



# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: APRIL 7, 2021**

*Filing Date:* March 11, 2021  
*Case No.:* 2021-002570LBR  
*Business Name:* Finnegans Wake  
*Business Address:* 937 Cole Street  
*Zoning:* NCD Cole Valley Neighborhood Commercial District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 1272/003  
*Applicant:* Thomas Frenkel and Daniel Serot and Brad Serot  
937 Cole Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Dean Preston  
*Located In:* District 5  
*Staff Contact:* Kalyani Agnihotri -  
Kalyani.Agnihotri@sfgov.org

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

## Business Description

Finnegans Wake is a neighborhood bar, opened by Tom Frenkel at 4054 24<sup>th</sup> Street in September 1976. After a five-year hiatus between 1984 and 1989, the bar reopened at its current location at 937 Cole Street. At the time of its opening, Finnegans Wake was a thriving business, until 1984, when it was closed due to the loss of its lease. The bar was reopened in 1989 at the location of Maud's which was San Francisco's longest running lesbian bar, owned, and operated by Rikki Streicher, one of SF's most influential businesswomen. Finnegans Wake was a neighborhood outpost in the aftermath of the Loma Prieta Earthquake in October 1989. Eventually, it came to be known as one of the best and busiest 'dive' bars in the city.

In 2006, Tom's daughter Lindy came on board to work at the bar and the Serot brothers, Dan and Brad Serot became part owners of the bar in 2014. Finnegans Wake has hosted annual barbeques for three decades on Memorial Day and Labor Day, which offer free food for patrons, along with sponsoring/hosting several San

Francisco seasonal sports leagues like pool, darts, softball, and a ladies' soccer team. The bar has also hosted the Maud's reunion eight consecutive years from 2009 – 2016, on the Saturday on Pride Weekend.

Finnegans Wake has been cited by Herb Caen several times and was mentioned once in the LA Times. It has also won the San Francisco Bloody Mary Festival five years in a row. The business contributes to the Cole Valley Improvement Association yearly to support the clean streets program that pays for daily cleaning of the commercial sidewalks in Cole Valley. It also donates yearly to several charities that provide services to disenfranchised and underserved communities.

The business's primary location at 937 Cole Street is a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the west side of Cole Street between Carl Street and Parnassus Avenue in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. It is within the Cole Valley NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. 937 Cole Street has been identified as potentially significant under Criterion B/2 of the *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco* (Donna Graves and Shayne Watson-2015) for its association with Maud's, LGBTQ history and with Rikki Streicher, one of SF's most influential businesswomen. It has a Category A historic status due to the property's location within the eligible Cole Valley Historic District.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1976.

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

Yes. Finnegans Wake qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Finnegans Wake has operated continuously in San Francisco for 45 years.
- b. Finnegans Wake has contributed to the history and identity of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Finnegans Wake 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 a neighborhood bar in the Cole Valley micro-neighborhood within the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood.

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

Yes. The Cole Street property is associated with LGBTQ history as it was the original location of Maud's which was San Francisco's longest running lesbian bar, owned and operated by Rikki Streicher. It is identified as

been identified as potentially significant under Criterion B/2 of the *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco* (Donna Graves and Shayne Watson-2016).

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

No. However, the property is within the boundaries of an identified California Register- eligible Cole Valley Historic District.

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

Yes, the property has been listed in the adopted *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco* (Donna J. Graves & Shayne E. Watson), 2016.

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

Yes. There have been a few features and mention of the bar by Herb Caen, the LA Times respectively. The bar has also been written about in Hoodline, in Eventbrite as one of the best beer gardens, and featured on other publications such as Broke Ass Stewart, 7X7 etc. Finnegans Wake has been nominated and winner of the competition for The Best Bloody Mary in San Francisco for five consecutive years.

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

### **Location(s) associated with the business:**

#### **Current Locations:**

- 937 Cole Street (1989 – Present)

#### **Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:**

- 4054 24th Street (1976 – 1984)

### **Recommended by Applicant**

- Located at original site of Maud's – the exterior and interior features have been unchanged since the days of Maud's
- Wood interiors
- Custom-built wood structure over the bar
- Maud's plaque commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion of Maud's
- Original Maud's sign stored upstairs
- Mural in backyard

### **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: APRIL 7, 2021**

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*Staff Contact:* Kalyani Agnihotri -  
[Kalyani.Agnihotri@sfgov.org](mailto:Kalyani.Agnihotri@sfgov.org)

Field Code Changed

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR FINNEGANS WAKE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 937 COLE ST, BLOCK/LOT 1272/003;

**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 April 7, 2021, 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 Finnegans Wake 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 Finnegans Wake

***Location(s):***

Current Locations:

- 937 Cole Street (1989 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 4054 24th Street (1976 – 1984)

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

- Located at original site of Maud's – the exterior and interior features have been unchanged since the days of Maud's
- Wood interiors
- Custom-built wood structure over the bar
- Maud's plaque commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion of Maud's
- Original Maud's sign stored upstairs
- Mural in backyard

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).

