

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

## 2. Location

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

State or Federal agency and bureau

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

☐ other (explain):

**Comment [LP1]: DO NOT DELETE! THIS IS A SECTION BREAK.**

U Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☒ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☒ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
18	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
18	1	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register**

0

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/multiple dwelling/  
institutional housing/secondary structure  
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store/restaurant/  
warehouse

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/multiple dwelling  
COMMERCE/TRADE/business/specialty store/restaurant  
VACANT/Not in Use

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate/Queen Anne  
LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/  
Colonial Revival/Classical Revival  
OTHER/Vernacular

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick/Stone  
Walls Brick/wood/frame  
  
Roof Not visible  
Other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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### Description Summary:

#### Description of site and resources being added to the U Street Historic District:

The U Street Historic District expansion is likely the first phase of a larger future expansion area. It is a partial-block expansion to the east of the existing U Street Historic District and includes the 600 blocks of S Street (north side) and T Street (south side), 1800 block of 7<sup>th</sup> Street (west side); and the 1800 block of Wiltberger Street. The expansion area includes 18 contributing buildings and one non-contributing building. The area includes several large vernacular industrial and commercial structures related to the bakery complexes that were centered at S and Wiltberger Streets and that were in operation for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as a collection of residential buildings that represent the various phases of the area's evolution and that are consistent with those found in the existing historic district boundaries. Of particular note is the fine row of seven alley-type dwellings on Wiltberger Street—a remnant of the predominantly residential street that existed prior to the expansion of the bakery buildings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition, the expanded area includes several small commercial concerns on T Street that are consistent with other small-scale commercial enterprises along U Street.

In addition to the buildings aligning the minor Wiltberger Street and its alleys, the expansion area would include the network of streets themselves, including the cross alleys between Wiltberger Alley East and West. The proposed eastern edge of this expansion area (east of 623 S Street) is a “soft” edge that will likely be pushed further east based upon future preservation need and community desires. The area east of the proposed boundary includes intact streets of modest residential building that is consistent with the dwelling forms of the larger historic district.

### General Description:

#### **600 Block of S Street:**

The southern edge of the boundary increase consists of several buildings on the north side of the 600 block of S Street, from 623 to 631 S Street. This block is principally defined by the imposing four-part Whitecross Bakery building filling the lots between Wiltberger Alley (West) and Wiltberger Street and built in phases between 1913 and 1922. The original section, built in 1913, is a vernacular brick building located at the rear of the lot and fronted by a 1915 addition facing S Street. This 1915 section of the bakery building is the lower, two-story western section of the building facing S Street. Designed by the architectural firm of Simmons and Cooper, the building is a rectangular-shaped brick structure with a long two-story brick industrial wing buttressed on the S Street façade by an architecturally more formal “implied temple-form” elevation. This three-bay façade presents a glazed brick finish ornamented with terra cotta, while the wing of the building extends along the side alley to the rear of the lot, exposing only common

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brickwork and irregularly arranged industrial windows. The façade is divided into three bays by double-story, brick pilasters, which together visually support a brick frieze adorned with decorative glazed tiles and blue and red porcelain signage (not original) with a broad and overhanging cornice above. A brick parapet wall with a central pediment surmounts the cornice, completing the temple-form allusion. The three large bay areas formed by the brick pilasters are filled with banks of original steel sash windows, with doors located in either end bay. Glazed white tiles are used decoratively on the surface, namely in the pediment and at the ends, with tiles forming a white cross for the White Cross Bakery.

Attached to this western section is a taller, three-story addition to the building following the same design as the 1915 section, but executed by the architectural firm of A.B. Mullett & Company. Built in 1922, this addition uses the same proportions, materials and detailing as the original, including the decorative glazed white tiles in the form of crosses.

To the east of the bakery buildings on S Street is a collection of row houses and small apartment buildings. Only the pair of row houses at 623 and 625 S Street is included within the proposed boundaries for its important presence at the intersection with Wiltberger Street. Built in 1904, towards the tail end of the neighborhood's Victorian-era "building boom" these relatively modest sized and speculatively built dwellings have a substantial quality to them. This is largely due to their raised basements, double-height projecting bays, and to the decorative treatment of the brickwork of the façade, as well as with the ornate iron stairs. Attached to this pair of 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick dwellings on the east are two later 20<sup>th</sup>-century residential buildings constructed on the site of older frame buildings and thus not included within the expansion area boundaries.

