DRAFT

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

Twin Peaks Tavern

401 Castro Street

Draft Article 10 Landmark Designation Report submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission, September 19, 2012.

City and County of San Francisco
Edwin M. Lee, Mayor

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Landmark No.
XXX

Cover: Twin Peaks Tavern, 2012.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is a seven-member body that makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding the designation of landmark buildings and districts. The regulations governing landmarks and landmark districts are found in Article 10 of the Planning Code. The HPC is staffed by the San Francisco Planning Department.

This Draft Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the initiation and designation process. Only language contained within the Article 10 designation ordinance, adopted by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, should be regarded as final.

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Twin Peaks Tavern
401 Castro Street

Built: c.1886/1895/1923
Arc
hitect: Jules Levy (builder of 1923 alterations)

OVERVIEW

The Twin Peaks Tavern, a local bar at 401 Castro Street is at the major intersection of Market and 17th Streets. First opening in 1935, the bar lease was purchased in 1972 by two lesbians and refurbished as a fern bar for a gay clientele[1]. The first known gay bar to feature full length open plate glass windows, the Twin Peaks Tavern is a living symbol of the liberties and rights gained by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) community in the second half of the 20th century. Housed in a turn-of-the-century building with an intact 1923 Mediterranean Revival-style façade in the heart of the Castro, the bar retains its expansive windows and other character-defining features and continues to serve the LGBT community. The period of significance for the Twin Peaks Tavern begins in 1972, when it opened as a gay bar to 2003, when the pioneering women who opened the windows sold the bar.

In context, San Francisco's nighttime entertainment industries are significant in the formation, expansion and diversification of modern LGBT subcultures. Nighttime entertainment including bars, played an important role in the development of social networks and the creation of an "out" community starting with the repeal of Prohibition and culminating with the opening of the Twin Peaks Tavern's windows in 1972. The influence of nighttime entertainment and community-building organizations such as the Tavern Guild of San Francisco had a consciousness raising effect in society as a whole. Together these enabled collective resistance against persecution by the local, state and military policing agencies. The Twin Peaks Tavern is significant for its contribution to the evolution towards modern LGBT society and culture.[2]

The success of the Twin Peaks Tavern was a combination of several factors. First, it was located in the Castro, where a community of LGBTs was forming. Second, house rules as well as the organization of the physical space established the culture of the bar that encouraged personal bonding. Third, the lessons learned and advances made in LGBT recognition and political power in the 1960s by the Tavern Guild cleared the path for an "out" gay bar. Lastly, the normalization of an English pub in a social sense to a gay bar was attributable to the personalities and tastes of Cunha and Forster as "out" lesbians.

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[1] A fern bar is an American colloquialism for an upscale bar or tavern catering to singles, decorated with brass fittings, antiques, ferns and stained glass lamps.
[2] Scott, Damon, Sexing the City: The Development of Sexual Identity Based Subcultures in San Francisco, 1933-1979 Context Statement, 2004, page 3. The context was adopted by the San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Building History

The Twin Peaks Tavern sits on a lot that contains two buildings. The building at 401 Castro Street that houses the Twin Peaks Tavern appears much as it did in 1923 when the existing building was altered. First constructed before 1883 and known as 3999 17th Street, it was single-story building that housed a telephone exchange at one end of the building and a small dwelling fronting onto Castro Street on the southern end. In the 1890s, a second story was added and the building styled as a wood-clad square-bay Victorian. By 1899, the Sanborn map indicates that the storefront was occupied by a saloon and cigar shop. By 1915, a second building consisting of two flats, with two projecting bow windows on the second floor was constructed on the southern portion of the lot. In 1923, then owner Samuel Levin, perhaps in reaction to the adjacent construction of the Castro Theater, updated the façade of the building. The bay windows were removed and the entire building was stuccoed and restyled into the Mediterranean revival style that exists today.

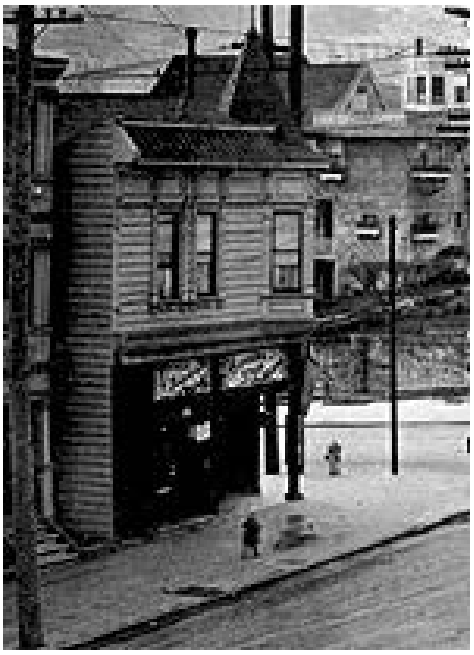

Figure 1: 401 Castro in 1919

401 Castro Exterior

401 Castro Street is one of two buildings located on a 25 by 100-foot lot, and is a two-story, rectangular plan, residential-over-commercial building clad in hard stucco in a Mediterranean revival style. The building is located on the southeast corner of Castro and 17th Streets. The second building on the southern end of the lot, 415-419 Castro Street, is of similar composition and use.

Figure 2: 401 Castro 17th St. storefront elevation

The building's 17th Street Façade contains historic materials including a recessed residential entry on the eastern bay, set within a paneled entry, and accessed by an unglazed terra cotta tiled step, a modern metal security gate leads to a wood sash door and transom window. The remainder of the ground level is given to a plate glass storefront assembly that wraps around to the Castro Street elevation. The base is covered in non-historic ceramic tile. Other historic materials include cast plaster pilasters flanking the residential entry as well as between the major elements of the storefront. An aluminum frame retains three large sheets of plate glass. A band of wood

panels forms a division between the storefront assembly, and a band of painted glass transom lights. Alternating lights open inward for ventilation. The fourth light is replaced with a painted metal ventilation hood. Turned wood colonettes separate each transom light. A plaster belt course divides the façade horizontally. The upper floor is characterized by historic materials including a smooth stucco façade. Two large illuminated metal box signs in the shape of an arrow are mounted on the façade; the downward point of each arrow aims towards the commercial entry of the Twin Peaks Tavern located at the corner of the façade at 17th and Castro Streets. The illumination of the arrow is animated by synchronized flashing lights in a rainbow of colors. Windows on the second floor on the 17th Street elevation, and the second and fourth bays on the Castro Street elevation are historic one-over-one wood sash with ogee lugs set within plain wood brick molding. Non-historic vinyl casement and fixed sash are located in the third and fifth bays of the second floor. The entablature contains a plaster band and a Spanish tile-clad pent roof parapet.

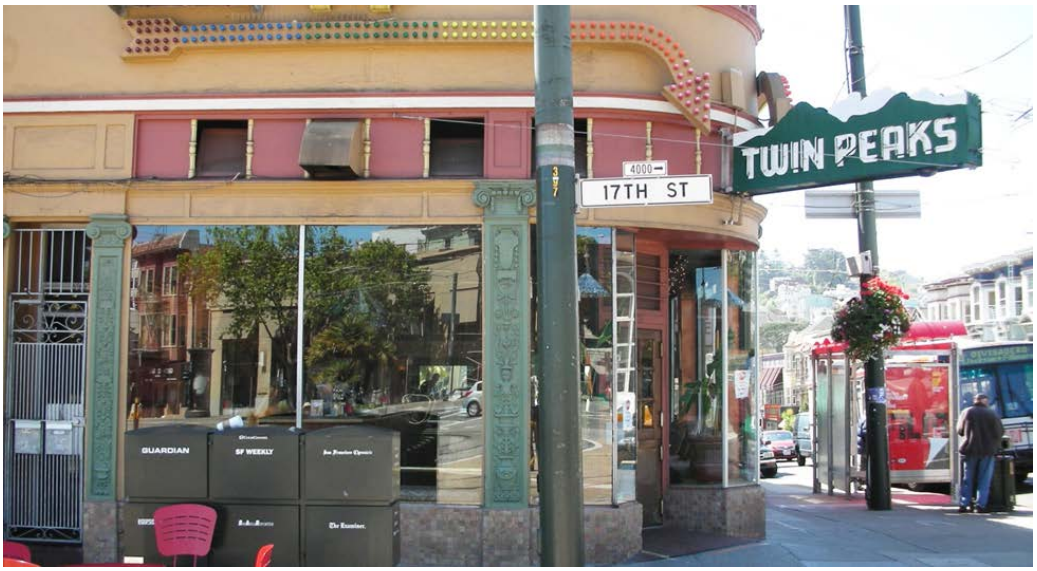

Figure 3: Corner entry and signage

All materials are historic unless otherwise noted. The primary entry into the Twin Peaks Tavern is through a centrally placed wooden nine-light Dutch door. Above, a transom with security bars completes the recess. Above, a metal box sign is shaped to feature the pattern of fog and the geographic Twin Peaks for which the Twin Peaks tavern is named. The words "Twin Peaks" are both painted and outlined in neon tubing. An additional neon feature of the outline of a martini glass is appended to the sign. At the second floor, a bow window flanked by bent sash wood

Figure 4: Castro St. elevation

casements and transoms is set within a wood frame and cast plaster hood. A plaster ornament of floral design is mounted above the center of the bow window transom. The entablature is a continuation of the plaster band and a Spanish tile-clad pent roof parapet that obscures the gable roof behind it.

