

S i g n s



for

Haymarket Landmark District

C i t y o f L i n c o l n , N e b r a s k a

Summary

Signs installed in Lincoln are regulated by chapter 27.69 of the Zoning Code and must obtain a sign permit from the Building and Safety Department. Signs for designated Landmark Districts must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission (staffed by the Planning Department) before a sign permit can be issued. The following Special Sign Criteria were adopted by the Lincoln City Council on November 26, 1990 by Ordinance 15783 to guide business owners and the Historic Preservation Commission as to what types of signs should be proposed and approved for the Haymarket Landmark District. Of course, standard requirements of the zoning and sign codes apply in Haymarket, except as specifically varied by these criteria. (Applications for review of sign proposals may be obtained from the Planning or the Building and Safety Departments.)

Background

In 1982 the Lincoln City Council designated the Haymarket Landmark District, recognizing and protecting the warehouse area around the Burlington Depot as a special historical and architectural asset. While many of the individual buildings are noteworthy, the District's character derives from the completeness of the historic environment, including warehouses, factories, and railroad buildings, loading docks, sidewalks, brick paving on 7th Street, and even the faded historic wall signs.

Since the early 1980s, the District has seen intensive revitalization efforts by both the private and public sectors, producing a mixed-use area of offices, residences, shops, restaurants, and other arts and entertainment businesses. Most of these uses necessitated new signs. The Landmark District designation gave authority for the review of appropriateness of these signs to the Historic Preservation Commission, and the 1987 revision of the sign chapter of the Zoning Code made the Commission's decisions on signs binding. In other words, **signs must be found appropriate to the historic character of the District in order to be legally installed.** Since the area was largely developed in the fifty years between 1880 and 1930, signs should generally have the appearance of signs of that era, and should relate to the buildings and the area in similar fashion to signs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Review of Haymarket signs has constituted a substantial part of the Commission's workload since the district was created. The language guiding the Commission's decisions is brief, recommending "Using new...signs...that are compatible with the character of the neighborhood in size, scale, material and color." Despite the brevity of this guideline, owners have usually proposed and the Commission has approved handsome and effective signs which have enhanced the vitality and visual character of the district.

Often owners or sign companies have sought more specific guidance than is provided by that brief statement on compatibility. Also, some signs have been proposed which appear to meet the preservation guidelines, but do not meet other requirements of the city-wide sign codes.

These special sign criteria for Haymarket Landmark District are enacted by the City Council for several purposes:

- To allow, with Preservation Commission approval, installation of certain traditional types of signs in Haymarket which are no longer allowed in the city at large, to enhance the area's special historical character.
- To prohibit certain modern types of signs which would detract from the District.
- To provide more detailed guidance to business people about signs that will be appropriate to the District, and will be approved by the Commission.
- To assist the Preservation Commission in reviewing sign proposals.

Basic Principles For Haymarket Signs

The following criteria, and their interpretation by the Historic Preservation Commission, are intended to implement four basic principles:

1. The primary function of signs is identification of buildings, businesses, and the district as a whole.
2. No signs will be permitted that disfigure or conceal any significant architectural feature of a building.
3. All signs must be subordinate to and in harmony with the buildings to which they relate and to the district as a whole. They must be compatible with the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century character of the warehouse, industrial, and railroad district.
4. Signs for the district should be well-designed, well-executed, and well-located relative to their buildings. Old photographs of the district (a few of which are included as illustrations of these criteria) provide useful models for designing and positioning new signs.

Prohibitions

1. Plastic-faced, interior-illuminated signs are not permitted in the Haymarket Landmark District. While this prohibition cannot be applied to existing signs of this type in the district, owners are encouraged to replace them, and should be aware that the Preservation Commission is unlikely to approve new faces for existing signs.
2. Translucent awnings of plastic or vinylized materials with interior illumination are not permitted in the District. The Commission will review use of translucent letters or sign panels sewn into an opaque fabric awning on a case-by-case basis.
3. Signs obscuring significant architectural features will not be permitted.

