

## ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

### Staff Report

**ADDRESS:** 120 W Washington St/117 S Ashley St, Application Number HDC13-046

**DISTRICT:** Main Street Historic District

**REPORT DATE:** March 8, 2013 for the March 14, 2013 HDC meeting

**REPORT PREPARED BY:** Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

**REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE:** Monday, March 11, 2013

	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>APPLICANT</b>
<b>Name:</b>	WWSA, LLC	Huron Sign Co
<b>Address:</b>	3075 Charlevoix Dr, Suite 10 Grand Rapids, MI 49546	663 S Mansfield St Ann Arbor, MI
<b>Phone:</b>		(734) 483-2000

**BACKGROUND:** This three-story brick building was constructed in 1908 with five storefronts: 114, 116, 118, and 120 West Washington, and 117 South Ashley around the corner. The building wraps around two sides of 122 West Washington (formerly the Del Rio), which was constructed much earlier. The original occupant of 117 West Ashley and 120 West Washington was M. Staebler's grocery store. A major fire in 1975 gutted half of the building and took two years to rebuild. The front facades at 118-120 W Washington and 117 S Ashley were altered to their present appearance in 1976. That half of the building was occupied for 67 years by the Old German restaurant, until 1995 when the restaurant closed and the current occupant, Grizzly Peak, moved in. (See related articles at end of staff report.)

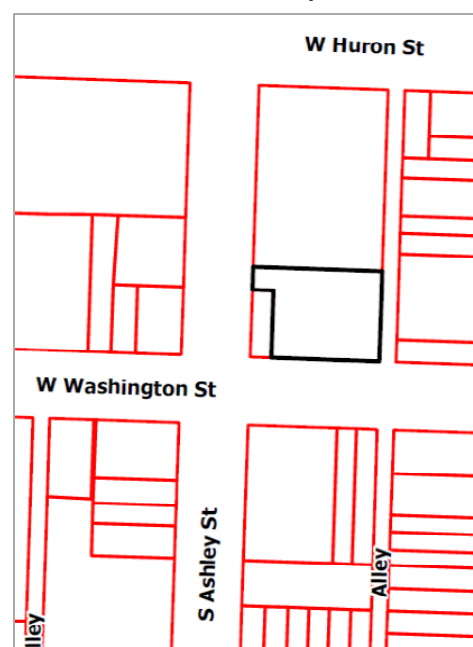
**LOCATION:** The site is near the corner of West Washington Street and South Ashley Street.

**APPLICATION:** The applicant seeks HDC approval to install two signs on the South Ashley storefront: a projecting wall sign with LED halo lighting, and a wall sign that is also indirectly halo lit with LEDs. The entrance to the new Old German restaurant will be at 117 South Ashley.

#### **APPLICABLE REGULATIONS:**

#### **From the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:**

- (9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.



- (10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

**From the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (other SOI Guidelines may also apply):**

**Storefronts**

*Not Recommended:* Introducing a new design that is incompatible in size, scale, material, and color; using inappropriately scaled signs and logos or other types of signs that obscure, damage, or destroy remaining character-defining features of the historic building; using new illuminated signs.

**From the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines:**

**Design Guidelines for Signs**

*Appropriate:* Attaching signage through masonry joints, not masonry units, or through materials that can be easily repaired, such as wood, when the signage is removed.

Installing signage that is lit from external light fixtures above or below the sign.

Installing signage that is subordinate to the overall building composition.

**STAFF FINDINGS**

1. Per the drawings provided, the proposed projecting sign would be 16 3/4" x 25 5/8" x 4", made of black aluminum, with flat projecting scrolls and a flat cut beer wagon pulled by horses driving across the top. The words "Old German" in metallic gold would be halo lit using LEDs behind the letters. The total projection distance from the wall would be 4'. The wall sign would be 7'11 1/4" x 1'9" x 2" aluminum painted to match the brick color, with 16" aluminum halo-lit letters that say "Old German". Both would be mounted in the sign band above the storefront windows.
2. The original Old German restaurant had a very large wrought iron projecting sign on the second story (see photos at end of staff report). The horse and wagon motif are borrowed from the original sign.
3. The size, materials, and colors of both signs are compatible with the district and the neighborhood. The locations of the signs on the building, within the sign band, are appropriate.
4. Staff recommends approval of the application since the size, scale, design, materials, and colors of the proposed signs are compatible with the historic character of the district and have no negative impact on the surrounding historic resources.

