

WASHINGTON

**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

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

1. Name

historic Yaker House and Union Brewery
and/or common Netzhammer House and Bluff City Brewery

2. Location

street & number 1421-31 Pearl Street N/A not for publication
city, town Alton N/A vicinity of congressional district 56th
state Illinois code 012 county Madison code 119

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Bluff City Brewery, Inc.
street & number 1421-31 Pearl Street
city, town Alton N/A vicinity of state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Madison County Courthouse
street & number
city, town Edwardsville state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alton Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1967 federal state county local
depository for survey records Hayner Library
city, town Alton state Illinois

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good (house)	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair (brewery)	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Yakel-Netzhammer House is of vernacular brick construction with German antecedents. Its heavy original Germanic styling has been muted by simplification of the dormers and elimination of the parapets and eave brackets. The 2 1/2 story soft red brick (now painted) residence has a symmetrical five-opening front (east) facade with a double doored first floor entrance beneath an ornamented iron balcony at the second floor level. Projected brick courses emphasize the gable ends and front and rear eave lines of the house. Five gabled-roofed dormers, three in front and two in the rear, contain round head windows. All the 6 over 6 windows in the above ground original house have ornamental jack arches and shoulders. The east (front) and north (street) sides of the house, the most visible to the passerby, retain the style and character of the structure, although the victorian architectural elements already mentioned as well as a porch beneath the balcony have been removed. Although a bathroom and two-story garage have been connected by hallways to the rear of the house, the addition is recessed toward the southwest corner and obscures less than one fourth of the original rear elevation of the house.

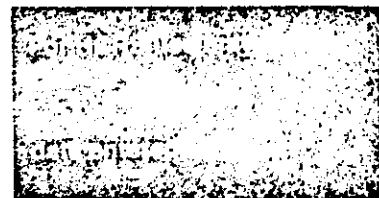
The house is situated on a courtyard-like emplacement above the street and brewery yard. A cut stone-with-finished-limestone-cap wall retains the emplacement on the north and east, and on the south and west a high stone wall (added by the Netzhammers) retains the hillside which rises behind the house. The original wrought iron fence on the retaining wall still borders the yard on north and east; red brick walks and red sandstone steps cross the lawn and lead to iron gates and stone steps at the two entrances to the yard. The stone north facade of what is probably the oldest building in the brewery complex, walls the entire south side of the front yard. The ten-to-fifteen acre original property was originally not entered from Brown Street, but from the east end of Union (as late as 1868-9 George Yakel was listed as living at Union near 6th) and the house was built to face the southeast. Later, Pearl street was constructed and now runs past the north side of the house.

On the interior of the original part of the house a center hall runs from front to rear on all three floors; in the hallways an open staircase rises continuously from first floor to attic. The second floor was designed as the main floor of the house; the ceilings are high (ten feet), the woodwork wider and most elaborate, and all windows are paneled underneath. To the north of the hallway are two rooms (originally double parlors with folding doors between them) and to the south are two bedrooms. All rooms open onto the hall. On the first floor, originally the living-dining room was to the south and the kitchen to the north. The south west room (being completely under-ground) was a food storage cellar with a dirt floor. The northwest room had a large bake oven and a sink in diagonally opposite corners. The floor was brick in this room. Ceilings on the first floor are nine feet high. The lighted attic story houses two bedrooms. (George Yakel's youngest daughter, sometime before her death in 1943, drew plans of each floor of the house as it was when she lived there as a girl.)

Besides enlarging the brewery, the Netzhammer family made many changes to the house during their nearly 100-year tenure. They had the adjacent hillside removed, had the high retaining wall built on the south and west sides to form a wide airway and added the garage wing. In 1936 the house was extensively remodeled on the inside and air conditioning was installed (the first in Alton). The first floor became the main floor; the kitchen was

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

(Con't) Description

relocated, three bathrooms and several closets were added; the living room acquired French doors (on the south) and ceiling moulding. The staircase and second floor woodwork (indeed most of the interior woodwork) were not altered; the attic rooms still retain the original doors, box locks and porcelain and Bennington door knobs. The house was heated by the brewery heating plant until the 1970's when a furnace room was excavated beneath the southwest corner of the original house.

The Yakel-Netzhammer house was vacant for a few years in the 1970's but since May 1980 it has been used as Alpha House, a not-for-profit Alcoholism Rehabilitation Center. Several changes have been made to conform to safety rules; a metal fire escape has been constructed on the south side of the house (not the street side); double metal doors have been installed in front of the still-in-place main entrance doors and the stairway has been enclosed in a wall on the first and second floors (the railing and newel post are still intact).