Special Haymarket Sign Types

- A. "Pedestrian marquee" signs permitted elsewhere in the district may also be allowed in the public right-of-way, if permanently affixed to permitted architectural features, such as loading docks or stair railings. All requirements under Chapter 14.54 of the Lincoln Municipal Code, "Occupancy above or below public property" must be met.
- B. On-premise painted wall signs shall be allowed without a fixed maximum square footage or percentage of wall coverage, subject to Commission approval. However, signs that exceed the standard limits of 30% coverage of a wall or 500 square feet (whichever is less) will be scrutinized most rigorously for appropriateness. The Commission shall weigh carefully any historic photographs or other documentation showing the design and extent of signs displayed on the building between 1880 and 1930 in making such determinations of appropriateness.



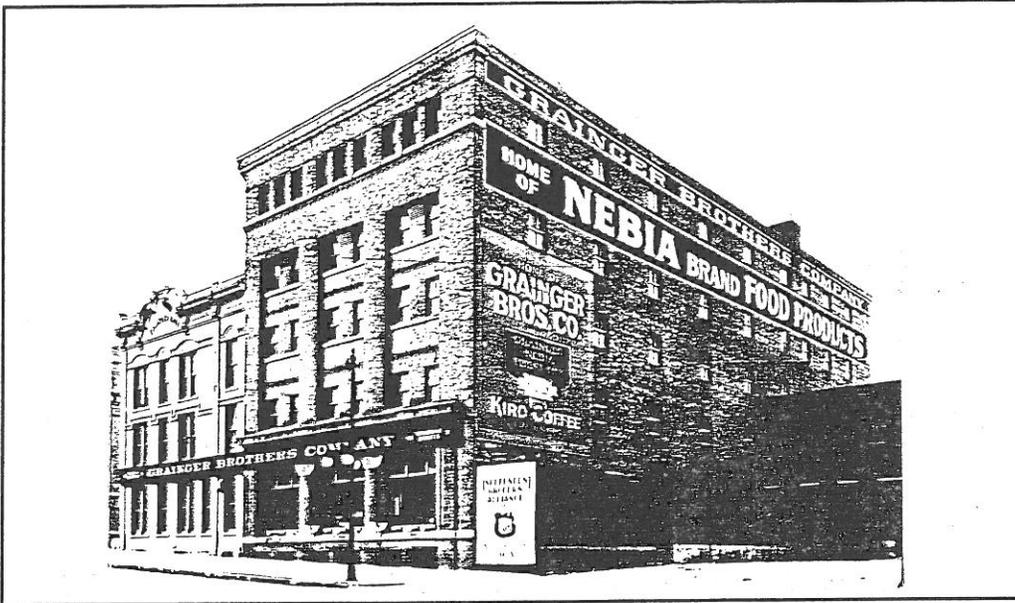
North side of P St., 800 block, ca. 1905-10.

The large painted wall signs on the west side of the tall Harpham Bros. Building include the "H.B. Brand" logo, and a wide range of apparent colors. The front of that building has a fine raised letter sign in the sign band, while the small building to the west (not extant) has a painted "LUNCH" sign in the sign band. There are awnings with valance signs on the small structures, window signs on the Harpham Building, and small wall signs flanking the Harpham doorway.

Existing painted wall signs more than 50 years old should usually not be removed, covered, or painted over in installing new signs, although the Commission will consider proposals to substitute a new sign of traditional appearance for an existing old sign of minor significance or in very deteriorated condition.

