



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: June 20, 2013 REPORT NO. HRB-13-028

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board  
Agenda of June 27, 2013

SUBJECT: **ITEM #14—AZTEC BREWERY ARTWORK (HRB #223)**

APPLICANT: City of San Diego

LOCATION: In the Possession of the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture

DESCRIPTION: Consider amending the historical resource designation of the Aztec Brewery Artwork by removing the designation from specified elements of the collection.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Amend the designation of the Aztec Brewery Artwork collection, designated as HRB Site #223, by removing specified elements of the collection from the designation. Elements to be removed from the designation are limited to 19 armless chairs; 3 arm chairs; plaster fragment pieces that belong to the Aztec calendar; plaster fragment pieces belonging to an alcove at the south end of the rathskeller; arched door frames painted green and white; four rustic wooden tables; five painted wooden table extension panels; and approximately 206 flat, ceiling and faux beam panels. This recommendation is based on the following finding:

Since the designation process in 1988, there has been the discovery of earlier misinformation and a change in circumstances surrounding the original designation. Specifically, several pieces in the ensemble, primarily plaster fragments and furniture, are either damaged beyond reasonable repair, have deteriorated beyond reasonable conservation, or have been determined to not be significant enough to warrant their inclusion in the designation.

## BACKGROUND

Originally located in Barrio Logan at 2301 Main Street, the Savage Tire Factory was constructed in 1911 by A.W. Savage. The buildings were Utilitarian in design and constructed of brick. The

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complex originally consisted of two buildings designed by the Quayle Brothers. At the time of construction, the three story building was said to be the largest and best built structure of its kind in San Diego.

In 1932, the Savage Tire Company Plant was acquired by the Aztec Brewing Company. Originally started in Mexico in 1921, the Aztec Brewing Company was the maker of ABC Beer. This beer was very popular in Mexico, and in 1929, won a gold medal at the International Exposition in Seville, Spain. When Prohibition ended in the United States, the owners of the company moved the brewery's equipment and people across the border into the newly converted Savage Tire Company Plant.

In 1934, the owners hired Jose Moya del Pino to decorate the walls of the rathskeller with murals. Moya del Pino was a Spanish artist of international renown who resided in the San Francisco area. The subject of the murals centered on Aztec Indian life and the ingredients of beer, including a large painting of "Human Sacrifice" on the north wall of the room. The artist spent two months painting the various elements in the rathskeller.

The Aztec Brewery was in operation until 1948 when it was sold to Altes Brewing Company which closed its doors in the 1950s. After the brewery closure the buildings were predominantly used as warehouses.

At the March 23, 1988 Historical Resources Board hearing, the motion to designate exterior of the Savage Tire Factory/Aztec Brewery Buildings failed. However, the motion to designate the interior artwork of the rathskeller passed. The interior designation included "murals, paintings, architectural elements, doors, tile work, bar, stained glass windows and frames, beams, chandeliers, wall finishes, statue, plaster work and any other elements that contributed to the ensemble."

During the course of the hearing, an owner's representative informed the Board that they had already authorized the removal of the mural and other artwork from the building. The owner stated that their intent was to preserve and donate the material to an organization that could maintain and display the artwork.

During the hearing, the Harborview Community Council requested that the Board reconsider the designation of the exterior of the buildings at the earliest available Board meeting. During the April 27<sup>th</sup> hearing, the Board voted to rehear the matter. At the May 25, 1988, the HRB reconsidered the buildings and the motion to designate passed.

After the HRB decision, the matter was appealed to the City Council. At the City Council meeting on June 6, 1988, the designation of the buildings was overturned, but the rathskeller artwork designation was upheld on the condition that the artwork be donated to the City.

Once the designation of the buildings was overturned, the process for their removal went forward. In March 1990, the City Council created Resolution R-275258 (Attachment 1) to provide a permanent site for the rathskeller ensemble. The City Council also initiated the

Mercado del Barrio redevelopment project around the same time, and noted that the ensemble should be placed within it to provide a permanent site in the Barrio Logan community.

During the past 23 years, the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture (Commission), which oversees the care and maintenance of the City's Civic Art Collections, has maintained and preserved the ensemble. As part of the preservation efforts, the Commission had the ensemble appraised in 2007 (Attachment 2). The appraisal report discusses the current condition of each piece in the ensemble and provides historic photos, when possible, indicating where the piece was located. Condition of the various aspects of the ensemble range from very poor to stable and commentary is provided on each piece.

Presently, the Mercado del Barrio project is near completion and the City would like to restore a large portion of the ensemble for installation and display in the restaurant space. Given the condition of a number of the pieces, the Commission would like to remove the designation on a portion of the pieces (Attachment 3) that would allow for the Commission to initiate a deaccession evaluation of the works as outlined in SDMC 26.0701 and the Commission's Collections Management Policy for the Civic Art Collection. The majority of the ensemble being maintained by the Commission and still included in the designation are outlined in Attachment 4.

## ANALYSIS

San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) Section 123.0205 states that the "Historical Resources Board may amend or rescind any designation of a historical resource in the same manner and procedure as was followed in the original designation. This action may be taken only if there is new information, the discovery of earlier misinformation, or a change in circumstances surrounding the original designation."

