



# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2020**

Filing Date: August 19, 2020  
**Case No.:** 2020-00753LBR  
**Business Name:** Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Historical Society  
Business Address: 989 Market Street (primary address); 4127 18<sup>th</sup> Street (secondary address)  
Zoning: C-3-G (DOWNTOWN- GENERAL) Zoning District  
120-X Height and Bulk District  
Block/Lot: 3704/068  
Applicant: Terry Beswick  
989 Market Street  
Nominated By: Supervisor Matt Haney  
Located In: District 6 and 8  
Staff Contact: Katherine Wilborn – 628-652-7355  
[Katherine.Wilborn@sfgov.org](mailto:Katherine.Wilborn@sfgov.org)

**Recommendation:** Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

## Business Description

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public benefit corporation founded on March 16, 1985 and officially incorporated on May 22, 1986. The nonprofit was originally known as the San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society but is now generally referred to as the GLBT Historical Society. The GLBT Historical Society focuses on advancing public respect for the diverse spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities through the preservation, production, and transmission of historical knowledge related to LGBTQ and intersectional communities and their cultures. It has continuously been headquartered in San Francisco, and despite having moved a number of times, the GLBT Historical Society has continuously operated and remained committed to serving, preserving, and spreading respect for the LGBTQI community and their heritage. Since 1990, the Society has maintained a public space for its archives, reading room, exhibitions and programs. Today, those resources are located at the nonprofit's headquarters at 989 Market Street. Since 2008, the GLBT Historical Society has also concurrently operated a Museum space within the

Castro neighborhood. The GLBT Museum at the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> and Castro Streets has one of the largest collections of queer historical materials in the United States and is one of the only museums dedicated specifically to queer history and culture in the world. The GLBT Historical Society's dedication to uncovering, collecting, documenting, preserving, and sharing the history of San Francisco's LGBTQI community has come to be internationally recognized as an irreplaceable asset to the immediate community, as well as to the larger memory and progress of the global LGBTQI community. The GLBT Historical Society's collection is among the world's largest and most extensive public repository of materials pertaining to LGBTQI people. The GLBT Historical Society has ensured that the unique experiences and contributions of the city's LGBTQI community are remembered and honored through its continued efforts to collect and safeguard history. The Society gathers oral histories, leads guided tours, creates public exhibitions and programs, preserves work and artifacts documenting LGBTQI history, and advocates for the respect and promotion of LGBTQI historical places and intangible cultural heritage of San Francisco.

The GLBT Historical Society has developed a rich network of researchers, curators, archival practitioners, journalists, filmmakers, bearers of community memory, and other cultural contributors, and is associated with many significant persons. Additionally, the GLBT Historical Society's contributions have been well documented in books, articles, documentaries, presentations, and scholarly work. In fact, when the GLBT Historical Society Museum opened, it received global news coverage in 38 languages across 75 countries. The GLBT Historical society's tangible space ensures that the intangible histories of the LGBTQI communities can be preserved and shared for years to come.

The business's primary location is within a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the southeast side of Market Street between Sixth and Fifth Streets in the South of Market (soma) neighborhood. The building is historically known as the Hale Brothers Department Store and is significant for its association and location within the National Register and California Register *Market Street Theater and Loft* Historic Districts; its identification in the Planning Department's 1976 Architectural Survey; and its location within the SoMa Pilipinas Cultural Heritage District. It is within the C-3-G (Downtown - General) Zoning District and a 120-X Height and Bulk District, as well as a Fringe Financial Service Special Use District, the Market Street Special Sign District, the Downtown Planning Area, the Central Market Community Benefit District, and the Central Market Mayors' Invest in Neighborhoods Initiative Area Plan.

The GLBT Historical Society's secondary location is also located within a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the North side of 18<sup>th</sup> Street between Castro and Hartford Streets in the Castro Neighborhood and the Castro Cultural District. It is located within the Castro NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) and 40-X Height and Bulk District.

## Staff Analysis

### REVIEW CRITERIA

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1985, officially incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1986.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. The GLBT Historical Society qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- I. GLBT Historical Society has operated continuously in San Francisco for 35 years.
- II. GLBT Historical Society has contributed to the history and identity of the Castro Neighborhood, San Francisco and Northern California, and the broader, global LGBTQI community.
- III. GLBT Historical Society is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with archival and museum curation; specifically related to the collecting, preserving, and sharing the history and on-going legacies of LGBTQI persons within San Francisco and Northern California.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. The Market Street property is located within the National Register- and California Register- Market Street Theater and Loft Historic Districts. The building is also within the SoMa Pilipinas Cultural Heritage District. The 18th Street property is located within the Castro Cultural Heritage District and California Register-eligible Castro Historic District.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

Yes. Both properties have Planning Department Historic Resource status codes of "A" (Historic Resource Present) because of their locations within Cultural Districts and Historic Districts.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

A *LGBTQ Heritage Historic Context Statement* is ongoing; however, the GLBT Historical Society is cited in its draft form.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. There have been a number of books, doctoral dissertations and master's theses, scholarly and peer-reviewed journals, popular articles and news outlets, documentary films, television programs and public presentations, as listed in the GLBT Historical Society's Legacy Business Application. Additionally, when the GLBT Historical Society Museum opened at its present-day location in 2011, the opening received news coverage in 38 languages, in 75 different countries.

## Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

### LOCATION(S) ASSOCIATED WITH THE BUSINESS:

#### Previous Locations:

- The Redstone Building, 2926 16<sup>th</sup> Street (1900-1995)

- The Wilson Building, 973 Market Street (1995-2003)
- 657 Mission Street (2003-2016)
- GLBT Historical Society Pop-Up Museum, 499 Castro (2008-2009)

**Current Locations:**

- 989 Market Street, Lower Lever (2016-Present)
- GLBT Historical Society Museum, 4127 18<sup>th</sup> Street (2010-Present)

**RECOMMENDED BY APPLICANT**

- Preserving personal papers, organizational records, art and artifacts documenting LGBTQ history, including the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives & Special Collections.
- Gathering oral histories to record the stories and memories of individuals who have contributed to LGBTQ history and notably to San Francisco history.
- Making its collections available to researchers including historians, authors, filmmakers, students, curators and members of the general public to support their work on LGBTQ history and culture.
- Creating public exhibitions and programs at the GLBT Historical Society Museum and at other venues to promote knowledge and informed public dialogue about LGBTQ history and culture.
- Organizing guided tours of its exhibitions and archives for classes and student groups.
- Advocating the identification, preservation and promotion of LGBTQ historic places and intangible cultural heritage in San Francisco.
- Partnering with sister institutions in San Francisco to create LGBTQ history programs for their constituencies.
- Lending historical materials about LGBTQ life – and especially LGBTQ life in San Francisco – for exhibitions mounted by other museums and cultural institutions across the United States and around the world.

**ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED BY STAFF**

None

## **Basis for Recommendation**

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information



- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
  - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
  - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
  - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. ###**

**HEARING DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2020**

**Case No.:** 2020-007533LBR  
**Business Name:** Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Historical Society  
**Business Address:** 989 Market Street (primary address); 4127 18<sup>th</sup> Street (secondary address)  
**Zoning:** C-3-G (DOWNTOWN- GENERAL) Zoning District  
120-X Height and Bulk District  
**Block/Lot:** 3704/068  
**Applicant:** Terry Beswick  
989 Market Street  
**Nominated By:** Supervisor Matt Haney  
**Located In:** District 6 and 8  
**Staff Contact:** Katherine Wilborn – 628-652-7355  
[Katherine.Wilborn@sfgov.org](mailto:Katherine.Wilborn@sfgov.org)

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 989 MARKET ST, BLOCK/LOT 3704/068; AND 4127 18<sup>TH</sup> STREET, BLOCK/LOT 2695/036.**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on September 19, 2020, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that the GLBT Historical Society qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby** recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for GLBT Historical Society.

**Location(s):**

- 989 Market Street, Lower Level (2016-Present)
- GLBT Historical Society Museum, 4127 18<sup>th</sup> Street (2010-Present)

**Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:**

- *Preserving personal papers, organizational records, art and artifacts documenting LGBTQ history, including the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives & Special Collections.*
- *Gathering oral histories to record the stories and memories of individuals who have contributed to LGBTQ history and notably to San Francisco history.*
- *Making its collections available to researchers including historians, authors, filmmakers, students, curators and members of the general public to support their work on LGBTQ history and culture.*
- *Creating public exhibitions and programs at the GLBT Historical Society Museum and at other venues to promote knowledge and informed public dialogue about LGBTQ history and culture.*
- *Organizing guided tours of its exhibitions and archives for classes and student groups.*
- *Advocating the identification, preservation and promotion of LGBTQ historic places and intangible cultural heritage in San Francisco.*
- *Partnering with sister institutions in San Francisco to create LGBTQ history programs for their constituencies.*
- *Lending historical materials about LGBTQ life – and especially LGBTQ life in San Francisco – for exhibitions mounted by other museums and cultural institutions across the United States and around the world.*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations** are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

Resolution No. ###  
September 19, 2020

RECORD NO. 2020-00753LBR  
989 MARKET ST; 4127 18<sup>TH</sup> ST

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business September 16, 2020.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NAYS:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: September 16, 2020



## Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2019-20-011  
*Business Name:* Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society  
*Business Address:* 989 Market Street, Lower Level; 4127 18th Street  
*District:* Districts 6 and 8  
*Applicant:* Terry Beswick, Executive Director  
*Nomination Date:* October 2, 2019  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Matt Haney

**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

☒ Yes ☐ No

3823 17th Street from 1986 to 1990 (4 years)  
2926 16th Street from 1990 to 1995 (5 years)  
973 Market Street from 1995 to 2003 (8 years)  
657 Mission Street from 2003 to 2016 (13 years)  
499 Castro Street from 2008 to 2009 (1 year)  
989 Market Street, Lower Level from 2016 to Present (4 years)  
4127 18th Street from 2010 to Present (10 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

☒ Yes ☐ No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

☒ Yes ☐ No

**NOTES:** N/A

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** August 19, 2020

Richard Kurylo  
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program

**Legacy Business Program**  
Office of Small Business  
City Hall Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 554-6680  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org  
[www.legacybusiness.org](http://www.legacybusiness.org)



Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 6



City and County of San Francisco

## MATT HANEY

October 2nd, 2019

Regina Dick-Endrizzi, Director  
San Francisco Small Business Commission  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 110

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi,

I am honored to nominate the GLBT Historical Society founded in 1985 with archives currently located at 989 Market St for San Francisco's Legacy Business Program.

