



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: February 8, 2012
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Moses Corrette, Planner
REVIEWED BY: Tim Frye, Preservation Coordinator
RE: Gold Dust Lounge Landmark

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During the public comment at its regularly scheduled hearing on February 1, 2012, Mr. Christopher VerPlanck submitted a landmark designation report and requested that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) consider initiation of the Gold Dust Lounge at 247 Powell Street as a City Landmark pursuant to Article 10 of the Planning Code. This request was followed by several members of the public also urging consideration of landmark designation of the Gold Dust Lounge. The HPC directed the Planning Department (Department) staff to review the landmark designation report for conformance with the purposes and standards of Article 10 and to schedule the item for consideration at its next hearing on February 15, 2012.

Article 10 of the Planning Code (Code) contains general language about the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of structures, sites and areas that may be significant to local, state or national history. In addition to the Article 10 requirements (by Resolution 527) the HPC uses the National Register Criteria and the California Department of Parks and Recreation forms (DPR 523 series) for use in landmark designation reports under Article 10 of the Planning Code¹. Section 1004 of the Code requires that a landmark designation include:

- The boundaries of the landmark site;
- The characteristics that justify its designation; and
- A description of the particular features that should be preserved.

Planning Department staff reviewed the information submitted by Mr. VerPlanck on February 1, 2012. Planning Department staff also conducted a site visit to the Gold Dust Lounge on February 6, 2012, and at that time provided feedback to Mr. VerPlanck regarding the submitted report. On February 8, 2012, Mr. VerPlanck submitted a revised report to Department staff for inclusion in the HPC packets for the February 15, 2012 hearing. Department staff reviewed the revised report and determined that the information conforms to the purposes and standards of Article 10 and Resolution 527, and should be considered a complete application for the following reasons:

- The report is on 523 DPR forms and uses National Register Criteria to evaluate the property in conformance with Resolution 527.
- The boundaries of the landmark site are the building at 301 Geary Street, Assessor's Parcel Number 0315-001, with character-defining features to be found at the 247 Powell Street 23' x 18' exterior storefront and the interior rectangular commercial space, which measures 20' x 55' in plan.

¹ Resolution 527 was adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, and continues to be used by the HPC.

- The characteristics that justify designation under National Register Criterion A and C are within the DPR 523 form section B10, and specifically summarized beginning at the bottom of page 10, continuing onto page 11. While the background and context for finding significance is well-researched and documented, stronger statements of significance under Criterion A (association with events) should be further developed to include further evidence about how this property is significant. Similarly, architectural significance under Criterion C is not strongly supported by evidence, and should be further developed.
- The description of the particular features that should be preserved is found within the DPR 523 form, page 11, listed under the heading “Character-defining Features”.

The HPC may choose to take an action in the form of a motion. Possible actions include:

- (1) Initiation of the Gold Dust Lounge as a Landmark with the information provided.
- (2) Initiation of the Gold Dust Lounge as a Landmark with the provision that the statements of significance should be further developed.
- (3) Determine that the characteristics of the Gold Dust Lounge do not justify consideration as a City Landmark.

Alternatively, the Commission may request additional research and information from Mr. VerPlanck to justify the significance of the Gold Dust Lounge and continue the discussion to a future hearing pending submittal of any additional information the Commission may require.

State of California — The Resources Agency
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
 HRI # _____
 Trinomial _____
 NRHP Status Code _____

Other Listings _____
 Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

Page 1 of 11 Resource name(s) or number Gold Dust Lounge

P1. Other Identifier: Bustles & Beaus, Techau Tavern

***P2. Location:** Not for Publication Unrestricted

***a. County** San Francisco

***b. USGS 7.5' Quad** San Francisco North, Calif. **Date:** 1994

***c. Address** 247 Powell Street

City San Francisco

Zip 94102

***e. Other Locational Data:** Assessor's Parcel Number Block: 0315 Lot: 001

***P3a. Description:**

The Gold Dust Lounge is a 46-year-old cocktail lounge located in San Francisco's venerable Elkan Gunst Building, near the southwest corner of Union Square. The Gunst Building is an eight-story, Renaissance/Baroque-style office building designed by G. Albert Lansburgh. Occupying a rectangular commercial space in the building, measuring 20' x 55', the Gold Dust Lounge retains exterior and interior architectural features from at least two famous bars that preceded it. The exterior of the present-day Gold Dust Lounge largely dates to the late 1960s when the Gold Dust Lounge opened in this space. Measuring approximately 23' x 18', the storefront is four bays wide. Beginning at its left (south) end is a gold-painted poster case. The glass door of the case is bounded by a molded wood frame and surmounted by a crest of molded acanthus leaves. Continuing to the right is a three-sided bay window containing diamond-pane fixed-sash windows. The third bay in from the left contains a large entrance featuring a pair of varnished hardwood doors. Each door features a rectangular pane of glass, and on its interior surface, brass kickplates and pushplates, hinges, as well as decorative "streamlined" brass grilles presumably installed to prevent people from breaking in. The materials and detailing of the door indicate that they are of 1930s origin and likely date to the Techau Tavern period. The entrance itself is surrounded by an elaborately molded door frame. Above the door is a glass transom with a painted sign bearing the name of the bar, its address, and alleged date of establishment. To the right of the entrance is a second poster case that matches the one in the first bay. Above it is a wall-mounted electrolier that matches the fixtures inside the bar. The unfenestrated portion of the storefront is made of wood, painted brown, and articulated as a series of square and rectangular panels with gold-painted moldings. Capping the entire storefront is a prow-shaped sheet metal marquee. The original marquee dates to the 1930s but this one is largely the product of a 1974 remodel. Painted brown and outlined with small incandescent light bulbs, the back-lit marquee advertises the fact that the Gold Dust Logues offers live music seven nights a week.