### 600 Block of T Street:

The northern boundary of the expansion area is that part of the south side of the 600 block of T Street that is not already included within the existing U Street historic district. Currently, along this street, the historic district includes the culturally significant Howard Theater at the corner of T Street and Wiltberger Street and the two former small stores to the theater's west. Included in the expansion area are those buildings east of the Howard Theater along T Street between Wiltberger Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. These buildings—small residential and commercial brick buildings from various periods of construction—are consistent with what is found elsewhere along U Street and within the historic district. Here, two-story, 19<sup>th</sup>-century vernacular Queen Anne-style residences sit side-by-side with later one- and two-story commercial buildings from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the Howard Theater, these buildings clearly mark U Street's evolution from a residential neighborhood street in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the "city within the city," that was filled with entertainment venues, small stores and businesses that catered to a predominantly African American clientele.

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Of particular social note here, however, is the two-story buff brick building at 614 T Street with stores on the first floor and flats above. Using German architect Julius Wenig, local baker and entrepreneur Michael Holzbeierlein built these "flats" (as well as another on 6<sup>th</sup> Street) to house ten families and workers of his Wiltberger Street bakery.

### Wiltberger Street and Wiltberger Alleys (East and West):

Wiltberger Street is a narrow 30-foot-wide north-south street that bisects Square 441. The 15-foot-wide Wiltberger Alleys (East and West) run parallel to the street and to either side of it, with smaller cross alleys running east and west at the southern and northern ends of the block. The street and its alleys were laid out in 1857 when C.W. Wiltberger subdivided the square for development. During the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wiltberger Street developed as a residential street with several rows of alley-type row houses flanking the 30-foot-wide road. The alleys themselves were primarily service lanes, with private stables, wood sheds, and other outbuildings, though a number of modest dwellings, including two longish rows, also stood on Wiltberger Alley West. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, an industrial character emerged in both alleys and grew to include several bake ovens, grain storage facilities, stables and other resources associated with a growing bakery industry. Eventually, the competing bakeries, Holzbeierlein's Bakery and Dorsch's White Cross Bakery, expanded into Wiltberger Street, prompting the demolition of most of the residential row houses on the street and transforming it from a residential to a commercial/industrial street.

The row of dwellings at 1801-1813 Wiltberger Street, built in 1889, survives as the street's only remaining residential buildings. The modest dwellings, effectively alley dwellings, are narrow two-story, two-bay brick structures located on the east side of the street and fronting directly onto the street with small door stoops leading to the sidewalk. Architecturally, the modest houses are well detailed with corbelled brick cornices, brick string courses and raised brick jack arch lintels above the doors and windows. These row houses are a remnant of and provide an example of what the full length of this minor street, Wiltberger Street, looked like prior to its late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial growth.

Immediately north of the dwellings along the east side of the street and continuing to the cross alley before T Street, are vernacular industrial brick buildings associated with the street's mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century bakery complex. Just north of the lower cross alley from the dwellings is the Holzbeierlein Bakery building at 1817 Wiltberger Street. Constructed in 1913 and designed by architect Julius Wenig, it is a seven-bay long, two-story brick building with raised window openings located on the first story and equally spaced window openings on the second story. The southeast corner of the building has smaller, higher window openings that, according to the

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maps, are located where the actual ovens once operated. A two-story, three-bay brick addition to the bakery abuts the original 1913 building to the north. This addition was originally constructed as a one-story wing, but later was raised to two stories.

Abutting the north end of the bakery and its addition is the Holzbeierlein Garage building, also designed by Julius Wenig and constructed in 1914 to house the bakery's fleet of delivery trucks. It is a two-story, eight-bay-long brick structure with two large garage door openings on the first floor and a range of eight single window openings with jack-arched brick lintels, wood sills and several original 6/6 wood sash on the second story. Abutting the garage to the north, and located at the corner of the cross alley, is a contemporary, non-contributing cinder block structure that replaced two 19<sup>th</sup>-century alley dwellings on the site. On the other side of the cross alley, a long, rear wing of the 1946 store building that fronts T Street extends down the alley.