The GLBT Historical Society has made great contributions to the effort of preserving the unique history of the LGBT community and the Gay Liberation Movement. It provides a vital service to the local community and the world by continuing to ensure that these stories are never lost; giving everyone who walks through their doors a chance to learn.

As San Francisco is considered by many to be the epicenter of the global LGBT community, and in fact is the home of the first ever documented collective uprising of LGBT folk the Compton's Cafeteria Riots in 1966, we recognize the important role of organizations like the GLBT Historical Society in preserving and honoring that history for generations to come.

Please contact the GLBT Historical Society's Senior Public History Advisor Gerard Koskovich [gerard@glbthistory.org](mailto:gerard@glbthistory.org) (415) 864-1423 to inform them of their nomination.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt Haney", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matt Haney

## Section One:

### Business / Applicant Information. Provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address, and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title, and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

NAME OF BUSINESS:		
The GLBT Historical Society		
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)		
The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society A registered 501(c)3 California nonprofit public benefit corporation		
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE:	
989 Market St., Lower Level San Francisco, CA 94103	(415) 777-5455	
	EMAIL:	
	info@glbthistory.org	
WEBSITE:	FACEBOOK PAGE:	YELP PAGE
www.glbthistory.org	facebook.com/GLBTHistory	www.yelp.com/biz/glbth-history-museum-san-francisco

APPLICANT'S NAME	
Terry Beswick	<input type="checkbox"/> Same as Business
APPLICANT'S TITLE	
Executive Director	
APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE:
The GLBT Historical Society 989 Market St., Lower Level San Francisco, CA 94103	(415) 777-5455
	EMAIL:
	terry@glbthistory.org

SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):
0369910	1532352

OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff	
NAME OF NOMINATOR:	DATE OF NOMINATION:

## Section Two:

### Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:	ZIP CODE:	START DATE OF BUSINESS
3823 17th St.	94114	May 22, 1986
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	1985–1990	

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
The Redstone Building, 2926 16th St.	94110	Start: 1990 End: 1995

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
The Wilson Building, 973 Market St.	94103	Start: 1995 End: 2003

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
657 Mission St.	94105	Start: 2003 End: 2016

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
989 Market St., Lower Lever	94103	Start: 2016 End: n/a

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
GLBT Historical Society Pop-Up Museum, 499 Castro St.	94114	Start: 2008 End: 2009

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
The GLBT Historical Society Museum, 4127 18th St.	94114	Start: 2010 End: n/a



## Section Three:

### Disclosure Statement.

#### San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for the Business Assistance Grant.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

**Terry Beswick**

Name (Print):

Date:

11/12/19

Signature:



# **GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

## **Section 4: Written Historical Narrative**

### **CRITERION 1**

**a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.**

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society was founded on March 16, 1985, during a public meeting in the Community Room at the San Francisco Public Library in Civic Center, now the building that houses the Asian Art Museum at 200 Larkin Street.

Originally known as the San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society, the organization is now generally referred to as the GLBT Historical Society. The society is a 501(c)(3) California nonprofit public benefit corporation governed by a board of directors in keeping with articles of incorporation first filed with the office of the California Secretary of State on May 22, 1986.

The GLBT Historical Society has been headquartered in San Francisco continuously since its founding. During its first five years, its collections were held and made available to researchers in the private apartment of co-founder Willie Walker at 3823 17th Street in the Castro neighborhood. Meetings of the board and other volunteers occasionally took place there, as well.

Since 1990, the society has maintained public premises in San Francisco for its archives, reading room, exhibitions and programs:

#### **1990-1995**

The Redstone Building  
2926 16th St.  
San Francisco, CA 94110

#### **1995-2003**

The Wilson Building  
973 Market St.  
San Francisco, CA 94103

#### **2003-2016**

657 Mission St.  
San Francisco, CA 94105

**2016-Present**

989 Market St., Lower Level  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Since 2008, the GLBT Historical Society also has operated a museum concurrently with its archives but in separate premises in the Castro district:

**2008-2009**

Pop-Up Museum  
499 Castro St.  
San Francisco, CA 94114

**2010-Present**

The GLBT Historical Society Museum  
4127 18th St.  
San Francisco, CA 94114

**b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?**

The GLBT Historical Society has not ceased operations in San Francisco since it was founded in 1985.

**c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.**

The GLBT Historical Society is a nonprofit organization and not "a family-owned business".

**d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.**

Not applicable.

**e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation demonstrating the organization has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application.

**f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

The historic resource status of the building at 979 - 989 Market Street is classified by the Planning Department as Category A, Historic Resource Present, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act. The building was constructed in the first decade of the 1900s and is known as the Hale Brothers Department Store.

Following is a description of the building from the State of California's Resources Agency: "This contributor to the National Register-listed Market Street Theatre and Loft District is a six-story reinforced concrete building on the southeast, or south, side of the street a little east of Sixth Street. The terra cotta facade has five bays of Chicago windows separated by two tiers of two-story columns on the top four floors, and by heavy rustication on the next floor down. The smooth marble base dates from the 1930s. Both the 1902 original design and the 1907 reconstruction of the building behind the facade were designed by the highly respected Reid Brothers. The building appears not to have changed since the National Register Nomination rated it a contributor to the Market Street Theatre and Loft District."

The historic resource status of the building at 499 Castro Street is also classified by the Planning Department as Category A, Historic Resource Present. The building is a contributor to the Eligible Castro Street Historic District

## **CRITERION 2**

### **a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.**

The GLBT Historical Society advances respect for diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity by supporting the production and transmission of historical knowledge about LGBTQ individuals and the intersectional communities and cultures they create.

The society maintains one of the largest collections of queer historical materials in the United States. In addition, it operates the GLBT Historical Society Museum in the Castro, one of just a handful of museums of queer history and culture anywhere in the world.

The GLBT Historical Society makes an irreplaceable contribution to both the LGBTQ community and the city as a whole by uncovering, documenting, preserving and sharing the history of San Francisco's LGBTQ community. It has carried out this work for 35 years, ensuring that the unique experiences and contributions of the city's LGBTQ community are remembered and honored.

### **b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?**

The founding and growth of the GLBT Historical Society itself are events of historical significance given its role as a groundbreaker in the field of LGBTQ archives and museums. Over the course of more than three decades, the society has come to be internationally recognized

for its LGBTQ public history initiatives. See section 2C below for documentation on the historical importance of the Historical Society itself.

**c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?**

The work of the GLBT Historical Society, the significance of its archives, the originality of its approach to exhibitions and the importance of its contributions to the LGBTQ public history movement have been documented in books, doctoral dissertations and master's theses, scholarly and popular articles, documentary films, television programs and public presentations.

As an example of media visibility for the institution, the opening of the GLBT Historical Society Museum in the Castro district received news coverage in 38 languages and in 75 different countries in 2011.

Among the books that discuss the GLBT Historical Society are the following:

Jennifer Tyburczy. *Sex Museums: The Politics and Performance of Display* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016)

Swedish Exhibition Agency. *Museums and LGBTQ: An Analysis of How Museums and Other Exhibitors Can Highlight Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Perspectives* (Stockholm, 2016)

Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell (eds.). *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2015)

Kate Theimer (ed.). *Educational Programs: Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015)

Graduate research projects addressing the history and activities of the Historical Society include doctoral dissertations such as Tamara de Szegheo Lang's "Contagious History: Affect and Identification in Queer Public History Exhibitions" (Toronto: York University, 2018), Diana Wakimoto's "Queer Community Archives in California Since 1950" (Brisbane, Australia: Queensland University of Technology, 2012) and Kelly Jacob Rawson's "Archiving Transgender: Affects, Logics and the Power of Queer History" (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University, 2010).

Master's theses dealing with the society include Renaud Chantraine's "La Patrimonialisation des traces des minorités sexuelles: étude de cas" (Paris: Ecole du Louvre, 2014); Amanda Kreklau's "Collections Conundrums: Considering the First Major GLBT Museum" (Boston: Brandeis University, 2009); and Sue Weller's "Homeworks Art Museum" (Brooklyn: Pratt Institute, 2003).

In addition, numerous articles about the society have been published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals; these include Martin Meeker's "Archives Review: The Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California," *Journal of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity* (1999); Don Romesburg's "Presenting the Queer Past: A Case for the GLBT History Museum," *Radical History Review* (2014); and Gerard Koskovich's "Displaying the Queer Past: Purposes, Publics and Possibilities at the GLBT History Museum," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* (2014).

**d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?**

Founders and founding members of the GLBT Historical Society include numerous scholars, writers, artists and queer public history activists of national and international renown. A small sampling includes historian and MacArthur "genius grant" fellow Allan Berube (1946- 2007); historian and bibliographer Eric Garber (1954-1995); anthropologist and feminist and sexuality theorist Gayle Rubin, who currently serves as cochair of the society's National Advisory Council; and historian and pioneering FTM transgender activist Louis Graydon Sullivan (1951-1991).

Other noted cultural figures associated with the society include artist and curator E.G. Crichton, who currently serves as artist in residence; historian Susan Stryker, who served as executive director from 1998 to 2003; historian Marc Stein, who served on the board of directors from 2016 to 2019; and historian Amy Sueyoshi, who served as co-chair of the board of directors from 2009 to 2012 and who currently serves as co-chair of the society's National Advisory Council.

**e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

The GLBT Historical Society demonstrates its commitment to the community by doing the following:

- Preserving personal papers, organizational records, art and artifacts documenting LGBTQ history.
- Gathering oral histories to record the stories and memories of individuals who have contributed to LGBTQ history and notably to San Francisco history.
- Making its collections available to researchers including historians, authors, filmmakers, students, curators and members of the general public to support their work on LGBTQ history and culture.
- Creating public exhibitions and programs at the GLBT Historical Society Museum and at other venues to promote knowledge and informed public dialogue about LGBTQ history and culture.
- Organizing guided tours of its exhibitions and archives for classes and student groups from San Francisco elementary and secondary schools; colleges and universities; community, corporate and professional groups; and other individuals and organizations.
- Advocating the identification, preservation and promotion of LGBTQ historic places and intangible cultural heritage in San Francisco.