Section *P3a. Description continued on the attached Continuation Sheet.

***P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP39: Lounge and Restaurant

***P4. Resources Present:** Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other



P5b. Photo: (view and date)
 View toward west, January 24, 2012

***P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:** historic
 1918, 1961, 1966: *San Francisco Chronicle*, San Francisco City Directories

***P7. Owner and Address:**
 Jon Handlery
 351 Geary Street
 San Francisco, CA 94102

***P8. Recorded by:**
 Christopher VerPlanck
 Catherine Friel

***P9. Date Recorded:** January 29, 2012

***P10. Survey Type:** None

***P11. Report Citation:** None

***Attachments:** None Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (list)

Section *P3a, Description, continued:

Interior

The interior of the Gold Dust Lounge measures 20' wide by 55' long. It is laid out as a conventional "American"-style bar, with a pair of hinged doors providing access to the interior, a long wood bar and back bar along the south wall; tables, booths, and chairs along the opposite wall; a stage at the center-rear of the space, and toilet rooms at the far rear corners. Storage and office space is provided in the basement, accessed by a wood stair at the right-rear corner of the bar. The floor is carpet over concrete. The walls are painted Lincrusta and flocked wallpaper over plaster and the ceiling is painted plaster.

Upon entering the Gold Dust Lounge, one sees a seating area to the left, within the bay window that was added ca. 1967 (**Figure 1**). To the right is an alcove separated from the rest of the bar by a partial-height screen wall. Located in the far right corner is a non-historic closet. Within the closet are remnants of unpainted flocked wall paper and a historic light fixture that probably date to the Bustles & Beaus era. Also likely dating from the Bustles & Beaus era is a large, gilded mirror surmounted by a clam shell to the left of the closet. Beneath the mirror is an upholstered bolster, also gold in color. Directly opposite the primary entrance is a carved wood figure of a gold miner searching for gold in a gold pan but finding pennies instead. The base of the figure is inscribed with initials, presumably of the artist, "D. Colp," and the year that it was made, 1982.



Figure 1. Seating area at the front of the bar
Source: Catherine Friel, 2012



Figure 2. Front bar, looking west
Source: Catherine Friel, 2012

The bar, which fills the southern half of the Gold Dust Lounge, undulates in a curvilinear pattern suggestive of the Art Deco era (**Figure 2**). An undated matchbook from the Techau Tavern (1918-22, 1939, and 1946-1959) shows a bar sharing a similar curvilinear profile, suggesting that it may date from the 1930s or 1940s. The front bar features a hardwood mahogany bar top with a lip to prevent drink spillage, a padded base to cushion people's legs, brass coat and hat hooks beneath the bar top, and a brass foot rail. A pair of brass bars located roughly mid-way down the front bar (called a well) is designed to provide a zone for cocktail waitresses to have unimpeded access to the bar to pick up and deliver drink orders. The rear portion of the front bar, which is not visible to customers, features storage for mixers, ice, and other ingredients, refrigerators, and sinks for washing glassware. A narrow passage covered with slip-resistant floor covering, separates the front bar from the back bar.

Typical of many American bars and cocktail lounges, the so-called "back bar" is an elaborate creation that is both furniture and interior architecture. The back bar of the Gold Dust Lounge contains integral commercial coolers below with wood doors and chrome latches and hinges. These heavy appliances form the base of the back bar and are designed to hold bottled beers and other goods requiring refrigeration. Above this is the back bar proper, which consists of a wood counter surmounted by glass shelving designed to hold (and display) liquor bottles, with cheaper liquor at the bottom and more expensive at the top, hence the expression "top-shelf" liquor. The upper portion of the back bar features glass shelving in front of five mirrored alcoves of various shapes and sizes. The mirrored alcoves are bounded by elaborate wood and plaster moldings embellished with various hybrid Art Deco/Victorian moldings, including rope moldings, sculpted and beaded parapet moldings, floral details, and acanthus leaf spindles and cornice moldings (**Figure 3**). The back bar of the Gold Dust Lounge features some unique characteristics, including a wall-mounted street car bell.



Figure 3. Back bar, looking east
Source: Chris VerPlanck, 2012



Figure 4. Back bar detail
Source: Catherine Friel, 2012

As mentioned above, tables, banquetts, and chairs line a portion of the north wall, with a secondary seating area provided to the right of the bar in the far left-hand corner of the space. The banquetts are bolstered and upholstered in a red velvet-like material (**Figure 5**). Above the banquetts along the north wall are several oil paintings, some by members of the Bovis family. There are also several elaborate brass Victorian-style “electroliers” with white globe shades and suspended crystal pendants. These were added in 1960 as part of Bustles & Beaus. The wall above the secondary seating area features mirrors that continue the aesthetic of the back bar across the length of the south wall.