**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 April 7, 2021.

Jonas P. Ionin  
*Commission Secretary*

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

Resolution No. ###  
April 7, 2021

CASE NO. 2021-002570LBR  
Finnegans Wake

ADOPTED: April 7, 2021



## Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2020-21-039  
*Business Name:* Finnegans Wake  
*Business Address:* 937 Cole Street  
*District:* District 5  
*Applicant:* Dan Serot, President  
*Nomination Letter Date:* March 4, 2021  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Dean Preston

**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

4054 24th Street from 1976 to 1984 (8 years)  
937 Cole Street from 1989 to Present (32 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:** Finnegans Wake had a five-year hiatus between 1984 and 1989, but the business meets Criterion 1 because the reopening occurred more than 30 years ago.

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** March 11, 2021

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)





**DEAN PRESTON**

March 4, 2021

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: *Legacy Business Nomination -- Finnegans Wake*

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

I am writing to nominate Finnegans Wake, a cherished neighborhood bar in Cole Valley, to the Legacy Business Registry.

Finnegans Wake was founded in 1976 in Noe Valley and operated at that location until 1986, when it was forced to close for 5 years due to loss of its lease. The owners, Tom Frenkel and Alvin Warwas searched for a new home for the neighborhood bar, before settling on its current location in Cole Valley -- the historic site of the first lesbian bar in San Francisco, Maud's.

Since its reopening in 1989, Finnegans Wake has been a staple of Cole Valley and a place of refuge during times of crisis. Just 31 days after Finnegans' reopening, the Loma Prieta earthquake devastated San Francisco. During that catastrophic event, Finnegans Wake served as a safe place for neighbors to gather, emblematic of the past and future role of the bar as a neighborhood center.

Nestled along the commercial corridor in Cole Valley that many describe as having a small town feel hidden away in a big city, Finnegans Wake is the quintessential neighborhood watering hole. Finnegans Wake carries on the rich legacy of Maud's by celebrating the history of the LGBTQ movement in San Francisco, paying homage to these hard won victories with original decor and photos. Today, Tom Frenkel's daughter, Lindy Frenkel, continues to operate the family business, joining the many other surrounding businesses that have been in the neighborhood for generations.

Finnegans Wake is a neighborhood treasure and a testament to the history of San Francisco. I'm pleased to nominate Finnegans Wake to the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Preston", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Dean Preston  
District 5 Supervisor

# Section One:

## Business / Applicant Information.

Please 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.

<b>NAME OF BUSINESS:</b>	
Finnegans Wake	
<b>BUSINESS OWNER(S)</b> (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business):	
Thomas Frenkel, Daniel Serot and Brad Serot	
<b>CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
937 Cole Street, San Francisco, CA 94117	415-731-6119
	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
	finneganswakesf@gmail.com
<b>MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS:</b>	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address	San Francisco, CA
616 Belvedere Street	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE:</b>
	94117
<b>WEBSITE ADDRESS:</b>	
<a href="https://www.finneganssf.com">https://www.finneganssf.com</a>	
<b>FACEBOOK PAGE:</b>	
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/FinnegansSanFrancisco/">https://www.facebook.com/FinnegansSanFrancisco/</a>	
<b>TWITTER NAME:</b>	
<b>APPLICANT'S NAME:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
Dan Serot	
<b>APPLICANT'S TITLE:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
President	
<b>SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:</b>	
1012548	
<b>SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable):</b>	
C3668677	

## 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
4054 24th Street		September 1976
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	September 1976- September 1984	

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
937 Cole Street	94117	Start: September 1989 End: ongoing

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:



## 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. A business deemed not current 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 grants through the Legacy Business Program.

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.

Daniel A Serot

07/28/20



Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:

## **FINNEGANS WAKE**

### **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.**

Finnegans Wake is a neighborhood bar that was founded in September 1976 at 4054 24th Street in Noe Valley. The bar had a five-year hiatus between 1984 and 1989, reopening on September 16, 1989, at 937 Cole Street in Cole Valley.

The original and current owner, Tom Frenkel, moved from St. Louis, MO, to San Francisco in 1969 and was literally driving into the city and on the Bay Bridge at midnight on New Year's Eve when 1969 became 1970. Tom's soon-to-be business partner, Alvin Warwas, originally from Texas through Cambridge, MA and MIT, had moved to San Francisco a few years earlier.