The west side of Wiltberger Street consists exclusively of bakery-related buildings. Immediately across from the alley dwellings is the 1922 section of the White Cross Bakery building facing S Street, and an earlier 1917 wing which was itself an addition to the original 1913 bakery building to its east. The 1922 building rises a full four stories along the alleyway, beyond the three-story S Street façade. On this alley side, the building has an unadorned common brick vernacular industrial appearance with large roll-up doors on the first story and rows of punched window openings with industrial metal sash on the second, third and fourth stories. Brick additions to the bakery complex extend the building north along Wiltberger Street to the northern cross-alley.

### Wiltberger Alleys:

Historically, Wiltberger Alley West was filled with a combination of small, one- and two-story alley dwellings, stables, and bake ovens. The bake ovens—the first phase of the bakery complexes to evolve on the block—were located at the rear of the stores numbered 1811 7<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished) and 1849 7<sup>th</sup> Street (contributing resource within existing historic district). The bake oven and stable behind 1811 7<sup>th</sup> Street was constructed in 1893, by then-owner Charles Specht, but shortly thereafter owned and operated by baker Peter M. Dorsch who later built the White Cross Bakery complex at S and Wiltberger Streets. The store and dwelling at 1849 7<sup>th</sup> Street was built in 1878<sup>1</sup>, including its two-story brick stable at the rear of the lot. In the 1890s, the property was enhanced by a bake oven, operated by Michael Holzbeierlein where he began operation of his large bakery business

Wiltberger Alley East was historically much more of a service alley to the properties facing 6<sup>th</sup> Street, offering one-story stables, sheds and later garages along the east side of the alley.

<sup>1</sup> See D.C. Permit to Build #0642 5/11/1878.

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Similarly, on the west side, the alley provided service buildings for the alley-type dwellings lining Wiltberger Street. However, after the establishment of the first bakeries within the system of alleys, there emerged a two-story grain storage facility, and by 1928, the Holzbeierlein Bakery complex had expanded, having frontage on the west side of Wiltberger Alley East.

Today, several of the brick bakery buildings survive along both alleys, giving the alleys the same industrial commercial feeling as Wiltberger Street. Wiltberger Alley West is defined at its southern end by the side wall of the 1922 White Cross Bakery Building, along with the side wall of the original 1913 bakery and later additions. At its northern end, the alley is bordered by the end wall of the 1912 stable-cum 1931 apartment building and by the side wall of the Howard Theater. The rear buildings of 1849 7<sup>th</sup> Street are also intact, though vacant, and abut Wiltberger Alley West, though they are included within the existing U Street Historic District. The stable building, located on the alley is a two-story brick structure with a large opening now filled in with concrete block. This stable is attached to a two-story brick structure that was the former bake oven, while a one-story brick wing and the former "bake house" connects the 7<sup>th</sup> Street store to its rear wings.

The west side of the East alley contains three separate, but attached brick buildings that were historically associated with Holzbeierlein's bakery. Each of these buildings is an unadorned industrial brick structure with irregularly arranged window openings, many of which have been filled in with concrete block and brick. The corner building, like the one it abuts on Wiltberger Street, has two raised window openings apparently located where the actual ovens operated. The east side of Wiltberger Alley primarily consists of rear garages belonging to the dwellings facing 6<sup>th</sup> Street and would thus form the edge of the historic district.

This network of minor streets and alleys together with the residential and commercial/industrial buildings lining them offer a palpable sense of the city's early residential roots and its rare, industrial heritage. Although currently vacant, the vernacular industrial buildings that historically made up the bakery complexes are viable architectural resources worthy of preservation recognition and protection.