Figure 5. Banquetts along north wall
Source: Chris VerPlanck, 2012



Figure 6. Detail of ceiling mural
Source: Catherine Friel

Opposite the secondary seating area at the right-rear portion of the Gold Dust Lounge is a small bandstand used by the bar’s house band and others who perform at the Gold Dust Lounge. This feature, which at first glance resembles the main bar, was added in 1966. Behind the band stand is a stepped platform and what appears to have been a door that formerly accessed the commercial space at 301 Geary Street.

The ceiling of the Gold Dust Lounge is one of its most significant features (**Figure 6**). The outer perimeter of the ceiling features recessed stucco bezel moldings that indicate Art Deco influences characteristic of a 1930s-era construction date. The central level panel of the ceiling is covered with painted canvas panels that together comprise a mural depicting amply bosomed nude female figures cavorting in a dimly lit, cloud-filled sky. According to the current owners, the mural was commissioned by Milton Kreis in 1960 when he, and alleged “silent partner” Bing Crosby, were co-owners of Bustles & Beaus. The mural, which does not appear to be signed, was apparently painted by a Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer (MGM) set painter from Los Angeles. Anchored to the central ceiling

panel are three large brass Victorian electroliers with white globe shades, another remnant of Bustles & Beaus. The bases of the electroliers are surrounded by round acanthus leaf ceiling medallions of unknown origin.

The rear portion of the Gold Dust Lounge contains a pair of toilet rooms (one men's and one women's). Both appear to retain most of their materials and features from the 1960 remodel that created Bustles and Beaus, including the padded and bolstered doors. The women's toilet room door has a round, framed mirror with woman and the word "Bustles" depicted on it. Although the toilet rooms have been periodically updated, the men's toilet room contains a 1930s-era urinal and a salvaged marble Victorian wash basin that were likely part of the 1960 remodel.

A door at the northwest corner of the Gold Dust Lounge provides access to the basement via a wood staircase. The basement is a long, linear space that houses storage for liquor, furnishings and other equipment, and mechanical equipment. The western portion of the basement houses a small office with a door that provides access to the basement of the Elkan Gunst Building and Lefty O'Doul's next door.

***B10. Significance, Continued:**

Historic Context: Bar Design in the United States

The design of the American bar, tavern, and cocktail lounge has European antecedents that go back to at least the seventeenth century when coffee drinking became a popular pastime in Central and Northern Europe. Typically designed to be a "home away from home," coffee houses of early modern Europe were places for people (mostly men) to gather and socialize, do business, and exchange information. In contrast, the drinking of alcoholic beverages was something that was typically either done at home or within guild halls or other trade-related organizations. The advent of the Industrial Revolution changed European culture. In addition to making so-called "wage slaves" of once independent tradesmen and craftspeople, the Industrial Revolution introduced industrial time management principles that required most industrial laborers to work long, set hours for six days a week. Increasingly time-crunched, many working-class European men sought relief from the insatiable demands of modern Capitalism in drinking alcohol in public places with friends and co-workers. As European peasants were uprooted from the countryside to the industrial cities of Europe, the workingmen's tavern or bar became a social center and a respite from the harsh demands of modern life.¹

Architecturally, the workingmen's taverns of Europe ran the gamut. Some were like the traditional coffee houses of Vienna, Munich, and other central European cities. Others were little more than a hole in a wall, where a keeper would serve beer or hard liquor on a rough wood "bar", and patrons would drink standing up. By the nineteenth century, the gin shops of London had begun to develop a standard architectural typology recognizable today in many American bars. Victorian writers like George Cruikshank described the typical London gin shop as "gaudy, gold-bepastered temples" where gin was "served by young women dressed up like the 'belles Limonadières' of a Paris Coffee House."² During this time, many London establishments had acquired the characteristics associated with bar architecture today, including glassed-in storefronts, mahogany bars, mirrored back bars where liquor was displayed in brightly colored bottles, brass foot rails and other fittings, and other architectural embellishments that were out-of-the ordinary and that certainly contrasted favorably with the slum housing that so many of their patrons lived in.

In North America, the development of the American (and to a lesser extent, the Canadian) bars and taverns owe much to the nation's English origins. Indeed, there is very little to differentiate old New England taverns from their English cousins across the Atlantic. America, like Europe, was greatly transformed by the Industrial Revolution. Millions of native-born and European immigrants poured into fast-growing cities and industrial centers. Many urban residents were single men without families or friends, all vulnerable to the vagaries of capitalist, laissez faire American corporate culture. Entrepreneurs keen to cash in on these lonely, overworked, and rootless men, opened bars to provide a taste of home (many bar keepers were the same ethnicity as their patrons), companionship, and even services such as check-cashing, mail delivery, notary services, and other needs. Many single men took their meals in American bars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³

During this time, before Prohibition, the American bar approached standardization. This was due to several factors, including the fact that many bars in this era were run by several large breweries that monopolized beer distribution, as well as the fact that anti-liquor laws were increasingly clamping down on where bars could be located. In addition, the tight urban centers in which so many bars and taverns operated became conducive to certain floor plans. Larger bars with kitchens were often located in prominent corner locations – particularly in industrial areas where there were no freestanding restaurants - whereas smaller beer and liquor bars could be located in very small or irregularly shaped commercial spaces. All that was needed in these most basic of bars was room for the bar itself, a men's bathroom, and typically a basement for storage and keeping beer kegs.