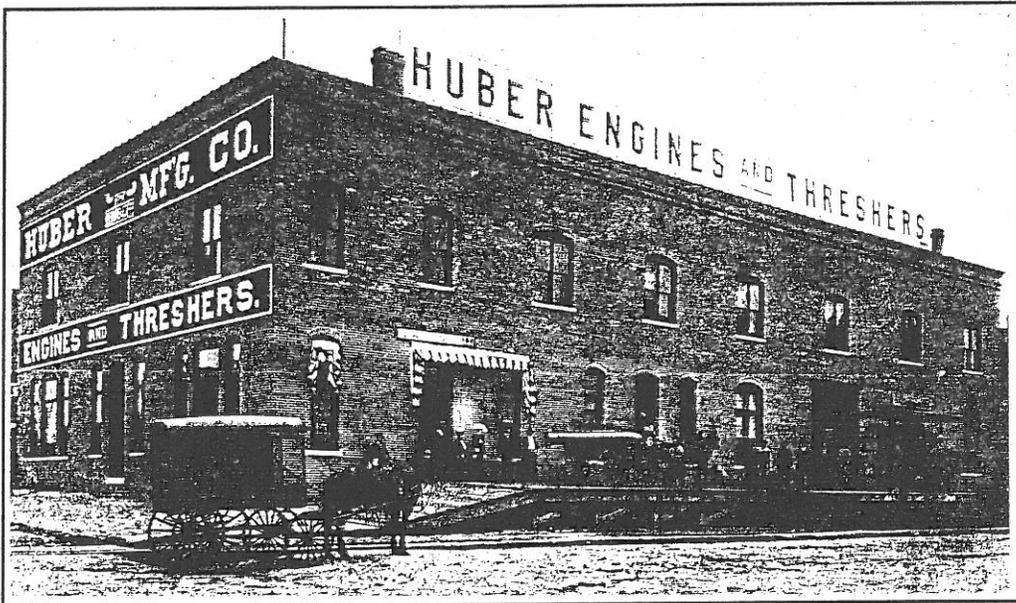
- C. On-premise roof signs may be permitted, including signs projecting above the top of the roof, after careful evaluation of their traditional design, appropriateness to the architectural design of a particular building, location in the district, and preferability (in terms of appropriateness) relative to other types of signs for the building in question. No more than two roof signs per building may be used, and their height shall be related to that of the building. Two and one half (2.5) feet of sign height shall be permitted per story of the building, with a minimum of five feet always permitted (if approved) and a maximum

height of ten feet. Designs consisting of individual illuminated letters shall be preferred to billboard-type signs. Particular care should be taken in designing the structures for roof signs to minimize the visual impact of the supports.



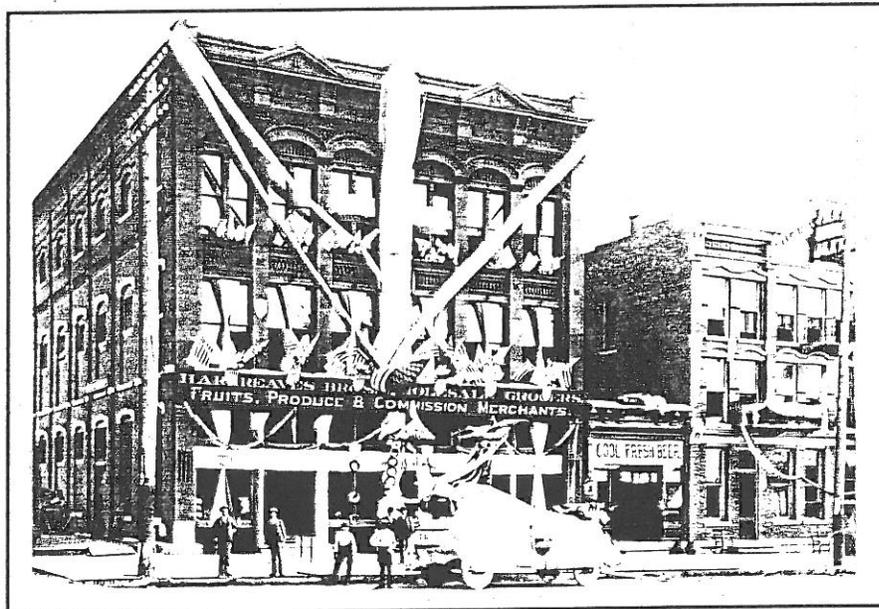
*Grainger Brothers complex on southwest corner, 8th & P Sts., from the northwest, 1936
Note the large multi-tone painted wall signs, confined to the secondary facade
and carefully positioned in relation to the windows.*

Roof signs are limited to identifying a building or its principal use. The basic principles regarding subordinating signs to the buildings and the district and prohibiting disfigurement of significant architectural features will be rigorously applied in reviewing proposed roof signs.