Comment [LP2]: DO NOT DELETE! THIS IS  
A SECTION BREAK.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)



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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

#### Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- ☐ Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☒ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ Designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: Barracks Row Mainstreet

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### Summary Statement of Significance:

#### Introduction:

The proposed expansion of the U Street Historic District would increase the boundaries of the existing historic district (listed in the National Register in 1998) to the east and would include an important collection of twenty-one contributing commercial, industrial and residential buildings east of 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Square 441. This expansion is the first phase in what will likely be incremental increases to the historic district as research is conducted, appropriate documentation is prepared, and preservation needs, and neighborhood desires warrant it. This proposed boundary increase would include all of those buildings in Square 441 that are fronting S and T Streets and that are not already included within the historic district, and all of those buildings located on Wiltberger Street and its flanking Wiltberger alleys. This includes several commercial and residential buildings along S and T Streets between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Wiltberger Street (east of the Howard Theater); residential dwellings along Wiltberger Street; and the important collection of historic bakery buildings fronting S Street, Wiltberger Street and Wiltberger Alleys. In addition, the proposed boundaries would encompass the vacant lot at 7<sup>th</sup> and S Streets, once the site of 19<sup>th</sup>-century commercial and residential buildings, for its archaeological potential.

#### Boundary Expansion Rationale:

The original historic district documentation drew as its eastern boundary Wiltberger Street due to the loss of urban fabric along 7<sup>th</sup> Street at S Street, NW. The existing historic district also appears to have been drawn to capture significant, stand-alone African American resources, such as the Howard and Dunbar Theaters, but omitted adjacent historic fabric that perhaps lacked individual distinction.

Despite this loss of urban fabric at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and S Streets, the surviving buildings east of these vacant lots are intact and lend support to our understanding of the socio-economic evolution of the U Street Historic District. In particular, the proposed boundary increase provides significant information on the rise of competing bakeries and thus on the commercial/industrial development of this part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Street commercial corridor within the larger historic district. Historically, 7<sup>th</sup> Street was an important commercial and transportation corridor that connected downtown to the city limits, and that serviced the well-established and recognized African American U Street corridor. Small neighborhood stores and other commercial concerns grew up along 7<sup>th</sup> Street—home to many German and other Eastern European merchant immigrants—while rows of dwellings catering to a mixed-race and predominantly working-to middle-class demographic filled the neighboring streets. Minor

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streets and alleys, located mid-block in the large city squares, generally offered light industrial concerns, and smaller dwellings that were occupied by the poorer and often exclusively African American populations.

The buildings in the proposed boundary increase, including those along Wiltberger Street and its alleys, are firmly planted in the context of the important 7<sup>th</sup> Street commercial/transportation corridor within the U Street Historic District. The Howard Theater (1910), one of the most significant cultural institutions of the U Street corridor, faces T Street, while the former White Cross Bakery, a significant example of the city's commercial/industrial heritage, stands sentinel at the southern end. A number of single-family dwellings, including a row of alley-like dwellings in Wiltberger Street, and commercial concerns along T Street occupy the remaining lots. Together, these buildings represent several different phases in the evolution of the U Street Historic District.

### Resource History and Historic Context:

#### Early Civil War Era Land Use History:

Like much of the existing U Street historic district, the proposed expansion area between S and T Streets and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets (Square 441) saw little development prior to the Civil War. The square was, however, platted for subdivision in 1857, by a C.W. Wiltberger. Wiltberger divided the square's original 12 lots into 64 buildable lots, and bisected the block by the 30-foot-wide central north-south Wiltberger Street and the 15-foot-wide flanking alleys (later dubbed Wiltberger Alley east and Wiltberger Alley west). During the Civil War, Seventh Street became one of city's two north-south horse-drawn streetcar routes, prompting development along the corridor. This growth, which began around the already well-established commercial node "downtown" and grew progressively north, did not effectively reach this northern edge until after the War. Indeed the major impetus for growth came as a result of the massive, city-wide infrastructure improvements implemented as part of Alexander "Boss" Shepherd's Board of Public Works to modernize the city.

