

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 23 1983

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Pacific Coast Railway Company Grain Warehouse

and/or common Loomis Feed Store

2. Location

street & number 65 Higuera Street N/A not for publication

city, town San Luis Obispo N/A vicinity of

state California code 06 county San Luis Obispo code 079

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Pacific Coast Coal and Lumber

street & number 924 Westwood Boulevard, Suite 905

city, town Los Angeles N/A vicinity of state California 90024

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Government Center

street & number 1050 Monterey Street

city, town San Luis Obispo state California 93401

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 (file #0107-05C) federal state county local

depository for survey records City Hall, 990 Palm Street

city, town San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 state California

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The warehouse is a long, gable-roofed late Nineteenth Century trackside structure; light wood frame with corrugated iron panels covering both roofs and walls. The appearance of the exterior is little changed from that shown in early photos. The panels on a portion of the building have been painted, but most remain natural. The building once had several doors on Higuera Street, but those have been closed off by placing corrugated panels over former door openings (the widened street passes within a few feet of the structure making entry on this side impossible). The side facing the former trackage has its original door openings and loading dock intact. The closing of doors on one side is the only apparent significant alteration to the building over the years.

The free-standing rectangular warehouse's ground dimensions are approximately 360 feet by 50 feet. The building is on a raised brick foundation--the soft red bricks being of local manufacture from a Nineteenth Century Chinese-owned-and-operated brickyard. Most of the building consists of a long one-story shed, with gable roof supported by wood trusses; this area was used to store sacks of grain and beans awaiting shipment. Along the peak of the roof, at intervals, are six cylindrical vent structures which lend interesting rhythmic accents to the roofline.

The interior of this area is roughly finished: exposed wood framing and roof trusses which have been painted white, rough wood partitions which divide the interior into four separate rooms, and a floor paved with locally-procured bitumen from tar seeps near Pismo Beach. (These same tar seeps were used by Chumash Indians. The floor is apparently the original.)

At the southern end of the structure is a double-height portion, with its gable roof pitched at right angles to that of the long shed; this grain elevator type structure housed the grain and bean cleaning, handling, and sacking machinery, which was recently removed. An odd feature of the south end of this tall section is the pattern of the metal wall panels; they are installed as if the tall area was an afterthought tacked atop the shed. If it was an afterthought, it was an early one, for one interview source says the tower predates the turn of the century. An early photo shows this same curious panel pattern.

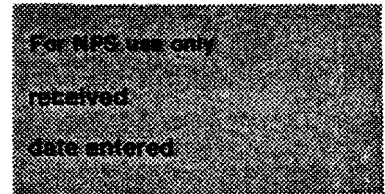
Along the east side of the building, which faced the tracks, a raised outdoor loading platform remains. Sliding barn-type doors open onto the platform. The platform has a brick side and is paved with the same local bitumen that covers interior floors.

The building's exterior remains without significant modifications,

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according to a source who has known it since 1915. One obvious non-original feature is a small asbestos-cement shingle-covered weigh station office attached to the end of the grain elevator; however, although this construction is not part of the original, the interview source cited above says the weigh station itself dates from the turn of the century or before.

One contributing building

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 checked="" 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/humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1892/3-1930 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY: The Pacific Coast Railway Company grain warehouse is significant for its association with the Nineteenth Century Pacific Coast Railway Company headquarters complex, and is an excellent example of a once commonplace wood frame, corrugated iron industrial building type in San Luis Obispo County. This structure is the one remaining building from the Pacific Coast Railway Company San Luis Obispo headquarters complex, and as such is a visual reminder of an era when the San Luis Obispo area was a major grain and bean-producing region. This building was the trans-shipment point from farm wagon to local narrow gauge trains which led to steamer wharves at Port Harford (now known as Port San Luis/Avila Beach). Architecturally, the warehouse is typical of a vanishing type of once common buildings that stretched out along local railroad tracks. It is the only structure of that type built specifically for grain handling still remaining within the city, and one of the last (in addition to probably being the oldest) within San Luis Obispo County.

Transportation into and out of San Luis Obispo County during the early years of settlement was by overland stage or coastal ship. For transporting bulky goods, both local agricultural products headed for export and the essential non-local imports, ship was the only choice. By 1870 it had become evident that a railroad linking coastal farm areas with ship landings would be a big boost to the local economy. Efforts to build such a railroad began in the early 1870s, but the first stretch from San Luis Obispo to Port Harford, about 10 miles, was not completed until 1876. This initial stretch of 3-foot narrow gauge railroad ran from the shipping wharves to the site of the present warehouse.