Additional storefronts along Castro Street feature a centrally placed recessed entry with wood sash door, and a modern ceramic tile base. Frameless plate glass storefront windows follow the angles of the recess. A small awning projects over the sidewalk. A storefront transom features two wooden windows and a modern venting fan. A projecting box business sign is mounted in front of the storefront transom windows. Non-historic ceramic tile pilasters flank this bay. A recessed entry leading to the second floor of the adjacent building is located at the Sothern edge of the building. It features a wood sash door and transom, and a modern ceramic tile base.

Figure 5: Additional storefronts on Castro St.

Twin Peaks Tavern Interior

All materials are historic unless otherwise noted. The Twin Peaks Tavern interior is accessed from the corner of 17th and Castro Streets. The unpainted door is hung on double-swing hinges. The lower leaf displays brass numbers "401", while the upper leaf has a small brass plaque advertising "1st CLASS TOILET." The interior space is composed of a double-height space with a partial mezzanine. To the southern end of the room is a mezzanine space. The interior is carpeted, the plaster walls painted with faux finishes, the beamed ceiling is painted. On the interior to either side of the entry is a small display window with a ceramic tile base. At each is a potted plant. The left (eastern) side of the interior is dominated by the bar and back bar. The glazed storefront system dominates the northern and western interior walls.

Figure 6: Twin Peaks Tavern interior

Figure 7: Painting of interior by Jimmer

The "U"-shaped bar is provided with a wooden foot rest, shaped wooden lip, and Formica top surface. Free-standing wood stools with vinyl upholstery surround three sides of the bar. The more elaborate back bar is a pre-Prohibition piece of furniture. The unpainted wood lower section provides for open storage of liquor bottles, as well as closed cabinets and drawers. The upper section consists of three large arched openings with mirrored backs. Each arch sits on a squat wooden column with a gilt plaster composite capitol. The arches are adorned with additional plaster ornamentation. Stained glass pendant lamps hang within each arched opening. To the left of the back bar hangs a colorful painting of the bar's interior in the 1970s by a local artist known as Jimmer[3] who also painted all the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in the Twin Peaks Tavern."[4] To the right of the bar is an antique oak clock that is wound weekly, as well as a framed dollar bill. A doorway behind the back bar leads to the storage areas in the cellar.

The northern wall is made of a storefront system, and has an upholstered bench built in at the base. The western wall also features a built-in upholstered bench at the base of the glass storefront system. The piers between the glass storefront system feature artwork. One framed text reads: "No Cross No Crown." Facing the built in bench is a series of non-historic free-standing round tables and upholstered armchairs.

To the southern end of the room, the space is horizontally divided by a partial mezzanine. Below the mezzanine are sets of tables and chairs. The back wall features three large framed mirrors flanked by stained glass wall sconces on metal bases. A single brass column supports the floor above. A non-historic jukebox is located on the western wall below the mezzanine. A carpeted staircase leads down a short flight of stairs to a toilet in the southeastern corner of the room. To the east, another carpeted stair leads to the mezzanine level. At this level are additional non-historic round tables and upholstered armchairs. There are additional framed artworks and mirrors, as well as stained glass table lamps. A cast brass railing overlooks the lower portion of the room. The exposed edge of the mezzanine floor features a band of gilt lincrusta.

A series of historic mismatched stained glass lamps are hung from the ceiling, as are ceiling fans and a gas heater.

[3] Jimmer may be incorrect, or a nickname for Ramon Pablo Vidali, who is also credited with the painting.
[4] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.

CONTEXT

The Development of Sexual Identity-Based Subcultures in San Francisco, 1933-1979[5]

Historically, San Francisco is the primary location where sexuality became the basis for mobilizing for community rights and cultural recognition in the twentieth century. The city has served as a catalyst for national discussions about revaluing categories of gender and sexual difference and as a proving ground for forming modern sex and gender-based identities.

The repeal of Prohibition coincided with the proliferation of public spaces that began to attract increasing numbers of gays and lesbians and provided the social milieu for San Francisco's sexual minorities to strengthen communal ties. The growth of gay social networks would provide the basis for an emergent, self-styled cultural and political movement that attracted gay migrants from other parts of the country. Through the third quarter of the 20th century, the expansion of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) cultural and political movement evolved from the local stage to its "coming out" into the national arena. The Twin Peaks Tavern is a representation of an actual "coming out" of a social space for the LGBT community through the open windows. The first National March on Washington in October 1979 marked the posthumous realization of Harvey Milk's hopes for building a national sense of gay solidarity and the articulation of a national political agenda. This event marks the consolidation and nationalization of the LGBT identity movement that began in San Francisco's relatively tolerant social and political environment. It also signaled the diversification of the LGBT movement as the intersections of sexuality with gender, race, class and ethnicity became increasingly more grounded.

The city's built environment provides excellent opportunities to interpret the growth, expansion and diversification of sexual-identity-based subcultures during the last century. Woven into the city's fabric of urban villages, significant sites that mark the development of modern gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender identities include places of social interaction, political action, and community organizing. These sites are not restricted to a single area, but are spread throughout a number of different neighborhoods, including North Beach, the Tenderloin, Polk Gulch, South of Market, the Haight, the Castro, and the Mission.

The most enduring contribution of San Francisco to the social history of sexual minority subcultures has been its role in forging a political self-consciousness among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender peoples. Among the factors most influential in forming a sense of collective identity and political purpose are:

1. the establishment of permissive social spaces (e.g. bars such as the Twin Peaks Tavern, bathhouses, night clubs),
2. the founding of sexual identity-based political and social organizations (e.g. the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, Society for Individual Rights, Tavern Guild), and
3. the consciousness raising effect of demonstrations of social and political power, sometimes circulated through mass media (e.g. Compton's Cafeteria riots, the campaign and election of Harvey Milk).

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[5] Scott, Damon, Sexing the City: The Development of Sexual Identity Based Subcultures in San Francisco, 1933-1979 Context Statement, 2004.

Acknowledging the cumulative influence of meeting places, community-building organizations, and public demonstrations, sites significant in the formation, expansion and diversification of modern sexuality-based subcultures can be traced to the city's nighttime entertainments that gained visibility with repeal of Prohibition. Public visibility of gays and lesbians in bars and nightclubs facilitated the growth of social networks and planted the seeds for collective resistance against persecution meted out by the city's police force. The public visibility at the Twin Peaks Tavern was unprecedented for its time in 1972, and in scope with the fully open storefront windows.

Prohibition and the Growth of Gay and Lesbian Social Spaces

With the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, zones of nighttime entertainments emerged where even older vice districts had existed and provided the relatively open social environment for sexual and gender transgressions to flourish. The 1930s saw the rapid growth of nightlife on and near Broadway which became the central artery of the city's vice and tourist district--North Beach. The Black Cat reopened after the repeal of Prohibition in North Beach and soon became a fashionable destination for homosexuals and thrill-seeking tourists. The bar's straight owner, Sol Stoumen, played an important role in the 1951 California Supreme Court case that prohibited the practice of revoking liquor licenses solely on the basis of catering to homosexual clientele. Some twenty years before the opening of the Twin Peaks Tavern as a gay bar, these businesses established the basic rights of LGBT citizens to congregate.

Organizing Sexual Identities in the Post-War Era

After World War II, several groups began to organize in San Francisco around the goal of improving the social status of gays and lesbians. By 1956, the two most prominent national organizations dedicated to the improvement of gays and lesbians were headquartered in San Francisco—the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis. Set in motion by the candidacy of Jose Sarria for City Supervisor, several more explicitly political organizations formed in the 1960s. In 1962, the Tavern Guild formed in San Francisco as a response by bar owners to police harassment. The first gay business association in the United States, the Guild fought the discriminatory practices of the police and the liquor board. Among the several long-time patrons of the Twin Peaks Tavern interviewed for this report, Tom Shepard recalled his experience in a post-WWII era:

> "It [San Francisco] was a Mecca. When the Navy's Pacific fleet threw someone out for being gay, they'd get thrown out here."[6]

Self-Representation and the Flourishing of a New Culture in the Mid-1960s

With growing strength of gay and lesbian organizations and the mobilization of previously non-politicized bar patrons in response to police harassment, San Francisco became increasingly associated in the minds of most Americans with sexual freedom and gender transgressions. San Francisco's sexual minority subcultures began to grow as new migrants arrived to seek relief from the oppressive environments they left behind. Bypassing North Beach and the Tenderloin--the centers of adult entertainments and sexual and gender transgression in the 1940s and 1950s--the Polk, the Haight, and South of Market increasingly gained a visible gay and lesbian presence in the 1960s. In part, this is attributable to an expanding LGBT population not only in terms of total numbers, but also into new neighborhoods within the City, although still centered around areas associated with vice.