As part of this improvement effort, 7<sup>th</sup> Street was graded and paved to Boundary Street by 1872. According to a Water Department Survey taken in 1875, Square 441 was home to 95 dwellings, of which 27 were of brick construction. In comparison to adjacent squares, Square 441 appears to have been relatively densely developed. This is attributable in part to the fact that it lay immediately adjacent to the important 7<sup>th</sup> Street streetcar line and so necessarily saw greater development. The density also appears due to the heavy clustering of small frame houses ("shanties") located along the narrow Wiltberger Street and its flanking alleys. In fact, in 1878, Wiltberger Street was one of several streets identified by the local press for its unhealthy state.

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The reporter, intent upon decrying the city's unsanitary streets, likely exaggerated the street's condition, but nonetheless reported:

"Adjoining this section is Wiltberger street and contiguous alleys, where the manure heaps are piled up even with the first floor windows and where rivulets of copper colored malaria and typhoid slime course their way over the surface of the ground."<sup>2</sup>

The public faces of the square, fronting both 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, were more presentable. In 1873-74, 6<sup>th</sup> Street was already entirely built up with brick dwellings, which based upon the surviving examples, were well-designed two-story, two-bay Italianate-style dwellings. Similarly, the brick store/dwellings at 1853 and 1855 7<sup>th</sup> Street (within the existing U Street Historic District) feature exuberant brickwork and Italianate-style window trim. The brick construction and high degree of ornamentation illustrate the spirit of optimism for development in the area at the time.

According to historic maps and census records, the buildings on this block of 7<sup>th</sup> Street at the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup> century offered a combination of dwellings and stores that included over time a cobbler, a tin shop, a paperhanger and of particular note, bake ovens. Now vacant, the undeveloped site at 7<sup>th</sup> and S Streets offers a potentially rich archaeological opportunity to learn more about the city's early commercial heritage.

In the decades that followed the city-wide improvements, the larger U Street corridor became densely developed with rows of speculatively built houses and individual commercial buildings.<sup>3</sup> The new growth attracted both African Americans and whites of the working and middle-classes. In general, and as further described in the U Street Historic District documentation, the principal streets and those closest to the streetcar lines tended to attract the more stable and primarily white merchant and professional classes. Streets further removed from the streetcar routes as well as secondary streets and interior alleys generally housed members of the less-fortunate laboring class, with a majority of them being African American. Square 441 provides a perfect example of this trend. Sixth Street, located just one street east of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and thus within easy walking distance of the streetcar and shops, evolved early on into a relatively stable, middle-class white street. Similarly, 7<sup>th</sup> Street attracted members of the city's merchant class, many of whom were of German descent. Despite this same proximity, the minor Wiltberger Street and its alleys,

<sup>2</sup> "Is the City Clean?" *The Washington Post*, August 29, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> See Northern Shaw-Strivers Cultural Resources Survey, Phase II Final Report. Prepared by Tracerics, July 1993 and on-file at the D.C. Historic Preservation Office.

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with no public street frontage, was home to exclusively working class laborers, half of whom were African American according to the U.S. Census records.<sup>4</sup>

In the decades following the 1878 newspaper report, the physical condition of Wiltberger Street saw significant improvement. During the 1880s, several groups of houses were erected on Wiltberger Street, of which the row 1801-1813 Wiltberger Street (built in 1889) survives. Although modest, this group of seven, two-story, two-bay brick houses features a high degree of Victorian-era detailing and craftsmanship remarkable for alley-type dwellings. In particular, the houses have a shared corbelled cornice, brick string-coursing, and jack-arched brick lintels above both doors and windows. Around the turn-of-the-century, the entire length of Wiltberger Street resembled this surviving row.<sup>5</sup>

### The Bakeries of S Street, Wiltberger Street and Alleys:

Located behind the residential Wiltberger Street, the alleys to either side (Wiltberger Alley East and West) developed along commercial/industrial lines. As would be expected, the alleys housed stables, blacksmith shops and other light industrial/commercial concerns in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also and more importantly to the area's later evolution, several bake ovens. The first-known bake oven to be constructed in the square was built in 1891 at the rear of 1817-1819 Wiltberger Street, and actually having frontage on Wiltberger Alley East. John M. Ruth, the property owner as listed on the D.C. Permit to Build used German architect Julius Germueller to design the one-story brick building that is now encapsulated by later bakery buildings.<sup>6</sup> Fellow baker Michael Holzbeierlein, who operated a bakery nearby at 1849 7<sup>th</sup> Street, also saw an opportunity within the system of alleys, and during the 1910s began construction of an extensive wholesale bakery complex there.