Of course, not all drinking establishments in the United States were for working-class men. Before Prohibition many American hotels, clubs, restaurants, and even department stores featured high-end "cocktail lounges" where the uniquely American

¹ Christophe Grafe and Franziska Bollerey, *Cafés and Bars: The Architecture of Public Display* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 4-10.

² *Ibid.*, 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

phenomenon of mixed drinks were served, often within an elaborately decorated space. In contrast to the working-class taverns, women could go to many cocktail lounges.

Historic Context: Drinking and Nightlife Culture in San Francisco: 1848-1919

As anyone with even a passing familiarity with the city knows, San Francisco is a drinking town. From its earliest days as a cosmopolitan and largely male-dominated entrépot at the edge of the North American continent, San Francisco escaped many of the anti-alcohol crusades that afflicted much of the rest of the country. San Francisco drinking culture really got its start during the Gold Rush. Miners on leave from “the diggings” would often drink and gamble away much of the gold that they had so laboriously recovered from the Sierras. Some of the earliest bars were located in converted ships’ hulks abandoned in San Francisco Bay, including the author’s great-great-great-great grandfather – Philip VerPlanck – who ran a liquor store and tavern in the *Niantic*. Important early bars in San Francisco included the Bank Exchange in the Montgomery, aka the “Monkey” Block, where famous San Francisco cocktails such as the Pisco Punch and the Martini were evidently invented; Meiggs Cobweb Palace in North Beach; and the legions of French restaurants that offered both food and drink and “other” entertainment upstairs!

By the early twentieth century, San Francisco, like many American cities, had several types of bars. In the industrial districts were workingmen’s taverns, or as they were more frequently known in San Francisco, “saloons.” These could be found along commercial strips in the Potrero and Mission Districts, the South of Market Area, along the waterfront, in North Beach, and elsewhere. Many of these establishments had kitchens that served food, as well as providing other services to their largely male and working-class patrons. Examples of bars that embody this type include the Rite Spot at 17th and Folsom streets, the Homestead at 19th and Folsom streets, and dozens of similar bars throughout the southeastern quadrant of the city.

Meanwhile, most San Francisco hotels and social clubs had their own bars. Often very lushly appointed and exclusive, these cocktail lounges catered to businessmen, women, high-end tourists, and others looking for a more refined night out, often with music and dancing. Nearly all of San Francisco’s downtown hotels had cocktail lounges, including the Fairmount Hotel (Venetian Room and later Le Cirque), the St. Francis (Patent Leather Lounge), the Mark Hopkins (Top of the Mark), and the Sir Francis Drake (the Persian Room and later the Starlight Lounge). In addition to the hotels, there were many famous restaurants in downtown San Francisco that had their own bars, including the famous Poodle Dog at 57 Post Street, and the even more famous Techau Tavern, which moved several times throughout San Francisco over the course of its 90-year history.

The passage of the Volstead Act in 1919 and the imposition of Prohibition later that year put a dent in San Francisco’s bar and nightlife scene, although it did not end it. At first many local police ignored Prohibition – after all San Francisco was a largely Catholic town with little support for the largely Protestant-dominated Temperance Movement. However, in the early 1920s Federal agents began to crack down on scofflaws, regularly raiding restaurants that were illegally serving liquor, such as the Techau Tavern and Restaurant at 247 Powell Street. Agents also raided other business establishments listed in the city directories as selling “soft drinks,” “candy,” or “flowers,” which were actually “speakeasies” or “blind pigs.”

Historic Context: The Gold Dust Lounge

The Gold Dust Lounge occupies a commercial space that has been a bar for at least 94 years, beginning with the famous Techau Tavern (1918-1922, 1933, and 1947-1959), Bustles & Beaus (1960-1965), and the Gold Dust Lounge (1966-2012). For a time during Prohibition the space was occupied by a commercial florist (1923-1935). From 1936 until 1946 247 Powell Street housed several short-lived bars that operated under the names of their owners.

Techau Tavern, the earliest known bar to occupy the storefront at 247 Powell Street, has roots that go back to 1870, when a German immigrant entrepreneur named R.J. Techau opened the San Francisco Oyster House at California and Market Streets. In 1885, he moved the business to 7th and Market streets and renamed it the Good Fellows Grotto. This restaurant and bar became a popular hangout for local San Francisco politicians, and in order to be closer to City Hall, Techau moved Good Fellows Grotto to the corner of Market Street and City Hall Avenue in 1890.⁴

In 1899, R. J. Techau decided to move his business again, this time to the vicinity of Union Square. At this time he built a new four-story brick building for his new business, Techau Tavern and Hotel, which was located on the west side of Mason Street, between Ellis and Eddy streets (109-117 Mason Street). This business burned in September 1900, but Techau rebuilt Techau Tavern in this location. After its move to Union Square, Techau Tavern became one of the most prominent restaurants and taverns for affluent San Franciscans. Early advertisements called it a “restaurant and family resort,” where people could listen to live musical entertainment.⁵

The Techau Tavern and Hotel were destroyed in the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. By this time, R.J. Techau had already retired, and the new owners (members of the Younger family) decided to rebuild on a prominent corner “gore” lot bounded by Market Street to the south and east, Powell Street to the east, and Eddy Street to the north (today’s Hallidie Plaza). This iteration of the Techau

⁴ California Historical Society Card Catalog.