**MOTION**

I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 117 South Ashley Street in the Main Street Historic District to install a wall sign and a projecting sign within the sign band, as proposed. The work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, materials, and relationship to the building and the surrounding area and meets

*The City of Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines, and The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, in particular standards 9 and 10, and the guidelines for Storefronts.*

**MOTION WORKSHEET**

I move that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work at 120 W Washington Street in the Main Street Historic District

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided the following condition(S) is (ARE) met: 1) STATE CONDITION(s)

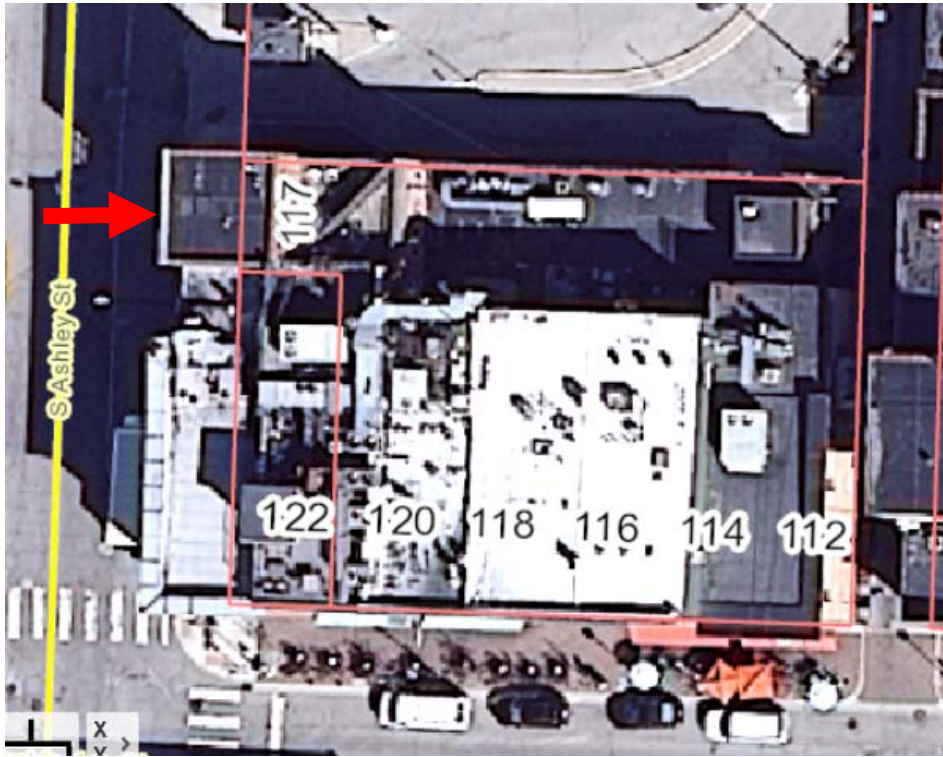
The work is generally compatible with the size, scale, massing, and materials and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, standard(S) number(S) (*circle all that apply*): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

**ATTACHMENTS:** application, drawing, photos

122 and 120 W Washington (2007 photo)



2010 Aerial Photo (red arrow marks 117 S Ashley entrance to the building)



1981 Survey Photo of Old German wrought iron sign



Old German Restaurant, 217 S Ashley, 1977 (courtesy of aadl.org)



The Old German, 122 and 120 W Washington c.1930 (courtesy of aadl.org)



Michigan Daily, April 2, 1975

April 2, 1975

Ten Cents

Eight Pag



FIREFIGHTERS ATTEMPT to douse the blaze atop the Old German Restaurant. The fire gutted the downtown landmark and damaged several neighboring businesses as well. No one was seriously injured.

Daily Photo by KEN FINK

Ann Arbor, Michigan—Wednesday, April 2, 1975

## Blaze destroys 'Old German'

By GORDON ATCHESON  
and CHERYL PILATE

City firefighters spent over six hours yesterday morning battling a persistent blaze that completely gutted the Old German Restaurant—a well-known downtown landmark.