The Twin Peaks Tavern is an important location where the development of a LGBT identity can be interpreted. It possess significance in understanding the social, cultural, political and economic history of

[6] Tom Sheppard, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.

San Francisco's diverse sexual subcultures. The Twin Peaks Tavern is significant among other sites that include places where social interaction among sexual subcultures persisted, where influential local and national sexual-identity based organizations conducted activities, and locations where sexual minorities demonstrated their collective social and political power.

LGBT in Eureka Valley; the Beginnings of 'The Castro'

Eureka Valley is a section of San Francisco immediately east of the geographic center of the City. It lies at the eastern base of the hills called Twin Peaks, north of Noe Valley, south of Corona Heights and the Western Addition, and west of the Mission District. First settled in the 1870s, it survived the 1906 disaster with little damage. The overwhelming majority of the area is of wood-frame construction built prior to 1920. It is located approximately two miles from the commercial core of San Francisco, and aside from residential uses, it features commercial strips along Market Street, Castro Street, 18th Street and scattered corner stores.

The Castro neighborhood, set within Eureka Valley, is the LGBT-identified area that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Attracted by the cheap rents and inexpensive real estate, young LGBTs moved into the neighborhood and away from the North Beach and Tenderloin neighborhoods to form a community. Francis Redman, who arrived in San Francisco in 1964 mused over San Francisco in the 1960s: "The gay bars used to be in North Beach—the Savoy Tivoli. Polk Street and North Beach were the gay areas in San Francisco in the 60s. The cops used to raid the places back then."[7] Sam Crocker, another migrant noted, "Polk Street area was getting tired. The Castro was fresh and vibrant."[8] Judd Ziebell articulated in an interview another aspect of the formation of the Castro:

> "After the Summer of Love, the Haight Ashbury couldn't handle all the counter culture, so, they moved over the hill to here [The Castro], where rents were cheaper. The Castro started filling up with people and sexual freedom all day and all night. Gay men, especially. We saw how many of us there were, how varied we were—stereotypes were breaking down."[9]

Scott Damon's "Sexing the City" context provides some additional documentation of the LGBT community migration to Eureka Valley. Beginning in the early 1970s, the Castro became an increasingly important destination for gay men and lesbians. In 1973, the opening of Castro Camera (575 Castro) by Harvey Milk reflected the neighborhood's quickly changing demographics. San Francisco's LGBT population grew explosively during the 1970s. The Department of Health estimated the LGBT population in 1972 to be around 90,000; just five years later the Chronicle placed the figure at 120,000. This rapid growth had several significant effects on sexual minority subcultures:

1. numerous new, cultural traditions were established,
2. the diversity of sexual expression became more evident,
3. the political strength of the San Francisco LGBT community resulted in electoral successes, and
4. the intersection of sexuality with identifications based on gender, race, ethnicity and class became increasingly important.

[7] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[8] Sam Crocker, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.
[9] Judd Ziebell, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.

The 1970s saw the crystallization of the gay identity movement in San Francisco as the number of gay-oriented organizations exploded, the gay-targeted commercial sector gained strength, numerous gay people swelled the City's population, and the organization of a gay voting bloc paid off with electoral successes. Francis Redman reported his experience within the emerging Castro neighborhood:

> "The Castro was blossoming in the '70s. At first, we were afraid of being seen, but, then we just didn't care anymore. It happened so fast!"[10]

Once established, the neighborhood also provided a physical location that was safer than prior gay-oriented areas such as Polk Street and South of Market that had seedy or "underground" reputations. The Castro was an established working-class neighborhood that became the backbone of a relatively new manifestation of gay-identity whose members were both "out" and "normal." Lesbians and gays who had the wherewithal to purchase property set upon painting and refurbishing the houses, and in turn the neighborhood and in doing so, increasing property values.

HISTORY

A Working-Class Neighborhood Bar, 1935-1971

San Francisco city directories list the Twin Peaks Tavern by name as a neighborhood bar since 1935, two years following the end of Prohibition. It was operated by Osborne Bye and William Mullane. The present metal projecting sign is depicted in a photograph from the early 1940s, with the hills and fog painted, along with the names of then proprietors of the Twin Peaks Tavern: "Gus and Bye." The 1945 city directory identifies Gus Fagerlind and Knut Carlson as proprietors. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Twin Peaks Tavern was operated by Robert Clancy and Curtis R. Robinson.

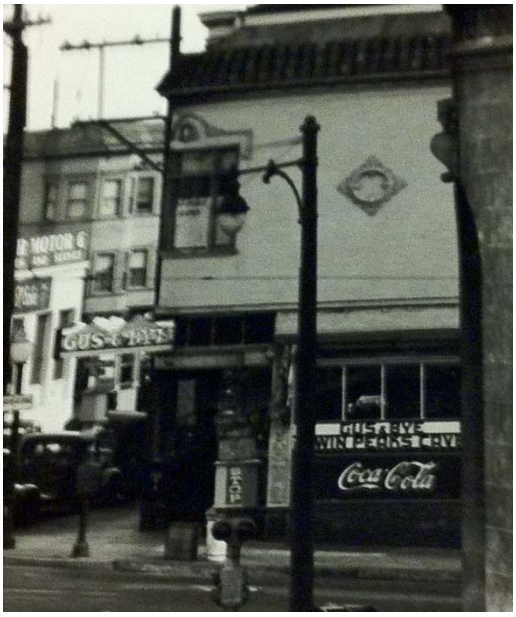

Figure 8: Twin Peaks Tavern c. 1944

In 1971, Robert Clancy sold the Twin Peaks Tavern business. At the time of the transfer, the bar's windows were "blocked out by black paper on the interior, and were painted on the exterior."[11] It is not presently known when the modifications to the 1923 façade were carried out to initially block the windows, or if that condition had changed over time. The c. 1944 photograph shows them partially blocked. With the windows covered, "wives couldn't see their husbands drinking in here."[12] In the early 1970s, owners of the Twin Peaks Tavern opted to sell. MaryEllen Cunha, one of the women that purchased the bar recollected the character of the bar at the time of the transfer:

> "The Twin Peaks Tavern was a dive Irish bar when we bought it. It served mostly neighborhood men and wives, but lots of seamen would drink there while in San

[10] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[11] Alan Snelling, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[12] Matthew Wright, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.

Francisco. Usually, when you buy a bar, you keep the same name. For years, a lot of the old regulars still came in and had their drinks. I never had fears about being a bar that catered to lesbian and gay clientele; that never bothered us. It was just going to be a neighborhood bar."[13]

Twin Peaks Tavern: The Years of 'The Girls', 1972-2003

Records from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) establish October 11, 1972 as the original date of issue for the license of the Twin Peaks Tavern in the name of Mary E. Cunha. The new owners of the Twin Peaks Tavern, MaryEllen Cunha and Margaret Ann (Peggy) Forster, set upon giving the bar a new identity. MaryEllen Cunha recalled her personal history, and how she came to the Twin Peaks Tavern:

> "I lived in Los Banos and came to San Francisco in 1957. Coming out was hard in the early days. I mean, I never had any trouble, but Charlotte [Coleman, a friend and long-time lesbian-bar proprietor and founding member of the Tavern Guild] did when she first got here from Boston back in the early 50s or late 40s. They used to hide all the time. The cops were always chasing them, trying to catch them doing something. She [Coleman] worked for the IRS, so she wasn't too happy. I worked for American Motors in San Francisco and Burlingame. Then I started working for Peggy [Forster, who had arrived in San Francisco from Madison, Wisconsin on August 23rd 1959[14]] in her liquor store on Valencia and 16th. One of the liquor salesmen started talking about the Twin Peaks Tavern, and I had enough money, so I bought it in 1971 and opened it in '72. It was a good location on the corner, lots of people—good future. I'd been looking for a bar for a while, and this one was in this neighborhood. We were already living in this neighborhood."[15]
>
> "The Castro started attracting gays in the late 60s. There were a couple gay bars on Castro and Market. Charlotte and Peggy owned a group of bars— The Mint, The Trap, The Blue and Gold, Gilmore's up at the cable car turnaround, Sharp's Bar and Restaurant and a bar down in San Carlos. They also owned the Golden Cask on Haight Street. I only had the Twin Peaks Tavern. That was enough for me."[16]

Cunha and Forster were, and continue to be known to long-time patrons as "The Girls." As plans for the transition of the Twin Peaks Tavern into a gay fern bar materialized, "The Girls moved the bar in and opened the windows."[17] Before MaryEllen Cunha and Peggy Forster took over Twin Peaks, the large plate glass windows were painted on the exterior, and featured advertisements, and papered on the interior. Cunha recalled the changes to the windows that she and Forster made:

> "The interior was dark and dingy, with a low ceiling, a little bar with mirrors behind it, and a little office upstairs. We tore the walls of the office down and put the rail up there, and tore down the suspended ceiling. I don't remember if the windows were painted, but we took all that

[13] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[14] Lynn Haley, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, September 1, 2012. Friends since high school, Haley and Forster left Wisconsin for San Francisco together. Forster's father served as mayor of Madison from 1950 to 1955.
[15] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Mike Learned, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, June 21, 2012.