⁵ California Historical Society, Ephemera files for local businesses.

Tavern was by all accounts quite exuberant but perhaps too exuberant, because on April 26, 1909, the Younger family's creditor, Albert Meyer, foreclosed on their mortgage, forcing them to sell.⁶

The new owners, Carleton Wall and A.C. Morrisson, remodeled the interior of Techau Tavern in the "Spanish Renaissance style," at the cost of \$150,000. Advertisements from the era refer to Techau Tavern as a "high class family café" with elegant brochures to match (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Brochures advertising Techau Tavern
 Source: California Historical Society

Unfortunately for the owners of Techau Tavern did not own the building, and in 1918 the Bank of America announced its intention to purchase the property occupied by the Techau Tavern, with the intention of demolishing it for a new bank building.⁷

In need of a new home, Messrs. Carleton and Morrisson decided to lease the defunct St. Francis Theater at 333 Geary Street (now Lefty O'Doul's) (Figure 8). The owners of the Techau Tavern then spent \$50,000 to demolish the upper balcony in the theater, construct a basement, and build a connector to attach the former theater with a storefront in the Elkan Gunst Building next door. This storefront was located at 247 Powell Street (now the Gold Dust Lounge) in the 1908 Elkan Gunst Building. The owners of the Techau Tavern desired an entrance and a separate bar facing Powell Street so that the former St. Francis Theater building at 333 Geary could be converted into a restaurant (Figure 9).⁸ This is the earliest known time that a bar began operating at 247 Powell Street and is the direct ancestor of the Gold Dust Lounge.



Figure 8. Article in November 22, 1918 Examiner

⁶ "Decide Against Tavern Company," *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 27, 1909), 7.

⁷ "Powell Street Corner Resold to Financiers," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 9, 1918), 6.

⁸ "Techau Tavern to Move to Geary," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 16, 1918), 4.

From the time that it opened in the former St. Francis Theater, along with its freestanding bar at 247 Powell, the Techau Tavern was a roaring success. There was only one problem: the increasingly powerful Temperance Movement. Although never strong in hard-drinking San Francisco, the Temperance Movement had gained traction across the nation, particularly in the Deep South and in parts of the Midwest. The passage of the Volstead Act in 1919, and the subsequent passage of the Eighteenth Amendment by two-thirds of the states, ushered in the prohibition of the manufacturing, distribution, or sale of intoxicating beverages in the United States. Known simply as "Prohibition," the act was never very popular in the heavily Catholic cities of the Northeast, the Midwest, and San Francisco. At first many local law enforcement officers turned a blind eye toward restaurants and other establishments that served alcohol. Angered over what it saw to be open disobedience of the law, federal agents began raiding business establishments in the big cities where alcohol (mostly smuggled in from Canada, the Caribbean, or Mexico) continued to be sold.

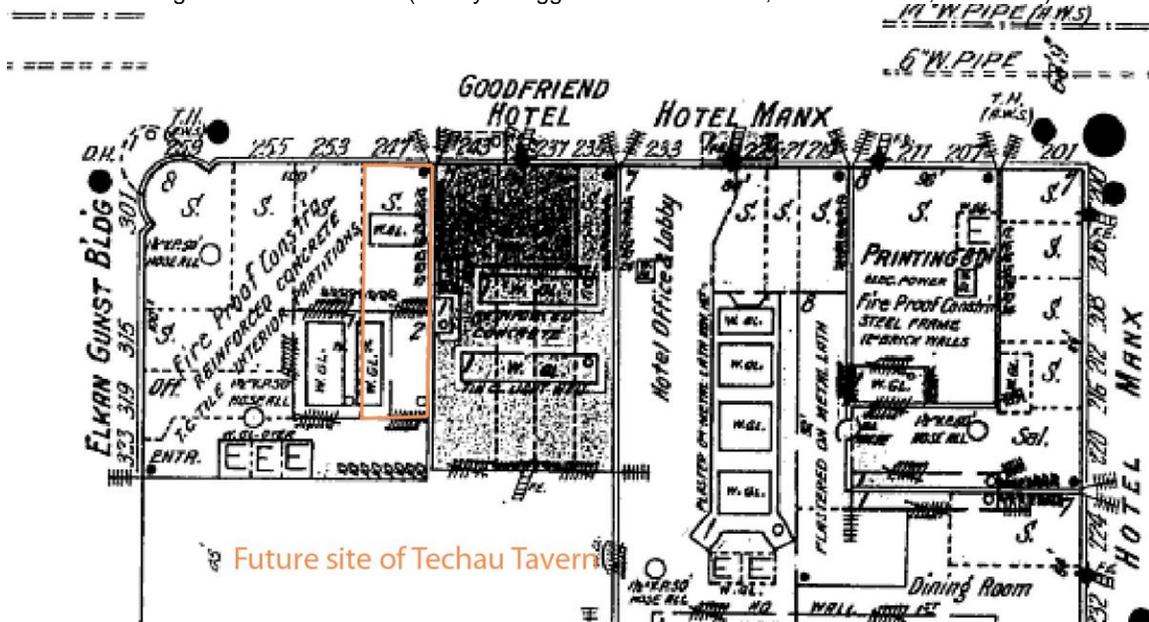


Figure 9. 1915 Sanborn Map showing the future location of Techau Tavern at 333 Geary and the location of the bar at 247 Powell Street