The German-born Holzbeierlein worked as a foreman for the large Charles Schneider Baking Company in the 1880s before launching his own business in 1893 and creating what became his "famous" Bamby bread and pies.<sup>7</sup> Holzbeierlein initially worked and lived out of 1849 7<sup>th</sup> Street where he had a bake house, oven, and stable at the rear of his lot. By 1908, according to Washington City General Assessments, Holzbeierlein had purchased several lots within the system of Wiltberger Street and alleys behind his 7<sup>th</sup> Street home and bakery, and in 1913, built

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. See the Race and Class Maps in the appendix to the Final Report, compiled from U.S. Census Research findings and color coded on maps to show certain trends. Wiltberger Street was not identified in the 1880 census, but is included in the 1900, 1910 and 1920 census records.

<sup>5</sup> The 1904 Sanborn map reveals that most of the buildings on Wiltberger Street were attached, two-story brick row houses.

<sup>6</sup> D.C. Permit to Build #2392 (5/25/1891).

<sup>7</sup> "Who's Who and Why, Washington Yesterday and Today," *The Washington Post*, October 7, 1909, p. B7.

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the large and still standing two-story bakery building at 1815 Wiltberger Street.<sup>8</sup> Holzbeierlein expanded his enterprise by erecting a stable across from the bakery in 1912, and a garage (to house his fleet of delivery trucks) next to his bakery in 1914. In the process of expanding his bakery business, Holzbeierlein demolished a number of the Wiltberger Street dwellings, ultimately affecting the transformation of the street from a residential alleyway to a bustling light-industrial one. Holzbeierlein's Bakery survived as a family business<sup>9</sup> through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1953 when the company, which then employed 70 persons, filed for bankruptcy and ceased operation.<sup>10</sup> According to the press at the time, the insolvency was caused by the increased cost of labor and supplies and to stiff competition. Although now defunct, the Holzbeierlein bakery complex and its associated buildings—all red brick utilitarian structures—stand as an excellent and rare collection of the city's industrial heritage.<sup>11</sup>

Somewhat simultaneous to Michael Holzbeierlein's establishment of his bakery along Wiltberger Street, was the construction of a competing bakery by Peter M. Dorsch, of German descent. Like Holzbeierlein, Dorsch's bakery evolved from a smaller facility along the commercial 7<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. Peter M. Dorsch was born in D.C. in 1878, and around the turn of the century lived at 3<sup>rd</sup> and I Streets, NW while working as a baker (most likely at nearby Charles Schneider's Bakery), along with other members of his family, including his mother, father, four brothers and a sister, several of whom also worked as bakers. By 1910, Peter M. Dorsch had moved to 1811 7<sup>th</sup> Street (now-demolished), just a few stores south of Holzbeierlein's, along with several of his family members. Dorsch's 7<sup>th</sup> Street store/dwelling included a two-story bake house and oven at the rear of the lot and where he operated a small retail baking business for several years. In 1913, Dorsch constructed his White Cross Bakery building at the rear of a lot on S Street, immediately adjacent to Holzbeierlein's on Wiltberger Street. Perhaps foreshadowing its greater ultimate success, the principal building of White Cross Bakery (facing S Street between Wiltberger Alley west and Wiltberger Street), is architecturally more impressive than Holzbeierlein's more vernacular collection of bakery buildings. Dorsch's large complex actually developed in four principal phases beginning in 1913 and culminating in 1922. Each of the buildings was designed by established Washington architects.<sup>12</sup> The two most prominent

<sup>8</sup> See D.C. Permit to Build #947 (8/30/1913). According to the permit, Holzbeierlein contracted with fellow German, Julius Wenig to design his bakery building.

<sup>9</sup> Holzbeierlein's appears as a wholesale bakery business in the city directories; Michael Holzbeierlein is listed as having stalls at all the city markets.