The railroad operated under various names at first, but in 1882 the name became the Pacific Coast Railway Company. (The Pacific Coast Railway Company was an arm of a firm that also ran steamships up and down the California coast.) From the warehouse site at Higuera and South Streets in San Luis Obispo, which became the Pacific Coast Railway Company nerve center, the rails were extended incrementally to the south: by 1881 to the rich agricultural areas of south San Luis Obispo County (Arroyo Grande), by 1882 to northern Santa Barbara County (Santa Maria and Los Alamos), and by 1887 to their ultimate terminus, Los Olivos. The effect of this 76-mile rail line was to give economic unity to

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the agricultural heartland of coastal Central California, and to establish San Luis Obispo and Port Harford as centers of this transportation and its dependent commerce. Approximately 30 miles of branch lines to a sugar factory and to sand and gravel pits in northern Santa Barbara County also gave the railroad an industrial base. The PCRC was important as well for passenger travel; its several trains each day provided good intra-regional passenger transport, plus connections to steamers. The PCRC was unchallenged by competition until the Southern Pacific reached San Luis Obispo from San Francisco in 1894; the SP connection to Los Angeles was not completed until 1901.

The PCRC remained important until the Great Depression. By then, in addition to suffering from the general economic troubles of the times, it was also being hurt by competition from a standard gauge railroad in the Santa Maria Valley, by truck transport, and by decline of the coastal steamer traffic. The route to Los Olivos was abandoned in 1936, and in a progression similar in reverse to that involved in building the railroad, abandonments and sales of assets proceeded northward, piece by piece, until the PCRC ceased to function altogether in 1942.

The grain storage warehouse was in continuous use by the PCRC from its construction until the railroad's demise. The City's historical resources survey provides an 1885 date for construction of the warehouse. A printed source (Nicholson) gives the date as 1892/3 based upon newspaper accounts of rebuilding after a fire; the old headquarters buildings burned to the ground in November 1892 and were completely replaced in the incredibly short time of less than four months, so important was it to have the railroad fully operational once again. In any event, it is clear the building is at least 94 years old. After the demise of the railroad, the warehouse and surrounding property passed into the hands of the Loomis family, a pioneer family whose patriarch A. M. Loomis had held the franchise in the 1870s and beyond for providing San Luis Obispo with its domestic water. The E. C. Loomis and Son feed, tack and agricultural supply store used the warehouse until the early 1980s. The property now belongs to a Southern California shopping center developer, and the building has been vacant and neglected for about two years.

The building is architecturally significant as the only remaining grain storage warehouse in San Luis Obispo. The largest similar structure in San Luis Obispo County, the wood and corrugated steel Farmer's Alliance along the Southern Pacific Tracks in Paso Robles, 30 miles north, was demolished several years ago. A smaller, younger, and less noteworthy steel-on-wood-frame example still stands, abandoned, along S.P. tracks in San Miguel, 38 miles north.

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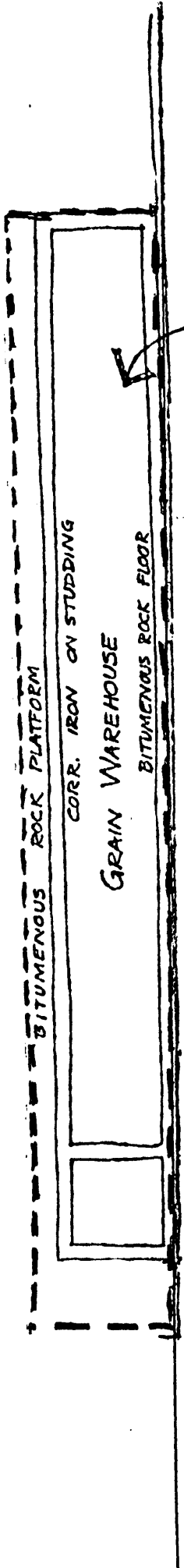
REFERENCES, continued.

San Luis Obispo Historic Resources Survey, City of San Luis Obispo, 1983

May 1903 maps of San Luis Obispo, California, Sanborn Map Co., 11 Broadway, New York City. Copy in San Luis Obispo City-County Library.

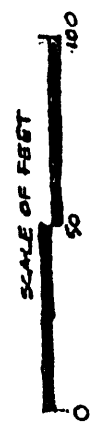
Interviews (10-25-85)

- Staff of County Historical Museum
- Pat Brown of San Luis Obispo, who worked for the PCRC, and whose father before had worked for it. Brown's recollections of the warehouse go back to 1915.