> down and put the glass windows in. People were used to being in windowless bars, but I didn't like it! That was our plan, to open it up. We wanted to look out! We didn't want to sit in a bar and not be able to look out!

Patrons were provided with comfortable chairs and tables and an unobstructed view of the street's goings on; however, this also meant that there was an unobstructed view in.

Figure 9: Twin Peaks Tavern interior 1970s.

In 1972, Cunha and Forster remodeled the interior of the Twin Peaks Tavern as a "fern bar." A fern bar is an American colloquialism for an upscale bar or tavern catering to singles, decorated with brass fittings, antiques, ferns and stained glass lamps. The phrase came into common use in the late 1970s or early 1980s. An early establishment that many consider the world's first fern bar in 1970 was called Henry Africa's at Broadway and Polk Streets. Its proprietor, Norman Hobday, "took the opium-den atmosphere out of the saloons" in favor of "antique lamps and Grandma's living-room furniture."[18] At Twin Peaks, according to a former patron, "Ferns [were] hung in all the windows [at Twin Peaks].[19] One of the bartenders used to come in every Monday or Tuesday to take them down and water them.[20]" Cunha described Twin Peaks' "fern bar" interior and other aspects of the bar in further detail:

> "We had plants up around the ceiling. Then we took them down because it was too hard for the boys to water them. They had to take them down, take them out back, water them and put them back up. We had area rugs to start. The first carpet we got was out of a mansion in Palo Alto. It lasted a long time. It was gorgeous. The back bar came from a bar in the Mission. My liquor salesman mentioned it to us. It was in a little back room, a pool room, and when we had the windows out, we were able to bring it through the windows. Peg and I got the tables and chairs just going around places, antique stores and stuff. Peggy and I picked stuff out with a little helper, Pat Green, one of our little group.

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[18] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fern_bar accessed 8/23/12
[19] George Roehm, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[20] Jeffrey Green, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.

We had [the stained glass hanging lights] made over in Berkeley. Upstairs there is a portrait of "Uncle Louis" who used to work for us at the liquor store.

"Antiques were just the look that we wanted. I never liked a bar where everyone has to stand up. I like to sit down myself. Just a little bit more comfortable. Led to more conversation, customers bonded with their groups. They'd come in and save tables for their group. They had their own little bar stools, unless I or Peggy were sitting on their barstool having a little cocktail ourselves.

"The Twin Peaks Tavern sign has always been there from the '30s or '40s. The only thing we did was add the little cocktail glass. Later, we put the colored lights on the arrows. They were on the building, but, they were not in use. We wanted to put the gay colored lights, but, we couldn't find them anywhere, so we dipped them—we painted them down in my basement. But, now you can buy all the colors. It was great; it was beautiful. The sign was gorgeous! It still is. You can see it from Divisadero, or Market, or on the news. The news is always shot from that corner. We were never tempted to change the sign."

Figure 10: Twin Peaks Tavern 1982. Photo by Larry Moon .

"Yeah, it was—two crazy girls that looked ahead a little bit. It wasn't the only bar—there were lots of nice bars. I'm not gonna knock the other bars, but, we were selfish; maybe we opened it for ourselves! We had a trial run the night before Thanksgiving. I think we used all the booze we'd purchased that night! There were 3 of us gonna do it—run the bar ourselves. We were so popular that that idea didn't last 2 days! We couldn't do it!"[21] [22]

Other aspects of the Twin Peaks Tavern that contributed to its unique interior character included a jukebox on the balcony that played from its collection of 45s, and a cigarette machine below the balcony dispensing its wares. Cunha and Forster uniformed their bartenders and table servers in aprons, giving the bar an "Irish look." Cunha describes the scene:

"We thought it looked good. And, it kept their clothes clean. Bartenders. I can see their faces—the loves of my life. Art, Paulie, Mikie. Art was hilarious—especially if I was still sitting there when he came in at 6:00 in the morning… "*Oh, my god—she didn't go home yet*!" Bunch of brats! I bought cases and cases of Irish Coffee glasses. Until I figured out

[21] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[22] Ibid.

why. They wouldn't wash them. They'd just throw them away. Why? Because they'd have to change the water every time because of the cream in the water. We were so stupid. We were selling Irish Coffee for 50 cents! Put a sign in the window—"50-cent Irish Coffee up 'til 6:00". They'd line up and order 3 at a time! 25-cent beer, 75-cent highballs."[23]

Figure 11: Art White. Photo: Matthew Wright

Once the exterior and interior modifications were complete, Cunha and Forster developed a marketing strategy to target their bar for men and women alike who were slightly more professional, and more interested in conversation than sex. In addition to developing a marketing strategy, house rules were established, including a rule against touching – a common practice in historic LGBT spaces. The Twin Peaks Tavern was known as a 'no touch' bar. A long-time patron remembered, "The Girls didn't allow making out in the windows. This was not a cruise bar; more of a social bar. You could greet each other with a kiss and hug."[24] If you were caught kissing, you'd get thrown out.[25] Cunha explained:

"Twin Peaks Tavern was a "don't touch" bar. I don't know what happened after I went home. Well, that was the way we wanted to have a bar. It was for the best. Who wants to sit in a bar and watch people misbehave? Peggy and Charlotte had so many bars, and they were all "no touch" bars. If you want to make out, you go home, right? You want to run a clean bar to avoid police and ABC trouble. I think most of the guys appreciated it. Some of them teased us about it. Most of them were in there to drink and have a good time, never mind making out. Everybody can run their bars the way they want to. And, it lasted a long time. I don't know if the rules have changed now."[26]

Figure 12: Halloween. Photo: Matthew Wright

Bartenders at the Twin Peaks Tavern were typically employed for many years, and developed keen following, establishing personal connections with the regular patrons. It was not uncommon for a bartender to be at the Twin Peaks Tavern for ten or more years.

"I got to know the bartenders. One in particular was very friendly and hysterical. He always gave me a

[23] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[24] George Roehm, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[25] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[26] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.

warm welcome. I felt very comfortable here. His name was Art White. He kinda kept me personally coming back."[27]

"Liz Carroll was a great cocktail waitress. She worked here for 15 years. She was kind of a matchmaker."[28]

Several holidays are celebrated at the Twin Peaks Tavern on an annual basis which cemented the personal bonds of friendship and lent the bar to become an informal community center. Alongside the celebrations in the Castro, New Year's Eve, Gay Pride, the Castro Street Fair, Halloween all are cause for celebration.

Figure 13: Forster and Cunha at the 10th anniversary party. Photo: MaryEllen Cunha

"For the first Gay Parade, the Twin Peaks Tavern had a marching band. The Castro Street Fair brought a lot of business. It was great. Halloween was a great time until it got so big."[29]

The bar opened at noon, but staff was often on-hand much earlier. Maryellen Cunha shared an anecdote of one the Castro's most well-known personalities:

"Opening in the morning, Harvey Milk would stop by. He'd catch the bus, he'd stop in and have coffee and dish. He'd take the bus, get off and come in, then hop back on the bus and go downtown to work."[30]

Tavern Guild and Police Relations

As a gay bar established in the early 1970s, the relations between the State ABC, and local police were carefully balanced for their proprietors. This was not the case in the 1950s and 1960s. Established in 1962, the Tavern Guild of San Francisco was the first gay business association in the United States founded in an effort to fight corruption. The Tavern Guild charged itself with improving the relationships between owners of businesses that catered to the LGBT community and the San Francisco Police Department. The Twin Peaks Tavern was admitted as a member in July 1973.

[27] Jeffrey Green, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[28] Alan Snelling, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[29] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[30] Ibid.