- Partnering with sister institutions in San Francisco to create LGBTQ history programs for their constituencies. Recent examples include "Heritage City," a panel developed for the Night of Ideas hosted by the San Francisco Public Library, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the French Consulate (February 2019), and "Living History: Queer Culture Across Generations," developed for the De Young Museum (June 2019).
- Lending historical materials about LGBTQ life – and especially LGBTQ life in San Francisco – for exhibitions mounted by other museums and cultural institutions across the United States and around the world.

**f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.**

The GLBT Historical Society serves the community of LGBTQ people and their allies in San Francisco. In addition, the collections, programs and exhibitions of the society serve visitors from the region, from across the United States and from around the world.

**g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?**

The Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives & Special Collections of the GLBT Historical Society are among the largest and most extensive holdings in the world of materials pertaining to LGBTQ people, occupying more than 3,500 linear feet of storage. Broadly speaking, the over 900 collections include personal papers, organizational records, periodicals, oral histories, photographs, audiovisual recordings, ephemera, artifacts and works of art.

The archives are located at 989 Market Street, Lower Level, between Fifth and Sixth streets in downtown San Francisco. The archives are non-circulating. All materials must be consulted in the reading room. The extensive archival collection is maintained with generous help from foundations, business sponsors, individual donors and volunteers.

**h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

The GLBT Historical Society is the single most important repository of materials documenting the history of San Francisco's LGBTQ people and their communities and cultures. In addition, it is one of the most significant LGBTQ public history institutions in the world. If the society were closed, the loss would be incalculable-and if it were forced to relocate outside of San Francisco, the city and its residents would suffer significantly in losing ready access to their own LGBTQ heritage.

### **CRITERION 3**

**a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.**

The GLBT Historical Society is an LGBTQ public history center that operates a museum offering public exhibitions and programs, maintains an archives and special collections of LGBTQ historical materials open to researchers, collects oral histories, and promotes the identification and preservation of LGBTQ historic places and intangible cultural heritage. Its initiatives focus particularly on San Francisco and Northern California.

**b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)**

For more than three decades, the GLBT Historical Society has consistently pursued its mission to advance social justice for LGBTQ people by supporting the production, transmission and discussion of LGBTQ historical and cultural knowledge.

The museum and archives of the GLBT Historical Society are at the center of the historical tradition that defines the institution. The society would not exist without these spaces and the tangible and intangible historical and cultural resources they protect and make available to the public.

In the course of its activities, the society also has developed rich networks of researchers; curators; museum and archival practitioners; writers, journalists and filmmakers; bearers of community memory; and other cultural contributors. These networks are key to the historical character and ongoing functioning of the society. They require the society's institutional base and the physical space and tangible resources it provides to remain active and productive.

**c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).**

The GLBT Historical Society is committed to preserving the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives & Special Collections.

**d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation that demonstrates the organization has been operating for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.



1532352

FILED  
In the office of the Secretary of State  
of the State of California

MAY 22 1986

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION  
OF

*March Fong Eu*  
MARCH FONG EU, Secretary of State

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA GAY AND LESBIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

I

The name of this corporation shall be ~~The~~ San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society.

II

This coproration is a nonprofit public benefit corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law for public purposes:

To uncover, preserve, promote and make available  
Gay and Lesbian history.

No substantial part of the activities of this corporation shall consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not participate or intervene in any political campaign (including the publishing or distribution of statements) on behalf of any candidate for public office.

III

The county in the State of California where the principal office for the transaction of the activities of this corporation is located is San Francisco County.

The name and address in the State of California of this corporation's initial agent for service of process is Roberto Esteves, 34 Caselli Avenue, San Francisco, California, 94114.

V

The general management of the affairs of this corporation shall be under the control, supervision and direction of the Board of Directors. The rules and procedures for the election and operation of the Board of Directors shall be set forth in the corporation By-laws.

IV

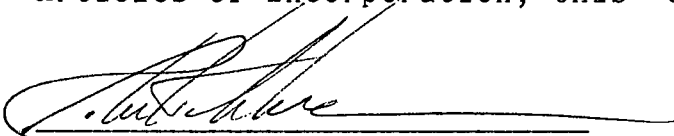
The number and qualification of members of the corporation, the different classes of membership, if any, the voting, and other rights and the privileges of members and their liability to dues and assessments and the method of collection thereof, shall be as set forth in the by-laws.

VII

The property of this corporation is irrevocably dedicated to educational purposes and no part of the net income or assets of this organization shall ever inure to the benefit of any director, officer or member thereof or to the benefit of any private individual. Upon the dissolution or winding up of the corporation, its assets remaining after payment of, or provision for payment, of all debts and liabilities of this corporation, shall be distributed to a non-profit fund, foundation or corporation, which is organized and operated exclusively for educational purposes and which has established its tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. If this corporation holds any assets in trust, or a corporation is formed for charitable purposes, such assets shall be disposed of in such manner as may be directed by decree of the superior court of the county in which the corporation has its principal office, upon petition therefore by the Attorney General or by a person concerned in the liquidation, in a proceeding to which the Attorney General is a party.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned have executed these Articles of Incorporation, this date:

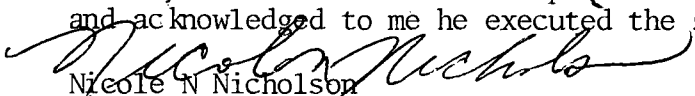
*Jan 27, 1986*



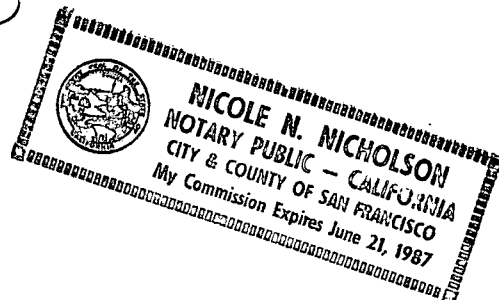
Roberto Esteves  
Incorporator  
Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society

STATE OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SF

On Jan 27, 1986 before me the undersigned Notary Public personally appeared ROBERTO ESTEVES signing as incorporator for Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me he executed the same



Nicole N. Nicholson







BLACK art market

SAN FRANCISCO

FOOD  
WATER  
SHELTER  
The INTERNET  
helps people  
succeed

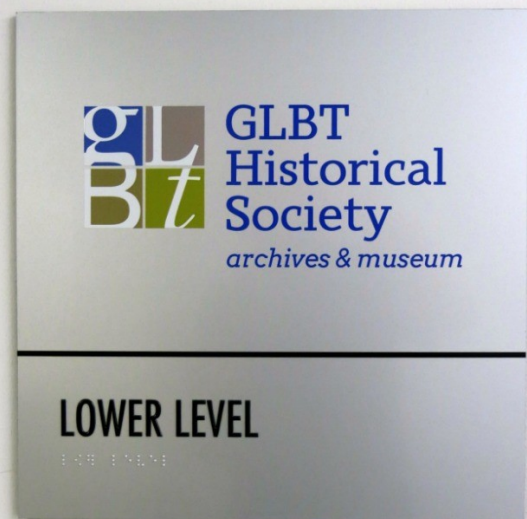
mozilla  
spreads know-how globally

OXFORD STREET

NEWSSTAND

CUSTOM  
FINE ART



















## PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI # \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

1D

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_

Local: category II in Article 11

Review Code \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 2

\*Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) 3704068

P1. Other Identifier

\*P2. Location: ☐ Not for Publication ☒ Unrestricted

\*a. County: San Francisco

and P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*c. Address: 979-989 Market Street

City: San Francisco

Zip: 94103

d. UTM: (Give more than one of large and/or linear resources) Zone \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_\_\_ mN

e. Other Locational Data: Assessor's Parcel Number: 3704068

\*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

This contributor to the National Register-listed Market Street Theatre and Loft District is a six-story reinforced concrete building on the southeast, or south, side of the street a little east of Sixth Street. The terra cotta facade has five bays of Chicago windows, separated by two tiers of two-story columns on the top four floors, and by heavy rustication on the next floor down. The smooth marble base dates from the 1930s. Both the 1902 original design and the 1907 reconstruction of the building behind the facade were designed by the highly respected Reid Brothers. The building appears not to have changed since the National Register Nomination rated it a contributor to the Market Street Theatre and Loft District. It is also designated in the next-to-highest category of the Downtown Plan (Article 11 of the S.F. Planning Code.)

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: (list attributes and codes) HP7. 3+ story commercial building

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

P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures, and objects)

\*P5b. Photo (view, date, accession #)

Market Street elevation  
looking east

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources

☒ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both

1902, 1907  
per National Register  
Nomination

\*P7. Owner and Address:

Civil Service Employees Inc.  
%gardner Gray Jr., 989 Market  
San Francisco, Ca 94103  
P--private

\*P8. Recorded by

Anne Bloomfield  
2229 Webster Street  
San Francisco, CA 94115

\*P9. Date Recorded:

05/14/1997

\*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)

\*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none")

### \*Attachments

- |  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeological Record | <input type="checkbox"/> BSOR            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photograph Record | <input type="checkbox"/> Sketch Map         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artifact Record       | <input type="checkbox"/> NONE            | <input type="checkbox"/> Location Map                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuation Sheet |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> District Record | <input type="checkbox"/> Linear Feature Record        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other...           |



## CONTINUATION SHEET

Primary #  
HRI #  
Trinomial

Page 2 of 2      Resource Name or # (Assigned by Recorder) 3704068

\*Recorded by: Anne Bloomfield

Date 05/14/1997

☒ Continuation   ☐ Update

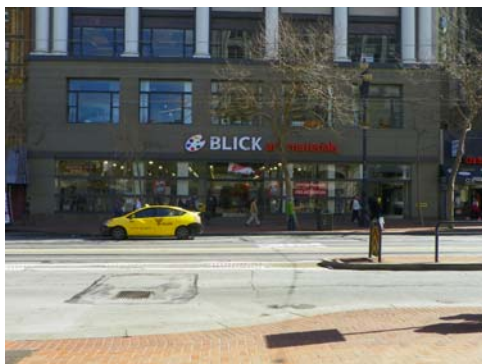
Note: 1997 Photos no longer available, all photos by Tim Kelley Consulting