Tom and Alvin met in 1970 and became instant friends, bonding over many shared interests and learning that each had history in the bar industry. Tom Frenkel had been a bartender for years in St. Louis and Alvin had owned 10% of a bar in Cambridge, MA, before moving to San Francisco. Five years later, Alvin's friend Tom Hargadon moved from Cambridge, MA, to San Francisco. Tom Hargadon had been the main owner of the bar in Cambridge where Alvin was a 10% owner. The three got to talking one night and decided it would be great idea to open a bar in San Francisco. Tom Hargadon, an avid reader of Irish literature, suggested the bar be named Finnegans Wake.

Tom Hargadon sold his shares of Finnegans Wake in 1979 to purchase a home.

Finnegans Wake was a thriving bar from its opening in 1976 until 1984, when it was forced to close due to loss of its lease. Tom F. and Alvin searched the city for the right location to reopen Finnegans Wake. They searched for five years before finally finding Maud's in Cole Valley, the original lesbian bar in San Francisco founded and owned by Rikki Streicher. Rikki had opened Maud's in 1966 and, after owning and operating it for 23 years, was ready to retire. Tom and Rikki had an immediate rapport, which prompted her to sell to Tom and his group, which now included Tom (in the role of owner, manager, and bartender), Alvin (owner and bartender), and new partners David Wood and Michael Paratore (as semi-silent partners).

After a five-year hiatus, Finnegans Wake reopened on Saturday, September 16, 1989, in its present location at 937 Cole Street in Cole Valley. Finnegans was reincarnated.

After a quick facelift (much of the work done by Michael Paratore, a native San Franciscan), Finnegans was able to get its doors open by mid-September 1989. The bar opened 31 days before the Loma Prieta Earthquake on October 17, 1989, which nearly finished it off. On the

day of the earthquake, Finnegan's became the neighborhood outpost, creating safety and community while the city and her residents exhaled from the earthquake. The day after the earthquake, Tom's daughter Lindy (who had just turned 11) spent hours sweeping up broken glass and plaster, and the bar was able to open that afternoon. All but the neighborhood patrons disappeared for about six months while the city recuperated from the trauma. Eventually, people began going out again and Finnegan's Wake quickly became one of the best and busiest "dive" bars in the city.

In 2006, Tom suggested Lindy work at Finnegan's to earn some additional money while in graduate school. She accepted and slowly over the years began taking on more of the managerial duties. In 2014, Tom was ready to retire (mostly) and arranged a buyout of the original owners which involved the sale of two-thirds of the ownership to brothers Dan and Brad Serot, with Tom retaining one-third ownership and Lindy transitioning to the manager (while still receiving instrumental support from Tom). Dan, who lived in Cole Valley and had been a patron of the bar for 10 years, had approached Tom several times about a partnership when he was ready. With the Serots on board, the new partnership changed the corporate name from King Transfer, Inc. (Tom had moved his Elvis collection from 24th Street to Cole Street) to Two Brothers ODH, Inc. (Tom being, of course, the self-titled ODH, or "Old Dick Head." It's an homage to the softball team at Blooms Saloon, Tom's other bar. There were two softball teams – the second was for men over 45 years old, named the Old Dick Heads. Everyone's shirts said "Dick.")

Finnegan's Wake seamlessly continues to be a neighborhood community gathering place; especially today as the community continues to weather the pandemic storm.

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

Finnegan's Wake was forced to close for 5 years from September 1984 to September 1989. Unfortunately, in 1984, the landlord of the 24th Street location refused to renew the lease. Finnegan's Wake reopened on September 16, 1989. Despite the five-year hiatus, Finnegan's Wake meets Criterion 1 of the business eligibility criteria for the Legacy Business Registry because the business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years with no break in San Francisco.

Finnegan's Wake was open 365 days a year for 30.5 consecutive years until the city mandated closure on March 17, 2020, due to the pandemic. Finnegan's Wake reopened on August 21, 2020, in accordance with the health directives allowing bars to operate with food in San Francisco. A mandated second closure occurred on December 8, 2020 due to a post Thanksgiving spike in the pandemic numbers. Finnegan's reopened on February 4, 2021 and hopes to never close again!

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

Together Tom Frenkel, the founder and original operator, and his daughter Lindy continue to own one-third of the business. Dan Serot and his brother Brad Serot each own one-third. Lindy is the day-to-day manager; Dan is responsible for all of the lease and operational activities. Tom fills in the rest; with his 40+ years in the bar business, there are things that Lindy and Dan don't know that they don't even know.