In spite of high tensions between the Police and the LGBT community during the 1970s, Cunha and Charlotte Coleman never encountered any police harassment at the Twin Peaks Tavern. The ABC was another story, as Cunha recalls:

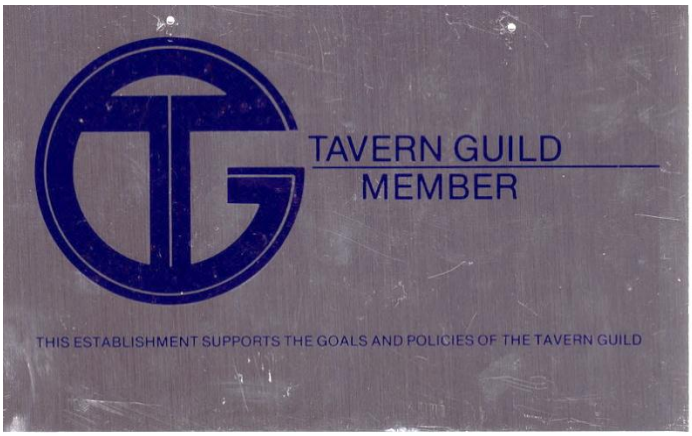

Figure 14: Tavern Guild membership plaque

"We could only have 90 customers in there. The Police would come in and walk around if it looked too crowded. It looked like more people with those windows wide open. It was crazy watching the people walk by and looking in and everyone inside is looking back out. It was crazy in those days. At one time the ABC would set up young, good looking guys who were underage came in to try to buy drinks."[31]

In 1980, the police used Twin Peaks Tavern as a meeting place to respond to tensions between the SFPD and the LGBT community. The Tavern Guild arranged for Police Chief Cornelius Murphy to address 125 gay men at the Twin Peaks for 40 minutes of discourse in 1980. The appearance of Chief Murphy was noteworthy, and stories ran in several newspapers.

For Twin Peaks Tavern owner MaryEllen Cunha, the Tavern Guild was "was more of a social club [she] was never into heavy duty politics." She explained:

Figure 15: Twin Peaks participants in the Memorial Day Tricycle Race

"Peggy and Charlotte had always belonged to the Tavern Guild, so, I joined it. They did a lot of great things. We met every other week. They raised a lot of funds at fundraisers—a lot of money. The money that was left [when the Tavern Guild closed down] went to buying that building on Valencia—the Valencia Community Thrift. The Guild also helped bartenders find jobs and bars, etc. through their local newspaper."[32]

The Twin Peaks Tavern quickly became more than a local bar, but as a member of the Tavern Guild, was an active participant in the role of a sexually-based political and social organization. Many patrons recalled with smiles the Tavern Guild's Memorial Day Tricycle Races that occurred in San Francisco in the 1970s. A way to bring frivolity to bar-hopping, while raising money for charity, the races of teams of two made the rounds

[31] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[32] Ibid.

between several bars, including the Twin Peaks Tavern. Various bars would sponsor tricycles and a team of two people in ridiculous costumes would take turns riding and pushing the tricycle along a route which covered most of the gay bars in the City. They had to check-in at each location and have a drink before speeding along to the next pit-stop. They raised thousands of dollars along the way. The finish line was, of course, The Mint, where the celebration continued well into the evening. The first charity to benefit from the event was "Guide Dogs for the Blind." Later, the donations were made to various AIDS charities including San Francisco General hospital Ward 5-B (the world's first hospital ward dedicated to AIDS), Project Open Hand, and The AIDS Emergency Fund. The first Great Tricycle Race was held in 1972 and the tradition continued for 21 years.[33]

Figure 17: Tricycle race pin

One enduring activity that began at the Tavern Guild's annual picnic of 1973 was the Gay Community Softball League. Eight gay bars, including the Twin Peaks, sponsored teams to compete with one another, the winner to play against the police. Jack 'Irene' McGowan began the gay softball league and managed the Twin Peaks team to the historic 1974 victory over Police Department Central Station 9-4[34]. Recalling the team, Cunha said:

> "We played the police league. We had a good team, good looking guys—all of them! And they won! They played the police Department. After the game, all the Department came to the bar with the sirens going, parked their cars all over the place, and came in and saluted all the guys and the chief was escorted in by the policemen. Quite a day."[35]

BAR BAY AREA REPORTER FREE

POLICE BEATEN!

Play Ball!

Figure 16: Bay Area Reporter 1974

White Night Riots

Following the trial of former Supervisor Dan White, and his acquittal for the assassination of Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, the "White Night Riots" erupted in both the Civic Center and the Castro. According to film maker and eyewitness, David Weissman, while the police assembled at Market and Castro Streets in riot gear, the Twin Peaks Tavern lowered the lights and locked the doors and insisted the patrons move to the floor. The police did not enter the Twin Peaks, but devastated the Elephant Walk bar one block to the south at 500 Castro Street. Other witnesses of reported their experiences:

> "I was here [at the Twin Peaks Tavern] for the Dan White decision. I'd been going with a supervisor's aide at the time. He told me to leave City Hall, where I'd been waiting for

[33] http://thecastro.net/street/tracepage/tracepage.html accessed August 30, 2012.
[34] Bay Area Reporter, Sportstory 3.5, San Francisco CA, March 30, 2006.
[35] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.

him to get off work. I came here, to the Twin Peaks Tavern. There were riots at City Hall. A police line formed across Market Street and started marching up Castro to the Elephant Walk. The bartender here, I think it was Jeff, told us to get under the tables. The doors were locked."[36]

"During the White Night riots, the Twin Peaks Tavern was a refuge."[37]

Cunha added: "One of my bartenders, Ron, got hurt pretty bad, but, I think it was in the Elephant Walk."[38]

While it isn't known why the police opted to raid the Elephant Walk instead of the Twin Peaks Tavern, the effects of the event raised the consciousness of the LGBT community and actually served to promote the social and political power of the Castro. When Diane Feinstein was sworn in as mayor, she appointed a new Police Chief, Cornelius Murphy who moved quickly to restore relations with the LGBT community. Addressing the crowd of 125 from the balcony of the Twin Peaks Tavern in 1980, the Chief was greeted with applause.

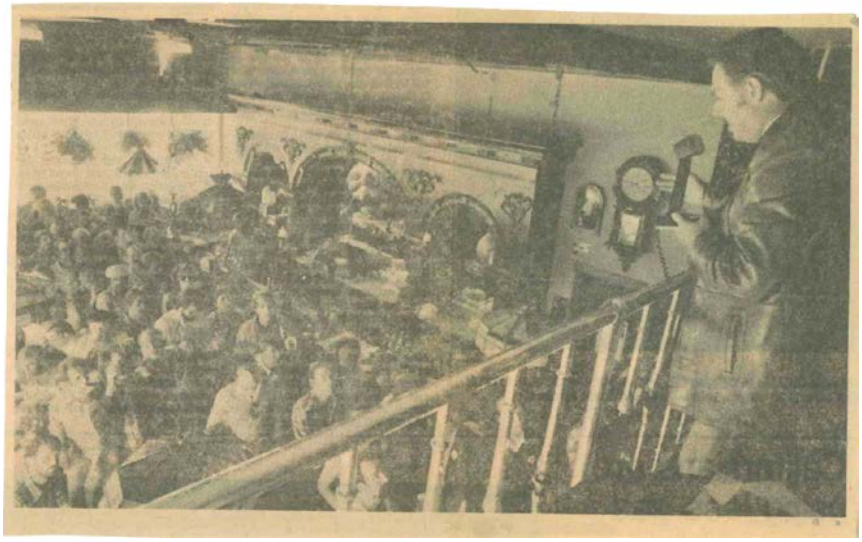

Figure 18: Chief Murphy addressing a crowd from the balcony of the Twin Peaks tavern, April 2,1980. Photo by Examiner / John Gorman

Fred Rogers - Owner of the Elephant Walk and others recognize the significance of the Twin Peaks opening the windows:

"We [The elephant Walk] were not the first glass-walled tavern in the neighborhood. That distinction belonged to the venerable, and still thriving, Twin Peaks on Market and 17th Streets."[39]

"The legacy of the Twin Peaks Tavern is: Don't be afraid; it's hard to hide here."[40]

AIDS

As the years progressed, and AIDS affected the Castro, neither the staff nor the patrons of the Twin Peaks Tavern were spared. Among the longtime bartenders who succumbed to AIDS were David Himsl, Paulie Walker, Mike Winnings, Art White and Clint Royce. A discussion of the organized response to the AIDS crisis is provided below, under the section "Statement of Significance."