Source: San Francisco Public Library; annotated by Chris VerPlanck

Techau Tavern, despite its family friendly advertising was first and foremost a bar. Suspecting that it was still selling spirits, federal agents raided 247 Powell Street on several occasions, beginning in July and August 1921.⁹ During the course of these raids it was discovered that Techau Tavern was serving alcohol to its customers. On October 31, 1921, A.C. Morrisson, manager of Techau Tavern, was convicted in a US District Court of having violated Prohibition. The conviction was based on a raid that occurred on July 30, 1921, when officers found alcohol being served in the bar, and in waiters' lockers.¹⁰

The raids appear to have been very effective, because after 1921 Techau Tavern disappeared for several years from the San Francisco city directories. After the Techau Tavern closed, what had been the bar at 247 Powell Street was converted into a florists' shop, called the Art Floral Company. Permits from 1923 indicate that the front of the store was remodeled in this year to house the new floral business.¹¹ Also known as the Pelicano-Rossi Floral Company, the business occupied what had been the Techau Tavern at 247 Powell Street until after the end of Prohibition in 1933. It is not known whether a speakeasy operated at this location, although it is possible given the connections to other hidden locations in the building, including the basement of the Elkan Gunst Building or the mezzanine level above the former bar.¹² Newspaper articles do not indicate that Art Floral Company was ever raided, so it is possible that it was a legitimate flower shop.

As soon as Prohibition ended the Art Floral Company moved out of 247 Powell Street. Between 1936 and 1938 it was leased to a man named William Nard, who ran a bar at this location. Nard's brother Walter was the bartender. Meanwhile, what had been the restaurant portion of Techau Tavern at 333 Geary Street became one of the famous Compton's Cafeteria chain. In 1939, 247 Powell Street was again briefly called the Techau Tavern, but in 1940, city directories indicate that it was owned by a bartender named George Kammerer. It is not known whether he ran his bar as the Techau Tavern or not. It is likely that there may have been

⁹ "Further Raids on Downtown Cafes Augured," *San Francisco Chronicle* (August 5, 1921), 2.
¹⁰ "Techau Tavern Manager Found Guilty by Jury," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 1, 1921), 3.
¹¹ San Francisco Department of Building Inspection files for 247 Powell Street.
¹² San Francisco City Directories, 1922-1933.

licensing issues over the name.¹³ Kammerer continued to lease and run the bar at 247 Powell Street until the end of World War II. The existing Art Deco bar, entrance doors, and ceiling may have been installed during this time.

The year 1947 witnessed the rebirth of the fabled Techau Tavern at 247 Powell Street. Leased by Mr. F. Joseph Williams, owner of The Golden Pheasant at 301 Geary (now Weinstein Gallery), the bar at 247 Powell was renamed the Techau Tavern. A postcard published around 1948 shows The Golden Pheasant and the neon-lit marquee of the Techau Tavern (**Figure 10**).



Figure 10. Postcard showing The Golden Pheasant and the Techau Tavern at Geary and Powell streets, ca. 1948

Source: Postcard in author's collection

From 1947 until The Golden Pheasant closed ca. 1955, the Techau Tavern was physically linked to The Golden Pheasant by a door on the north wall of the bar near what is presently the bandstand. The Golden Pheasant was a bakery café that catered to families and women, and the Techau Tavern was probably a way to appeal to a male clientele. The Techau Tavern had a large metal canopy/marquee that carried a neon sign. The sign extended above the entire Powell Street sidewalk, as shown on a ca. 1950 menu from the bar (**Figure 11**). Parts of the marquee structure remain enclosed within the existing marquee.

After The Golden Pheasant closed, F.J. Williams sold the Techau Tavern to Mr. Lou Kavros of Daly City.¹⁴ In 1959, Lou Kavros lost his lease at 247 Powell Street and in 1960 it was leased to Milton F. Kreis, a Palm Springs-based businessman who had opened a combination drug store and restaurant at 301 Geary Street, where The Golden Pheasant had been. In the winter of 1960 he began remodeling the space into a “Gay Nineties”-themed burlesque bar, called “Bustles & Beaus.”¹⁵ The interior remodel, by Design Group Inc. of Beverly Hills, cost \$10,000 and the work was completed by Elvin Stendell.¹⁶

According to Jim and Tasios Bovis, the owners of the Gold Dust Lounge, Milton Kreis' silent business partner in the bar was singer and actor Bing Crosby. Apparently Bing Crosby commissioned a set painter at MGM Studios in Los Angeles to paint the murals of nude women on the ceiling of the bar, and also to design the Victorian-style electroliers that are still in the bar. As mentioned above, Bustles & Beaus was a burlesque bar, replete with