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

The following is the ownership history of Finnegan's Wake:

1976 to 1979:	Tom Frenkel, Alvin Warwas, Tom Hargadon
1979 to 1984:	Tom Frenkel, Alvin Warwas
1989 to 2015:	Tom Frenkel, Alvin Warwas, Michael Paratore, David Wood
2015 to Present:	Tom Frenkel, Dan Serot, Brad Serot, Lindy Frenkel

**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 of the existence of Finnegan's Wake verifying it has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in the 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 937 Cole Street is classified by the planning department as Category A, Historic Resource Present, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act. The building is potentially significant under Criterion B/2 for its association with Rikki Streicher, one of SF's most influential businesswomen. Her bar Maud's was the longest running lesbian bar in San Francisco, in business from the 1960s to 1989. See pages 165, 169, and 339 of the [Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco \(Donna Graves and Shayne Watson-2015\)](#).

Known far beyond San Francisco, Maud's was as popular as it was long-lived. Historian Nan Alamilla Boyd describes it "as a central gathering spot for a new and counter-cultural generation of lesbians for over twenty years." Long-time patrons, known as "Maudies," created community through celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, and other events together. Streicher was an enthusiastic supporter of lesbian and gay sports, and Maud's softball team was one of the most active in the lesbian and gay leagues. Just before the bar closed in 1989, Streicher recalled, "I've always stayed open 365 days of the year because I thought... 'if they can go to [this place] the rest of the [year] it better be here on Christmas for them. And it always was.'" (Page 169, Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco)

## **CRITERION 2**

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

It's nearly impossible to imagine the neighborhood of Cole Valley without Finnegans Wake. It's located perfectly in the center of the one full commercial block that makes up Cole Valley; the little neighborhood in San Francisco that feels like a little town. And because most of the other businesses have been around for decades as well, Finnegans, as the bar of the neighbor, is definitely the community watering hole. People come to relax, see friends, watch sports, play games, or get some sun in the beautiful backyard. Finnegans Wake had a bartender who, back in the early days of Facebook, set up a specific profile for people who met at Finnegans, married, and had children. A couple couldn't make the page without the trifecta. Before he passed away in 2013, there were several dozen families on that Facebook profile. It's ironic that the old-school style of meeting prompted the online profile – but it speaks to the energy, the presence, the vibe, and the essence of Finnegans Wake.

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

For three decades, Finnegans has hosted annual barbeques on Memorial Days and Labor Days that are open to all where free food is served by the bar with a potluck format. The barbecues have been a time for the neighborhood to gather together to eat, drink, and be merry. Finnegans has also been the proud host/sponsor bar to several San Francisco seasonal sports leagues including: pool teams, dart teams, softball teams, and a ladies soccer team. The business participates yearly in the Cole Valley Street Fair.

Finnegans Wake hosted the Maud's reunion for eight consecutive years from 2009 to 2016. Held on the Saturday of Pride Weekend, the Maud's sign that is stored upstairs was placed out front, artwork from Maud's, kept safely by the reunion organizers, was placed on the walls, and video streams of pictures from what was referenced as "the Maud's days" were played on the televisions. Then-Supervisor Mark Leno attended nearly every year, as did Maud's patrons from around the world. The 2016 reunion was also celebrated as the Maud's 50th anniversary party. StoryCorps came and held interviews upstairs during the event. Following the 50th anniversary, the organizers decided to take a break from the reunions as they all lived outside of California. There is an open invitation to resume the reunions should the Maud's organizers decide they would like to have another event.

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

Finnegans Wake was cited by Herb Caen several times and once in the LA Times. Finnegan's Wake as also won the San Francisco Bloody Mary festival five years in a row prompting Lindy to become a judge in the 2019 festival instead of having the bar's Bloody Mary mix participate.

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

Aside from article citations by Herb Caen and attendance by then-Supervisor Mark Leno during Maud's reunions, Finnegans Wake is not associated with other significant or historical people.

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

As a bar, Finnegans Wake tries to be as flexible and amenable to the requests of all neighbors and patrons. The business contributes to the Cole Valley Improvement Association yearly to support the clean streets program that pays for daily cleaning of the commercial sidewalks in Cole Valley. The business also donates yearly to several charities that provide services to disenfranchised and underserved communities. Finnegans Wake also feeds their patrons and the Cole Valley neighborhood at the annual Memorial Day and Labor Day barbecues.