The fire broke out at about 7 a.m. in the basement of the restaurant, located at 120 W. Washington.

A TRIO OF Old German employees in the three-story brick building noticed sparks, then smoke coming from electrical wiring in a small cellar room. Within a short time, the first-floor dining room was filled with acrid, black smoke.

Firefighters, police, and ambulance teams arrived almost immediately.

No one was seriously injured, but four firefighters were hospitalized for smoke inhalation and minor burns. Four others were treated on the scene.

'DEL-RIO'S, a popular college bar located next to the Old German, received only slight smoke damage, Fire Chief Fred Schmid reported.

On the opposite side, however, an empty store front adjacent to the restaurant was also extensively damaged. A law office and Flick's bar received smoke and water damage Schmid said.

Several times during the morning, the 40 firefighters appeared to put out the fire—only to watch it break out again in another section of the 75-year-old building.

THE FIRE'S exact cause and the extent and cost of the damage have not yet been determined, according to Schmid, who said the structure was insured for about \$300,000.

Old German owner Robert Metzger spent most of the latter portion of the

See RECURRING, Page 8



FIREFIGHTERS  
landmark and

## The Passing of the Old German

Published In:

Ann Arbor Observer, March 1995,

March 1995

Author: Grace Shackman

### **It was a favorite of townfolk for 67 years**

"I feel real bad that I've celebrated my last birthday there," says Gottlob Schumacher, a former owner of the Old German, who turned ninety-one on January 29. After almost fifty years of working seven-day weeks, the restaurant's current owner, Bud (Robert) Metzger, is closing the business and retiring.

Although Metzger's rest is well deserved, his customers are in mourning, many of them coming in for a last chance to savor a menu that embodies the cuisine of Ann Arbor's Swabian population: southern German specialties such as spatzen, warm potato salad, stuffed noodles, Koenigsberger klops (veal meatballs in a caper sauce), and liver dumplings. One item, "German meat patties," is an Old German original. In the 1940's, the restaurant was fined for selling "adulterated" hamburgers because they added breading and seasoning. But the item was so popular, explains Metzger, they resumed selling it--"We just hung on a new label."

The Old German started in 1928 as a small eatery on Ashley with a horseshoe counter and a few tables. Original owner William Schwarz was a German-trained butcher who specialized in sausage making. When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Schwarz couldn't get a liquor license because he was still a German citizen. He sold the restaurant to the Haab brothers, Oscar and Otto, but they found it too hard to run restaurants in both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, so after a few years they offered to sell it back. Still not a citizen, Schwarz asked Gottlob Schumacher, a tailor at Wild's Men's Clothing, to become his partner and apply for the liquor license. By the time Schumacher joined the restaurant in 1936, it had expanded into its current L-shaped layout by taking over a grocery store facing Washington Street.

Carolina Schumacher and Anny Schwarz cooked traditional German fare, with daily specials such as spareribs, sauerkraut, and pig hocks, and chicken dinners on Sunday. At lunchtime they served workers from the three factories in the area--King Seeley, American Broach, and the International Radio factory (later Argus).

Bud Metzger's father, Fritz, bought the restaurant from Schumacher in 1946. Trained as a baker in Germany, he left in 1926 to escape the rampant inflation, only to run into the Depression here. He first ran a restaurant in Ypsilanti, then moved to Ann Arbor and ran the German Inn at what had been a Coney Island on Huron Street across from the bus station. Metzger had two brothers in Ann Arbor, William and Gottfried, who were also trained as bakers. (Their father owned a bakery in their hometown of Wilhelmsdorf.) Just a few months after the Old German opened, William started a similar German restaurant, Metzger's, right next door (where the Del Rio is now). Gottfried ran the DeLuxe Bakery on the corner of Fourth Avenue and Washington, and for many years furnished the black bread for his brothers' restaurants.

Bud returned from the navy in 1946 and immediately went to work for his father. "We never talked about it," he recalls. "It was just understood that I would work there." In 1952, when Fritz became too ill to work, Bud took over. While keeping the original customer base of factory workers and people of German descent, the Old German began attracting a much wider clientele,

becoming the special-occasion restaurant for many townspeople and university students. During the 1960's and 1970's, the lines of people waiting to be served often extended outside and down the block.

