

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUL 17 1984
DATE ENTERED AUG 30 1984

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC American Trona Corp. "Raw Salt Storage" Building

AND/OR COMMON
Trona Plant

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER East side of Pacific Ave., bet. 28th & 30th St.
(Fort MacArthur Military Reservation)

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN
Los Angeles (San Pedro)

___ VICINITY OF #32

STATE
California

CODE
06 (1970)

COUNTY
Los Angeles

CODE
037

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
___ DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	___ AGRICULTURE	___ MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	___ PRIVATE	___ UNOCCUPIED	___ COMMERCIAL	___ PARK
___ STRUCTURE	___ BOTH	___ WORK IN PROGRESS	___ EDUCATIONAL	___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___ SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	___ ENTERTAINMENT	___ RELIGIOUS
___ OBJECT	___ IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	___ GOVERNMENT	___ SCIENTIFIC
	___ BEING CONSIDERED	___ YES: UNRESTRICTED	___ INDUSTRIAL	___ TRANSPORTATION
		___ NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	___ OTHER:

AGENCY

Department of the Air Force, Headquarters Space Division (AFSC)

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (if applicable)

STREET & NUMBER

Los Angeles Air Force Station, P.O. Box 92960, Worldway Postal Center

CITY, TOWN
Los Angeles

___ VICINITY OF

STATE
California 90009

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Los Angeles County Recorder

STREET & NUMBER

227 North Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Los Angeles

STATE
California 90012

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

NA

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The American Trona Corp. "Raw Storage" Building is a rectangular industrial building measuring 301' 10" in length, 87' 6" in width and 48' 6" in height. The building is sited with its long axis running north/south. Externally, the structure is sheathed in heavy cement stucco which is terminated at the parapet by three overlapping bands of galvanized metal. The south, west, and north walls are punctured by a row of metal window units above, and by occasional wood double hung windows below. At the base of the south side are three large openings, and numerous openings and exterior wooden staircases occur in the east wall which faces onto the adjoining sheltered railroad tracks. A double-ramped delivery entrance, with a counterbalanced loading platform exists on the west side of the building, and on the north elevation external stairs now lead to the second or main level. The built-up roof of the building is hidden on all sides behind low parapets.

The interior of the building is divided into two floors - a ground level which is 14' 6" high, and the upper level which is 25' 6" high. The lower level consists of three long spaces (each 28' 6" wide), separated by a floor-to-ceiling reinforced concrete wall. Internal ramps and stairways now lead to the upper level. Currently, the upper level has been divided into two long spaces, supplemented by smaller office, hallway and storage spaces.

The foundation and the exterior and interior walls of the building's first floor are of reinforced concrete. The entire upper section of the building (including walls and roof) is of heavy timbered wood. The long walls are divided into 20 bays, each separated by 10" x 16" built-up wood piers. The framing between the piers is composed of horizontally placed 2" x 6"'s which were further strengthened by criss-cross bracing. The structural culmination of the interior is that of the elaborate structural system of wood trusses and supports which not only supported the roof, but the lower catwalks and the conveyor system (no longer in place) as well. Where the timbers join, connecting steel plates and bolts emphasize the exposed nature of the joinery.

The modular structural system of the building is open and dramatically apparent within, but the suggestion of structural modularism which was once apparent externally is now difficult to make out. As originally built, the metal factory sash windows (with center horizontal operational units) were arranged so that 3 window units (composed of two 9 light units to each side and a central 12 light unit) composed and declared the separation of each bay (with the exception of the bays at each end which in a Classical fashion remained solid). In addition, a projecting horizontal band stated the division between the lower concrete wall, and the wood framed, stucco sheathed wall above.

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As originally designed, there were no doors provided on either the long east or west walls. On the south elevation the three large doors still in existence are original, while in the north wall only one small ground level door was provided. Delivery to and from the interior was made to the adjoining railroad tracks to the east via two underground conveyor shafts (measuring 8' 0" high by 7' 6" in width). The records currently available do not indicate at what date the space over the railroad track was covered (along with its elaborate system of catwalks). The Cooling Plant building to the east was in existence at the time that the Trona Plant was built. The structural system used for the section over the railroad tracks is similar to the interior of the Trona Plant, so it seems likely that it was built at the same time, or immediately after the Plant itself. The modification of the building's windows, the injection of lower double hung windows appear to have taken place in 1943. In July of that year, the doors on the west side and counterbalanced loading platform were built.