Since the designation process in 1988, there has been the discovery of earlier misinformation and a change in circumstances surrounding the original designation. During the designation process, a number of the murals and artworks were removed from the walls without due consideration which has contributed to their severe state of deterioration. When the various pieces were removed from the wall surfaces there was little consideration as to how to treat them for restoration at a later date. A number of the pieces were removed as fragments. When the HRB initially visited the site and viewed the interior, the rathskeller was intact. During the hearing, the owners mentioned that they had removed the murals and artwork, but there was no discussion about their condition after the removal. Due to the process of removal, a number of the pieces are damaged beyond reasonable repair, have deteriorated beyond reasonable conservation, or have been determined not significant enough to warrant their inclusion. Additionally, a number of the pieces experienced heavy use during their tenure in the rathskeller – some tables and chairs feature broken slats and seats. Elements of the collection that are proposed for removal from the designation include: 19 armless chairs; 3 arm chairs; plaster fragment pieces that belong to the Aztec calendar; plaster fragment pieces belonging to an alcove at the south end of the rathskeller; arched door frames painted green and white; four rustic wooden tables; five painted wooden table extension panels; and approximately 206 flat, ceiling and faux beam panels. Due to their state of deterioration, these pieces are no longer able to convey their significance.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Board amend the designation of the Aztec Brewery Artwork collection by removing the designation from the aforementioned elements of the collection.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted, it is recommended that the Board amend the designation of the Aztec Brewery Artwork collection, designated as HRB Site #223, by removing the designation from specified elements of the collection, due to the discovery of earlier misinformation and a change in circumstances surrounding the original designation. Elements to be removed from the designation are limited to 19 armless chairs; 3 arm chairs; plaster fragment pieces that belong to the Aztec calendar; plaster fragment pieces belonging to an alcove at the south end of the rathskeller; arched door frames painted green and white; four rustic wooden tables; five painted wooden table extension panels; and approximately 206 flat, ceiling and faux beam panels. The remaining portion of ensemble would continue to be maintained as HRB Site #223 and be subject to the review and approval consistent with the City's Historical Resources Regulations. Any future improvements or installations would be subject to review and approval by historic resources staff.

for   
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Jodie Brown, AICP  
Senior Planner

  
Cathy Winterrowd  
Assistant Deputy Director/HRB Liaison

JB/cw

#### Attachments:

1. City Council Resolution R-275258 (under separate cover)
2. Appraisal Report: Aztec Brewery Rathskeller Art and Furnishings, Report Dated September 17, 2007 (under separate cover)
3. City of San Diego Civic Art Collection—Pieces Proposed for Removal from the Designation (under separate cover)
4. Appraisal of Aztec Brewery Art and Furnishings—Pieces Proposed for Retention (under separate cover)
5. Draft Resolution

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A  
ADOPTED ON 6/27/2013

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 3/23/1988, and designated the Aztec Brewery Artwork collection which included the interior of the rathskeller: murals, architectural elements, doors, paintings, tile work, bar, furniture, stained glass windows and frames, beams, chandeliers, wall finishes, statue, plaster work and any other elements that contribute to the ensemble, held in the possession the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture; and

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 4/27/1988, and voted to reconsider the designation of the Aztec Brewery building; and

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 5/25/1988, and designated the Savage Tire Factory/Aztec Brewery building located at 2301 Main Street, San Diego California; and

WHEREAS, the designation of the Savage Tire Factory/Aztec Brewery building and Aztec Brewery Artwork was appealed to the City Council of the City of San Diego; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/6/1988, and by Resolution R-271111 (later amended by Resolution R-272019) the City Council upheld the decision of the Historical Resources Board in its designation of the Aztec Brewery murals/artwork ensemble and granted the appeal and overturned the decision of the Historical Resources Board in its designation of the Savage Tire Factory/Aztec Brewery building, subject to the condition that Northern Automotive Corporation donate the murals/artwork ensemble to the City of San Diego; and

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 6/27/2013, to consider amending the designation of **Historical Resources Board Site #223, the Aztec Brewery Artwork** (owned by the City of San Diego) held in the possession the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, by removing specified elements of the collection from the designation due to the discovery of earlier misinformation and a change in circumstances surrounding the original designation; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, specified elements of the collection (19 armless chairs; 3 arm chairs; plaster fragment pieces that belong to the Aztec calendar; plaster fragment pieces belonging to an alcove at the south end of the rathskeller; arched door frames painted green and white; four rustic wooden tables; five painted wooden table extension panels; and approximately 206 flat, ceiling and faux beam panels) are removed from the designation of **Historical Resources Board Site #223, the Aztec Brewery Artwork**, and

WHEREAS, all other elements of the collection included in the designation of **Historical Resources Board Site #223, the Aztec Brewery Artwork**, will remain in the designation and are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) and as such any modifications shall be approved by the City,

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its amendment of the designation of the Aztec Brewery Artwork to remove specified elements of the collection (19 armless chairs; 3 arm chairs; plaster fragment pieces that belong to the Aztec calendar; plaster fragment pieces belonging to an alcove at the south end of the rathskeller; arched door frames painted green and white; four rustic wooden tables; five painted wooden table extension panels; and approximately 206 flat, ceiling and faux beam panels) on the following finding:

- (1) Since the designation process in 1988, there has been the discovery of earlier misinformation and a change in circumstances surrounding the original designation. Specifically, several pieces in the ensemble, primarily plaster fragments and furniture, are either damaged beyond reasonable repair, have deteriorated beyond reasonable conservation, or have been determined to not be significant enough to warrant their inclusion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby amends the historical designation of the Aztec Brewery Artwork to remove the specified elements of the collection; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote: N/A

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN LEMMO, Chair  
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND  
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,  
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Corrine Neuffer  
Deputy City Attorney

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