NOMINATED BUILDING

HIGUERA STREET

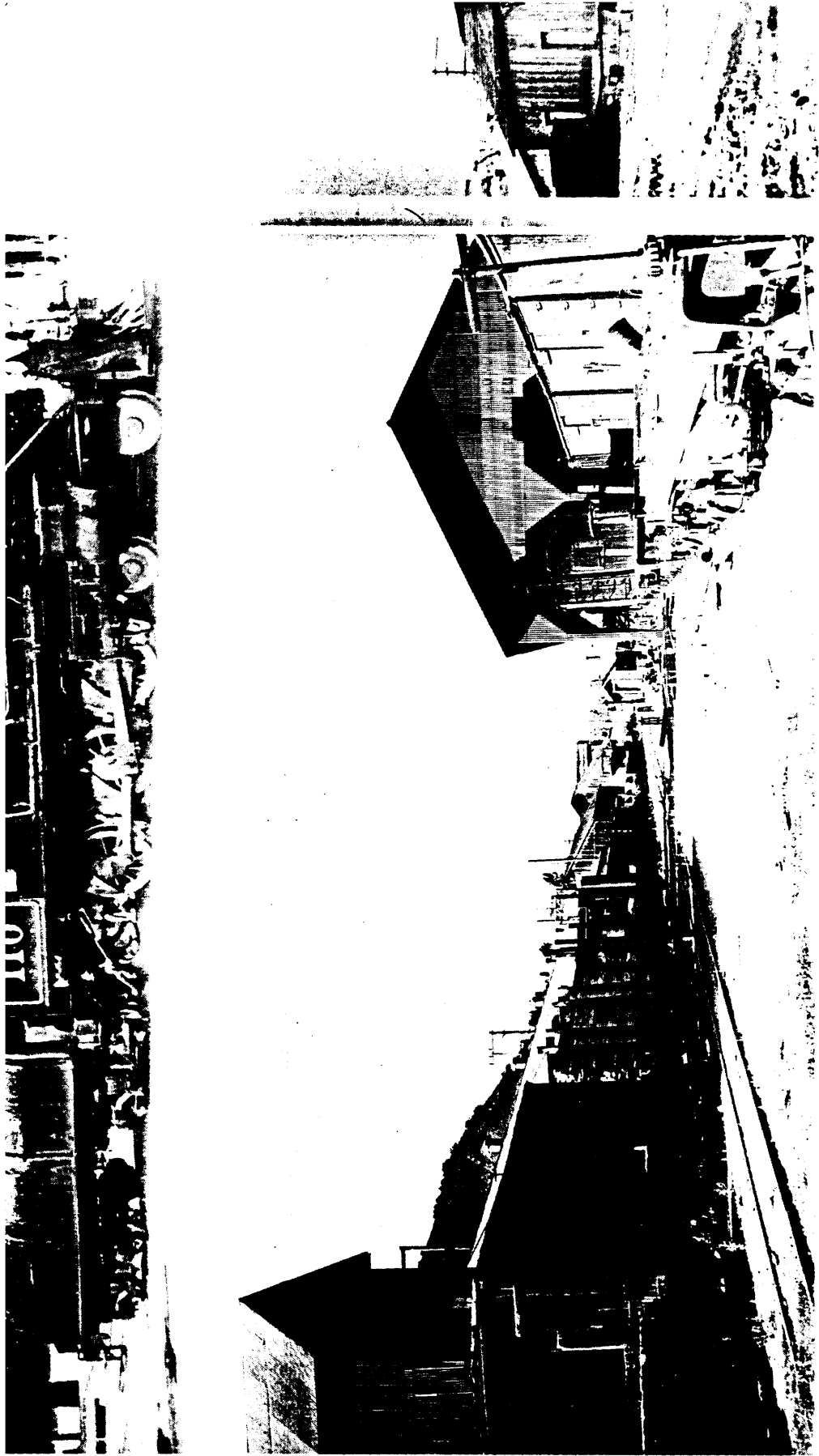


MADONNA ROAD

Property boundary - - - -

Pacific Coast Railway Warehouse
65 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo
California





Undated historic photo
Grain Warehouse at left:

Pacific Coast Railway Co. Grain Warehouse
65 Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo County
California

Gerald M. Best, Ships & Narrow Gauge Rails: The Story of the Pacific Coast
Compass No. 11-12. Re-issues, 1964 p. 66