A fire on April 1, 1975, destroyed the Old German. It was out of business for two years, but customers flocked back after it was remodeled and expanded. Competition from scores of newer restaurants has put an end to the long waiting lines, but the Old German is still very busy at mealtimes. Some regulars come every day, including a group, mainly lawyers, who gather at the traditional round table for lunch. Many university alumni feel that a visit to the Old German is a must when they return to Ann Arbor to relive their first dates or their first beers at age twenty-one. What was missing at a lunch visit in early February was the under-forty crowd.

The Old German will close the first or second week in March. They have to be out for the new owners, the Grizzly Peak Brew Pub, by the first of April, but Bud doesn't want a big deal made out of the actual final day. "I couldn't handle it," he says. He thinks his twenty-four employees, many of them long-term (cook Bill Dettling has been there since Schumacher's day), will have no trouble finding other employment. Some already have plans. He isn't sure what he'll do in retirement, but he won't be leaving town. "Ann Arbor has so much to offer," he says.

Bud Metzger's beer stein collection, which is almost as famous as the food, will be auctioned off in May.





**City of Ann Arbor**  
**PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES — PLANNING SERVICES**  
 100 North Fifth Avenue | P.O. Box 8647 | Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647  
 p. 734.794.6265 | f. 734.994.8312 | planning@a2gov.org

**ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION APPLICATION**

**Section 1: Property Being Reviewed and Ownership Information**

Address of Property: 117 S. Ashley St. /120 W. Washington

Historic District: Main St

Name of Property Owner (If different than the applicant):

WWSA, LLC

Address of Property Owner: 3075 Charlevoix Dr. Ste 10, Grand Rapids 49546

Daytime Phone and E-mail of Property Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Property Owner: See attached Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Applicant Information**

Name of Applicant: Huron Sign Co

Address of Applicant: 663 S. Mansfield St

Daytime Phone: ( 734 ) 483-2000 Fax: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) 483-5164

E-mail: kevinshort@huronsign.com

Applicant's Relationship to Property: \_\_\_ owner \_\_\_ architect  contractor \_\_\_ other

Signature of applicant: Kevin Short VP Sales Kevin Short Date: 4/4/2013

**Section 3: Building Use (check all that apply)**

\_\_\_ Residential \_\_\_ Single Family \_\_\_ Multiple Family \_\_\_ Rental

Commercial \_\_\_ Institutional

**Section 4: Stille-DeRossett-Hale Single State Construction Code Act**

(This item **MUST BE INITIALED** for your application to be **PROCESSED**)

Public Act 169, Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act, was amended April 2004 to include the following language: "...the applicant has certified in the application that the property where the work will be undertaken has, or will have before the proposed completion date, a a fire alarm or smoke alarm complying with the requirements of the Stille-DeRossett-Hale Single State Construction Code Act, 1972 PA 230, MCL 125.1501 to 125.1531."

Please initial here: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 5: Description of Proposed Changes (attach additional sheets as necessary)**

1. Provide a brief summary of proposed changes. We are installing two (2) new signs on Ashley St. One (1) double sided projecting wall sign with letters LED indirectly halo lit  
One (1) set of LED indirectly halo lit letters on a background

2. Provide a description of existing conditions. There are no existing signs

3. What are the reasons for the proposed changes? To identify the Old German entrance

4. Attach any additional information that will further explain or clarify the proposal, and indicate these attachments here.

Pictures of existing signage and sizes

Drawing of proposed new sign

5. Attach photographs of the existing property, including at least one general photo and detailed photos of proposed work area.

**STAFF USE ONLY**

Date Submitted: 4/9-2013 Application to \_\_\_\_\_ Staff or \_\_\_\_\_ HDC

Project No.: HDC 13-046 Fee Paid: 100<sup>00</sup>

Pre-filing Staff Reviewer & Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Public Hearing: 5/9-2013

Application Filing Date: 4/9-2013 Action: \_\_\_\_\_ HDC COA \_\_\_\_\_ HDC Denial

Staff signature: \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ HDC NTP \_\_\_\_\_ Staff COA

Comments:

## Letter of Authorization

Date: 4/10/2013

I, Jon Carlson, Owner of Grizzly Peak and the Old German  
approve the proposed signage for Old German located at  
117 S. Ashley St.

