

9/5/18

S. Ferguson

September 5, 2018

Andrew Wolfram  
Commission President  
Historic Preservation Commission  
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Commissioner Wolfram:

As the fiscal sponsor and partner for the *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco*, the GLBT Historical Society wholeheartedly endorses the landmarking of the former Paper Doll at 524 Union Street in San Francisco. Not only would this be the first San Francisco Landmark inspired by the LGBTQ HCS, it is a landmark proposed by a property owner who is genuinely committed to honoring her building's LGBTQ history. Truly extraordinary.

LGBTQ historian and scholar Nan Alamilla Boyd was the first to describe the Paper Doll as a "community center" where LGBTQ people could "make friends, find lovers, get information, or plan activities." Public spaces such as the Paper Doll were vital in the formation of San Francisco's LGBTQ communities, especially in the 1940s and 50s when any display of nonnormative sexuality was criminal, and most people viewed nonnormative men and women as pathological. As noted in the LGBTQ HCS, "the concept of public spaces providing the protection needed for establishing and nurturing community is critical to understanding LGBTQ history." The Paper Doll was one of those places.

On a personal note, the Paper Doll has been close to my heart since 2009 when I completed my master's thesis on preserving the history of San Francisco's lesbian community in North Beach. At a time when North Beach was bustling with queer bars and nightclubs, the Paper Doll was unique as the only full-service restaurant catering to these communities. I imagined myself as a lesbian during that period and understood how good it would feel to gather in one of those famous booths for a meal with like-minded women in a place that not only tolerated but welcomed us.

Thank you for your consideration of this landmark!

Sincerely,

Shayne E. Watson  
Founding Chair  
GLBT Historical Society Historic Places Working Group

# TENDERLOIN MUSEUM

WWW.TENDERLOINMUSEUM.ORG

• 398 EDDY STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

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Dear Historic Preservation Commission,

The Tenderloin Museum enthusiastically supports efforts to landmark the Paper Doll site at 524 Union.

As a historical institution with exhibits and programming that shares the history of marginalized groups (that are often ignored in history books), the Tenderloin Museum sees the Paper Doll as having tremendous historical value. Commemorating the Paper Doll promotes LGBTQ history, specifically Lesbian history, which is frequently overlooked in traditional LGBTQ narratives.

The Tenderloin Museum produced a popular play about the Compton's Cafeteria Riots, which ran from Feb-May of this year. The play shared the history of trans women in the Tenderloin neighborhood and a riot that occurred in 1966, three years before the more famous Stonewall riot in New York. Educating the public about this important, little known historical incident highlighted the vital contributions trans women (and many trans women of color) made to the queer civil rights movement. It also highlighted the importance of the Tenderloin, the city of San Francisco, and the vital role our city played in sparking the nationwide queer liberation movement. Compton's directly challenges the narrative that the movement began in New York with Stonewall in 1969.

Granting landmark status to the Paper Doll achieves similar objectives. It shows the vital role San Francisco has played in fostering gay culture and gay civil rights, through the lens of an often overlooked group in the gay community. Mona Sargen, an early manager of the Paper Doll who went on own the first lesbian clubs in the city is a criminally unknown queer civil rights hero. Championing her and the Paper Doll, is incredibly important in telling a more complete story about gay life and gay activism, as well as challenging traditional, incomplete narratives about the movement.

Let me know if I can be of any service in promoting this important history.

Sincerely,



Katie Conry  
Executive Director  
Tenderloin Museum