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[36] Gary Gerdes, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[37] Judd Ziebell, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[38] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[39] Fred Rogers - Owner of the Elephant Walk from http://thecastro.net/milk/rogers.html accessed 8/25/12
[40] Tom Sheppard, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.

> "Sylvester gave a concert at the Elephant Walk! Then, people started dying and the Castro became a haunted neighborhood."[41]

The following summary of the effects of AIDS and HIV in the Castro is repeated from KQED's "*Neighborhoods: The Hidden Cities of San Francisco: The Castro*"

"Even though AIDS and HIV encouraged a negative view of gay sex, the educational efforts to combat the disease, inadequate as they were, helped to demystify same-sex unions. As a result, public awareness of homosexuality is much greater now than it was before AIDS was first identified in 1981. One of the most dramatic consequences of AIDS is that a large number of men were catapulted out of the closet when their illness became obvious. Gay men "in the closet," who were more likely to seek anonymous sexual contact, were at greater risk than those who were open about their sexual orientation. The tragic opening of many closet doors forced heterosexuals to become aware of homosexuality in a new way.

"The AIDS crisis mobilized the gay and lesbian community by concentrating its focus on a single threat, and by involving many people who had not been politically active before. Because of the general public's indifference to this crisis, the greatest response came from the gay community itself. Community-based groups started support services such as ACT UP, Shanti, Project Open Hand and the Coming Home Hospice. AIDS, which had the potential to destroy the gay liberation movement, in fact brought the neighborhood closer than ever before.

Figure 19: Farewell party flier, 2003.

"Another unexpected development was the new spirit of cooperation and solidarity between lesbians and gay men. AIDS also brought many new supporters to the gay cause: parents whose sons had died of the disease; heterosexuals in the medical profession; and people who were beginning to understand the problems and discrimination encountered by gay people."[42] MaryEllen Cunha says she hates to talk about the AIDS epidemic:

> "I went through some things yesterday and found some notes from different mothers—of the bartenders. We must have lost about ten or more bartenders. Pretty sad. Lost very close friends—young, healthy men, and pretty soon their bodies are just gone. Hard to believe. We did a lot of fundraising. Not just the Twin Peaks, but a lot of the bars. Family aspect of the Twin Peaks really helped the people who were still with us. It took a long time. But AIDS, it was too fast. Seemed like they didn't have a chance. It's so funny—those guys were such characters and so strong—unbelievable when it started. Like Mikey [Michael Winnings]—he wrote me so many letters. He was on so much medication, he'd dream he was at work."[43]

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[41] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[42] Neighborhoods: The Hidden Cities of San Francisco: The Castro, KQED http://www.kqed.org/w/hood/castro/resourceguide/programhighlights.html accessed August 31, 2012.
[43] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.

Sam Crocker reflected emotionally: "The Twin Peaks has been a rock in the Castro."[44]

Twin Peaks Tavern: Jeff and George, 2003-2012 and Beyond

When Cunha and Forster moved towards retirement, they approached longtime friends and bartenders Jeff Green and George Roehm, to take over the Twin Peaks Tavern. Each had been working at the bar for several years, and was already invested in the operation of the bar and the lives of the patrons.

> "We were relieved when Jeff and George bought the bar, after all, it could have become a McDonald's!"[45]

After 31 years running the Twin Peaks Tavern, Cunha and Forster sold the business to long-term employees, bartenders and longtime friends Jeff Green and George Roehm in 2003. Once the transfer was made, and the new owners began to make minor, but much-needed upgrades to the interior. Jeff Green and George Roehm talked about how the Twin Peaks Tavern conveys its unique feeling and significance in the Castro and the larger LGBT community:

Figure 20: Twin Peaks tavern interior.

> "I found it was unlike any other bar in the neighborhood—or any other gay bar. You could meet people and have a conversation with them and become friends with people instead of going to other bars that were dim and with loud disco music (which I enjoyed, too); but, this was like a safe haven, nice to come back here knowing the bartenders and people. I think it continues today to have that feeling.[46]"
>
> "The legacy of the Twin Peaks Tavern is the windows. That's pretty much what we're known for. Because of them, being open in a period of time when you could be fired for being seen in a gay bar….That's pretty significant. The windows caused the gay movement to move forward—no hiding from society."[47]

For several years prior, the full expression of a "fern bar" was waning. The ferns were difficult to maintain and were among the first things to go. Some of the antiques used for functional decoration followed. The antique brass cash register and round oak dining tables and mismatched chairs were replaced with modern versions, while keeping the same feeling. Carpets, bar stools and upholstery on the built-in benches were changed. The juke boxes were replaced with a modern unit. The flashing light

[44] Sam Crocker, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.
[45] Tom Libby, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[46] Jeffrey Green, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[47] George Roehm, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.

mechanisms on the arrows on the outside the bar were repaired. Fresh paint was applied to the interior, and the Twin Peaks Tavern was set for a new generation.

> "The framed dollar [behind the bar] was given to us by Peggy and Mary Ellen to wish us luck. It was our first dollar and is signed by them."[48]

Figure 21: Twin Peaks Tavern's AIDS Walk team members

In 2008 the owners were asked to allow the bar to be used as a stage set. The Twin Peaks Tavern was used as an interior set for the filming of the movie "Milk." The renewed interest in the life of Harvey Milk, and the attention given to The Castro as a center of LGBT culture and rights, have attracted tourists from around the world. Countless guidebooks direct the traveler to The Castro, and to the Twin Peaks Tavern. Long-standing traditions of the bar continue such as raising money for charity, public celebrations and private memorials. Jeff Green is proud of the Twin Peaks Tavern's AIDS Walk team's success in fundraising, noting: . "We usually come in first, second or third for raising the most money for teams under 50 people. We have an old-fashioned bake sale and a raffle where all the businesses in the area contribute something. Plus, our customers—we hit them up for a couple months prior to the Walk. This year we raised $28,000 which is really substantial for a bar. Not many other bars—especially gay bars—do this, which surprises me. Maybe it's because we've been here so long and been effected so deeply by all the loss that we feel it's important to continue raising money until we don't need to anymore."[49]

Bartenders like Spiros who joined the Twin Peaks Tavern in 2003 tend to stay for many years, and continue the tradition of developing personal relationships with their patrons. The patrons demographic has evolved over the years in terms of age, gender, and sexual orientations to become more of the neighborhood bar envisioned by Cunha in the 1970s. The community bonds are strong enough for patrons, Mike Learned and Francis Redman to recall:

> "I was here when the California Supreme Court declared Prop 8 null and void. Very joyous occasion. A friend who got married lost his partner shortly thereafter, and he felt he had to be here rather than at home for such a feat. This is the type of personal place this is."[50]
>
> "The Twin Peaks Tavern is the first gay bar with open windows. The whole world knew about this place—it was mentioned in travel guide books. Europeans flooded this place. It's a world-renowned gay bar. The glass windows were a break from dark bars."[51]

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[48] George Roehm, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[49] Jeffrey Green, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[50] Mike Learned, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, June 21, 2012.
[51] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.

Twin Peaks Tavern: Enduring LGBT Community Connections

True to the socialization patterns of an English pub analogy, the Twin Peaks Tavern is more than a place that serves alcohol. The Twin Peaks serves as a public living room, social hall, community center, informal chamber of commerce, meeting place, a site of fundraisers, memorials, public announcements, private celebrations, and merriment – all provided with a view to the street.

> "The patrons here consider each other family. It's the gay Cheers."[52]

When Cunha and Forster opened the Twin Peaks Tavern, "they were in their 30s and that's what the ages of the patrons were, too."[53] Younger gay men in their 20s were not generally attracted to the Twin Peaks, with its "no-touch" rules and more conversational tenor. As one regular recalls, "I was only 21 when I started coming here [in 1978], and the older men thought I was a hooker."[54] As the original patrons from the 1970s have aged, those still residing in San Francisco have continued to patronize the Twin Peaks. The present owners recall, "for a while the Twin Peaks was perceived as an older person's bar. Some of our patrons who've been here since the 70s still come in, but really we get everyone over 21 coming in here. Because the bar is so comfortable, people keep coming back for years."[55] Many bars earn nicknames, and the Twin Peaks is among them. It's been called the Glass Coffin.[56] Ageism wrapped in irony is cold comfort for the Twin Peaks Tavern.