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

Finnegans Wake's customers range through every demographic. Many women have thanked the business for being a safe bar space. One of the pool players teaches ESL classes to young Japanese adults and brings each cohort to Finnegans to celebrate completion of his course. Many graduating students return on their own following the completion party. Most of the neighborhood restaurant staff come in following their shifts. Finnegans has a huge cluster of neighborhood regulars. Since the pandemic in 2020, there have been many new Cole Valley residents, which is very nice. There are patrons who were in the bar on opening day, including some current staff, and patrons who just turned 21 years old. And, of course, there are the sports fans. Finnegans' yard is quite large and is a "chameleon space" that has hosted life events from birthdays to weddings to funerals to baby showers to going-away parties and everything in-between. Most recently a Jeopardy winner used the backyard to safely host a Jeopardy viewing party for his family and friends.

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

Finnegans Wake is located at the original site of Maud's, San Francisco's original lesbian bar. The exterior and interior of the bar have been left virtually unchanged since the days of Maud's. There is a Maud's plaque from the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion commemorating her history, attached to an original piece of the wood bar, permanently on the wall next to the bartender's entryway to behind the bar. The original Maud's sign is stored upstairs in the event of a future Maud's reunion. There is also a lovely and large mural in the backyard by the prominent San Francisco muralists Sam Flores and Ronnie Budders.

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

What would the neighborhood do without its watering hole? It's like an office building not having a water cooler. If Finnegans Wake were to close, it would be a tremendous loss to Cole Valley.

### **CRITERION 3**

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

Finnegans Wake has been the neighborhood bar for generations. Countless relationships have been forged; marriages and families have all been spawned from Finnegans. The warm wood interior is very inviting and is a place of refuge from all of the hustle and bustle of the city – a place where you can still purchase a beer for five dollars. Finnegans is a dying breed in San Francisco, a place where everyone knows your name.

**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)**

Finnegans Wake is committed to maintaining its historical tradition of being an awesome, slightly divey, neighborhood bar and gathering place.

**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.).**

There is a custom-built wood structure over the bar in the interior of the building that was built during the Maud's days. The structure spans the whole length of the bar and has remained in place since it was installed. There is a Maud's plaque from the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion commemorating her history, attached to an original piece of the wood bar, permanently on the wall next to the bartender's entryway to behind the bar. The original Maud's sign is stored upstairs in the event of a future Maud's reunion. The mural in the backyard is also unique and beautiful. The front facade of the building has maintained the same overall look as far back as Tom Frenkel knows.

**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 business has been a bar for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.































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It Was the Worst of Times  
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Tom Frenkel, Lindy Frenkel, and Dan Serot



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1993

# HERB CAEN



**NAKED North Beach:** Shotgun weddings are a thing of the past, aren't they? Well, who isn't . . . Alvin Warwas and Tom Frankel, owners of Finnegans Wake bar and Bloom's saloon here (wouldn't James Joyce be delighted?), took the staffs to brunch at the Happy Family Chinese restaurant on Calif. and bartender Dennis O'Connor showed up late, grumbling, "Who could possibly be up for Chinese food for breakfast?" Barman John Murphy: "Oh, about a billion people a day."



We made the L.A. Times.

Los Angeles Times

National League / Gordon Edes

## Giants Long for Return of Big, Bad Frank Robinson

Chalkboard message in Finnegan's Wake, a San Francisco bar:

"What do the San Francisco Giants and Michael Jackson have in common?"

"They both wear gloves on their left hand for no apparent reason."

And while the Giants have tumbled to the worst record in baseball, the manager, fiery, cantankerous, outspoken Frank Robinson, has kept his temper. Now, Robinson wears mellow about as well as Willie Nelson wears glitter. Apparently, the idea wasn't Robinson's, and the ill fit is showing.

"We want the old Robby," Jack Clark, the Giants' team captain, told Nick Peters of the Oakland Tribune last Wednesday.

"Frank should go back to being his old self. He finds himself in the position where he's been a heavy in the past, and has been forced to change. You can't do that. You can't make someone into what they aren't."

"The change is obvious, and it's not him. He's been super during this whole time and that's fine if you want a nice guy, but you know what happens to nice guys."

"That's just not Frank's makeup. I've told him we need more of his old self. He should have the right to get upset. The manager should be chewing us out, because we deserve it."

Just who told Robinson to become Mr. Nice Guy is a bit of a mystery. Robinson isn't saying, and the No. 1 suspect, Giants owners Bob Lurie, said he had absolutely nothing to do with it.

"There's validity to what Jack's saying," Robinson told Peters. "I didn't decide to do it myself. I've listened to others. I've tried to get into the mainstream and out of the old school."

"I've had the reputation of being a hard guy and it's been suggested that I become kinder and a little more understanding, a little more diplomatic. But the final choice has been mine."

"I think about going back to my old nasty self, but it would be phony if I did it overnight."

It may have been purely coincidence, of course, but last Thursday, Lurie told reporters that he asked Robinson to get tougher. That night, after the Giants'

seventh straight loss, 14-5, to Houston, Robinson closed the clubhouse doors and lectured the team for 15 minutes.