Market Street facade. 103\_3734.JPG.  
3/1/2011



Market Street facade, looking northeast.  
103\_3733.JPG. 3/1/2011



Detail, 1st story storefront. 103\_3735.JPG.  
3/1/2011



Stevenson Street facade, looking northwest.  
103\_3770.JPG. 3/1/2011

# CONTINUATION SHEET

Primary #  
HRI #  
Trinomial

Page 1 of 1

Resource Name or # (Assigned by Recorder)

3704068

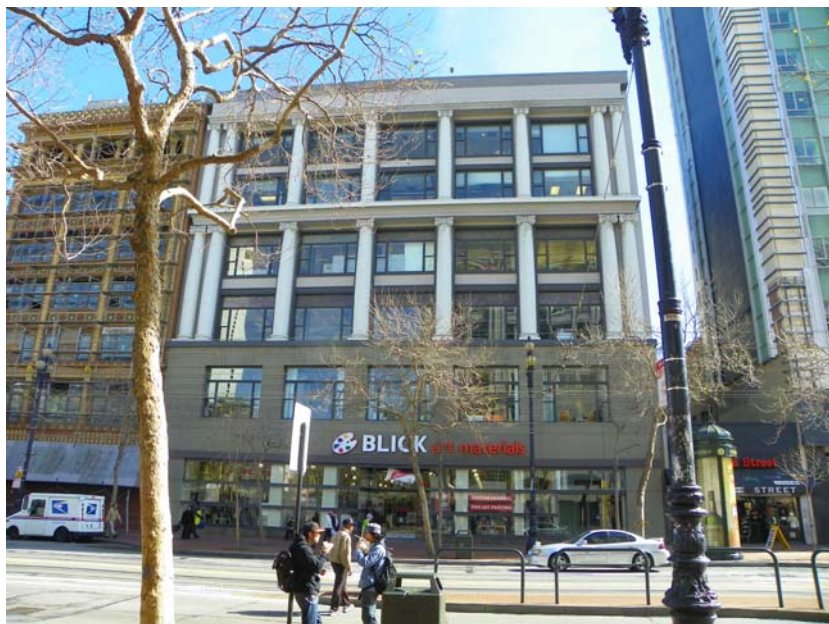
\*Recorded by: Tim Kelley Consulting, LLC

Date 3/1/2011

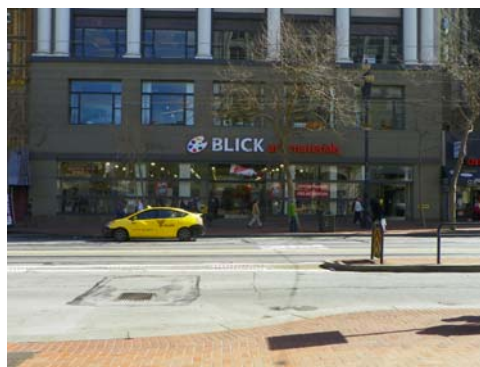
☐ Continuation ☒ Update

979-989 Market Street may have been altered since the time of previous survey and documentation, which only noted the post-1906 reconstruction and the installation of the marble base in the 1930s. Currently, the first story is spanned by non-original storefront windows that consist of large expanses of plate glass with prominent horizontal mullions, and glass entry doors. This diminishes the building's integrity somewhat, but is not detrimental.

The building was previously evaluated on a DPR 523: Primary Record and was stated to be a contributor to the Market Street Theater and Loft National Register Historic District. This status as "contributor to a National Register District" appears to still be appropriate.



View of northwest facade. 103\_3734.JPG 3/1/2011



Detail of storefronts. 103\_3735.JPG  
3/1/2011



View of southeast facade. 103\_3770.JPG  
3/1/2011



4144 18th St  
San Francisco, California

Google

Street View



Google



Tea & Sugar

MUSEUM

4127

EXIT

gltb

The Museum's Story

DISCOVER  
LGBTQ RIGHTS HISTORY.



gay lesbian bisexual transgender  
history museum

COME IN! WE'RE OPEN.  
GLBTHISTORY.ORG

Photography by Rick Gerhart







## Faces from The Past

We Have Always Been Here

## Jiro Onuma

1942-1946

## Lesbians of The Ladder

Courage Under Attack







hoods

THE TENDERLOIN

UPTOWN TENDERLOIN  
Lost Landmark  
COMPTON'S  
CAFETERIA RIOT

1966  
ONE AUGUST EVENING IN 1966, TRANSGENDER WOMEN AND GAY MEN BANGED TOGETHER TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST OPPRESSION AFTER A POLICE OFFICER INMATED ONE OF THEM AT COMPTON'S CAFETERIA. THIS FULL-SCALE RIOT FOR TRANSGENDER AND GAY RIGHTS IN U.S. HISTORY IT GALVANIZED THE COMMUNITY, PROMPTING NEW PUBLIC POLICES AND SOCIAL SERVICES THAT IMPROVED THE LIVES OF LOCAL TRANSGENDER PEOPLE.

Lost Queer L

José Sarria

Activist and Entertainer

Queer Youth  
Out and Active

Fighting  
Four

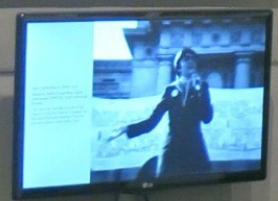


# THE BRIGGS INITIATIVE: A SCARY PROPOSITION

**MIAMI FALLS B.A.R.**

Demonstration for Equality for Gaypeople  
THURSDAY April 2 1:00PM at the  
Shapiro Sewing Center  
41 N. Adams Street

A DAY WITHOUT  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
IS LIKE A DAY  
WITHOUT SUNSHINE



**NO ON 6**  
DON'T LEGALIZE  
DISCRIMINATION

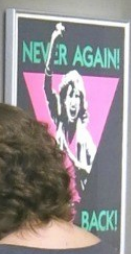
NO EN 6

PROTECT  
YOUR  
RIGHTS

Ask a  
Hawthorn Parent  
NO ON 6

NO-6

NO ON 6



ORANGE TUESDAY

TO PROMOTE  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
THE BRIGGS INITIATIVE  
DOES NOT SERVE  
ORANGE JUICE  
OR ORANGE JUICE  
CONCENTRATE

anita  
kisses  
oranges



NO!  
BY THE  
BRIGGS  
INITIATIVE







September 25, 2019

**To:** The Office of Small Business of the City and County of San Francisco

**Re:** Legacy Business Registry Application of the GLBT Historical Society

We are writing to support the application of the GLBT Historical Society for listing on the Legacy Business Registry of the City and County of San Francisco. The Historical Society is an irreplaceable San Francisco institution that has devoted itself for nearly 35 years to documenting, preserving and sharing the history and culture of transgender, bisexual, lesbian and gay people.

The archives, exhibitions and public programs of the Historical Society make an invaluable contribution to the well-being of San Francisco residents and visitors not simply by promoting recognition and understanding of the little-known history of TBLG+ communities, but also by encouraging use of this historical knowledge to build respect for the diversity of gender and sexual orientation in contemporary society.

The Compton's Transgender Cultural District offers one example of the positive contributions of the GLBT Historical Society to social justice in San Francisco. The 1966 Compton's Cafeteria Riot, after which the district is named, had been largely forgotten—until historian Susan Stryker found a reference in the archives of the Historical Society. Thanks to the documents preserved by the society, Stryker launched the research that has restored the story of the riot to public memory.

We encourage the City and County of San Francisco to provide all the support needed to ensure that the GLBT Historical Society remains in the city and continues to thrive. Adding the society to the Legacy Business Registry will help greatly with this process.

Sincerely,

Aria Sa'id  
Executive Director





101 West Hall

1085 South University Avenue  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1107  
ph: 734-764-7274  
fax: 734-763-6077

To the Office of Small Business of the City and County of San Francisco  
re: Legacy Business Registry Application of the GLBT Historical Society

I am writing to express my fervent support for the application of the GLBT Historical Society to be registered as one of San Francisco's legacy businesses. I speak as a San Francisco resident, as a scholar of San Francisco LGBTQ history, and as someone who is extremely familiar with the impact and importance of the GLBT Historical Society both locally in the city of San Francisco, and as a nationally and internationally recognized organization. The GLBTHS is an irreplaceable resource whose significance cannot be overestimated.

The Historical Society was officially founded in 1985, but the issues that led to its establishment have much deeper roots. In 1978, I arrived in San Francisco to do a dissertation on San Francisco's gay leather community. I joined up with a small group of individuals who were doing research on other aspects of San Francisco's LGBT histories. This was the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project, among whose early members were Allan Berube ([Coming Out Under Fire](#)), Eric Garber, Jeffrey Escoffier, Amber Hollibaugh, and Estelle Freedman. The history project was only a kind of reading and support group; the membership was fluid but it quickly became the central clearinghouse for assembling and disseminating knowledge of San Francisco's queer pasts. Later participants included award winning film maker Rob Epstein, transgender scholar Susan Stryker, GLBTHS founder Willie Walker, and archivist and writer Martin Meeker ([Contacts Desired](#)).

One early problem we all faced was the lack of source material. None of the local research institutions— including UC Berkeley, Stanford, SF State, and the SF Public Library— collected any of the basic primary LGBT sources. That included the local gay newspapers: none of these libraries were even collecting the BAR and the Sentinel, much less their predecessors. In the entire United States, one of the few collections of homophile era publications, many of which were actually produced and printed in San Francisco, was at the University of Michigan. Early historians of the gay movement in the US went to Michigan to read homophile magazines such as the [Mattachine Review](#) and [The Ladder](#), even though the organizations that produced these publications were headquartered in San Francisco. But the local libraries did not think these periodicals were worth having.

Most historians and researchers can go to various libraries, archives, and museums to consult primary source material; they generally do not have to assemble it. But in order to do their research, the early scholars of LGBT history had to accumulate those sources. For many years, most of those collections were stored in their apartments, as there was no where else to place them. For example,

Willie Walker, who joined the history project in the early 1980s, decided to build a collection of LGBT periodicals. As this collection grew, it took over his dining room.