The thirteen brewery buildings in stone, brick and some wood, built between establishment of the brewery in 1836 and its closing in the 1950's, were erected to house the Union Brewery and its successor, the Bluff City Brewery. The stone buildings, the fermenting basement (A) and the joined together stone building(s) (C), appear on the 1854 Map of Alton and appear to date to the late 1830's or the 1840's. The building near the house (A) is a 2 story stone gable-roofed structure, built into the hillside so that the eaves in the frame west gable end are only four feet above ground level. Original segmental and round arched openings on the north facade have been filled in to make a solid stone wall. On the south, the depression made by the spray pond reveals the upper part of the building's underground cellar. The east end of the structure is extended by an 1860's brick addition (F). The dashed lines west of building A indicate the size and position of underground cellars (B) which are 2 stories deep, stone walled, and reported to be stone-floored and arch-ceilinged. An adjacent above ground building (Ba) provides ventilation to the cellars.

The stone portions of the buildings labeled C were also probably built in the 1840's. It is difficult to determine the sequence of alterations, additions and subtractions, joinings, extensions of stories, etc., in this irregularly shaped joined-together building(s). The "a" portion of C with its flat arched wood lintels seems very early; the west side of Cb has segmental arch openings filled with stone and later flat-arched openings. The pipe room (Cc) has a frame board and batten west gable end with an alteration in the roof line. One of the few frame constructions is the coal room (D) a two-story circa 1860 addition. Still later the frame clapboarding was continued across the upper part of the original stone building to the north (Ca) making an original 1 1/2 story building 2-storied. The southernmost stone wall of these joined buildings has been much repaired with brick infilling. Originally the center core of the group was of 2 stories with a hip roof; 1 1/2 storied extensions to the north and east had shed roofs. At present, most of building C is 2-storied with some shed, and some gable roofed sections. The brick addition, E, was probably built in the 1940's, however its original use is unknown.

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 3

(con't) Description

The packing-wash room building (F) was built in the 1860's to join and extend stone building A eastward. Building F is a 2 1/2 story red brick structure with hip roof, louvered rectangular cupola, wide overhanging eaves, and segmental-arch attic windows. Its brick construction displays the directness of early industrial design. Single shutters, X-braced and contrastingly painted, lend an "old world" flavor to the building. A shed roof extends from the east facade between the 1st and 2nd story to shelter a loading platform. This building, easily the most prominent in the brewery complex, is very little altered, having lost only its weather-vane atop the cupola. A narrow red brick 2 1/2 story 1890's building (G) fills the space between the packing-washroom building (F) and the 1840's stone building (C). The front of building G continues the east facade line of building F. Double-tiered, X-braced shutter panels, which appear to cover former windows at the second story level, repeat the decorative motif of building F, and the same panels appear on the rear (west) facade.

A large metal stack approximately 95 feet high and 4 feet in diameter rises from the ground behind and towers over the boiler room building (H), which still houses boiler machinery. Of three quarters brick, and one quarter frame (south facade) with a continuous metal gable roof overall, building H is in poor condition.

The L-shaped combination garage and cold storage structure (I) is a single story brick, stone, concrete, and wood building. Heavy decorative brackets below the wide roof overhang are found around the entire short leg of the L (cold storage section) but along only part of the long leg of the L which contains the garage. The east end of the garage has a poured projected concrete foundation which joins the projected stone foundation of the balance of the building, and although the entire building is constructed of the same four-course rowlock brick, the concrete foundation section appears to be a later addition. Concrete parapets and round windows which appear on the gable ends of the cold storage room and on the east end of the garage indicate a construction date in the early twentieth century.

The largest single building of the complex, the beer warehouse (J) is a single story red brick 1930's building with a part stone, part concrete foundation and a flat roof. Projected brick courses between regularly spaced windows form a continuous band around the building. On the south facade the design of a slightly projecting center section of brick and concrete gives an art moderne look to the main entrance of the building. The brewery's progression down Pearl Street ends with a small red brick one story office building (K) constructed in a 1930's to 1940's style similar to the beer warehouse (J). The cooler-washroom building (L) is an almost square, red brick, single story 1940's structure joined to the north side of the 1860's packing-washroom building (F). Building L has a fine stone foundation and ^{HAS} a loading dock (sheltered by a shallow roof and supported by short stone piers) across its entire Pearl Street (north) facade. Although the building forms an interesting courtyard aspect (along with the venerable stone building A) to the front yard of the house, the building is a more intrusive than a decorative element at the entrance to the brewery yard.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	House 1863			Industrial Archeology
Specific dates	Brewery from 1836	Builder/Architect	UNKNOWN	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

