among the richest and most extensive in Southern California". (4) While some of the company's directors thought "Hillman had lost his mind", (5) the investment quickly proved to be very lucrative, and began a long history of Standard's successful discoveries and operations in Southern California. It is not insignificant that Standard selected Whittier as the site for their new Southern California District and Producing Department. The office was conveniently located for access to the fields. However, it was not only a "field office". As the company's producing headquarters, the employees there were experts, pioneering the technical advances needed to overcome difficulties such as water in the wells and deep drilling.

The company's employees in Whittier included 12-15 engineers, 8-10 clerks and 2-3 officers. The engineers' offices were primarily in the small building in the northwest corner of the property, and a few were located on the second floor above the garage. The small building was divided into 5 private offices, a drafting room and a chemist's lab where soil samples were evaluated. When the weather permitted, a blue print machine operated on the roof, utilizing the sun. The engineering building was added in 1918 and although it is not known if Rea and Garstang designed the addition, the style is in keeping with the original building. The Chief Construction Engineer for the Southern Division was Warren Johnson, who was responsible for the engineering and design of the addition above the garage and the extension of the garage itself. The roof of the addition was gabled and covered with red tile, and the exposed rafters were designed to imitate those on the original building. Each addition to the complex has enhanced its character, each sensitively designed to create a unified image around the courtyard as well as harmonious exterior facades.

The courtyard was originally paved in brick and used occasionally for parking cars of visiting dignitaries. Typically the garage was used for parking the company's cars. All the cars were passenger cars, some of which were luxury cars, including a 1917 Marmon and a 1918 Packard, used

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to transport Mr. Hillman and the general superintendent, Mr. Smullin. A motor transport group was employed to chauffeur, maintain the cars and insure their working condition. The garage was originally designed to house about 12 cars and with the addition in 1922 approximately 8 more spaces were created. The coupe cars, primarily Model T's, were modified by removing the back ends to transport the drilling crews and tool pushers with their supplies and fittings to the fields.

Standard Oil's growth was tremendous and by the late 1920s, the producing department had outgrown the Whittier complex. In addition, new departments had been established -- the petroleum engineering, geological and pipeline departments. In 1930, the decision was made to move the district headquarters to downtown Los Angeles where a new Standard Oil Building was built at 10th and Hope Street. The downtown site was more centrally located to their expanding holdings in Southern California, and provided an easier commute for those frequently travelling between corporate headquarters in San Francisco and the Southern Division. In 1942, Standard sold the Whittier building complex for \$5,000 to Whittier College, located two blocks away. By 1943, the College made some alterations to the interior and used the building alternately as a dormitory and office space for a bi-lingual study group. The building has been known as Newlin Hall since 1943, named in honor of Thomas Newlin, second President of the College. Newlin Hall was last used as a dormitory in the mid-60s and since then has been used for offices with storage spaces. The College sold the building this year.

The present owners are planning to restore the complex and develop a mixed-use plan, including offices, restaurant and retail space. Plans for the courtyard include addition of a fountain, providing a focus for the pleasant plaza space enclosed by the smooth stucco walls. The owners plan to utilize the incentives of the Tax Reform Act of 1976 in this project.

Footnotes:

- 1 "Standard Oil Building, Whittier", Standard Oil Bulletin, March 1916.
- 2 "Standard Oil to Erect Fine Offices", Whittier Daily News, March 3, 1914.
- 3 "Steady Gain in Local Field", Whittier Daily News, June 4, 1914.
- 4 Gerald T. White, Formative Years in the Far West, 1962, pg. 414.
- 5 Ibid.

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"Fifth Annual Architectural Exhibit at Los Angeles", Elmer Grey, Architect and Engineer, XLIV:3, March 1916, pg. 64.

Pearce, Phyllis, Founders and Friends, Whittier, 1977.

"Standard Oil Building, Whittier", Standard Oil Bulletin, March 1916.

"The Oil Industry", Alva Starbuck, History of Whittier, Los Angeles, 1933.

White, Gerald T., Formative Years in the Far West, 1962.

"Whittier Permits", Southwest Builder and Contractor, February 28, 1914; March 6, 1915; January 11, 1924.

Interviews

Mr. Warren Johnson, retired Standard Oil employee, "Oral History Tape Transcription, July 12, 1972" and interview November 14, 1979.

Mr. Fred Downer, retired Standard Oil employee, interview November 13, 1979.

Mr. William Harrison, Architect, interview November 12, 1979.

Mrs. Blanche Richards, retired Standard Oil employee, interview November 15, 1979.

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(11/78)

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Photographs

"Newlin Hall", Whittier College Yearbooks 1943 - 1965.

Standard Oil Bulletin, March 1916.

Mrs. Blanche Richards, Whittier, California.