*Huber Mfg Co., 801 Q St., ca. 1901
Note the roof sign of individual letters, painted wall signs in the signs bands of the facade,
and small painted board wall sign above the side entry.*

- D. Permanent kiosks, not to exceed twelve feet (12') in height, may be approved in the sidewalk area of the public right-of-way, if also granted a permit in accord with Chapter 14.54 of the Lincoln Municipal Code, provided that at least 30% of the sign area is reserved for public information, district-wide notices, or historical plaques, photos, or information. The Commission will review kiosks for permanence of materials, appropriateness of design, impact on adjacent buildings, and impact on the overall streetscape.
- E. Temporary, freestanding "sandwich board" signs can add to the liveliness of the Haymarket streetscape and reinforce its pedestrian orientation. But such signs should be carefully reviewed to avoid becoming safety hazards and mere clutter. The Commission may approve not more than one "sandwich board" per building frontage, not to exceed six feet (6') in height and 24 square feet in area (measuring both sides). These signs shall either be permanently anchored, with approved, changeable message areas, or installed with removable anchoring approved by the Department of Building and Safety, or so constructed and weighted as to withstand 30 PSF, as approved by the Department of Building and Safety.
- Each application for a sandwich board sign must identify the specific location and include a schedule for its display, not exceeding six months within a calendar year. Sandwich boards approved by the Commission must be reviewed annually and preservation certificates may be revoked on grounds of safety, poor maintenance, or failure to comply with the terms of the certificate. Sandwich boards installed on public right of way are also subject to the permitting process in LMC 14.54.]
- F. Banners identifying the district as a whole or announcing district events may be approved for installation in the public right-of-way.



*Hargreave Bros. Wholesale Grocers, 8th & O, ca. 1900
Note the painted, light-on-dark sign board above the storefront,
and the temporary banner on the saloon.*

Recommended Types Of Signs

Photographs depicting early twentieth-century Haymarket show a bustling warehouse/industrial area with a profusion of signs. Among the characteristics of these signs are long-lasting materials, high degree of legibility, and careful coordination with, and subordination to, the architecture of the buildings. Among the types of signs appropriate to this area are:

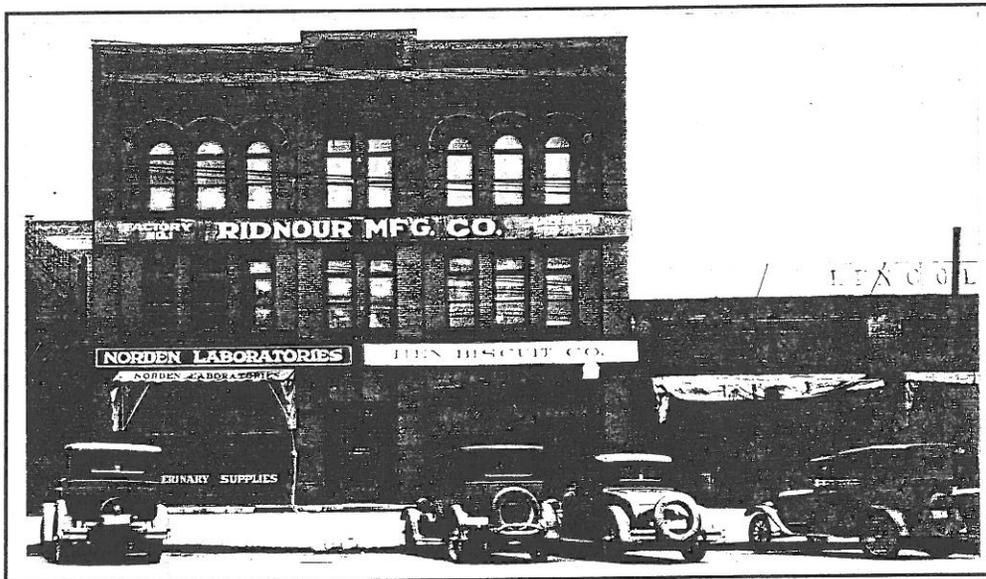
Wall Signs

On principal facades, signs formed of individual letters attached directly to the building, or attached to a background panel with frame, are most appropriate. These signs usually should be scaled to relate to the whole facade, and installed in the flat "sign band" above the storefront level, or below the cornice. Wall signs painted on wooden or metal panels can also be appropriate. Use of light-colored letters on a darker background is strongly encouraged.

On side and rear walls, painted walls signs were very commonly used. A black band with white letters and a white border was the most common color scheme, but yellows, greens, and other bright, primary colors were also incorporated into these signs. In some instances, painted wall signs were used on principal facades, but those must be very well integrated with the architecture.