Accumulating the source materials was one thing; figuring out how to preserve them and make them available to others was another challenge. It soon became clear that having these kinds of collections in dining rooms, closets, or under beds was not a viable arrangement: there needed to be some kind of institution that would outlive us, manage these materials professionally, and make them available to other and future researchers. To address these issues, the GLBTHS was founded.

Because it was entirely community based, the GLBTHS also faced additional hurdles: initially, it had minimal funding, only volunteer staff, and a tiny rented office (in the Redstone Building). Creating durable institutions is a very difficult process: for an institution to survive, it needs reliable funding, professional staff, and stable space.

Although the GLBTHS has faced many obstacles in its nearly 35 years of existence, it has nonetheless managed to assemble a world class research collection. The resources it now possesses have become an essential destination for people producing GLBTQ knowledges, art, and film. The collections of the GLBTHS have been the basis for hundreds of publications, both popular and academic, as well as dozens of award winning documentary films, and even Hollywood movies (Milk having been the most obvious example). The GLBTHS has also always had exhibits to disseminate queer historical knowledges. These used to be housed with the archival collections, but now occupy (a temporary and barely adequate) space in a storefront in the Castro.

Because of its own success, many people probably do not appreciate the ways in which the collections of the GLBTHS and the work of the many researchers who have used them have changed what “we”— and the general public— understand about GLBT history in the United States. For example, I was noticing recently how the story of Compton’s Cafeteria, and the riot that took place there in San Francisco’s Tenderloin some years before Stonewall, has now become part of the general narrative. It was mentioned in the series When We Rise, and more recently was completely central to the plot line of the newest iteration of Tales of the City. And that story was unknown at the time of the original Tales of the City. It was initially discovered in the stacks of the GLBTHS by Susan Stryker, formerly Executive Director of the Historical Society and one of the major figures internationally in Transgender Studies. The stories of gay men and lesbians in World War II, the biographies of Harvey Milk, the history of the AIDS epidemic, the presence of LGBTQ individuals in San Francisco’s organized labor movement – none of these would have surfaced, much less become relatively common knowledge, without the GLBT Historical Society.

In short, the GLBTHS is one of the most important institutions of LGBTQ San Francisco. It is one of the major achievements of the GLBT movements in San Francisco. It has become a world renowned and indispensable research institution for LGBTQ histories.

One of the ironies is that the legacy business program itself relies on the kind of knowledge— and in many cases, the actual knowledge— that would not exist without the GLBTHS. It is the GLBTHS that has preserved the records that document the trajectories of many of the LGBT businesses in the city that have been granted legacy status. Another example is the Compton’s/Transgender Cultural District: without the GLBTHS and Stryker’s work, there would never have been a plaque in front of the former cafeteria, nor would there have been awareness of the very culture and history now celebrated by the city. There might have been a transgender district, but it would not have been named after the activism that took place at Compton’s Cafeteria, were it not for the GLBTHS.

I cannot even begin to express how important it is that the GLBTHS survive, and that it remain in San Francisco. It would be an irreparable loss if the institution should fail, and a tragedy if it had to relocate to an area with cheaper costs. Part of how San Francisco functions for the Bay Area has to do with its centrality: it is accessible to pretty much all of the surrounding towns and cities. But those surrounding towns and cities are not all accessible to one another, precisely because the transportation infrastructure does not link the peripheral areas as efficiently as it links all of them to San Francisco.

San Francisco remains the beating heart of the Bay Area for many reasons, but one of them is this centrality, which in turn has enabled so many businesses, institutions, and resources to be located in the city. These then attract people into the city: whether it is to shop near Union Square, attend the opera or symphony, or visit the museums. However, the city is losing many of these kinds of attractions because of rising costs and other problems. Losing these kinds of magnet institutions harms San Francisco. And the GLBTHS is such a magnet: it is a destination that draws visitors from the greater Bay Area, from the rest of the United States, and indeed, from much of the world.

If there is any non-profit that should be treasured by the city of San Francisco and helped to remain here, it is the GLBTHS. I hope that the Office of Small Business will recognize the GLBTHS as the legacy institution that it is.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gayle Rubin". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Gayle Rubin  
Associate Professor, Anthropology and Women's Studies



OFFICE OF THE DEAN, COLLEGE OF ETHNIC STUDIES

1600 Holloway Avenue, EP-121B  
San Francisco, CA 94132

Tel: 415/338-1693  
Fax: 415/338-1739

September 1, 2019

Dear Office of Small Business of the City and County of San Francisco:

I write to strongly recommend that the GLBT Historical Society be admitted into City and County of San Francisco's Legacy Business Registry. I am a historian by training with expertise in sexuality studies, ethnic studies, and turn-of-the-century San Francisco. The Historical Society has played a critical role in my experience of queer San Francisco.

Since my early days as a graduate student in the 1990s, I had heard about the Historical Society as not just an archive of invaluable and inspiring primary source material, but also as a refuge for queer academics particularly in a world that perceived queer history as a prurient interest, rather than a valid intellectual endeavor. At the archive I met countless dedicated queers, those doing research and those who volunteered their time to run the organization. A number of queers opened up the archive for me on weekends so that I could finish my research on my short research trips. They invited me to their house parties as well, so much so that I felt very much that this was a special place of community building amongst a bunch of queer nerds. All of us who passed through the organization's doors learned of the its brave and quirky beginnings in the 1980s, when renegade queers fiercely fought to preserve gay history by diving into dumpsters to retrieve the belongings of men who just passed from AIDS. The archive continues to remain one of the few places across the nation where queer scholars can feel welcome and in community with other researchers.

In the mid-2000s, I began to play an active role with the GLBT Historical Society's museum, where I have seen innumerable college students and adults moved by queer history. Not only do exhibits bring new light to the inequality that queers faced, but also to their courage in how they then moved to change that reality. By highlighting San Francisco's queer past through their archival material, the Historical Society and its museum advances the city as a queer capital not just in myth, but through examples of protest and hard won reform. The large number of exhibits as well that address people of color, transfolks, and women astounds guests in it diversity that only a San Francisco queer community could produce. No doubt, if the Historical Society were to move outside of the city it would lose its radical political edge that links pleasure as a powerful site of empowerment and social change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Sueyoshi".

Amy Sueyoshi, Ph.D.  
Dean, College of Ethnic Studies  
Professor, Race and Resistance Studies  
Professor, Sexuality Studies



**584 Castro Street #333  
San Francisco CA 94114-2512**

**415/431-2359**

formerly "Merchants of Upper Market & Castro – MUMC"

[Info@CastroMerchants.com](mailto:Info@CastroMerchants.com)  
[www.CastroMerchants.com](http://www.CastroMerchants.com)

Masood Samereie, President

September 30, 2010

*By Email to Gerard@GLBTHistory.org*

San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall – Room 140  
1 Dr. Carleton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco CA 94102

Re: Legacy Business Registry Application of the GLBT Historical Society

Ladies and gentlemen,

This confirms that Castro Merchants (formerly "Merchants of Upper Market & Castro – MUMC") **SUPPORTS** the Legacy Business Registry Application of the GLBT Historical Society.

Castro Merchants believes that the Society's long history of service in San Francisco, including preservation of its extensive Archives and operation of an informative and popular Museum in the Castro, especially deserves recognition in the Legacy Business Program.

Castro Merchants represents business owners and managers in San Francisco's Castro-Upper Market area, generally along Upper Market Street from Castro Street to Octavia Blvd.; Castro from Market to 19<sup>th</sup> Street; and commercially zoned portions of cross streets throughout that area. Castro Merchants has about 300 currently paid Members through April 30, 2020.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding this Castro Merchants support.  
We understand that this letter will be included in the Society's formal Application to your office.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Masood Samereie".

Masood Samereie, CASTRO MERCHANTS President

email cc: S.F. District 8 Supervisor Rafael Mandelman, Staff Tom Temprano  
Regina Dick-Endrizzi, S.F. Office of Small Business  
Terry Beswick, Gerard Koskovich, GLBT Historical Society

## Presenting the Queer Past

### A Case for the GLBT History Museum

*Don Romesburg*

The January 2011 opening of the GLBT History Museum in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood marked the culmination of over a quarter century of collecting, preserving, and interpreting the Bay Area's queer history. The museum is a project of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Historical Society, home to one of the world's largest and most accessible community-based queer archives. Organizers conceived the museum as a vehicle through which archival materials could be presented to the public in compelling ways, with an eye toward diversity and social justice. The museum was to showcase the archive's depth and breadth, attract new collections, engage the public with the importance of queer history, and produce powerful exhibitions linking past and present. Organizers also hoped to attract new GLBT Historical Society supporters and deepen commitments of those already invested in its mission. Even as the museum brings the archives into interaction with many publics, however, contemporary forces in San Francisco threaten to render it complicit in a sanitized, tourist-oriented Castro and gay history. How successfully this museum can represent its related queer archive—and the past, present, and future it endeavors to sustain—remains an open question.

By assuming the identity "museum," the GLBT Historical Society runs the risk of being disciplined into its long-standing colonial, hierarchical, bourgeois structures that tend toward elitism. Mainstream museums increasingly mount GLBT-related shows and will always play a crucial role in winning converts, solidifying GLBT legitimacy, and creating threads for our belonging in the tapestry of history.

*Radical History Review*

Issue 120 (Fall 2014) DOI 10.1215/01636545-2703769

© 2014 by MARHO: The Radical Historians' Organization, Inc.