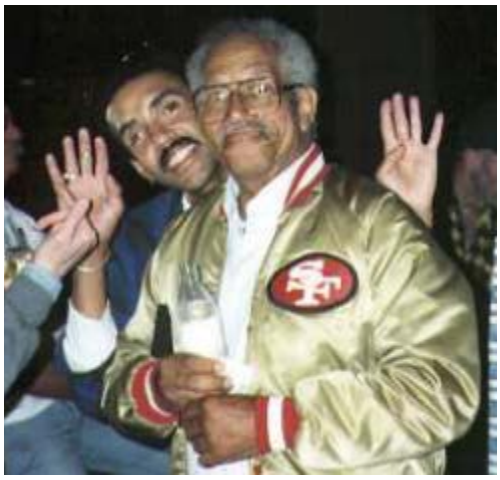

Figure 22: Patrons at the Twin Peaks

> "Lot of the guys, the older guys—they used to call us the oldest bar in town because we had the oldest customers, which was great."[57]

> "We don't perpetuate the derogatory names that disrespect our older clientele, because they're an important part of our society. They are pioneers. They made it possible for young people today to walk down the street holding hands."[58]

Different generations view the Twin Peaks Tavern with different lenses, and derive different meanings that provide insight into the bar's LGBT cultural significance. To the generation that came of age in the 1950s and 1960s, the Twin Peaks Tavern is a place where the gay movement came out of the closet to become visible to society. Men of the next generation, who came of age in the 1970s, remember the Twin Peaks as a place where they personally came out. The following generations walk comfortably in the footsteps of the pioneers who came before them, and blithely see the Twin Peaks tavern as a venerable bar where it is safe to bring straight friends and family in the Castro.

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[52] Jeffrey Green, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[53] George Roehm, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[54] Matthew Wright, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[55] Jeffrey Green, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[56] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[57] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[58] George Roehm and Jeffrey Green, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.

Figure 23: Long time patrons pose for a portrait. (c) Ron Williams

"In the old days [1950s and 1960s], you wouldn't dare hold hands."[59]

"People flocked into this place [when it first opened] because they could see in. It was the most popular place in the Castro."[60]

"I've always felt comfortable here; so does my whole family. Everyone's welcome here."[61]

The TPT is located at the gateway to the Castro at the intersection of Market, Castro and 17th Streets. The Twin Peaks Tavern is the closest business to the intersection, has the most prominent business sign, and the steadiest clientele. "Everyone comes in here, authors, painters, film makers, and celebrities."[62] "The bar doesn't organize political activities, but people involved in them come here due to its location."[63] "Often, political candidates will come to the Twin Peaks."[64] One long-time patron recalled helping to form the first gay/lesbian Democratic club, the Alice B. Toklas Club, dedicated to George McGovern. "That club was begun one block from here. We opened [the McGovern field office] the same day the Girls opened Twin Peaks Tavern."[65]

> "The Twin Peaks is a safe place to observe gay history in the making."[66]
>
> "Things really have changed nowadays. I mean, us kids always wanted to get married when we were young, but, we couldn't. Now, we have a chance. I wasn't living with anyone, so I couldn't get married. And, I was too ornery."[67]
>
> "José Sarria comes in here. He's still alive and 89 years old. Without him, there'd be no Mark Leno."[68]
>
> "The Twin Peaks Tavern represents the normalcy of being gay."[69]

[59] Robert Potter, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.
[60] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[61] Alan Snelling, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[62] Tom Libby, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[63] Judd Ziebell, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[64] Alan Snelling, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[65] Judd Ziebell, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[66] Sam Crocker, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.
[67] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.
[68] Robert Potter, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.
[69] Gary Gerdes, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.

The Twin Peaks Tavern joined other social and philanthropic organizations in San Francisco and the Castro in responding to the AIDS epidemic from its outset in the early 1980s to present-day. Events such as the softball league and tricycle races were transformed from fundraising for the Tavern Guild to fundraising for other charities and even individuals. The community-building from the events and fundraising has formed enduring bonds between the Twin Peaks Tavern and the LGBT community. The Twin Peaks Tavern sponsored fund raisers, donated money to Coming Home Hospice, kept pamphlets around, hosted potluck dinners, memorials, bake sales for the AIDS walk, and sponsored a softball team. "It's a very community kind of place" mused patron Mike Learned[70] and " a socially conscious bar" added Francis Redman.[71]

The Twin Peaks Tavern evolved in its first ten years into a hub of the LGBT community that created a mutually-supportive atmosphere and family-like relationships between owners and staff, and in turn staff to patron. These actions cemented the bonds of camaraderie that are still found at the Twin Peaks Tavern.

Figure 24: A gathering of friends by the windows

> "It was a great bar for people experiencing pain. There were empathetic ears."[72]
>
> "During the AIDS crises, the TPT became a haven. The windows protected you."[73]
>
> "The Twin Peaks Tavern is unique and important for gay community in bringing issues to City's attention, politically. Posters were hung in the windows, which showed moral support during AIDS crises."[74]

Reflecting on the significance of the public visibility of LGBTs in the Twin Peaks Tavern an early patron, one of the current owners and one of the pioneering women that opened the Twin Peaks Tavern as a gay fern bar have strikingly similar perspectives on the significance of opening the windows to the world:

> "The first couple of times I drove by, the windows were blocked, so you couldn't see in or out. Even when they opened them up, I still sat way inside so that I wouldn't be

[70] Mike Learned, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, June 21, 2012.
[71] Francis Redman, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[72] Alan Snelling, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[73] Judd Ziebell, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.
[74] Sam Crocker, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.

spotted in there for fear of reprisals at work. But, after a while, everyone was just so comfortable there."[75]

"It wasn't uncommon in the 70s for people to lose their jobs—especially if they worked for the City. It was pioneering for 'the Girls' to take the risk and open it up."[76]

Reflecting on the positive impact the Twin Peaks Tavern has had in the creation of an "out" community of LGBT in the Castro, MaryEllen Cunha stated:

"When we first opened the bar, a lot of our friends who were doctors and lawyers would sit upstairs on the balcony. Eventually, they moved downstairs because they didn't care anymore. They got over the fear pretty quickly. The Elephant Walk followed suit and opened their windows. Yes, they did!"[77]

Figure 25: Friends pose by the windows

[75] Don LaHann, interview held at a residence, San Francisco CA, August 24, 2012.
[76] Jeffrey Green, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, July 23, 2012.
[77] MaryEllen Cunha, interview held at her residence, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2012.

ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION

This section of the report is an analysis and summary of: the applicable criteria for designation, statement of significance, period of significance, integrity, and additional Article 10 requirements which include the identification of the boundaries of the landmark site, and identification of character-defining features that should be preserved.

Criteria for Designation

Check all criteria applicable to the significance of the property that are documented in the report. The criteria checked is (are) the basic justification for *why* the resource is important.

_X_ Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
___ Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.
___ Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
___ Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

Statement of Significance

The Twin Peaks Tavern, a local bar at 401 Castro Street is at the major intersection of Market and 17th Streets. First opening in 1935, the bar lease was purchased in 1972 by two lesbians and refurbished as a fern bar for a gay clientele[78]. The first known gay bar to feature full length open plate glass windows, the Twin Peaks Tavern is a living symbol of the liberties and rights gained by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) community in the second half of the 20th century. Housed in a turn-of-the-century building with an intact 1923 Mediterranean Revival-style façade in the heart of the Castro, the bar retains its expansive windows and other character-defining features and continues to serve the LGBT community. The period of significance for the Twin Peaks Tavern begins in 1972, when it opened as a gay bar to 2003, when the pioneering women who opened the windows sold the bar.

In context, San Francisco's nighttime entertainment industries are significant in the formation, expansion and diversification of modern LGBT subcultures. Nighttime entertainment including bars, played an important role in the development of social networks and the creation of an "out" community starting with the repeal of Prohibition and culminating with the opening of the Twin Peaks Tavern's windows in 1972. The influence of nighttime entertainment and community-building organizations such as the Tavern Guild of San Francisco had a consciousness raising effect in society as a whole. Together these enabled collective resistance against persecution by the local, state and military policing agencies. The Twin Peaks Tavern is significant for its contribution to modern LGBT society and culture.[79]

An article published in the News call reported that in 1940, there were but four bars known to the LGBT community in San Francisco; however, this may be an understatement as other bars may have been known to the LGBT community, but more discrete to have made the count.[80] In the 1950s, at least fifteen

[78] A fern bar is an American colloquialism for an upscale bar or tavern catering to singles, decorated with brass fittings, antiques, ferns and stained glass lamps.
[79] Scott, Damon, Sexing the City: The Development of Sexual Identity Based Subcultures in San Francisco, 1933-1979 Context Statement, 2004, page 3.
[80] News Call, March 8, 1965, Page 3.

bars located within a few square blocks in North Beach catered to the LGBT community.[81] In 1968, there were 30 gay bars in San Francisco.[82] At the end of 1971, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that there were 55 bars for the LGBT community, 50 catering to men, and five to women.[83] By 1980, the number had grown to 100. A tally conducted by the Tavern Guild in 1984 counted over 150 gay bars in San Francisco. The Twin Peaks Tavern, as a gay bar in San Francisco, is among the oldest, and one of only a handful still in its original location that exhibits a high level of historic integrity.