<sup>10</sup> "Bakery Files Bankruptcy Petition Here," *The Washington Post*, November 13, 1953, p. 23. The article notes that the bakery employed 70 persons and had a fleet of 30 trucks.

<sup>11</sup> The stable on the west side of Wiltberger Street was converted to an apartment building in 1931 and is currently (2007) slated for demolition to allow for the renovation of the Howard Theater.

<sup>12</sup> The 1915 building at 637 S Street was designed by Simmons and Cooper; a 1917 addition at the rear was designed by the firm of Alfred B. Mullett & Co., as was the 1922 building on S Street. (See D.C. Building Permits #595 8/7/1915; Permit #2250 10/7/1919; and Permit #8951 5/27/1922.

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sections of the complex, constructed in 1915 and 1922, face S Street and clearly identify themselves as the White Cross Bakery by white terra cotta crosses in their central pediments.

According to the press, the two-story White Cross Bakery building contained “two continuous ovens of the latest type” on the first floor, and a “rotary” oven and an oven for baking cakes on the second floor.<sup>13</sup> When the plant first started, it produced 200-300 loaves of bread daily. The company survived cost increases in 1918 and the threatening bakers’ strike of 1920 that plagued all city bakeries and its residents.<sup>14</sup> Heavy advertising during this period may have helped save the bakery,<sup>15</sup> for within a decade (and following completion of the major 1922 building addition) the company was turning out 100,000 loaves each day, in addition to baking 40 different varieties of cakes.<sup>16</sup> The bakery delivered its products throughout the city and into the suburbs, using its own fleet of REO Speed Wagon trucks.<sup>17</sup> As noted in the local press hailing Dorsch’s bread:

“Dorsch’s well-known products are...sold by practically all grocers. The latest baking equipment is used, including the traveling type oven, in which the bread is baked and is then cooled and automatically wrapped in wax paper by machines. Every precaution is taken to produce the cleanest and finest loaf of bread possible...Therefore it is not hard to understand why this manufacturer has made such a widespread reputation, and consumers are thoroughly satisfied with this brand of “The Staff of Life.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1937, Peter M. Dorsch sold White Cross Bakery to the Continental Baking Company.<sup>19</sup> The Continental Baking Company is known, of course, for altering the course of bread forever when in the 1930s it introduced sliced Wonder Bread. The Continental Baking Company operated the Wonder Bread Bakery at 2100 7<sup>th</sup> Street as its principal bakery, but used the White Cross facility on S Street for production of its Hostess Cupcakes. In 1953, the former White Cross Bakery was one of 17 major bakeries in the city—considered at the time as the city’s largest processing industry. The Continental Baking Company continued to use the White Cross Bakery building into the 1990s.

<sup>13</sup> “New Home for Bakery Concern,” *The Evening Star*, 8/21/1915, part 2, page 2.

<sup>14</sup> “D.C. May Face Bread Famine,” *The Washington Post*, April 29, 1920.

<sup>15</sup> The Washington Post carried many quarter and half-page advertisements for Dorsch’s White Cross Bakery, in particular its “Old Mammy’s Rice Bread” during 1918 and 1919.

<sup>16</sup> “Dorsch’s Bread on Market for Thirty Years,” *The Washington Post*, January 8, 1928, p. R5.

<sup>17</sup> REO Speed Wagon, the Gold Standard of Value, *The Washington Post*, 9/26/1920.

<sup>18</sup> “Dorsch’s Bread on Market for Thirty Years.”

<sup>19</sup> Upon selling his White Cross Bakery in Washington, Peter Dorsch then bought the Spalding Baking Company in Staunton, Virginia where he lived the rest of his life. See “P.M. Dorsch Dies; Baker for 50 Years,” *The Washington Post*, December 23, 1959.