Yet queer museum studies scholarship details the challenges of doing GLBT history in public and other large endowment institutions. These include the pressure toward grand progressive narratives that reproduce the repressive-hypothesis-to-pride trajectory, emphasis on famous gays, inclusivity that sustains heteronormative master narratives and upholds homo/hetero binaries of difference, consignment of queerness to temporary displays, and censorship of nonnormative or explicit lives, acts, and representations. Additionally, restraint among professionals at nonqueer museums can have a closeting effect on their “erotic intelligence.”<sup>1</sup>

To date, GLBT History Museum curators, who have generally been queer historians who are also activists committed to social justice, have countered many of the big *M* museum challenges. They have done so by being accountable to the GLBT Historical Society’s grassroots archive that links saving our objects and telling our stories to saving our lives. The Lesbian Herstory Archives had it right back in the 1970s, when it insisted that the “will to remember” relied upon a commitment to those it claimed to represent and a mandate to keep expanding and complicating who might fall under that sign.<sup>2</sup>

The GLBT Historical Society has its struggles and shortcomings but has developed goodwill by keeping the Bay Area’s GLBT history safe and accessible as it strives to incorporate racially, gender, and socioeconomically diverse components of the region’s complex queer community. One might question, given the resources required to maintain the archives, whether the added burden of a brick-and-mortar museum is worthwhile. This article proposes that it is vital to the evolution of the organization’s mission. The archive matters crucially to the way the GLBT History Museum does public history, which, in turn, grows the archive in important ways. I combine interpretation of how archive and exhibition correspond, analyses of museum media coverage and visitors, exploration of how exhibitions from its first three years (2011–13) reflect key interventions emerging within queer museum studies, and scrutiny of the organization’s site-specific opportunities and challenges. This assessment is grounded in my active participation in the museum’s creation (then as a GLBT Historical Society board member and archival volunteer) and exhibitions (now as a curator). By both intention and design, the GLBT Historical Society engages in three approaches linking queer museum and archive: coordinating communities, demonstrating queer belonging, and making power plain.

Coordinating communities involves the design of exhibitions that consciously bring together disparate networks across time and space. Through such coordination, diverse materials come into the GLBT Historical Society’s archives. Moreover, people seldom encouraged to maintain and share their history gain the skills and platform to do so in ways that strengthen community. In the process, other audiences are brought into the conversation.

*For Love and Community: Queer Asian Pacific Islanders Take Action, 1960s–1990s*, which ran September 2012–January 2013, models the critical practice of



Figure 1. Marion Abdullah (left), one of the community organizers whose story was featured in *For Love and Community: Queer Asian Pacific Islanders Take Action, 1960s–1990s*.

Photo credit: Gerard Koskovich / GLBT Historical Society

coordinating communities. Curator Amy Sueyoshi began the exhibition process by surveying the archives. She found that only 30 percent of the materials cover women, less than 5 percent are from the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) community, and only 2 of the 709 collections come from queer API women. Because the first generation of openly out API queer women and trans people were approaching their late sixties, she created the Dragon Fruit Project. It held archiving seminars, collected oral histories and materials for deposit at the GLBT Historical Society, and mounted the exhibit. Programming brought together generations of API queer people (fig. 1) and attracted many other audiences.<sup>3</sup>

In fall 2012 the GLBT History Museum also developed the Community Gallery Project to partner community curators with the museum's exhibitions professionals to create new perspectives on Bay Area queer history and attract new audiences and acquisitions. An early Community Gallery show, *Legendary: African American GLBT Past Meets Present*, which ran February–July 2013, utilized the relatively few black-related holdings in the archives and exposed gaps that could inform future acquisition strategy. Community curator Byron Mason, collaborating with me as the museum's Community Gallery Project curatorial consultant, brought archival

artifacts and images into conversation with a video montage of five contemporary Bay Area queer and trans African American activists and cultural producers. The interviews, now in the archives, testify to tensions of belonging within the Bay Area's black queer communities, racial marginalization within white-dominant gay spaces, activism and accountability, the importance of drag and nightlife to black queer vitality, racialized and gendered politics of erotic representation, and struggles with AIDS and poverty. The opening reception attracted a multiracial, multigendered, and multigenerational audience. During the run, thousands saw *Legendary*.<sup>4</sup>

Another Community Gallery show, *Vicki Marlane: I'm Your Lady*, ran from November 2013 to March 2014. It showcases the life of a trans woman and drag performer who, as the chat panel reads, "got her start as a sideshow carny, rose to fame as a female impersonator, and, in her third act, transformed into the community icon she was born to be." Community curator Felicia "Flames" Elizondo has been active in San Francisco's queer community for nearly fifty years and was a "screaming queen" involved in the 1966 Compton's cafeteria riot.<sup>5</sup> As the keeper of Marlane's personal archive once the performer passed in 2011, Elizondo was wary when I approached her in June 2012 to consider the GLBT Historical Society as a home for the materials. She felt that transgender people generally and the Compton's riot specifically had not been given enough prominence at the museum, a criticism others shared. An extended dialogue ensued, involving many Facebook messages, several meetings where she shared artifacts and stories, and a back-and-forth dialogue conceptualizing a potential exhibit. Working in earnest on the show from July through November 2013, trust continued to build. By the time the show opened, Elizondo and the organization developed a solidly collaborative relationship. The reception was packed with generations of drag and trans performers, longtime fans and friends of Marlane, and regular museumgoers. Elizondo now intends to deed the Marlane collection to the archives.<sup>6</sup>

All three shows produced intersecting social and cultural space within the museum through openly addressing deficiencies within the archive's holdings. Through coordinating communities, they also created practices through which the museum and the Castro, a neighborhood that overwhelmingly favors white, affluent gay men, could better realize their potential as gathering places for all queer people. They underscore the effort and intentionality necessary in queer practices linking museum and archives.

The GLBT Historical Society has long valued diverse queer peoples' materials over famous gays' papers, even if such shows suggest that results have been uneven. While its archive has outstanding famous gays' collections, mostly established in its early years, such materials can today find university and public archival homes. The same cannot reliably be said for the rest. Additionally, while many archives focus mostly on manuscripts and photographs, the GLBT Historical Society has collected objects and textiles essential for dynamic and compelling museum

exhibition. For the purposes of queer public history, diversity in subject matter and form merit the space, resources, and labor they take to maintain. Without constant and specific diligence, however, holdings will always veer toward those most likely to have the space, time, and sense of entitlement to claim a place in history—often well-connected white, gay men. Museum exhibition has begun to play an important role in building an archive truly representative of the communities it ostensibly serves, an ongoing effort necessarily involving many strategies and activities.

The museum's approach to queer public history, then, relies upon its intimate relationship with the archives. Easy access allows for a cost- and time-efficient exhibition attuned to our community's complex dynamism. The GLBT Historical Society's twenty-two thousand linear feet of archive contains approximately two hundred artifact, textile, and art collections; five hundred manuscript collections; seventy linear feet of ephemera; nearly three thousand T-shirts and five thousand posters; over five hundred oral histories; and over two thousand hours of recorded media. Through the museum, the institution has an exponentially greater level of visibility. More people now want to preserve their queer history. Ever more diverse and rich materials will find a home at the GLBT Historical Society. Still, the organization's work to professionally maintain and make holdings accessible has been strained by rapid acquisition of new materials, causing the organization to slow the flow. Genuinely inclusive collection, preservation, and organization are expensive and time-consuming, and the current archive space is nearly full. To continue and expand its eclectic and queer approach, the institution will require a substantially bigger archival footprint, more staffing, and costly space-efficient storage. This is not a simple problem to solve—to date, the museum's success has not brought with it resources substantial enough to make such changes into reality. Unless this situation changes, the museum's potential to coordinate communities vis-à-vis the archive will be truncated.

Despite this state of affairs, the museum has by many measures been a success. The GLBT Historical Society has capitalized on the stamp of legitimacy bestowed on a museum that looks like a museum, located in one of San Francisco's most touristed parts. Coordinating communities facilitates engagement with wider publics who may or may not have a deep investment in a particular show or its subject matter. Selling "the public" on the worthiness of a queer history museum is also about explaining the function and value of sustaining a long-standing archive by and for GLBT people. Organizers expected an enthusiastic reception when they opened the GLBT History Museum, but they could not have anticipated the worldwide media coverage it received. With modest in-house public relations, a local interest and national GLBT story became a global phenomenon. The story went viral on the web on January 12 and 13, 2011. A January 11 Google search for the term "GLBT History Museum" produced 16 pages, while a January 13 search yielded approximately 70,400 pages. On January 25, a Spanish-language search for "museo

gay” plus “San Francisco” found an additional approximately 27,400 pages for the preceding month. Within its first months, coverage occurred in at least thirty-eight languages and at least seventy-five countries. Online, broadcast, and print reportage was overwhelmingly positive or neutral. Coverage often identified San Francisco, and the Castro, as a good fit, given its reputation as a site of GLBT historical and present significance. The museum’s arrival suggested the queer past was interesting to society in general.<sup>7</sup>

In the first two years, approximately thirty thousand visitors came through, with staff estimating a 70/30 split between tourists and locals. Docents gave nearly one hundred tours to everything from high school gay-straight alliances to corporate employee groups. Audio tours provided visitors a deeper experience in English, German, Japanese, and Spanish. In the first three years, GLBT History Museum staff and volunteers have mounted six major exhibitions, twelve short-term shows, and over sixty programs, almost all well attended.<sup>8</sup>

While many visitors would like a “greatest hits” exhibition of the GLBT past, organizers understand that this is not enough. The demonstration of *any* GLBT belonging can, of course, be revelatory. Many, particularly non-GLBT, visitors to museums have given queer pasts little thought prior to interacting with related exhibitions. It is as if we jumped out of the shadows into Stonewall and, after a brief detour through AIDS, landed in gay marriage. So the GLBT History Museum begins by giving them what they often think they came for. The first exhibition people encounter features Harvey Milk’s kitchen table and bull horn as well as the pantsuits in which Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon were legally married in 2008 alongside an issue of the *Ladder* and other materials by these pioneering lesbians. From that jumping-off point, however, exhibitions complicate matters and stay truer to the archives in the process. In conversation with visitors, I have been struck by some tourists’ amazement at the century of materials and multiple forms of belonging showcased. Through realizing that they did not know this history, they begin to question why it never even occurred to them. This encounter opens up new possibilities for queer recognition beyond the normative frames with which they arrived.

In the past decade, queer museum studies scholars have sought to articulate how museums might demonstrate and facilitate queer and GLBT intelligibility beyond “hidden from history,” heroic, or sanitized narratives. Within exhibition theory, best practices emphasize what I characterize as demonstrating belonging and making power plain. Demonstrating belonging builds upon and affirms processes of community, whether civic, liberal humanist, identitarian, intersectional, coalitional, or conditional. GLBT people have often been estranged from national identities and other normative imagined communities. Museums can “demarcate[e] who is legitimate or illegitimate; acceptable or unacceptable; worthy of grieving or not worthy of grieving,” writes Anna Conlan. “Thus, museum practice and theory have respon-

sibilities towards disavowed queer lives past and present.”<sup>9</sup> Simply bearing witness to the struggles for access to civil rights, markets, subcultures, relationships, bodies, and psyches can affirm queer lives beyond narratives of normativity.