Awnings

Fabric awnings, usually of triangular section, are commonly seen in historic photographs of Haymarket and other commercial areas. Messages were usually confined to the valance area, perhaps because these awnings were often cranked or folded flat against the facade, leaving only the valance visible. Preference is given to awnings incorporating these traditional features.



Burr & Muir Block, 227-231 No. 9th St., 1927

Note the awning, window, and wall signs. The latter might not be approved today, as they could be found to conflict with the architecture of the building.

This structure was built in 1888 as a retail and office building but was used for industrial purposes in the 1920s.

Window Signs

Signs for individual businesses are often most appropriately installed in windows, usually by painting or applying individual letters to the glass. The Commission has allowed a variety of materials and graphic styles in window signs, but urges good graphic design, simplicity of message, and scale appropriate to the storefront and building.

PROJECTING SIGNS

Projecting signs, usually consisting of letters applied or painted on panels, can be approved, either for building identification or for individual businesses. The former should usually be designed at a scale relating to the building as a whole (such as the tall, blade-type sign at 808 P) or relating to an individual entrance or storefront.



Southwest corner of 8th and P Streets, 1936

Note the projecting signs,
the raised letter signs, and the painted wall signs.

REGARDING ILLUMINATION

Incandescent illumination is preferred for signs, either shielded to spotlight wall signs, awnings, or projecting signs, or exposed to form individual letters (usually in a metal channel). Windows signs in a brightly lit storefront are encouraged as they provide attractive signs at night and increase the ambient light for pedestrians. Signs with exposed neon tubing will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for quality of design, appropriateness to the specific building, and overall impact on the streetscape.

REGARDING OFF-PREMISE SIGNS

There have long been billboards in Haymarket, given its location beside the O Street overpass and North 9th Street. Historic photos also provide a few examples of off-premise painted wall signs. However, new billboards are discouraged from installation because the changeable nature of their messages and graphic design will seldom be appropriate in appearance to the District. Off-premise signs advertising Haymarket as a whole, or businesses within the District, may be more appropriate and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, as will incorporating traditional logos commonly seen in early outdoor advertising, such as for "Coca Cola."

"SIGN," as defined in Lincoln Zoning Code (27.03.550):

Sign shall mean any structure, fixture, graphics, illustration, statue, or other device visible from off the premises designed or intended to advertise, to identify, to attract attention to, or to convey information regarding any goods, product, service, business, location, institution, activity, person, solicitation, issue, or campaign, with the exception of merchandise window displays, flags of any nation, state, or political subdivision, and sculpture. For purposes of removal, signs shall also include any sign structure.

1. Capitol Bedding Building, 1923
2. Hardy Building, 1919-20/1927
3. Sullivan Transfer Building, 1904/1973
4. Carter Transfer Building, 1916
5. Seaton & Lea Ironworks Building, 1881
6. Lincoln Hide & Fur Building, 1909
7. Henkle & Joyce Building, ca. 1887
8. Star Van & Storage Building, 1907/1915
9. Huber Building, 1901
10. Lau Building, 1904/1906
11. Gillen & Boney Building, 1906/1919/1924
12. Stacey Brothers Building, 1912
13. Harpham Brothers Buildings, 1903 & 1912
14. Veith Building, 1884
15. Economy Clothing Building, 1915
16. Lincoln Fixture Building, 1922
17. Burr & Muir Block, 1888
18. Ridour Building, 1925
19. Lincoln Drug Co. Building, 1905/1919
20. Bennett Hotel, 1915
21. Cafe and Shop, 1915
22. Cafe and Hotel, 1916
23. Burlington Northern Depot, 1927
24. Beatrice Creamery Building, 1890/1904
25. Old Wood Bros. Cos. Building, 1914
26. Grainger Brothers Warehouse, 1906
27. Salvation Army Building, 1966
28. Grainger Brothers Annex, 1936
29. Grainger Brothers Warehouse, 1912
30. Armour & Co. Building, 1911
31. Proudfit Co. Building, 1915 & 1924
33. Occidental Saloon, ca. 1891
34. Hargreaves/Schwarz Building, 1884/1905
35. Raymond Brothers Building, 1885
36. Pepperberg Segar Factory, 1908
37. Campbell Produce Building, 1895