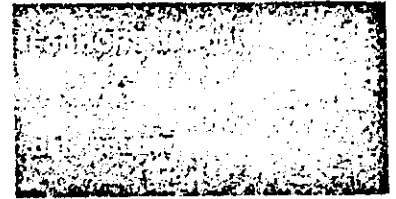
The Yakel-Netzhammer house and Union-Bluff City Brewery are an excellent example of a well-preserved mid-19th century family-owned brewery complex built and operated by German immigrants. In 145 years the property has been in the possession of only two owner-proprietor families, and the property still belongs to the second of the two families (1836-1981). Once located beyond the city limits, the Yakel-Netzhammer property is now surrounded by the city of Alton; however, because of its peculiar location, it still retains its look of a separate enclave. The house and brewery buildings are isolated in a triangular piece of ground, bounded by three streets (Union, Brown and Pearl), insulated by plotted but never developed lots along Brown Street, and provided with a backdrop of steep wooded hillside and park-like cemetery. The brewery buildings reflect the natural diversity of industrial structure design over a 116-year period. In the 4.8 acre site there is a progression of early establishment and intermediate expansion as well as recent effort to meet changing needs and to keep up with technological advances in the brewing industry (1836-1952).

The Yakel-Netzhammer House is a fine example of a vernacular brick construction with German antecedent. The early brewery buildings are a good example, not only of the fine but simple craftsmanship practiced under the rigorous conditions of a late frontier period, but they represent the history of an early brewery and its role as one of Illinois' early industries. In 1836 Philip Yakel (Jeckel, Yeakel, Jackel, Jeckel) came from Germany to settle in Alton with his wife and young children. Soon after he arrived he established Alton's first brewery (Union Brewery) east of the city. Philip Yakel built a modest dwelling (since demolished) and his first brewery buildings in a flat-bottomed valley of Shields Branch to take advantage of the superior water which came from Rock Springs located about a mile north. Unlike most other Germans who came in later waves of immigration, the Yakel family came with trunkloads of possessions (some of which were lost at sea) and sufficient funds to start a business. It was not an auspicious time to start a business in Alton, Illinois. Incredible schemes to supplant St. Louis as the metropolis of the mid-west nearly bankrupted the branch of the Illinois state bank in Alton; a general revulsion was caused by the Lovejoy riots; the Panic of 1837 caused general bankruptcy which set Alton back for years. Nevertheless, the brewery prospered. Philip's son, George C. Yakel (who came from Germany when a child of three) assisted his father in the brewery, became familiar with the details of the business and took over its operation when his father died in 1854. George Yakel had the present house built in 1863; he was elected alderman to the Alton City Council from the fifth ward from 1860 to 1868; he died in 1873.

Note: A descendant of George Yakel, Mrs. Carmel Mann, has a letter written in German script (but translated into English) dated September 1864 which says, "you wrote that you have built a new house (8 rooms) how fine--is enough for a dozen children".

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

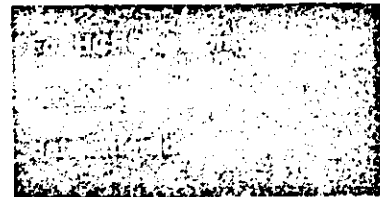
(con't) Significance

Family tradition holds that George Yakel built the house to lift the spirits of his wife, Elizabeth, who was despondent over the loss of two children (the first in 1859). In addition Mrs. Mann has 3 invoices from St. Louis and Alton firms (dated April 9, May 1, and May 22, all in 1863) listing pieces of furniture, ingrain carpeting, damask drapery material, etc., all purchased to furnish the new house.

George Yakel's widow continued to live in the house for a few years but in 1882 William Netzhammer, Sr., a brew master at the old Bremer Brewery in St. Louis, acquired the property. Netzhammer had learned the brewing business from his father in Baden, Germany. After a stint in the army and participation in the Franco-Prussian War, William Netzhammer immigrated to the United States in 1873; for a while he worked as a brewer in Louisville, Kentucky; from there he went to St. Louis where he lived until he purchased the inactive Union Brewery with a partner, Charles Shibi. A year later Netzhammer bought out his partner's interest and was sole proprietor of the renamed Bluff City Brewery until his death in 1908. Then his son, William Netzhammer, Jr. ran the brewery, still later it was managed by Emil Netzhammer; more buildings were erected through the years, machinery was installed for the manufacture of ice and cooling of storage cellars (ice making was a thriving business before the introduction of electric refrigeration). Beer was made in the Bluff City brewery continuously until 1918 when war time restrictions prohibiting production went into effect. During prohibition the Bluff City Brewery was the only downstate Illinois brewery (the other four were in Chicago) licensed to produce near-beer. After repeal in 1933 the brewery resumed its regular brewing. Plant capacity was 20,000 barrels a year by July 1952 when the brewery was closed because of a breakdown in refrigeration machinery which was judged too costly to repair.