During his tirade, Robinson raised the fine for mental mistakes from \$100 to \$1,000, banned music from the clubhouse before and after games, banned food from the clubhouse after the game and altered the reporting time from 5 p.m. to 3 p.m. for night games. Friday during the early reporting period, the Giants had a 1½-hour meeting to review fundamentals.

Afterward, someone asked Robinson, with everything that's gone wrong with the club, how could he get everything said in 15 minutes.

Robinson: "I talk fast."

The measures seem to be getting fast results: Since the meeting, the Giants have won two straight games.

□

**Add Giants:** To help their battered pitching staff, the Giants are trying to sign Vida Blue. The left-hander was released last summer by the Kansas City Royals, then did time in prison last winter on a drug charge.

Blue, 34, lives in Oakland and has pitched batting practice for the Giants twice. Now the team is awaiting word from the commissioner's office on whether Blue will face disciplinary action similar to the suspensions given Willie Wilson, Willie Aikens and Jerry Martin. If not, Blue probably will be pitching for Phoenix, the Giants' Triple A affiliate, within the week.

**Note on Blue:** It's possible that one of his Phoenix teammates could be Atlee Hammaker, the Giants' reliever trying to come back from elbow surgery. Hammaker came to the Giants from Kansas City in a trade for Blue.

□



## Finnegans Wake Debuts Extensive Renovations, Keeps Cozy Vibe Alive



Photos: [Walter Thompson](#)/Hoodline

By [Walter Thompson](#) - Published on July 02, 2016.

[San Francisco](#)

[Cole Valley](#)

In September 1976, Tom Frenkel opened [Finnegans Wake](#) at 4054 24th St. in Noe Valley. "I had one of those San Francisco landlords who hates everybody, so when my eight-year lease was up, he told me to get out," said Frenkel, now 76.

"I spent the better part of five years looking for a new location," he said. When he did find a desirable spot, he was outbid several times.



"In 2016, people want bars that have a lot of light in them," said owner Tom Frenkel.

Finally, on October 2nd, 1989, *Legendary Chronicle* columnist [Mark Green](#) broke news of a new watering hole in Cole



Finally, on October 2nd, 1989, legendary *Chronicle* columnist [Herb Caen](#) broke news of a new watering hole in Cole Valley:

"Flash for saloonatics: Finnegans Wake, the fine drinking place on 24th St. that lost its lease in 1984, has been reborn on Cole St. in the space once occupied by the old lesbian bar, Maud's. The Wake is straight. Same owners, too: Alvin Warwas, Tom Frenkel et AL. Doesn't anybody ever get AL's last name?"

Frenkel said the decision to name the bar after [a James Joyce novel](#) was inspired by a friend. "We were sitting around and I said, 'no one wants to go to a Jewish bar,' and he said, 'let's call it Finnegans Wake. I'd tried to read it a few times, but it was so dense,' he admitted. Continuing the theme, he decided to name his Potrero Hill pub Blooms Saloon.



Removing a drop ceiling added space and exposed a skylight over the pool table.

When Frenkel came across 937 Cole St., it was still [Maude's, the first lesbian bar in San Francisco](#), which opened in 1966. Owner [Rikki Striecher](#) was active in San Francisco's gay rights movement and also owned a liquor store, as well as Amanda's, a lesbian dance club that opened in 1978. "Rikki was an amazing woman," said Frenkel.

"By the late '80s, there was a clean and sober movement among lesbians," Frenkel said, "and you really can't do well in the bar business if people don't drink much."

Initially, Frenkel was one of nine partners in Finnegans Wake. "In 1976, we paid \$42,000 for the bar on 24th Street, and my \$10,000 was good for 28 percent, which was the largest percentage," he said.







The rear patio is available for semi-private events.

"Liquor licenses today are going for more than a quarter of a million dollars," said Frenkel. Anyone considering going into the saloon business today in San Francisco has a simple choice, said Frenkel: "Either buy the building, get a 20-year lease, or forget about it."

Under his new lease, Frenkel invested heavily in a new electrical system and upgraded the bar's plumbing and bathrooms as part of a complete replacement of his unit's sewer line, formerly shared with other tenants. (Last year, [Bambino's Ristorante](#) and [Zazie Cafe](#) closed briefly to replace their portions of the sewer line, which dated back to the building's construction.)

"Because of its historical significance as the City's first lesbian bar, Planning got involved," said Frenkel. As a result, the opaque front windows were replaced with identical glass, the front is largely unchanged, and several other details—many of which can't be seen by bar patrons or passersby—were painstakingly preserved.