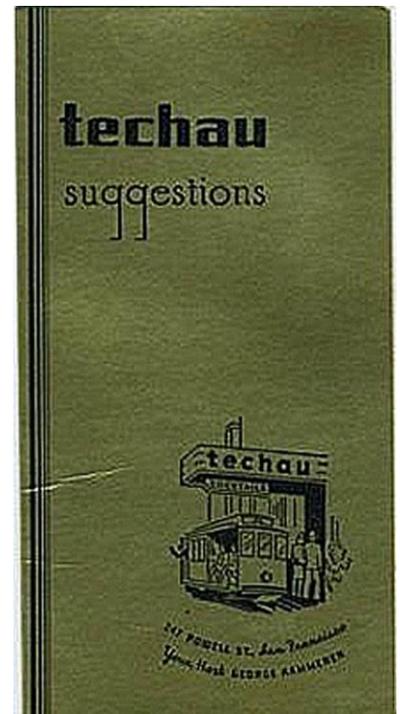


Figure 11. Techau Menu
 Source Catherine Friel

¹³ San Francisco City Directories, 1934-1946.

¹⁴ “Powell St. Bar Holdup,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (August 30, 1956).

¹⁵ John Bertrand, “Milton Kreis: New Venture,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 24, 1960).

¹⁶ San Francisco Department of Building Inspection files for 247 Powell Street.

scantly clad cocktail waitresses dressed in Victorian-inspired uniforms (**Figure 12**). On the half-hour pairs of waitresses would go up to the mezzanine level above the bar and slide down a fire pole near the front of the bar, where there was also a stage for them to perform. At one time the line to get in the bar went around the block, but when Carol Doda went topless in 1964 at the Condor Lounge, business began to drop off.¹⁷

Gold Dust Lounge owner Jim Bovis was working at the Yankee Doodle when Bustles & Beaus closed in 1965. He acquired the lease on the space and opened the Gold Dust Lounge in 1966. Jim's brother Tasios became a partner in 1970. Jim Bovis remodeled the exterior of the bar in 1966 to open up what had been a dark, windowless interior. In addition to building a bay window and seating area, he removed the fire pole and stage at the front of the bar, shortened the bar by several feet, and built a bandstand at the rear of the bar. He also painted the red flocked wallpaper gold. Otherwise, he left the interior alone, leaving the red carpeting and upholstery, as well as the ceiling murals, bathroom doors, and light fixtures. Jim's wife, Gracia, painted several oil paintings of the early cocktail waitresses of the Gold Dust Lounge. These still hang from the walls of the bar. In 1974, after the marquee was hit by a truck one too many times, Jim and Tasios Bovis had it shortened from 14'-2" to 81" and installed the backlit plastic signs that remain today.¹⁸

Since it opened in 1967, the Gold Dust Lounge has attracted many a San Francisco luminary. Regulars have included *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Herb Caen, who called the Gold Dust the "last of the old night capperies;" Janis Joplin, Steve McQueen, Lee Marvin, Jack LaLanne, Nick Nolte, and Willie Brown.

The Gold Dust started out as a piano bar. Owner Jim Bovis had a famous piano player there named Wally Rose. Wally was one of the top ragtime players in the country and a mainstay of the jazz scene in San Francisco during the 1940s and 1950s. For a couple of years after it opened, the Gold Dust remained a piano bar, but on off-nights Jim began bringing in a banjo to play Dixieland. A little while later a trombone player was added too. A three-piece band consisting of piano, banjo, and trombone became the entertainment for the Gold Dust Lounge. The Dixieland phase lasted about 10 years, until the people who listened to it got older. Eventually someone brought in a guitar and would play rock 'n' roll. People started requesting it and the format switched from Dixieland/Jazz to 50's/ 60's Rock 'n' Roll, which it remains today. The band that plays there now has been there about 12 years. The Gold Dust Lounge is one of the few bars that has live music every night with no cover charge.



Figure 12. Bustles & Beaus Ashtray

When it opened in 1967, the Gold Dust Lounge was exclusively a cocktail lounge, serving no beer or wine. Says Jim Bovis:

"When I first started out my special was a 76 cent Irish coffee. Cocktails were 60 cents. All the drinks were 60 cents. Martinis and Manhattans were before dinner drinks. Drinks were also small at the time. Glasses were small. It was straight alcohol served on the rocks, over ice. At the time, one person could come in and have 5 or 6 drinks but they were an ounce or less. Now they're an ounce and a half. There was no beer or no wine. We've only served draft beer over the last 20 years."¹⁹

Today the Gold Dust Lounge attracts a diverse mix of San Franciscans, including many old-timers and natives, as well as more recent arrivals, tourists, and younger people. Again lines form outside the doors on a Saturday night.