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The emergence of Holzbeierlein's Bakery and White Cross Bakery in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries had a profound effect on Wiltberger Street, its associated alleys and the larger area. Originally minor streets with the typical combination of small commercial concerns and working-class residences, Wiltberger Street and its alleys instead became a major industry and thriving employment center that contributed to the business success of the U Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street corridors in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to the industry's associated buildings such as garages and stables that both bakery owners built next to their businesses, Michael Holzbeierlein erected housing for his workers. In 1928 and 1929, Holzbeierlein hired architect Julius Wenig to design the two-story flats at 614 T Street and 1806 6<sup>th</sup> Street, and in 1931 renovated and converted his stable building in Wiltberger Street into flats for ten families. Although a white-owned business not directly associated with the African American culture along U Street, the notion of providing housing for workers fit into the "self-help" mentality that had been emerging within the African American community along U Street. During the 1910s, a variety of new businesses emerged along U Street and the surrounding area to fulfill the community's need for services. As these businesses increased in number, African Americans became less dependent upon white Washington for services, becoming increasingly self-sufficient. In a similar way, Michael Holzbeierlein developed a self-sufficient industrial complex where some workers lived and worked on site, enhancing the quality of life for those laborers, many of whom were black.<sup>20</sup> The Continental Baking Company appears to have continued this trend when in 1963 the company became one of the first business supporters of non-discriminatory employment policy, enlisting whites and blacks, both, to work as route men and manufacturers.<sup>21</sup>

### Non-Bakery-Related Buildings:

Although the majority of the buildings in the proposed extension area are related to the bakery industry, several non-bakery buildings are also located there. A combination of dwellings and stores representing several different phases of the area's history and typical of buildings found along other blocks of U Street within the historic district are located within the expansion area. In particular, in addition to the two-story flats built by Holzbeierlein, T Street includes two detached, late 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick dwellings indicative of the local residential building types (two-story brick buildings with two-story projecting bays and corbelled brick cornices), and a small one-story store typical of 20<sup>th</sup>-century city-wide commercial building types.

<sup>20</sup> Despite this "utopian" interpretation, racial tensions clearly still ran high. See "Baker Holzbeierlein Says Discharged Employee Was Paid," *The Washington Post*, 9/16/1908, p. 16. This article describes a scene involving two African American bakery workers, who having been previously "discharged," entered Holzbeierlein's store and stole back pay, which the baker denied owing them.

<sup>21</sup> "Progress in Job-Race Effort Seen," *The Washington Post*, March 1, 1963.



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Similarly, the proposed boundaries along S Street include five residential buildings ranging in date from 1877 to 1937, spanning the period of significance for the historic district.

Like other blocks in the U Street Historic District, Square 441 was, throughout its history, a mixed-race street. The construction of the Howard Theater in 1910 on T Street and the growth of the bakeries on Wiltberger and S Streets contributed significantly to the economic security and stability of U Street during its heyday. Similarly, during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as desegregation took hold throughout the city and U Street began to lose its economic stability, the bakeries of Wiltberger and S Streets continued to provide employment for many area workers and likely encouraged the viability of the smaller stores and residential buildings in the vicinity. Although now vacant, the bakery buildings of Wiltberger and S Streets are excellent examples of the city's rare industrial heritage and provide important information on the history and evolution of the 7<sup>th</sup> Street and U Street corridors.

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"Who's Who and Why," *The Washington Post*, 10/7/1909, p. B7

Wiltberger Street, Square 441, Record Plat Book B Folio 110.

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### Acreage of Property

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

☒ See continuation sheet

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

name/title	Kim Williams		
Organization	D.C. Office of Historic Preservation	date	September 2007
street & number	801 North Capitol Street, NE	telephone	202 442-8800
city or town	Washington, D.C.	state	zip code 20002

Submit the following items with the completed form:

## Maps

- X A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- X A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

X Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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UTM References (Continued)

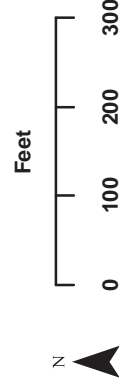
Verbal Boundary Description:

Boundary Justification:

# U Street Historic District Proposed Expansion



- Proposed Expansion
- Current Boundary
- Buildings
- Lots



Government of the  
 District of Columbia  
 Adrian M. Fenty, Mayor  
 Office of Planning ~ April 1, 2008

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