Table tennis and alcohol are effective ways of staying warm in the fog.

Although Finnegan's Wake retains much of its old look and feel, the space has been opened up by removing a drop ceiling and adding new touches like decorative ceiling tiles. A skylight has been exposed over the pool table in a formerly dark and foreboding corner. "In 2016, people want bars that have a lot of light in them," Frenkel said.

The floors and bar are brand-new, as are refrigeration units and a resurfaced open backyard with new tables and benches, table tennis, and two barbecue grills. Frenkel said the renovations "were pushing more than three hundred grand."



**Finnegans Wake will celebrate its 40th anniversary with a Labor Day BBQ.**

Frenkel said the outdoor area can be reserved for \$100 for semi-private events. "They can bring their own food and do whatever they want, as long as they buy their booze from the bar," said Frenkel. There's no bar minimum, he added.

"I'm not that driven," said Frenkel, who trained to become a lawyer in his native St. Louis before moving to San Francisco to find himself. "If I was that driven, I would have become a high-powered lawyer, and not a dropout lawyer."

"I didn't stick too well with corporate America," Frenkel said, adding that he did a lot of manual labor and odd jobs in the 1970s before borrowing enough to get into the saloon business. "I got a job as a salesman, but they fired me, so I dropped out until I ran out of unemployment, had a bunch of odd jobs, and ended up working at the opera as a paint boy in the scene department."

Frenkel said he'll use the bar's yearly Labor Day barbecue party to celebrate its fourth decade in September. "We'll probably just call the 40th anniversary barbecue, rather than have two parties in one month."

*Finnegans Wake is located at 937 Cole St. and is open every day from 11:30 am to 2 am.*

San Francisco

Cole Valley

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# Featured in Eventbrite's Best Beer Gardens

by Daniel Shankin | Sep 20, 2016 | Best Of Lists | 0 comments

We're happy that eventbrite noticed that we spruced up the joint a little, and put us in their "Best Beer Gardens to Enjoy Summer in San Francisco". Thanks guys, hope to see you here soon.

Finnegans Wake

COLE VALLEY

Finnegans recently got a little refresh, which means the back garden now has brand new picnic tables with seats you won't fall through and even a new ping pong table. Don't worry though; everything you loved about this place is still the same as it ever was, including the fact that it's usually crowded with locals or people who stumbled over after too many mimosas at Zazie. And though it can be warm and sunny, you'll want to make sure you have your jacket because when the fog rolls in, the backyard gets cold. Or leave the jacket at home and just move inside where you can watch the game or play a game of pool. Just kidding. Never ever leave your jacket at home.

[check the full article here!](https://www.finneganssf.com/2016/09/featured-in-eventbrites-best-beer-gardens/)

# Finnegans Wake Featured on Broke-Ass Stewart

by Daniel Shankin | Jul 12, 2018 | Best Of Lists | 0 comments

We were recently featured on the blog, *Broke-Ass Stewart*, in an article called, “5 San Francisco Bars You Didn’t Know About”. They wrote:

“For the average San Francisco resident, a visit to Cole Valley usually occurs around 11am on a weekend to brave the massive brunch lines at Zazie or Padrecito. Finnegans Wake, however, is a place that can be enjoyed at any time during the day, without the wait. While this unsuspecting neighborhood bar is a friendly spot to shoot some pool, chat up the bartenders, or catch a Giants game with the regulars, the real surprise is outside. Out the back door is a spacious, oft-overlooked patio with ping pong and awesome graffiti art that was basically built for day-drinking. And that whole brunch thing? These guys have caught on to that too! Finnegans Wake boasts one of the best Bloody Marys in San Francisco, and is open early on weekends so you have something to distract you while the rest of your party stands in the brunch line.”



# 16 Bloody Good Marys in San Francisco

By [Trevor Felch](#) and [V. Alexandra de F. Szoenyi](#)