Only in 1951, and as a result of a court case (*Stoumen v. Reilly)*, did the LGBT community gain the right to assembly in a bar. However, there was a loophole: If the policing agencies could prove that illegal or immoral acts were taking place on the premises, the assembly could be "busted" nonetheless. In 1955 when California created the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) crackdowns on LGBT spaces became even more common. Also in 1955, the ABC "declared war on homosexual bars in San Francisco" on moral grounds. The ABC declared that their agents "need not be bound by *Stoumen v. Reilly* if they could acquire evidence of unlawful acts within a bar."[84] It did not take long for the SFPD and Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Board to pick up on the same loophole. Soon, undercover officers, who even went so far as to pose as homosexual men, began planting themselves in gay and lesbian bars on the lookout for anything obviously homosexual. The California ABC never-the-less frequently targeted establishments that catered to the LGBT community, as did the San Francisco Police vice division. Patrons too had no protections for themselves. Protections from losing one's job were real. Before she opened her first bar in the late 1950s, Charlotte Coleman was fired from her job at the IRS for associating with people of "ill repute." In 1976, four years after opening the windows at the Twin Peaks Tavern, private sexual acts between consenting same-sex adults were decriminalized in California.

Figure 26: A group of patrons sitting in the window

As Cunha and Forster designed the Twin Peaks Tavern's fern bar setting, they were cognizant of the times, the setting, and the type of patron to attract. Prior to the Twin Peaks, gay bars in San Francisco that did not rely on entertaining a tourist trade, were enclosed spaces. Most were discrete so not call attention. Most relied on darkened interiors to allow patrons personal privacy so as not to be "discovered." Cunha and Forster opted for an "out" gay bar, seemingly not as an overt political statement, but as a reflection of their own lives. The first lesbian bar owner in San Francisco, Charlotte Coleman, did not open the windows at any of the establishments that she owned, but as a founding member of the Tavern Guild, Coleman was well versed in how to navigate the system.

[81] Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 245.
[82] McQueen, Robert, (Editor of the Advocate) Los Angeles Times, February 24, 1980: Part IX, Page 10.
[83] Bass, Donovan, San Francisco Chronicle "The San Francisco Gay Bar Route – Looking for the Leathers" December 7, 1971.
[84] Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 136.

In order to be an open and "out" gay bar and avoid trouble from the vice police and ABC, the Twin Peaks Tavern required patrons to be more straight-laced than its counterparts. House rules for patrons forbade physical contact between patrons. With no kissing, the bar's social behaviors fell towards conversation.

The success of the bar in this format was a combination of several factors. First, it was located in the Castro, where a community of LGBTs was forming. Second, house rules as well as the organization of the physical space established the culture of the bar that encouraged personal bonding. Third, the lessons learned and advances made in LGBT recognition and political power in the 1960s by the Tavern Guild cleared the path for an "out" gay bar. Lastly, the normalization of an English pub in a social sense to a gay bar was attributable to the personalities and tastes of Cunha and Forster as "out" lesbians.

As a European café prototype bar, the interior and open windows, the Twin Peaks Tavern became a sort of public living room that shaped the behavior of the patrons.[85] Tables and chairs of the sort that would be in anyone's dining room encouraged deeper, meaningful conversations as opposed to quick pick-ups; and first-time patrons quickly became regulars.

The efforts of Cunha and Forster to integrate "respectable" gay men into the public view were not only a first for a bar in San Francisco, but perhaps in a larger context as well. As one patron colorfully stated, "The Twin Peaks Tavern is like an English pub and meeting place for friends. Not for cruising or a pick-up bar".[86] Another long-time patron was more prosaic. "The Twin Peaks Tavern was different from other bars; we could relax and watch the world go by through the windows. It was live theater. It reminded me of Europe."[87]

The Twin Peaks Tavern's LGBT cultural significance changes with generations. Different generations view the Twin Peaks Tavern with different lenses, and derive different meanings. To the generation that came of age in the 1950s and 1960s, the Twin Peaks Tavern is a place where the gay movement came out of the closet to become visible to society. Men of the next generation, who came of age in the 1970s, remember the Twin Peaks as a place where they personally came out. The following generations walk comfortably in the footsteps of the pioneers who came before them, and blithely see the Twin Peaks tavern as a venerable bar where it is safe to bring straight friends and family in the Castro.

Period of Significance

The period of significance of the Twin Peaks Tavern begins with the bar's establishment as a permissive social space for the LGBT community in 1972 by MaryEllen Cunha and Margaret Ann (Peggy) Forster. The period of significance ends in 2003 with transfer of business from Cunha and Forster to friends and longtime bar tenders, Jeff Green and George Roehm. The period of significance covers the establishment of the space, as well as the development of a community within the bar's patronage.

Integrity

The seven aspects of integrity are considered to be location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association in relation to the period of significance established above. Cumulatively, the

[85] Graffe, Christophe and Franziska Bollerey, Cafes and Bars: The Architecture of Public Display (New York: Routledge, 2007), 4-15.
[86] Sam Crocker, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012.
[87] Matthew Wright, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.

building at 401 Castro retains sufficient integrity to convey its association with the Twin Peaks Tavern in the period of significance (1972-2003), as detailed in the integrity analysis below.

> "The TPT is a touchstone for me. It's always been here for me, unchanged. The clientele is the same, too."[88]

Figure 27: illuminated signs, arrows, Twin Peaks, cocktail glass.

The property at 401 Castro Street was constructed at its current location, and reached its current form in approximately 1923, with storefront modifications in 1972, and has not been moved. The exterior of the building has undergone few alterations, including some window replacement on the upper floor and the addition of non-historic ceramic tile to the storefront base. The illuminated signs on the building's exterior remain in use. No structural changes have occurred to the interior since Cunha and Forster opened the windows and balcony. The windows remain open and unobstructed, the interior spatial configuration is intact, as the mezzanine remains open as does the beamed ceiling. Extant design features that were present during the established period of significance include the bar, back bar, stained glass lamps and wall décor remain unaltered. Aspects of the bar that wear out have been cyclically replaced such as repainting, new carpets, upholstery, replacement of the jukeboxes, and replacement of the original tables and chairs.

ARTICLE 10 REQUIREMENTS SECTION 1004 (b)

Location and Boundaries of the Landmark Site

The boundaries of the landmark site encompass a portion of Lot 71 in Assessor's Block 3582 on the southeast corner of 17th and Castro Streets, and limited to the main building located on the northern 66 feet of the lot.

Character-Defining Features

Whenever a building, site, object, or landscape is under consideration for Article 10 Landmark designation, the Historic Preservation Commission is required to identify Features of the property that should be preserved. This is done to enable owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

The character-defining *exterior* features of the landmark building are identified as:

- All exterior elevations and rooflines.
- All architectural finishes and features of the exterior elevations with the following exceptions

[88] Judd Ziebell, interview held at the Twin Peaks Tavern, San Francisco, CA, May 26, 2012.

    - Non-historic ceramic bulkhead cladding.
    - Non-historic pier cladding of wood or tile at the additional storefronts on Castro Street, together with their signage and awnings.
    - Non-historic vinyl window assemblies at the second floor
- Metal box sign with shaped profiles of the Twin Peaks geological feature and neon tubing.
- Two arrow-shaped metal box signs with illuminated rainbow lights with sequential flashing mechanism.
- Plate glass storefront system consisting of raw aluminum frames and open and unobscured clear plate glass windows divided vertically into two sheets of glass; post-less chamfered corners into the recessed entry with all glass free of large permanent decals, etchings, advertisements and signage.
- Storefront transoms with turned dividing blocks.
- Corner entry with dual-swing 9-light Dutch door.

The character-defining *interio*r features of the landmark building are identified as:

- Interior plan consisting of the large, open main room, balcony with open spaces below and above, stairway to access the mezzanine and location of the bar (but not the bar or back bar themselves).
- Brass pole supporting the balcony and brass railing at the balcony.
- Built-in benches along windows.
- Beamed ceiling.

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Historic Name: Twin Peaks Tavern

Popular Name: Twin Peaks Tavern

Address: 401 Castro Street

Block and Lot: 3582 071

Owner: Elia and Jane Khoury Trust

Original Use: Tavern and Residential

Current Use: Bar and Residential

Zoning: (NCD) Castro Street Neighborhood Commercial

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ORAL HISTORIES

Oral Histories recorded by Moses Corrette and Elizabeth Skrondal
Participants include:

Sam Crocker
MaryEllen Cunha
Gary Gerdes
Jeffrey Green
Denis Johns
Mike Learned
Don Leher
Tom Libby
Robert Potter
Francis Redman
George Roehm
Tom Sheppard
Alan Snelling
Matthew Wright
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