The numerous remodelings of the interior space are only partially documented. The interior ramps date from July 1943, and probably other alterations were carried out at that time. Some of the present divisions of space were accomplished in 1950, 1952, 1958, and in 1960. None of those later alterations has appreciably compromised the strong expressive structuralism of the high second level space.

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1916 - 1917

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Abstract: The American Trona Corp. Plant in San Pedro represents an impressive example of an early West Coast industrial building in its use of exposed timber construction. The interior of the principal floor of this 1916 - 1917 industrial building openly exhibits a complexed modular structure of heavy wood timbers. The upper portions of the interior consisted of a "Piranesian" composition of suspended catwalks and open wood trusses. The Trona building is an industrial example of the open exposure of a wood structural frame which characterizes one of the dominant architectural traditions on the West Coast of the United States. Since we do not at this time possess anything approaching a history of wood industrial buildings of the West Coast, it is difficult to know what was built at the time of the Trona Plant, and what still remains today. The availability of large structural timbers made it possible to provide a high, large open space for the main floor of the Trona Plant. The size and strenght of these timbers used in truss configurations made it possible to construct and hang the elaborate system of catwalks and cranes from the roof. Structure and strict utilitarian needs certainly dictated the wall and roof structure of the Trona Plant, but as occasionally happens in industrial buildings, the results are aesthetically impressive. There may well have been other similar structures in Los Angeles and in the Bay Region, but to the knowledge of those writing this report, they no longer exist.

A. The Building:

1. Original Condition/Present Condition of Building:

As indicated in the description of the building (item number 7) the interior and the exterior of the building have been modified over the years in response to different needs. Nonetheless, the splendid exposed structure of the interior still remains basically intact. The timbered walls, truss ceiling, hung catwalks are all in place. On the ground level the three long bays formed by the 14' 0" walls of the reinforced concrete testify to the original use of this space. Externally the building was always simple (and even bland). The removal of the original pattern; of windows and substitution of other windows has compromised the exterior, but its basic configuration, with its three-banded galvanized metal parapet is in place. To the east the open roofed railroad delivery area, with its wood trusses and catwalks, extends the interior structure system outside the building.

2. The Building's Original Use:

The building was constructed by the American Trona Corp. of California as one of a group of structures which were to be used for the process

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/4 of an acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,1 3,8,0 8,4,0 3,7 3,7 3,8,7
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE David Gebhard, Lauren Bricker, David Bricker (Consultants)

ORGANIZATION

Beland/Associates, Inc.

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

16 S. Oakland Avenue, Suite #205

TELEPHONE

(213) 796-8093

CITY OR TOWN

Pasadena

STATE

California 91101

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

K. M. Ellen
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

GARY D. VEST

TITLE

Deputy for Environment & Safety

DATE

JUL 6, 1984

FOR NPS USE ONLY Assistant Secretary of the Air Force

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

8/30/84

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

[Signature]
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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(and storage) of salt potash to produce soda and potash fertilizer. The salt was mined at Searles Lake in eastern San Bernardino County and was then shipped by rail (Southern Pacific) to the plant facility constructed on the west side of San Pedro Bay. The Trona Plant building contained crushers, separators, and an elaborate network of above and below ground conveyor belts. The processing of the salt (or brine) separated the potash from the borax so that it could be used as agricultural fertilizer.

According to several individuals associated with the original American Trona Corp. (interviews conducted by Paul Secord, Beland/Associates, Inc.), the facility at San Pedro never went into full operation because a new method was developed to process the brine right at Searles Lake (communication dated March 1980 from Eugene L. Bark, San Pedro, California; and from William Gale, Whittier, California). According to Eugene L. Bark, only a few loads of brine were shipped from Searles Lake by train, and this was for experimental purposes to try out the machinery. In 1919 the machinery within the building was dismantled and shipped back to Trona, California. At the time that the San Pedro Plant was built and on down to the present it has been claimed that the Plant was built for the purpose of providing chemicals for the manufacture of munitions gunpowder. There is no concrete evidence which would indicate that this was the case. The Plant's production of potash (nitrogen), and its location next to the World War I activated Fort MacArthur could of course give rise to such assertions. While it is altogether possible that the Trona Plant may have been built with an eye towards the production of chemicals for gunpowder, there is no evidence that this actually took place.