Feb 07, 2019



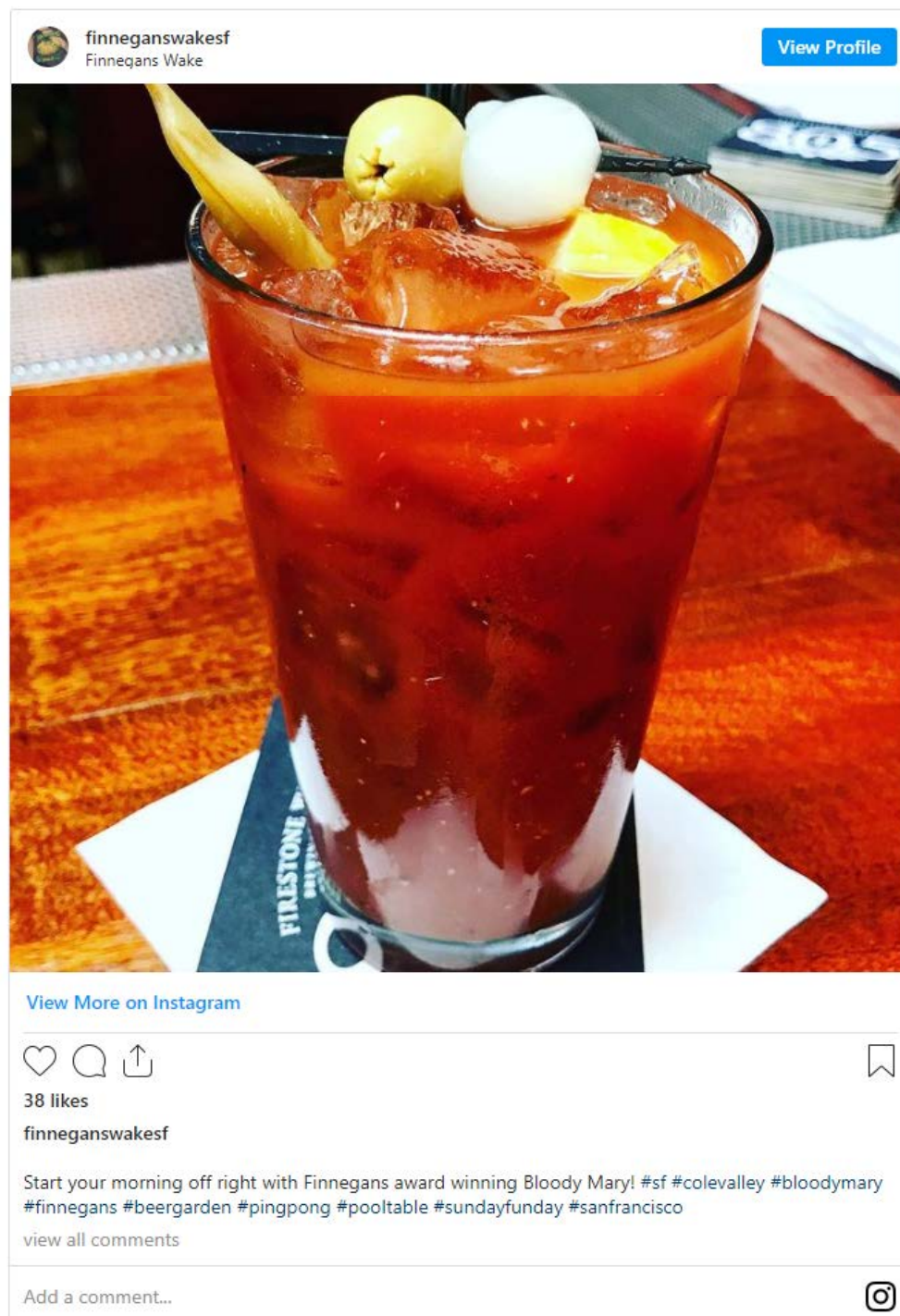
**Martinis, sidecars, and Irish coffees usually get top billing the headlines as San Francisco's most iconic cocktails. But if you're out and about in the city any given weekend morning, you'll come to find how much SF is in love with a good ole Bloody Mary (maybe it's all the hangovers?).**

But foodies that we are, we're rarely content with just tomato juice and horseradish. Rather, we lace our brunch beverage of choice with everything from tomatillos to miso and bacon. As for garnishes, well, let's just say that, sometimes, there's no toothpick large enough to hold all the fried chicken, salami, and shrimp piled on top of the glass. From classics to crazies, here are our 16 favorite Bloody Marys in San Francisco.

## Finnegans Wake

The Bloody Mary at this ultra fun and relaxed Cole Valley bar is so good, it won the best traditional Bloody Mary at SF's Bloody Mary Festival twice in recent years. Its "house-made secret" ingredients include Marz vodka, horseradish, Tabasco, Worcestershire, and Sacramento tomato juice. // 937 Cole St. (Cole Valley), [finneganssf.com](http://finneganssf.com).

## Finnegans Wake





Shutterstock

# Finnegan's Wake

San Francisco • \$\$\$\$

415.731.6119

<https://www.facebook.com/FinnegansSanFrancisco>



937 Cole St  
San Francisco, CA 94117


Finnegan's Wake is a basic neighborhood bar in Cole Valley that nails the effortlessly cool factor. It's kind of a dive, but it's mostly just a place to drink a few beers among regulars, play a round of pool, and chill on the back patio. It's nothing fancy, and we love it just the way it is.



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