In the GLBT History Museum’s first main gallery exhibit, *Our Vast Queer Past: Celebrating San Francisco’s GLBT History*, cocurators Sueyoshi, Koskovich, and myself sought to underscore multiple forms of belonging. As the introductory chat panel reads, these are “sometimes interlinking, sometimes isolated, sometimes in conflict.” Even as the show highlights plurality, the introduction makes a universalizing appeal for visitors to connect with the show’s twenty-two subject cases. “All of them reflect deeply human themes,” it states: “the search for companionship and pleasure; the struggle for self-determination and respect in an often-hostile society; the value of individual and collective expression; and the spirit, ingenuity, and wit that have been keys to our survival.”

In addition to predictable themes such as “The Strategy of Equality” and “Bar Life: Going Out,” cases such as “Queers of Color Organizing” and “Lou Sullivan: A Life Transformed” demonstrate multifaceted and contested belonging. In the former, curators initially began with several items representing overt gay community racism. We edited down to one, a newspaper clipping describing the 1984 protest of racial discrimination at the Midnight Sun, a Castro bar. Other case materials suggest how queer people of color worked together and distinctly to create community, media, activism, and wellness. Even the Midnight Sun item was later replaced with a more dynamic postcard representing queer youth of color coming together through LYRIC, a local GLBT youth organization cofounded in 1988 by Japanese American lesbian Donna Ozawa. The curators made this exchange because, as Sueyoshi says in the audio tour, we wanted the case to “speak to not what’s obvious—that racism exists—but, instead, to what’s inspiring.” While GLBT racial discrimination still introduces the case’s chat panel, curators felt that the core message was less about inclusion into gay, white, and middle-class norms than about the collectivity of queer people of color on their own terms. The latter approach better reflects the archive’s queers of color holdings than the former does. While some materials document antiracist protests of gay establishments, far more convey rich worlds of arts, politics, sex, and community that render such protests marginal to the lives contained within.<sup>10</sup>

The Louis Sullivan case showcases the ways one trans man and GLBT Historical Society cofounder fought to belong to multiple communities, identities, and histories. The chat panel describes how, as a sexually active gay man, doctors initially disqualified him for sex-reassignment surgery and how he pioneered alternative access models for female-to-male (FTM) services. A newsletter of Golden Gate Guys, an early trans men’s social group, displays his role as an FTM social and political organizer, while a snapshot of Sullivan in a tuxedo demonstrates his lived identity as a man. Curators placed his groundbreaking book *From Female to Male: The Life*



of *Jack Bee Garland* at the top to emphasize how Sullivan, like many other queer people, claimed belonging through historical identifications.<sup>11</sup>

British blogger Ceri Padley reflects the affective force of the exhibition's demonstration of belonging. Like many, she came to bear witness to Milk's "fight for equal rights." But she was transformed as she "wandered" through the museum. "So much pain and suffering was caused and so much bravery and togetherness rose up so everyone could be able to walk down the street with their head held high and not be treated like an outsider," she wrote. "I began to cry. I suddenly understood the bravery so many people needed to step forward [and] be proud of who they are." In an act of solidarity she declared her "official and long-overdue coming out" as bisexual.<sup>12</sup>

Not all bisexuals have shared her enthusiasm. Another blogger experienced the lack of a specific case dedicated to "bisexual/pansexual/fluid/+ people" as yet another example of bi erasure by gays and lesbians. She observes that when bisexuals are mentioned in *Our Vast Queer Past*, it is "in the context of BDSM [bondage/discipline/sadomasochism], swinging, and group sex."<sup>13</sup> While not technically accurate—bisexuals appear, for example, in a case on spirituality—the larger point remains. The exhibition's design, lacking a designated bisexuality case, plays into a way in which belonging is often *not* demonstrated for bi people, namely, erasure or obfuscation through a casual folding into larger initialisms, movements, and communities. The exhibition does not bring visitors into a dialogue about why this might be, what historical dynamics inform it, and what readings of the past have furthered such erasures. The GLBT History Museum is looking toward new exhibitions that demonstrate histories of "nonmonosexual" belonging and organizing. In the process, the GLBT Historical Society hopes to augment related archival holdings.

In addition to demonstrating belonging, the other best practice queer museum studies scholars advocate is making power plain. Queering the production of knowledge means highlighting and destabilizing frames of perception through which we come to, or lose, embodiment, subjectivity, space, rights, and affect. Museums can, but seldom do, disrupt normative modes of representation linking past and present, including progress narratives of GLBT assimilative inevitability. James Sanders calls for queer exhibitions to not just break silences and uncover secret histories but also "guide perceptual deconstructions as well as intersectionalities." Hilde Hein similarly promotes feminist perspectives that underscore fragmentation and ambiguity. She advocates exhibition that encourages visitors to produce irreverent classifications against seemingly omniscient narratives. Exhibitions and programming should dissolve boundaries between curators and visitors through inviting the latter to test new associations between past and present, self and other, and the forms of social power that discipline people's lives. Museums allow visitors to try on the complexities of subjugated knowledges with intense, cursory, and/or critical engagement. This experience can create what Barbara Soren calls "transforma-

tional” triggers, through which “interconnectedness” results in “more inclusive . . . open . . . and reflective” perspectives.<sup>14</sup>

*Our Vast Queer Past* is spatialized in thematic cases rather than chronologically sequenced. The introductory panel explains that the show “calls on its visitors to help paint the bigger picture”: “As you mix and match among the themes and materials, what new connections do you find? How do the stories speak to our lives today and our possibilities for the future?” In terms of visitor reception, results of this approach have been mixed. Of forty-three comments on four visitor websites (such as Yelp), six complain that the approach is “random,” “confusing,” or “lacking organization,” while ten appreciate it as “thematic,” “well-organized,” or “jam-packed.” One blogger was “pleasantly surprised by the way stories were told and, more importantly, questions [that] were asked,” in particular how the museum “incorporated different racialized GLBT histories throughout many of the exhibits,” resulting in a “complex (and accurate) representation of queer history.”<sup>15</sup> The processes through which museum organizers attempt to present the queer past reflect tensions within public history more generally, but the stakes are arguably higher at the GLBT History Museum, given its accountability to its archive.

In *Our Vast Queer Past*, one way power is made plain is by bringing unexpected associations together through its themes. “Lesbian Sex Wars” positions Women Against Violence in Pornography and the Media’s late 1970s and early 1980s letters, photographs, and press releases alongside sex-positive lesbian artifacts from the late 1970s through the 1990s. The chat panel encourages visitors to grapple with “links between sexual practices, personal identities, and political power” and notes that while “sex-positive feminists . . . prevailed,” sexual violence and discrimination against women continue to warrant activism. The audio tour directs the listener to a flyer to a 1979 women’s BDSM party hosted by Pat Califia at the Catacombs, a gay male sex club. It notes that Califia is a transgender theorist who once identified as a lesbian and wrote a famous essay about lesbians and gay men “doing it together.” Refusing to mischaracterize lesbians as one side or the other, contain the issues in the past, or stabilize bodies and identities among those involved, the case confronts museumgoers with multiplicity and the potential risks and affordances of various positions.<sup>16</sup>

A widely mentioned case is “Jiro Onuma: Documented/Undocumented,” which comes from the only known archive of an adult queer internee of the World War II Japanese American concentration camps. A minimal assemblage of photographs, personal effects, and government documents mark the location and dislocation of Jiro Onuma (1904–1990) across the twentieth century, from his 1923 Japanese passport, through a 1930s Japantown studio portrait with dandy friends, to his 1942 classification as an enemy alien, to physique pictures he may have taken into internment, to his 1956 US naturalization papers and, later, his US passport. The audio tour explains, “We only know about him because the brother of a longtime





Figure 2. Close-up of the Jiro Onuma case in *Our Vast Queer Past*.

Photo credit: Gerard Koskovich / GLBT Historical Society

friend of his brought the GLBT Historical Society a small box of materials years after Onuma died” and told the archivist that Onuma had been a lover of men.

The case (fig. 2) makes power plain, first, by disorienting what many visitors think that they know about a major world event, placing queerness into the history of internment. Second, it testifies to the precarity some sexual subjects—particularly transnational ones—have in relation to states. Third, it directs visitors to the precariousness of archives for subordinated knowledges and subjects. What is made knowable through these artifacts is up for interpretation, given their reliance on the collection’s provenance and the vast remaining gaps. Scholar Tina Takemoto challenges the GLBT History Museum’s interpretation of a key snapshot on display. She proves that a snapshot that archivists and curators claimed is of Onuma, a lover, and a friend in the Topaz camp is actually of Onuma’s lover, his friend, and another man relocated to the high-security Tule Lake camp. Takemoto’s essay underscores how crucial it is for queer public historians to resist our yearnings for coherence in the documents and objects we preserve and display. The GLBT History Museum is changing the photograph’s object tag and will feature a program by Takemoto in which she will walk visitors through her research. The audio tour raises a further question: Would this collection even exist today if not for the GLBT Historical Soci-

ety's archives? One Japanese blogger reflected that he was surprised to find this case at the museum. Such an unsettling realization compels reconsideration of queerness, history, and the contingency of mobility and citizenship across time.<sup>17</sup>

One of the GLBT History Museum's strengths is its capacity for ongoing revision and adjustment. Moreover, the museum is directly accountable to diverse constituencies with deep investments in the stories told. Highlighting archival holdings, growing areas where collection has been weak, and reinterpreting materials are open and visible processes of exhibition and programming. In ways impossible previously, the museum puts the archives into ongoing dialogues with many publics. Its archives, in turn, help produce a museum where people looking for gay San Francisco can visit queer history.