Significance

The Gold Dust Lounge appears eligible for listing as a local San Francisco City Landmark under National Register Criterion A (Events) and Criterion C (Design/Construction). Under Criterion A it appears eligible as a bar associated with important aspects of San Francisco nightlife culture, beginning as early as the years preceding Prohibition. What exists today contains elements of Techau Tavern, Bustles & Beaus, and the Gold Dust Lounge. All three were important and well-known businesses during their time, attracting many local luminaries, including politicians, writers, actors, musicians, and other local and national celebrities. Still patronized by important local movers and shakers, the Gold Dust Lounge retains its links to decades of local entertainment culture. The bar is a palimpsest of San Francisco nightlife history. Containing architectural and decorative elements of the famous Techau Tavern, the scandalous Bustles & Beaus, and the long-lived and highly regarded Gold Dust Lounge, the bar is an increasingly rare remnant of "old San Francisco" in Union Square. High rents and steady homogenization of San Francisco's once-distinct local culture have resulted in the replacement of most local San Francisco businesses with national and international chains catered toward teen shoppers or affluent suburban consumers. According to Gracia Bovis:

¹⁷ Catherine Friel, Interview with Jim Bovis, January 14, 2012.

¹⁸ San Francisco Department of Building Inspection files for 247 Powell Street.

¹⁹ Catherine Friel, interview with Jim Bovis.

"The sad part of it is in San Francisco, with what they're doing, it's happening slowly to all the old establishments, they're tearing them down, replacing them with the new. It's like they're chipping away at the city, the character of San Francisco. I have something to compare it to because I came here in the Sixties. It was so different. Years ago they had these beautiful restaurants where the waiters were in tuxedos, you had table cloths, it was more formal, more traditional. People dressed very nicely. It was a very romantic era."²⁰

Under Criterion C the Gold Dust Lounge as an example of a "type and period" of construction, as well as an excellent and well-preserved example of an "American" cocktail lounge of the mid-twentieth century. Containing elements of three storied bars, the layout of the bar itself embodies all of the characteristics of an early mid-century cocktail lounge, including its Art Deco mahogany bar and back bar which probably date from the 1930s. The ceiling and the walls are also molded in a "streamlined" Art Deco style. Overlaid over all this is the "Gay Nineties" interior design completed by Design Group Inc. of Beverly Hills in 1960, including the Victorian-style electroliers, the ceiling murals by the unknown MGM artist, the bolstered banquettes, doors and panels; the textured wall paper, as well as other elements, including the gilded Victorian mirror near the entrance and the salvaged Victorian marble sink in the men's room. Overlaid over this are elements added by the Bovis Brothers as part of the Gold Dust Lounge. Largely keeping the Gay Nineties look, the Bovis' added paintings by Gracia Bovis, a bay window and a modified marquee, the gold miner sculpture by "D. Colp," and other details.

Integrity

As mentioned above, the Gold Dust Lounge has undergone few if any major changes since the marquee was shortened in 1974. What remains is largely the Gay Nineties interior of the old Bustles & Beaus added on top of the original Art Deco-style bar interior. Some elements detract from the integrity, including several non-historic air filtering units, ATMs, televisions, exposed wiring and cables, and some more recent changes to the toilet rooms. Nevertheless, the bar retains enough of its historic fabric to convey its importance under both National Register Criteria A and C. It retains the following aspects of integrity:

Location: The Gold Dust Lounge and its ancestors have not moved from this space since the mid-1930s.

Design: Although a mixture of decorative and architectural elements, the Gold Dust Lounge is essentially an Art Deco style bar overlaid with Gay Nineties interior decoration. The materials and features blend fairly seamlessly to create that is a unique interior and exterior character.

Setting: The Gold Dust Lounge is located within the historic Elkan Gunst Building. Although the storefronts of the building have change over time, the rest of the building is intact and embodies nearly all of its 1908 design. Although businesses have changed over time, Powell Street is also largely intact in terms of its architectural character.

Materials: The Gold Dust Lounge contains materials and features from the mid-1930s, 1960, 1966, and 1974. Few changes have been made since 1974.

Workmanship: Many materials and features within the Gold Dust Lounge display advanced craft skills, including the bar, the back bar, the ceiling murals, and the paintings.

Feeling: The Gold Dust Lounge has all the feeling of an intact mid-century cocktail lounge in San Francisco. Although modern devices such as televisions and ATMs intrude in the space, these are reversible changes that do not greatly impact its historic fabric.

Association: What one sees today within the interior of the Gold Dust Lounge is what Herb Caen, Janis Joplin, and various other regular patrons would easily recognize if they were alive today.

Character-defining Features

The character-defining features of the Gold Dust Lounge include its existing façade, including its remaining Art Deco elements, including its poster cases and doors, as well as its 1960s and early 1970s-era changes, including the bay window and sheet metal marquee. Within the interior it retains its original 1930s-era floor plan, curvilinear Art Deco bar and back bar, and streamlined ceiling. It also retains much of its distinctive 1960s-era Gay Nineties interior decor, in particular its upholstered banquettes, painted ceiling murals, Victorian-style electroliers, textured wall surfaces, bolstered bathroom doors, and salvaged Victorian gold mirror. The stage at the rear of the bar is of less architectural significance. Various non-durable materials, such as carpeting and upholstery are also not character-defining.

Herb Caen, Willie Brown, Jack Lalanne and Janis Joplin can't all be wrong. The Gold Dust Lounge appears eligible for designation as a San Francisco City Landmark under National Register Criteria A (Events) and C (Design/Construction) as an intact mid-century cocktail lounge that embodies architectural and cultural characteristics of three important bars; Techau Tavern, Bustles & Beaus, and The Gold Dust Lounge.

²⁰ Catherine Friel, interview with Gracia Bovis.
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