and authorize Kevin Short from Huron Sign Co. to obtain appropriate  
(Representative)  
permits with the city of Ann Arbor and to proceed with the installation of such signage.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 7346615943  
(Agent's phone Number)



\_\_\_\_\_  
(Agent's signature)

120 West Washington  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

# New Custom Wall Sign



SHOWN CENTERED WINDOW - FINAL POSITION TBD SCALE 3/16" - 1'

13.25 SQFT



3M METALLIC GOLD

TO MATCH BRICK

NIGHT SIMULATION

**Sign Description:**  
Build & install (1) new custom halo lit wall sign with fabricated aluminum letters.



All mounting plate hardware positions are aligned to mortar joints.

SCALE 1 1/2" - 1'

**HURION SIGN**  
663 S. MANSFIELD  
P.O. BOX 980423  
YPSILANTI, MI 48198  
PHONE 734-483-2000  
1-800-783-0100  
FAX 734-483-5164  
www.hurionsign.com

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**UL**  
Luminaires, Inc.  
SUITABLE FOR WET LOCATIONS  
IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEC 404

ELECTRIC SIGN  
CERTIFIED MANUFACTURER

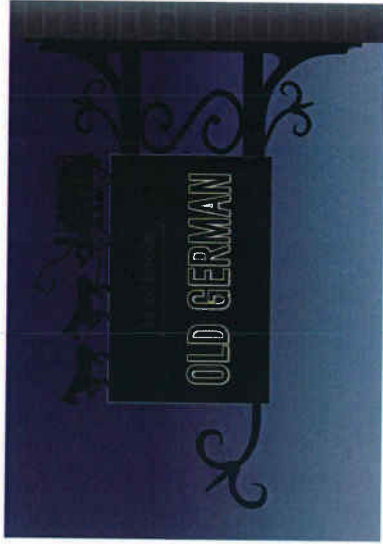
# OF SETS	1	RETURN DEPTH 2" FIELD / 1 1/4" LETTERS	RACEWAY COLOR N.A.	DESIGNER	S WILKIE
FACE COLOR	BLACK / GOLD	TYPE OF INSTALL	FIELD RACEWAY TRANSFORMER N.A.	DATE	03/21/13
RETURN COLOR	GOLD	TYPE OF FACE	ALUMINUM BALLAST N.A.	JOB NO.	8425
RETAINER COLOR	N.A. (BLIND)	RACEWAY D.	H. L. N.A.	JOB NAME	GP-OLD-GER-8425-4
LED COLOR	N.A.	HOUSINGS	N.A.	SALESPERSON:	KEVIN SHORT
				ADDRESS:	120 W. WASHINGTON ANN ARBOR, MI

APPROVED BY: DATE:

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# Flag Mounted Custom Projecting Sign



## NIGHT SIMULATION

**11.5 SQFT PER SIDE**

### Sign Description:

Build & install (1) new custom flag mounted projecting halo lit sign. Main shape is 4" deep aluminum. Sign has flat cut main copy & applied vinyl secondary copy.

All mounting plate hardware positions are aligned to mortar joints.



ALL ELECTRICAL WIRING TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CODE (NEC) AND ALL APPLICABLE LOCAL AND STATE ELECTRICAL CODES.

**UL** Laboratories, Inc.  
 AVAILABLE FOR WET LOCATIONS - IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEC 404.10  
 ELECTRIC SIGN  
 CERTIFIED MANUFACTURER

# OF SETS	1	RETURN DEPTH	2 1/4"	RACEWAY COLOR N.A.	DESIGNER	S WILKIE
FACE COLOR	BLACK / GOLD	TYPE OF INSTALL	FLAG MOUNT	TRANSFORMER N.A.	DATE	03/21/13
RETURN COLOR	BLACK	TYPE OF FACE	1/4" ALUMINUM	BALLAST N.A.	JOB NO.	8425
RETAINER COLOR	N.A. (BLIND)	RACEWAY D.	H. L. N.A.	COMMENTS:	JOB NAME	GP-OLD-GER-8425-4
LED COLOR	N.A.	HOUSINGS N.A.		SALESPERSON:	KEVIN SHORT	ADDRESS: 120 W. WASHINGTON ANN ARBOR, MI

APPROVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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SCALE 1 1/2" = 1'