3. The Building's Later Use:

It would appear that at the conclusion of the First World War (in late 1919) the American Trona Corp. gave up the lease on the land upon which the Plant and other buildings were built and these reverted back to the Southern Pacific Railroad Co. (The Pacific Electric). During the 1920s and 1930s the building was used as a saw mill and as a warehouse.¹ In 1943 the Trona Plant, along with a number of nearby structures, was acquired by The U.S. Army and it was added to adjacent Fort MacArthur.

(1) Edward B. Weil, Cultural Resources Investigation of Fort MacArthur, Middle Reservation, San Pedro, California, Los Angeles: Beland/Associates, Inc., 1979, p. 49.

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4. Comparison with Similar Resources within the State, Region or
Locality:

The interior space of the Trona Plant (measuring 301' 10" x 87' 6") presents one of the largest still existing wood structural spaces to be found in industrial buildings on the West Coast.

B. Site:

The site of the Trona Plant, on the west side of San Pedro Bay, has been an important location, from the late 18th Century to the present.

1784: Rancho San Pedro (75,000+ acres) was awarded to Juan Jose Dominguez by Pedro Fages, the military governor of Alta California.

1810: Jose Dolores Sepulveda obtained permission from Manuel Gutierrez, who had gained control of Rancho San Pedro, to run cattle on that part of the Ranch that later became Rancho De Los Palos Verdes.

1817: Cristobal Dominguez, heir of Juan Jose Dominguez, objected to the presence of Sepulveda; petitioned for the re-grant of Rancho San Pedro.

1822: Rancho San Pedro formally re-granted to Cristobal Dominguez by Gov. Pablo Vicente Sola (The Republic of Mexico).

1834: Jose Loreto Sepulveda and Juan Sepulveda, heirs of Jose Dolores Sepulveda, awarded Palos Verdes area of Rancho San Pedro by Gov. Jose Figueroa.

1853: Rancho Los Palos Verdes confirmed by the United States Board of Land Commissioners. Entire Rancho San Pedro surveyed by Henry Hancock.

1880: "Town of San Pedro Harbor: Property of San Pedro Harbor, Dock and Land Association and the Southern Pacific Railroad Reservation" filed.

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1888: San Pedro Harbor, Dock and Land Association sells 70 acres (including Trona site) to the Southern Pacific Railroad Extension Company.

1915?: Site of the Plant leased by Pacific Electric (?) to the American Trona Corp.

1942: U.S. Government acquired 45.07 acres, including site of the Trona Plant for the expansion of Fort MacArthur.

The industrial nature of the area around the Trona Plant has remained basically the same since the Southern Pacific Railroad completed its line into the area (1888). The addition, after 1942, of U.S. Army buildings has not apparently changed the site, except that parts of it are now landscaped with grass, trees and curbs.

C. Industrial History:

The American Trona Corp. was owned by (Baron) Alfred de Ropp, who in 1908 discovered a method of separating potash and soda from the brine of Searles Lake in San Bernardino County, California. From 1908 through 1913 the company was named the California Trona Company; from 1913 through 1926, it was named the American Trona Corp.; and in 1926 it was acquired by the American Potash and Chemical Corp. The mining and manufacturing of potash and soda represents one of the highly significant industrial activities of California.

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United States Senate

"United States Military Reservation at or near San Pedro, Los Angeles
County, California,"

Document No. 144, Congress Series Set 3600, Feb. 18, 1898, pp. 1-12.

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The only land included within this nomination is that occupied specifically by the Trona Plant, the Covered Railroad Delivery entrance to the east and the concrete ramped truck delivery entrance on the west side of the buildings. The proposed boundary lines are indicated on the enclosed map entitled: "Fort MacArthur Middle Reservation." The western line of the proposed designated area runs parallel to Pacific Avenue, 130' 0" to the east. For convenience the southern end would be a continuation of the north side of 30th Street if that street was continued into the Fort MacArthur Military Reservation. The described rectangle of nominated property measures approximately 125' 0" x 355' 0".

American Trona Corp.
"Raw Salt Storage Bldg."
Fort MacArthur Military Reservation
San Pedro, Los Angeles, Calif.
East and West Walls; Working
Drawings
Dated: August 3, 1917
Location of Drawings: Fort MacArthur
Military Reservation

American Trona Corp.
"Raw Salt Storage Bldg."
Fort MacArthur Military Reservation
San Pedro, Los Angeles, Calif.
Cross Section: Working Drawings
Dated: August 3, 1917
Location of Drawings: Fort MacArthur
Military Reservation