The museum's Castro location presents distinct challenges, however. Few would doubt that it is an optimal location for attracting local gay patrons and tourists from around the globe. Still, the neighborhood has had a history of hostility toward women, people of color, youth, trans people, and the poor ever since it became a gay ghetto. Its 1970s emergence as a gay political district relied upon its production as a gay spending and tourist zone. The gay-led Castro Village Association and the citywide Golden Gate Business Association (GGBA) oversaw this process. Nan Alamilla Boyd details how this neighborhood dynamic parallels the refashioning of other "ethnic" or "cultural" neighborhoods in San Francisco (such as Chinatown) from locations of policing, segregation, and economic hardship into desirable tourist destinations in the city's postindustrial, neoliberal economies. Tourist appeal granted some racialized, sexualized, and gendered constituencies political and economic clout, often at the cost of marginalizing others. In the Castro, residential and commercial rents soared across the 1970s and continued to climb while the GGBA promoted the neighborhood as a gay tourist destination beginning in the 1980s. In 2009 the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau launched a GLBT tourism effort. It markets San Francisco to gays and sells the "historic" Castro district to tourists generally.<sup>18</sup>

In the past decade, many aging gay people and people with AIDS have been forced from longtime Castro rentals by new gay and nongay owners of what are now million-dollar flats. Police work with neighborhood merchants to enforce San Francisco's sit/lie law, which criminalizes resting on public sidewalks and disproportionately affects homeless and marginally housed people, including queer youth. From 2004 to 2006, GLBT people of color and allies mounted a protest against racial and gender discrimination at the Badlands, a popular Castro nightclub, only to see owner Les Natali purchase the Pendulum, the neighborhood's only bar with a primarily African American clientele, and turn it into another white-dominant venue. When nudists recently congregated in Jane Warner Plaza, the neighborhood public parklet, openly gay San Francisco supervisor Scott Wiener (who holds Milk's old seat) responded with legislation that banned public nudity citywide.

Meanwhile, the Castro Community Benefit District promotes a planned “Rainbow Honor Walk” memorializing global GLBT “heroes and heroines” through plaques placed into neighborhood sidewalks. Natali’s replacement for the Pendulum is called Toad Hall, meant to invoke a beloved 1970s gay bar of the same name. Harvey’s, a nearby restaurant, features blown-up photographs licensed from the GLBT Historical Society that celebrate the 1970s Castro. In January 2013 city officials designated Twin Peaks Tavern, which sits at the heart of the neighborhood, a historic landmark in large part because it is thought to be the first gay bar anywhere with open plate glass windows and thus to represent the openness of a liberated gay community. As I write elsewhere, “Even as the Castro ramps up as an international tourist destination where people come to consume gay history, to read the plaque where Harvey Milk’s camera shop was, to buy a postcard at the GLBT History Museum, and to get a drink at Twin Peaks, I want this place to provide the kinds of generative diversity that queer life allows.”<sup>19</sup>

The GLBT History Museum’s queer curatorial and programming methodologies and relationship to the Historical Society’s archive enable its resistance to the gay history theme park bent of today’s Castro. Even so, the museum participates in the neighborhood’s touristic mobilization. This tension makes for odd bedfellows. To give just one example, Badlands / Toad Hall is one of the museum’s major sponsors. For now, the museum is part of what is going right in the Castro when so much else is not, because it pushes for more awareness, dialogue, diversity, critique, and justice. The framing of our past only through nostalgia, heroics, inclusion, or commodity does little to sustain us collectively as we struggle for possibility here and now.

So far, the GLBT History Museum has balanced its relationship to its archive, proximity to a capital *M* museum, and a changing Castro with its functionality as a site for coordinating communities, queer belonging, and making power plain. To continue to present the past meaningfully the museum and archive will have to critically engage multiple publics by linking the history they convey to contemporary dilemmas facing diverse queer peoples locally, nationally, and across the globe. Stay tuned.

## Notes

Elements of this essay were presented at the 2012 American Historical Association conference and the 2013 Queering the Museum symposium at Seattle’s Museum of History and Industry. I thank fellow panelists, audience members, and this issue’s anonymous reviewers and editors for their insights.

1. Stuart Frost, “Secret Museums: Hidden Histories of Sex and Sexuality,” *Museums and Social Issues* 3, no. 1 (2008): 29–40; Robert Mills, “Queer Is Here? Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Histories and Public Culture,” in *Gender, Sexuality and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, ed. Amy K. Levin (New York: Routledge, 2010), 80–88; Michael Petry, “Hidden Histories: The Experience of Curating a Same-Sex Exhibition and the Problems Encountered,” in Levin, *Gender, Sexuality and Museums*, 151–62; Maria-Anna Tseliou, “Disruptive Paradigms: Challenging the Heteronormative Frame in Museums,”

- International Journal of Social, Political, and Community Agendas in the Arts* 7, no. 2 (2013): 1–12; Paul Gabriel, “Why Grapple with Queer When You Can Fondle It? Embracing Our Erotic Intelligence,” in Levin, *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums*, 71–79.
2. Joan Nestle, “The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York,” *Feminist Review*, no. 34 (1990): 86–94. A promising British museum trend has been inviting visitors to pursue queer readings through interpretive frames and exhibition across multiple galleries. R. B. Parkinson and Kate Smith, *A Little Gay History: Desire and Diversity across the World* (London: British Museum Press, 2013).
  3. Gerard Koskovich, Amy Sueyoshi, and Don Romesburg, “Imperial Theme Park or Site of Resistance? The Case of the GLBT History Museum” (paper presented at the Queering the Museum symposium, Seattle, June 8, 2013); GLBT Historical Society, “Exhibition Opening: *For Love and Community*” album, [www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10151021603861176.416942.12195271175&type=3](http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10151021603861176.416942.12195271175&type=3) (accessed June 28, 2013).
  4. See GLBT Historical Society, “Exhibit Opening: *Legendary*” and “Exhibit Installation: *Legendary*” albums, [www.facebook.com/GLBTHistory/photos\\_albums](http://www.facebook.com/GLBTHistory/photos_albums) (accessed June 28, 2013).
  5. *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria*, directed by Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman (2005; San Francisco: Frameline, 2006), DVD.
  6. See GLBT Historical Society, “Exhibit Opening: *Vicki Marlane: I’m Your Lady*” and “Behind the Scenes: Installing *Vicki Marlane*” albums, [www.facebook.com/GLBTHistory/photos\\_albums](http://www.facebook.com/GLBTHistory/photos_albums) (accessed November 20, 2013). Correspondence in author’s possession.
  7. Not all reportage was positive or neutral. But of approximately five hundred instances of coverage from the first six months of the year, only twelve were clearly negative. Curator and media consultant Koskovich generated much of the media and assessment. GLBT Historical Society, “The GLBT History Museum Attracts Worldwide Media Coverage,” [www.glbthistory.org/museum/museummedia.html](http://www.glbthistory.org/museum/museummedia.html) (accessed December 26, 2011); Gerard Koskovich, “Media Pick-Ups: Opening of GLBT History Museum,” GLBT Historical Society internal report (October 22, 2011); Koskovich, “Our Vast Queer Past: Celebrating San Francisco’s GLBT History” (paper presented on the “History: Remembrance and Memory—Preservation of Cultural Heritage” panel at the International MANEO Conference, Berlin, December 1, 2011).
  8. Author correspondence with GLBT Historical Society staff, 2011–13.
  9. Anna Conlan, “Representing Possibility: Mourning, Memorial, and Queer Museology,” in Levin, *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums*, 261.
  10. The “Queers of Color Organizing” audio tour can be accessed online via [m.glbthistory.org](http://m.glbthistory.org) or by calling 415-226-2580 and pressing 39#.
  11. Louis Sullivan, *From Female to Male: The Life of Jack Bee Garland* (Boston: Alyson Books, 1990).
  12. GLBT Historical Society, “A British Blogger’s Visit to The GLBT History Museum Inspires a Life-Changing Decision,” *History Happens*, December 2012.
  13. Hannah, “GLBT History Museum, San Francisco,” *Non-mono Perspective*, August 21, 2012, [nonmono-perspective.tumblr.com/post/29889500513/glbth-history-museum-san-francisco](http://nonmono-perspective.tumblr.com/post/29889500513/glbth-history-museum-san-francisco).
  14. James Sanders, “The Museum’s Silent Sexual Performance,” *Museums and Social Issues* 3, no. 1 (2008): 20–21; Hilde Hein, “Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective,” in Levin, *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums*, 53–64; Barbara J. Soren, “Museum Experiences That Change Visitors,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 24, no. 3 (2009): 234.
  15. I reviewed all comments posted from January 1, 2011, to October 10, 2013, on Yelp, [www.yelp.com/biz/glbth-history-museum-san-francisco](http://www.yelp.com/biz/glbth-history-museum-san-francisco); Trip Advisor, [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

- /Attraction\_Review-g60713-d603315-Reviews-GLBT\_History\_Museum-San\_Francisco\_California.html; Gay Cities, [sanfrancisco.gaycities.com/organizations/301044-the-glbthistory-museum](http://sanfrancisco.gaycities.com/organizations/301044-the-glbthistory-museum); and Foursquare, [foursquare.com/v/glbthistory-museum-san-francisco-ca/4ce453c3f5f9236a1bd58461](https://foursquare.com/v/glbthistory-museum-san-francisco-ca/4ce453c3f5f9236a1bd58461) (all accessed November 1, 2013); Becky Cory, "GLBT History Museum vs. Port of San Francisco," *Becky Cory*, May 6, 2013, [www.beckycory.ca/cultural-critique/glbthistory-museum-port-of-sanfrancisco](http://www.beckycory.ca/cultural-critique/glbthistory-museum-port-of-sanfrancisco).
16. The audio tour "Lesbian Sex Wars" can be accessed online via [m.glbthistory.org](http://m.glbthistory.org) or by calling 415-226-2580 and pressing 44#.
  17. Tina Takemoto, "Looking for Jiro Onuma: A Queer Meditation on the Incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II," *GLQ* (in press); the "Jiro Onuma: Documented/Undocumented" audio tour can be accessed online via [m.glbthistory.org](http://m.glbthistory.org) or by calling 415-226-2580 and pressing 41#; *Diary of a Normal Life* (blog) [in Japanese], August 3, 2012, [spornberger.blog21.fc2.com/blog-entry-66.html](http://spornberger.blog21.fc2.com/blog-entry-66.html).
  18. Nan Alamilla Boyd, "San Francisco's Castro District: From Gay Liberation to Tourist Destination," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 9, no. 3 (2011): 228–39; Boyd, "Sex and Tourism: The Economic Implications of the Gay Marriage Movement," *Radical History Review*, no. 100 (2008): 223–35.
  19. Don Romesburg, "The Glass Coffin," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 14, no. 2 (2013): 172.