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



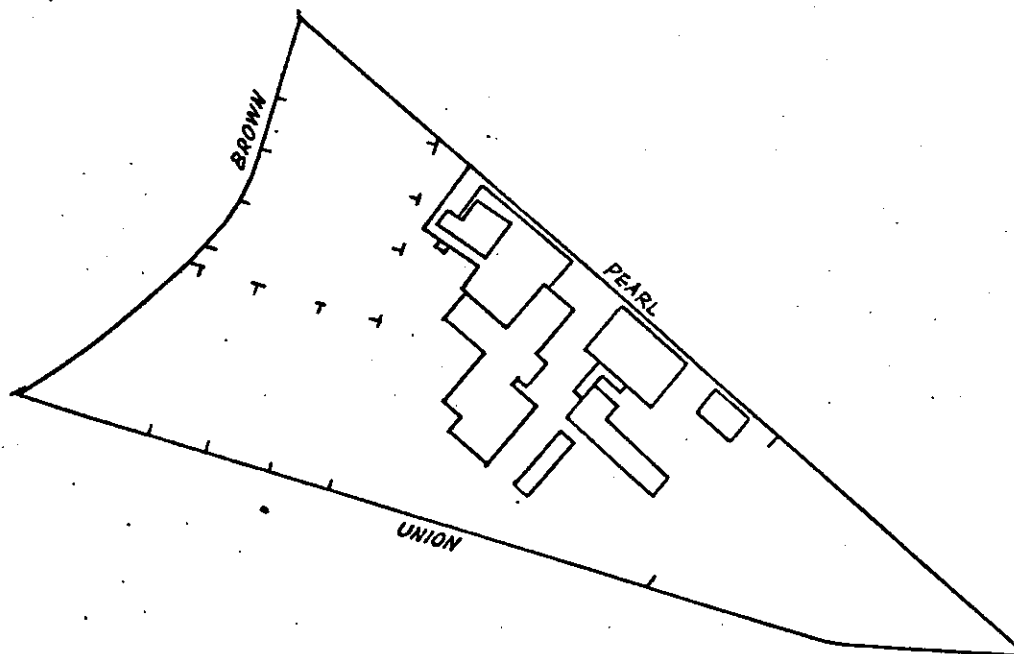
Continuation sheet

Item number 9

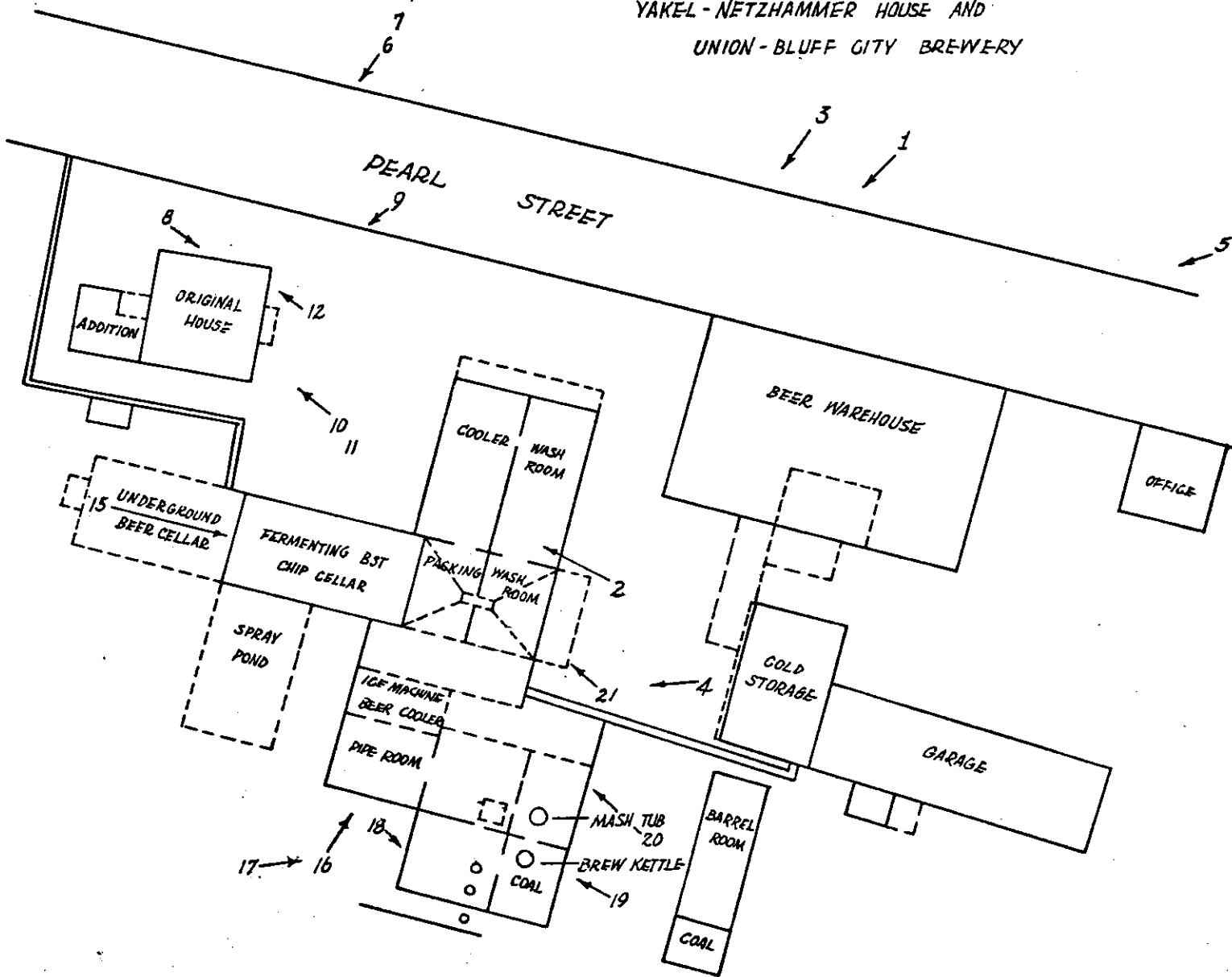
Page 2

(Con't) Major Bibliographical References

- Coombs and Elgin, Alton Historic Buildings Survey, 1967, Alton Rotary Club.
 Hair, James T., Gazetteer of Madison County, 1866, Alton, Illinois, James T. Hair
 Holland, Alton City Directory For 1868-9, Chicago, Illinois, Western Publishing Co.
 Harris, W.B., Directory of the City of Alton North and Upper Alton, 1889-90 Alton, Illinois,
 W.B. Harris and Co.
 McEvoy and Bowron, Alton City Directory and Business Mirror for 1858, Alton, Illinois
 McEvoy and Bowron
 Mann, Mary Lou, Recollections, family papers, photographs (Mrs. Mann is Philip Yakels
 Great-great grand daughter)
 Norton, W.T., Centennial History of Madison County, 1912, Chicago and New York, Lewis
 Publishing Co.
 Owens, E. F., Alton City Directory and Classified Business Directory for Madison County,
 1874, Alton, Illinois, E.R. Owens
 Pryor, Alton City Directory, 1876-7, Alton, Illinois, Pryor and Co.



YAKEL-NETZHAMMER HOUSE AND
UNION-BLUFF CITY BREWERY



9. Major Bibliographical References

Alton Telegraph, Jan. 23, 1882; Dec. 21, 1883; Mar. 28, 1990; April 3, 1890; April 29, 1896;
 Jan 2, 1918; Feb. 16, 1918; April 16, 1919; July 24, 1952; May 15, 1980
Benson A. T., Directory of the City of Alton North And Upper Alton, 1891-92, Upper Alton,
 Illinois, A.T. Benson and Co.
Brink, W.C., History of Madison County, 1882, Edwardsville, Illinois, W.R. Brink and Co.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 4.8 Acres

Quadrangle name Alton, Il. Mo.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 11.5 7459.40 43084.10
 Zone Easting Northing

B.
 Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification In Hunters North Liberty Addition, lots 1,2,3, and 4 on Union bounded on the west by Brown street; also lots 1,2,3 and 4 on Brown. Also 2 1/2 acres known as the Brewery Tract less pria tol out of the southeast corner of the Brewery Tract. (obtained from the Alton Tax Assessor's Office.)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ruth Means

organization

date January 1981

street & number R.R. #2, Box 115

telephone (618) 259-6710

city or town Alton

state Illinois

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature David [Signature]

title Director, Ill. Dept. of Conservation

date 4/13/81

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration