

GAINING A FOOTHOLD

CONSERVING LOS ANGELES' QUEER EDEN(DALE)

by

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*A city is composed of different kinds of men;
similar people cannot bring the city into existence.*

Aristotle, Politics

Dedication

When I first began to learn about LGBTQ history over a decade ago, I realized just how profoundly and rapidly the society I'd been born into had changed in the past century. I benefitted from the efforts of so many who questioned, loved, suffered, fought, and gave their lives to leave the world a better place for people like me. While this thesis deals with some of these histories, it is clear that the vast majority have vanished into obscurity. For those legacies that I had access to, the fact that I didn't always have a lot in common with these individuals in terms of background, interests, and values ultimately proved to be inconsequential. Engaging this research helped me to understand their struggles, empathize with their pain, put aside my own biases, and see our common humanity. Nobody is perfect, and LGBTQ people have always been especially complex and contradictory in the context of their time and place. Like me and those I love, former generations have done their best to make sense of and respond to the circumstances in which they found themselves. This thesis is dedicated to all of them, to all of us, and to those who've yet to come.

Acknowledgments

Strange as it may seem to preface this thesis with a confession, I feel it necessary to state that I do not consider myself to be a radical activist of the kind whose legacies are dealt with as part of this work. I also do not apply the label of “artist” to myself—any cursory reading of my fourth chapter will make it apparent that I highly value art—and the extent to which I can be considered a scholar will be up to each reader to decide for themselves. Unlike so many of us, I was lucky enough to grow up in a time and place where I was encouraged to be myself by those who mean the most in my life. As a gay man, proud to be both Mexican-American and Jewish, I recognize that my journey would’ve been profoundly different had I not been so fortunate. Perhaps because of this, I cannot view the society we live in as monolithically oppressive or hopelessly broken. Too much good has happened to me to believe that our world is beyond repair, though it is certainly not perfect and there is much to be done.

No acknowledgment would be complete without first recognizing my parents. They gave me life itself, and as educators devoted their entire careers to ensure that I, like the so many hundreds of children that they taught and mentored over the years, would be able to know ourselves better and navigate our lives through learning. My parents came from different cultural backgrounds, but the shared value they place on education has been a constant. Whether with the Fontes-Ahumada or Becker side, my most cherished memories consist of time spent with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The busier life gets, the more I realize how valuable and rare this time can be. Recent events have only made it clearer how much my family means to me, and I hope to see more of them as time and circumstance allows.

In a practical sense, this thesis would simply not have been possible without the support, guidance, and encouragement provided by Trudi Sandmeier. A few years ago, I found myself in the privileged position of weighing offers of admission and comparing graduate schools. In the middle of this process, several things stood out to me about USC’s Heritage Conservation program. To start with, Los Angeles was closer to my immediate family than any of the other schools that I had applied to. More importantly, the thesis topics being pursued by graduates of this program were not only engaging but often informed by the lived experience of the students pursuing them. This spoke to my desire to understand how history can help us make our surroundings more meaningful, and the possibility that I could write a thesis like this seemed too

good an opportunity to pass up. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, my first meeting with Trudi as a prospective student made it clear that she takes a genuine interest in our wellbeing and growth as individuals. This support was vital, continuing throughout my experience as a USC graduate student. She not only helped me believe that I could write a thesis dealing with LGBTQ history, but that I could do so in a way that would be of value beyond my own self-interest.

I'm likewise grateful to Shayne Watson and Dr. David Sloane, the additional readers on my thesis committee. Shayne's editorial eye and professional expertise were critical, and professor Sloane's perspective when it came to having me challenge my own gendered language tendencies were much appreciated. I thank my entire committee for not only providing me feedback and expertise but also for their endless patience as I kept pushing back my own due dates. I also owe a debt to the individuals I interviewed while researching my case studies. In addition to Russell Gamble, Wes Joe, Benjamin Clavan and Peyton Hall, Lambert Geissinger and Melissa Jones gave me valuable insight when it came to the role played by the City of Los Angeles in landmarking. I'm profoundly grateful to Durk Dehner, S.R. Sharp, and Marc Bellenger of the Tom of Finland Foundation, not only for letting me interview them but for being so generous with their time as to give me a tour of the house. The importance and uniqueness of the Tom of Finland house cannot be understated, and the increasing recognition it has received in recent years is justly deserved.

With its pressures and academic demands, graduate school can—and frankly will—take an emotional toll. Neglecting one's personal life for a flurry of professional activities and academic tasks is profoundly alienating. This can be difficult to explain for those who haven't gone through it themselves, and the importance of my friends and colleagues in heritage conservation cannot be understated. To Erik, Kelsey, Tennessee, Haowen, Camille, Lindsay, Daniel and Jackson especially, I'm grateful that we could keep each others' spirits up, commiserate, and continue to support each other even as we leave the program. I also owe an unbelievable debt of gratitude to the staff and docents of The Gamble House. Thank you for trusting me to assist, in my own small way, with the care and stewardship of a truly special place. My time as a Scholar in Residence has reinforced the fact that change often comes whether we seek it or not, and how we respond to its challenges is at the core of what we do. I look forward to a career of engaging change in an intentional and meaningful way.

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Abstract

The present-day neighborhoods of Silver Lake and Echo Park, historically known as Edendale, contain a significant concentration of historic resources associated with Los Angeles' Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) communities from the early to late-twentieth century.¹ This thesis begins by illuminating the earliest efforts to preserve historic resources specifically for their associations with Los Angeles' LGBTQ history. It traces the origins of local interest in doing so, then focuses on three case studies to explore the complexities of landmarking at the local level. These case studies, the Harry Hay Residence and Mattachine Steps, The Black Cat Tavern, and the Tom of Finland House, are linked both in terms of their socio-spatial context and their exposure to Los Angeles' framework for recognizing and listing sites as Historic Cultural Monuments. These crucial efforts to center LGBTQ history within the framework of Los Angeles' landmarking process yielded results that merit increased understanding within a vast, multi-centric metropolis where the pressure for change and redevelopment continues to increase.

This thesis highlights the unique challenges and advantages that LGBTQ historic resources face, lending perspective that can guide professionals, advocates, and the communities they serve. It also stresses the need to move beyond standard measures of integrity that privilege tangible history, since traditional forms of interpretation are not alone enough. Forward movement here depends on a critical engagement with emerging planning tools, combined with an honest acknowledgment of the web of struggles and tensions facing LGBTQ communities today. These steps, while only a starting point, should be taken to ensure that historically queer places continue to resonate for the living communities whose stories they represent.

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, an "LGBTQ historic resource" is any site, building, or place whose significance is derived predominantly *because* of its LGBTQ associations.

Introduction

The presence and contributions of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people cannot be denied. They are a valid and visible part of public life, society, and culture in the United States. Two decades into the twenty-first century, a diverse and ever-growing field of scholarship attests to the vibrancy of these people and the communities they have built. Though this work serves to provide understanding and recognition, it also delves deeper into queer folks' respective histories, development, and contributions to U.S. history. While valuable in the academic and social sense, extant scholarship has more recently begun to engage critical connections between queer communities more broadly and their relationship to the historic built environment. This thesis seeks to further an understanding of these connections. By focusing on the process of landmarking, it highlights one of the ways that sites with queer historical associations are not only recognized, but also protected and interpreted for posterity.

While preservation practices at the local level differ by community, understanding the challenges, complexities, and opportunities that arise from applying preservation tools to queer sites is a critical task. The city of Los Angeles for instance, despite its size and complexity, is often overlooked in terms of its queer significance.² Beyond New York City and San Francisco, many cities and communities around the country have played vital roles with respect to this history. L.A.'s role has been cited by eminent LGBTQ historians such as Lillian Faderman. In writing the book *Gay L.A.* with the journalist Stuart Timmons, Faderman "discovered that, historically, more lesbian and gay institutions started in Los Angeles than anywhere else on the planet, and that L.A.'s multifaceted, multiracial, and multicultural lesbian and gay activism continues to have a tremendous impact worldwide."³ The extent to which this impact has been successfully reified as part of the city's urban landscape constitutes a central theme of this thesis.

Because the city of L.A. is so large geographically, a specific area of focus, in this case, will be the historic neighborhood of Edendale, which is today split mainly between the

² Owing to its colloquially being referred to as such, and simply for brevity's sake, the acronym L.A. will be used to refer to the city of Los Angeles unless it appears fully spelled out in quotations.

³ Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, Second (Los Angeles, Calif., United States: University of California Press, 2009), 3.

contemporary neighborhoods of Silver Lake and Echo Park (Fig. 0.1).⁴ The first chapter, *The Push to Preserve LGBTQ L.A.*, attempts to briefly trace the development of local interest in applying planning and preservation tools to historical sites associated with LGBTQ persons, activities, and events.⁵ While a general interest in L.A.'s urban significance predates the twentieth century, the conceptual shift towards viewing urban landscapes as a form of public history is a critical factor. Key actors and activities largely during the 1980s and '90s propelled this shift. The process by which academic interest slowly transitioned into action in the realms of preservation and land use planning is admittedly a convoluted one, but it must be addressed to accurately contextualize subsequent case studies.

The first of these cases, *The Harry Hay Residence and Mattachine Steps*, centers on a single-family home and is outlined in the second chapter. Its significance derives from it being the site of the first meeting of the Mattachine Society, a group that is overwhelmingly considered by historians to be the first organization to successfully form and pursue equal rights for LGBTQ individuals. As the first LGBTQ-associated site in L.A. to be considered for landmarking at the local level, the fact that the effort to do so proved inconclusive leaves much to be examined. While the homesite itself was not physically at risk, community interest in its history would resurface in 2011, a full decade after the initial attempt at landmarking. In this latter instance, the concrete steps adjacent to the house were designated to ensure that this critical history did not go unacknowledged.

The third chapter will focus on *The Black Cat Tavern*, a gay bar that became the site of the first major LGBTQ protest in response to a police raid on New Year's Eve 1966. In L.A., this case stands as the first local landmark to be designated specifically for its LGBTQ historical associations. Initiated by neighborhood activists in 2008, the effort to successfully shepherd it through a bureaucratic and politicized landmarking process required the cooperation and support of several entities and individuals. Vigorous debate as to what tangible aspects of the site were

⁴ Both Silver Lake and Echo Park are bounded and recognized within the city of L.A.'s Neighborhood Council System. While the Edendale name was used up through the 1950s, it is the only historic name that accurately describes the entire area of interest while including all three case studies in its boundary. The relevant contemporary designations will be used when discussing the landmarking process underlying each case study. See Chapters 2, 3, & 4.

⁵ Within the US and throughout much of the English-speaking world, the LGBTQ acronym stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning.



Figure 0.1: The three case studies in relation to contemporary neighborhood boundaries. Sunset Boulevard is highlighted in red, in addition to the L.A. river in blue. The blue body of water next to the first case study is the Silver Lake reservoir. Map made from GIS data courtesy of L.A. County. The case studies are:

1. The Harry Hay Residence and Mattachine Steps
2. The Black Cat Tavern
3. The Tom of Finland House

worthy of preserving took place, with decisions being reached as part of a negotiation between property owners, community activists, and planners. Despite the building being saved, the (then) extant gay bar was ultimately replaced with a more upscale gastropub, which today includes a historically relevant interpretive program as part of a more culturally “mainstream” space.

Another single-family property, *The Tom of Finland House*, stands as the second LGBTQ-centric property to successfully be listed. As the part time residence and L.A. workspace of the gay erotic artist Touko Laaksonen, it represents an advancement of the former two cases in terms of outcome. While it wasn’t listed or called out in traditional archival sources like the former two cases, a concerted effort to establish its significance was undertaken between the property owners (with preservationist support) to ensure that it would continue to function as it had been after Laaksonen’s passing. Today, it is not only an active house museum, but also the headquarters for the Tom of Finland Foundation, which is devoted to safeguarding erotic art and erotic arts education. Alongside this program, the house also functions as a living resource for a queer community of researchers, curators, students, and enthusiasts.

The fifth chapter will analyze and compare these case studies, to better understand how varying factors led to equally varied outcomes. The usefulness of intersectionality will be addressed as a possible means of telling a broader story to increase community interest in preservation, advocating for an honest acknowledgment of ongoing tensions among LGBTQ communities generally. These efforts, occurring in the context of a living city, must also account for the political and economic forces currently shaping the built environment. The hope here is to open the way for suggestions that can be relevant for future attempts at landmarking similar sites in L.A., as more places of this nature exist and are already being considered for nomination. These points will be reiterated in the conclusion, which will also call out some unanswered questions and emerging methods that may prove useful in the pursuit of a more stable heritage.

Subject Terminology:

In his influential work, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Octavio Paz begins with the questions that people engage as part of any given moment of self-realization. Typically individual in origin, this process involves several inquiries when collectively expressed: Who are we? Where do we come from? What does it mean to be who we are? While Paz frames these in terms of

national, cultural, and ethnic identity, they can easily be applied to a sense of self concerning gender and sexuality.⁶ For many this may take the form of more specific variants: What does it mean to be Male or Female? Gay or Lesbian? Bisexual? Masc or Femme? Non-binary? Transgender? What does it mean to be Queer in any gendered or sexual sense? The post-World War II history of LGBTQ people in the U.S. may be viewed as a continuing sequence of responses to these questions. The ability to conceive of and ask them—almost always a challenging thing in and of itself—was inevitably followed by responses both individual and collective. The implications of this dialectic would go on to inspire the significant acts and struggles that have come to define what it means to be LGBTQ for many today.

Whether seen as part of a spectrum or other theoretical model, the language used to understand these concepts is constantly evolving. The need for tools to assist those for whom these questions are relevant has never been greater, with an understanding of appropriate terminology being a primary means of addressing this. For the sake of academic and professional relevance, subsequent chapters will take their cues from recently published historic context statements.⁷ While this may sound straightforward, terminological approaches are hardly standardized. Seemingly insignificant discrepancies, upon closer inspection, may work to diminish the credibility of documents that are intended to function as sources of discursive authority for professionals concerned with documenting and interpreting this history. A salient example of this can be found in the *LGBT Historic Context Statement* for the city of L.A. Its

⁶ Paz employs the metaphor of a self-conscious adolescent caught between childhood and adulthood. This serves to introduce the themes of his first chapter, *The Pachuco and Other Extremes*, where he uses his observations of Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles to inform a definition of Mexican identity as opposed to a North American (US Anglo) one. Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico*. (New York, Grove Press, 1962), 9.

⁷ A historic context statement is “a narrative document that provides the framework for survey professionals to identify potential historic resources and evaluate them according to established federal, state, and local criteria for designation.” These documents are not inherently required as part of a preservation ordinance. They are usually prepared by historians and preservation consultants, with oversight and guidance from relevant city planners and officials. Their drafting and adoption by a municipality can boost preservation efforts by highlighting locally specific historical themes, making it easier to justify significance for the resources associated with them. “Historic Context Statement Outline and Resource Guide Available | Office of Historic Resources, City of Los Angeles,” February 5, 2013, <https://preservation.lacity.org/news/historic-context-statement-outline-and-resource-guide-available>.

authors opted for caution by employing the word “queer” only with respect to the visual arts, where “queer art” is a frequently defined category within professional circles.⁸

To advocate for more inclusivity, this thesis defers to the national theme study, *LGBTQ America*, which takes the LGBT acronym and appends the letter “Q,” short for queer or questioning. Stemming from its root meanings of “strange” or “peculiar,” the historical use of “queer” to denigrate LGBTQ people broadly should not come as surprise to anyone familiar with the conformist cultural attitudes held by most Americans during the mid-twentieth century. Megan E. Springate, the lead editor for the *LGBTQ America* theme study provides additional considerations in her introductory chapter:

Recognizing that the word queer is charged, and uncomfortable to some, the scholars wanted to acknowledge the importance of groups like Queer Nation who influenced the trajectory of both LGBTQ and national histories in part through their reclaiming of the word, as well as to have the initiative be explicitly inclusive of those who, for personal or political reasons, do not feel represented by lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identifiers.⁹

Its inclusion as part of this thesis also acknowledges the complexities, nuances, and ambiguities that characterize this topic. The LGBTQ acronym, at present the most prominent in an ever-shifting array of alphabet soup combinations, is a predominantly anglophone one that does not always translate easily to other languages and cultures. It nonetheless continues to serve as a useful tool for describing individuals who self-identified as different, and by extension any behavior considered to be sexually “deviant” or outside of an established norm of gendered expectations.

Though LGBTQ will be used to refer to this history generally, it must be acknowledged that the case studies which will be discussed largely center on the stories and struggles of

⁸ The LGBT acronym, “used to broadly describe the entire community of ‘un-straight’ people,” was chosen for the L.A. context statement owing to the shifting connotations surrounding the use of the word “queer,” which “for decades... was used as a derogatory adjective for gays and lesbians, but in the 1980s gay and lesbian activists began to use it to self-identify. Like many reclaimed words, they are considered acceptable when used by a member of the group, but not by outsiders.” While the earnest desire to avoid causing offence is admirable here, this position implies that any reader who is not an “outsider” cannot be trusted to objectively grapple with triggering language embedded in their own history, which is an undeniably difficult one. Teresa Grimes, “LGBT Historic Context Statement,” Historic Context Statement, Survey LA (Los Angeles, Calif., United States: Los Angeles Department of City Planning, September 2014), 3.

⁹ Megan E. Springate, “Chapter 2: Introduction to the LGBTQ Heritage Initiative Theme Study” (Washington, D.C.: National Park Foundation, October 31, 2016), 5–6.

cisgender, and predominantly white, gay men.¹⁰ This was not intentional during the formulation of the thesis topic, but reflects a broader set of cultural biases addressed in greater detail as part of the first and fifth chapters. Now obsolete terms such as “homophile” will be used in the appropriate context, with terms appearing within quoted sources and citations unaltered and footnoted where necessary.¹¹ The case studies addressed not only deal with the personal realms of sexuality, but also the contentious processes of politically-informed community activism and planning. Out of respect for the wishes of individual actors, it must be acknowledged that some additional information has been kept out of this thesis as requested during oral interviews.

Professional Terminology:

The subject focus of LGBTQ history in L.A. is viewed through the lens of heritage conservation. In the U.S., this is part of a professional field of activity commonly referred to as historic preservation, which directly involves the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of historically important sites and places. The movement to document and save places in the U.S. has roots going back to the nineteenth century, occurring in a context where private interests pursued these aims beyond the realm of public oversight.¹² The public efficacy of these ideas—their ability to gain steam and successfully push for shifts in policy at the federal, state, and local levels—is due in large part to general anger and elite dissatisfaction over the aesthetic and social changes wrought by urban renewal in the post-World War II period.¹³ In pushing to save the architectural treasures of a collective, if too often idealized, American past, the historic preservation movement succeeded in establishing a regulatory framework with the passing of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966. This legislation, in addition

¹⁰ The word cisgender refers to any person who identifies with the gender that they were assigned at birth, while the use of the word Gay, which originally meant “happy,” began “during the 1930s, [when] men who were attracted to men or in same-sex relationships began calling each other ‘gay,’ although the term did not really catch on until the 1950s. Although homosexual women were referred to as lesbians by this time, gay was also used as an umbrella term that included homosexual men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgenders.” Grimes, “LGBT Historic Context Statement,” 2.

¹¹ The term homophile, “an alternative word for homosexual or gay that was used briefly in the middle of the twentieth century,” is explored in greater detail in the first case study (see Chapter 2), as it conveyed specific etymological meanings that responded to the socio-political context of its time. Ibid, 3.

¹² In western Europe, this interest evolved out of conceptual debates over how to preserve, which was typified by the contrasting attitudes of Violet Le Duc (a French architect and restorer) and John Ruskin (a British art critic and philanthropist). U.S.-based grassroots movements advocating for preservation can be traced back to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, which sought to preserve George Washington’s home at Mount Vernon.

¹³ Activists and writers such as Ada Louise Huxtable and Jane Jacobs were key figures in this effort, garnering and working to organize popular opposition to urban renewal policies generally.

to setting precedents for the listing, documentation, and protection of historic resources, has also resulted in a general professionalization of the movement.¹⁴

The use of “heritage” to describe the activities of this professionalized movement stems from the need for a more inclusive term, whereas “conservation” is meant to bring the profession (linguistically) into alignment with how it is normally referred to worldwide. In this context, heritage “is therefore ultimately a cultural practice, involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings.”¹⁵ In short, using heritage as a term allows traditional preservation discourse to move beyond simply saving beautiful buildings to include “the act of passing on and receiving memories and knowledge... as an act of communication and meaning-making. [Heritage] also occurs in the way that we then use, reshape and recreate those memories and knowledge to help us make sense of and understand not only who we ‘are’, but also who we want to be.”¹⁶ The conceptual flexibility of this term is appropriate in light of the LGBTQ communities being discussed which, like the notion of “heritage” itself, are largely defined in terms of intangible aspects relating to self-identification, inter-personal relationships, and forms of engagement with broader publics via activism, art, and other means.

Embracing the intangible side of historic preservation—embracing heritage conservation — is necessary to do justice to the history being discussed. This is not only true for LGBTQ communities, but for all minorities and people whose stories, perspectives, and narratives cannot be sufficiently conveyed by inert architectural monuments and sites alone. While the preservation/rehabilitation of tangible historic resources and districts plays an integral role in any sound urban and environmental policy, it must engage notions of heritage to stay socially relevant. This engagement is above all characterized by the intangible processes that are undertaken to center the meaning of people in place. The efficacy of landmarking as a tool for conserving heritage in this regard merits assessment for developing a nuanced understanding of how much space heritage can reasonably be expected to claim. In many ways, the pursuit of a richer, vibrant, and more meaningful urban landscape depends on it.

¹⁴ Grassroots and community efforts at preservation still occur frequently and are welcomed by the profession. These efforts (though not guaranteed to work) are often successful, even if the activists or communities involved don’t self-identify as preservationists/conservationists outright.

¹⁵ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London ; Routledge, 2006), 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

Chapter 1

The Push to Preserve LGBTQ L.A.

Queering Place and Public Memory:

LGBTQ communities in the United States have been historically oppressed and marginalized. This oppression has been pervasive enough that the existence of LGBTQ people was rarely, if ever, officially acknowledged as part of the public realm. By extension, this marginalization renders LGBTQ history and heritage as routinely forgotten, invisible, and lost. Whether by negligence or malicious intent, such obfuscation is a cruelty to communities where the search for self, communion, meaning, and purpose in a hostile context is especially poignant.¹⁷ Significant literary figures have elaborated on the importance of historical awareness in this regard, not only as relevant for establishing memory, but also for providing a template upon which future endeavors may depend:

Despite the often illusory nature of essays on the psychology of a [community], it seems to me that there is something revealing in the insistence with which a people will question itself during certain periods of its growth. To become aware of our history is to become aware of our singularity. It is a moment of collective repose before we devote ourselves to action again.¹⁸

Increasing consciousness and self-reflection as a prerequisite to action is an idea that LGBTQ people have long understood and sought to engage. These efforts to claim space in the realm of public memory stem from the fact that LGBTQ people have existed in every place, culture, and time. Since this has not been reflected within the historical record, many of the earliest efforts at what was initially termed “gay scholarship” were undertaken as a direct response to this condition of erasure. While the earliest instances of addressing this occurred during the late 1960s and ’70s, they strengthened as LGBTQ people began to claim more space

¹⁷ For instance, “it might not be the lack of evidence of an LGBTQ presence that explains [their] general absence from the historical record but rather scholars’ concealment of that evidence and unwillingness to interrogate the possibilities of alternative or nonnormative sexualities and gender expressions in their interpretations of this history.” Leisa Meyer and Helis Sikk, “Chapter 3: Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) History in the United States” (National Park Foundation, October 31, 2016), 9.

¹⁸ Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 10.

politically and culturally towards the end of the twentieth century.¹⁹ Self-consciously pioneering in its initial phase, scholarship borne out of the gay liberation movement was also heavily politicized, and tended to focus on "categories of activities, identities, and communities," ultimately "yielding a bounty of biographies, community studies and theoretical works."²⁰

For a variety of reasons too numerous to list here, societal attitudes have shifted dramatically since the twenty-first century began, with the U.S. and Western Europe often viewed as leaders in this respect.²¹ While said gains are typically framed as socio-political in scope, positive developments can also be seen in the field of public history and the agencies charged with managing historic resources at the federal, state, and local levels. This is evidenced by the recent publication of a theme study in 2016, commissioned by the National Park Service (NPS) in partnership with the National Parks Foundation, entitled *LGBTQ America*. As the centerpiece of an LGBTQ Heritage Initiative, this theme study contains thirty-two chapters and was informed by the expertise and peer review of over forty-eight historians and scholars specializing in the fields of gender and sexuality.²² It marks the first time that this prominent federal agency, which describes itself as "America's storyteller," has so forcefully and meaningfully devoted itself to making an official narrative reflect the fact that "queer Americans... consistently played important roles in American cultural life."²³

LGBTQ America is significant because it asserts that history is not only limited to the literary fora typically associated with elite academic, professional, and cultural circles. It speaks to a broader truth that historical memory, for individuals and communities alike, is also

¹⁹ Jonathan Ned Katz, an activist/academic who cofounded the Gay Academic Union in 1973 and wrote the first "gay" history book in 1976, is a founding figure in this regard. Jim Downs, "The Education of Jonathan Ned Katz," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 26, 2016, B11-13; Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A. : A Documentary History* (New York: Crowell, 1976); Gerard Koskovich, "Chapter 4: The History of Queer History: One Hundred Years of the Search for Shared Heritage" (National Park Foundation, October 31, 2016), 26–27.

²⁰ Daniel Hurewitz, "Made in Edendale: Bohemian Los Angeles and the Politics of Sexual Identity, 1918–1953" (Los Angeles, Calif., United States, University of California, Los Angeles, 2001), 11.

²¹ The US campaign for marriage equality, which became prominent in 2004 with the State of Massachusetts' adoption of same-sex marriage and culminated nationally with the Supreme Court decision of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, is often viewed as the most significant (and recent) indicator of societal acceptance. While this change has been an overwhelmingly good one in terms of achieving visibility and equal rights, shifts in attitudes towards LGBTQ people have never been consistently linear or always positive. Moreover, levels of understanding and acceptance are not uniform and still vary widely nationwide.

²² "LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History" (National Park Foundation, October 31, 2016), 5–11.

²³ "Telling All Americans' Stories: LGBTQ Heritage Introduction (U.S. National Park Service)," National Park Service, February 9, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/taas-lgbtqheritage-intro.htm>.

embedded in place. Efforts to situate public history geographically are what allow it to play a more active role within the living urban landscapes where it is so often overlooked.²⁴ This is not only true in terms of the tangible spaces that framed significant events, but also in the relation of those events to historical developments of both national and local importance. Mark Meinke, the founder and chair of the Washington, D.C. based Rainbow History Project, asserts that “LGBTQ people created, and continue to create, communities across the nation to provide for their needs, provide support when needed, and more recently to celebrate their shared past and historic sites.”²⁵ What Meinke describes—the celebration of a shared past and its component place-based histories—depends on the assumption that said places will continue to exist in some form or another. While place can be a powerful thing conceptually, it can also be taken for granted physically, and it’s no stretch to assume that most laypeople frequently do so. For anyone critically interested in places and their relation to public memory, the physical continuity of sites, buildings, and their embedded historical associations, should never be assumed outright.

As the stability of place is ultimately contingent upon a variety of factors that vary by situation, the most prominent ones addressed by *LGBTQ America* is that of heteronormative bias and (lack of) representation.²⁶ This bias is not only evident in a society that has only just recently begun to reassess its opinion(s) of LGBTQ people, but it is also apparent within professional fields that have typically laid claim to objectivity:

Lack of representation ... is the result of historical and structural forces in American history and historiography that have foregrounded the elite and powerful in celebrations of the predominantly white men who are popularly perceived as the driving forces behind the exploration, settlement, expansion, and military and political success of the United States. ... It was not until the new social history that began in the 1960s became more widespread in both academia and cultural resource management that historians began to focus on the rich, complex, and important histories of “those of little note”: non-male,

²⁴ Max Page, an architectural historian and prominent preservationist, asserts that “memory is impossible without society—families, communities, nations—but it is also impossible without physical places on which to ground it, for they bear witness to past events.” Max Page, *Why Preservation Matters* (Yale University Press, 2016), 21.

²⁵ Mark Meinke, “Chapter 1: Prologue: Why LGBTQ Historic Sites Matter” (Washington, D.C.: National Park Foundation, October 31, 2016), 4–5.

²⁶ Heteronormativity “is the assumption that heterosexuality is the default, preferred, ‘normal’ state for human beings because of the belief that people fall into one or other category of a strict [male and female] gender binary. Thus it involves the further assumption that someone’s biological sex, sexuality, gender identity, and gender roles are aligned. Such assumptions marginalize [LGBTQ] people.” John Harris and Vicky White, *A Dictionary of Social Work and Social Care* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

non-citizen, non-wealthy, non-Protestant, non-heterosexual, and non-white (and various combinations of these identities).²⁷

The significance of these forces being recognized in a federally sanctioned report cannot be understated, but they are not the sole preservation challenge that LGBTQ historic resources face.²⁸ Whether urban or rural, the specific geographies of relevant places can be problematic, with many “have[ing] historically been in economically marginal urban areas because such locations were less likely to attract negative attention from neighboring businesses and because they were cheaper for LGBTQ persons and organizations not particularly blessed with affluence.”²⁹ These “everyday” spatial qualities—viewed by many as low-key, nondescript, or perhaps even “seedy”—are arguably character defining features in and of themselves. Whether intentional or serendipitous, they functioned as a sort of spatial camouflage (or alternatively signaling queer presence to the initiated) in an otherwise hostile environment.

That the development of marginalized communities, and their constituent histories, unfolded in marginal spaces should come as no surprise. What is often less clear is how the physical nature of marginal spaces themselves can frequently hamper preservation efforts. Confronting tangibility in any effort to preserve this history often involves spaces that may otherwise seem unremarkable or less than noteworthy to the average person. Even for seasoned preservationists, this can make important places difficult to recognize given the standards by which a resource’s integrity is measured and evaluated.³⁰ The subjectivity inherent in these standards may be problematic, but it also provides the necessary flexibility for preservation professionals to make judgement calls based on a variety of factors that affect a place’s ability to “tell its story.” Bias will always be present to some degree, working to influence the process of resource evaluation in ways that vary widely by community.

²⁷ Springate, “Chapter 2: Introduction to the LGBTQ Heritage Initiative Theme Study,” 3.

²⁸ Resources of this nature are key to countering the adverse factors of bias and representation because “other places included in ... [landmarking] programs reflect LGBTQ histories, but those histories were not included in the nominations.” Ibid, 7.

²⁹ Meinke, “Chapter 1: Prologue: Why LGBTQ Historic Sites Matter,” 4.

³⁰ As defined by the National Park Service, a property’s integrity is measured by a professional review, conducted through the lens of “seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.” Jeff Joeckel, “Integrity: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Historic Aids to Navigation to the National Register of Historic Places (Bulletin 34),” July 11, 2001, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf.

While context varies, development pressure is especially acute in urban zones where monied interests are keenly aware of the implications that landmarking may have on property values. Growth in historic urban cores usually takes the form of “redevelopment,” and is an inherent part of a dynamic urban economy. Because these processes are by nature exploitive and disruptive, they are necessarily subject to regulation. Preservation tools, be they landmark designations or districts, contribute to the process of checking and controlling development. This is especially true when said activities endanger places that matter as part of the historic built environment generally. The failure—or perhaps unwillingness—to recognize and control special interests is another factor contributing to the process by which marginal spaces and places are generally ignored and simply allowed to disappear.

Relevant research on marginalized communities, which is a necessary (and ascendant) aspect of scholarly interest today also seeks to understand these communities’ relation to space and place. In order to progress, this work has had to reach beyond the traditional expectations placed on professional silos as part of a greater push towards interdisciplinarity. The ability of some fields—and arguably the willingness of practitioners—to diversify their own professional frameworks is necessary for these efforts to succeed. A significant example lies in the way that academic history, and by extension acts of public history or preservation generally, seek to make claims to authority via facts and evidence. Despite a common perception of evidence-based analysis as scientific, fixed, and unassailable, the interpretation of historical evidence is constantly being negotiated.³¹ This negotiation is itself a political one, and subject to changes that come about with the passing of time and hindsight necessary to see the subsequent effects of historical events and developments.

Extending received professional and knowledge boundaries also depends on the inclusion of diverse individuals, especially those with unique backgrounds and perspectives, as part of any “historicizing” process generally. The field of preservation is a key here because it is something the broader public is more likely to engage given its geographic scope. Because of this, the inclusion of LGBTQ scholars and preservationists as part of “re-understanding” the historical

³¹ While this process of authoritative claiming is unique to every context, it has been defined in the area of heritage studies by some scholars as part of an “authorized heritage discourse.” This discourse “is reliant on the power/knowledge claims of technical and aesthetic experts, and institutionalized in state cultural agencies and amenity societies ... tak[ing] its cue from the grand narratives of nation and class on the one hand, and technical expertise and aesthetic judgement on the other.” Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 11.

record has been instrumental in centering their own history, an effort that scholar Gail Dubrow highlights as having noticeably gained steam by the end of the twentieth century:

In recent years the preservation movement has taken the first steps toward gaining greater visibility for gay and lesbian heritage. The National Trust's 1996 annual conference feature[d] the first social gathering for gay and lesbian preservationists, followed by the organization's approval of an educational session for the 1997 meeting. Subsequent meetings in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles have featured field sessions that highlighted the cities' gay and lesbian landmarks and neighborhoods.³²

This needed work continued to advance alongside the social, political, and legal progress of the late 2000s and '10s, but it can hardly be considered complete two decades into the twenty-first century. The publishing of *LGBTQ America*, as central to the NPS's LGBTQ Heritage Initiative itself, was never intended as a culmination to the process that Dubrow describes. Its ability to recognize this history as a valid facet of a more inclusive national narrative not only validates the scholarship that preceded it but is also meant to catalyze action. To that end, it has established a set of goals with respect to future preservation efforts nationally. These four main goals are:

- To increase the number of listings of LGBTQ-associated properties in the National Register of Historic Places [NRHP], including amendments to current listings;
- To identify, document, and nominate LGBTQ-associated National Historic Landmarks [NHL], including amendments to current designations;
- To engage scholars and community members who work to identify, research, and tell the stories of LGBTQ associated properties and to preserve and nominate properties for appropriate levels of recognition; and
- To encourage national park units, National Heritage Areas, and other affiliated areas to interpret associated LGBTQ stories.³³

The first three goals are intended to address the issue of underrepresentation outright by increasing instances of landmarking at all levels. The fourth addresses professional bias via interpretation and, one may hope, serve as a means of countering historical erasure and societal hostility generally. As the “official list of our country's historic buildings, districts, sites,

³² The National Trust, which originally began as a federally affiliated entity, is today the foremost non-profit advocacy group for preservation efforts nationwide. Gail Dubrow, “Blazing Trails with Pink Triangles and Rainbow Flags,” in *Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation* (JHU Press, 2003), 284–85.

³³ Springate, “Chapter 2: Introduction to the LGBTQ Heritage Initiative Theme Study,” 6.

structures, and objects worthy of preservation,” the NRHP is a critical tool for increasing the visibility of LGBTQ historic resources.³⁴ If listed, then subject resources have been evaluated according to a very high standard of professional scrutiny with respect to their significance and/or integrity. NHL designation may provide an even greater boost, not only because listed resources have been subject to an even higher level of evaluation, but also owing to them being considered “exceptional because of their abilities to illustrate U.S. heritage.”³⁵

The goals spelled out in *LGBTQ America* are a necessary start, with the looming challenge of the first two becoming immediately apparent in a subsequent assessment of LGBTQ places currently listed at the national level. Of the over 95,000 listings made since 1966, only ten LGBTQ-centric places were listed at the time of the report’s release. The dearth of listings was immediately recognized and acted upon by the profession, with that number more than doubling to twenty-three four years later.³⁶ To date, four of these sites have been listed as National Historic Landmarks. Only one, The Stonewall Inn, has been listed as a National Monument (it achieved this designation in 2016, and was the first LGBTQ resource to reach National Historic Landmark status as early as 2000).³⁷ While each listing is compelling for its context and significance, only three of the currently listed resources are in California, a state that has been consistently prominent in so much of the development of LGBTQ communities and their respective struggles in the twentieth century.³⁸ While there is undoubtedly a large number of historically significant LGBTQ sites in California, making sure they’re represented as part of the NRHP and NHL programs is only one way to emphasize and protect the history they’re associated with.

³⁴ “What Is the National Register of Historic Places? - National Register of Historic Places (U.S. National Park Service),” accessed September 26, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/what-is-the-national-register.htm>.

³⁵ “National Historic Landmarks Program (U.S. National Park Service),” accessed September 26, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1582/index.htm>.

³⁶ This number is current as of the start of 2020, and will only continue to increase as professional and general interest gains steam nationwide. “Sites Listed on the National Register of Historic Places That Interpret LGBT History.” (NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, December 1, 2019), <http://www.nyclgbtsites.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/List-of-NR-Noms-1.pdf>.

³⁷ Springate, “Chapter 2: Introduction to the LGBTQ Heritage Initiative Theme Study,” 7–12.

³⁸ These three are listed solely on the National Register thus far, including two in San Francisco (The San Francisco Federal Building and the Women’s Building) and one in Los Angeles (The Great Wall of Los Angeles). In addition, the National AIDS Memorial Grove in San Francisco, California has been federally recognized through an NPS program (designated a National Memorial in 1996), though it is not included in either the NRHP or NHL programs.” Springate, 12; “Sites Listed on the National Register of Historic Places That Interpret LGBT History.”

Landmarking at the national level, though prestigious and bringing sorely needed attention to marginalized sites, cannot alone advance their preservation outright. Listing a place on the NRHP can make it subject to several planning and policy tools, but these largely work to incentivize—never enforce—their preservation. As this thesis focuses on the city of L.A., additional incentives beyond federal historic preservation tax credits are also available at the state level. These come in the form of Mills Act contracts, which in California consists of programs that are locally administered.³⁹ These policies, while valid and invaluable for preservationists, cannot alone prevent the unsympathetic alteration, or downright demolition of a significant property.⁴⁰ The power to do this lies at the local level, as it is here where states authorize local governments “to enact regulations over persons and property to prohibit all things inimical to their citizens’ health, safety, morals, and general welfare.”⁴¹ Through legal precedent, preservation related statutes have become a valid expression of this power, with the desire and responsibility to pass/enforce ordinances resting with the local municipality in any given case. What follows is a closer look at L.A.’s Cultural Heritage Ordinance. As a legislative document, it not only defines the entities responsible for determining what constitutes places worth preserving, but also how such places are to be listed as local landmark.

Heritage Conservation in Los Angeles:

In the case of L.A., the passing of a Cultural Heritage Ordinance in 1962 preceded the NHPA by four years, “ma[king] possible the designation of buildings and sites as individual local landmarks, called ‘Historic-Cultural Monuments’...” (HCM).⁴² Reflecting recommendations put forth by the State Historic Preservation Office, the ordinance centers on

³⁹ While tax credits are applicable to income-producing properties, the Mills Act, enacted in 1972, tends to benefit private residences by “grant[ing] participating local governments (cities and counties) authority to enter into contracts with owners of qualified historic properties who actively participate in the restoration and maintenance of their properties to receive property tax relief.” “Mills Act Historical Property Contract Program | Office of Historic Resources, City of Los Angeles,” accessed September 26, 2019, <https://preservation.lacity.org/incentives/mills-act-historical-property-contract-program>.

⁴⁰ While it is not popularly thought of as a tool for historic preservationists, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has also been an immense boon to preservation state-wide. Generally, CEQA “requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.” This also applies to any private development projects receiving discretionary approval from a public agency, requiring Environment Impact Review for projects that may impact both listed and *potentially* eligible historic resources. “CEQA,” accessed October 1, 2019, <http://resources.ca.gov/ceqa/more/faq.html>.

⁴¹ Barlow Burke, *Understanding the Law of Zoning and Land Use Controls* (LexisNexis, 2009), 8.

⁴² “Landmark THIS! Cultural Edition” (Los Angeles, Calif., United States, July 18, 2015), 5, <https://www.laconservancy.org/resources/guide/landmark>.

the procedures for nominating, reviewing, and listing eligible resources.⁴³ To accomplish this, a Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) acts as the deliberative body responsible for recommending for or against listing in any given case. Per the ordinance, the CHC must consist of five appointed commissioners (qualified L.A. electors) who “have a demonstrated interest, competence, or knowledge of historic preservation.”⁴⁴ While the CHC is defined as the deliberative body when it comes to recommending an HCM be declared, the role of planning staff is just as significant because they are the first line of review for applicants interested in listing a property.

Assuming a nomination has not been initiated by the city council or director outright, the planning staff housed within the Office of Historic Resources (OHR) is required to provide applicants with necessary feedback. If their feedback has been successfully incorporated and an application deemed “complete,” OHR staff will prepare a report recommending designation. At this point, a temporary stay on demolition begins. Any construction or renovation activities at the site are put on hold pending a formal review period and, ultimately, an outcome. The OHR report is then submitted at an initial hearing where the CHC will vote on whether to take the subject property into consideration. If approved, the CHC will have staff forward their report to the City Council. If the CHC’s decision is a negative one, then their decision is final and cannot be appealed.⁴⁵

In the event of approval, the CHC report will be submitted to the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee, which consists of five city councilmembers. Because every potential HCM lies within one of L.A.’s fifteen council districts, ensuring the local council office’s sympathy and support is crucial factor in the listing of any new HCM. If PLUM approves the nomination, the report will then be referred to the full City Council who will likely adopt the findings, resulting in the resource becoming an HCM. When HCM status is achieved, the city can then take additional steps to further protect the property in the event of physical threats by owners or developers. Because owner consent is not required for places to be listed as

⁴³ A core feature of the NHPA in 1966 included the creation of 50 State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) along with additional territorial and (later) tribal equivalents. SHPO’s serve a variety of purposes by conducting surveys, in addition to evaluating and nominating significant historic buildings, sites, structures, districts and objects to the NRHP.

⁴⁴ “Cultural Heritage Ordinance,” Pub. L. No. 185472, § 22.171, Los Angeles Administrative Code 12 (2018), 1.

⁴⁵ If viewed to be necessary, “the City Council may override a Commission recommendation of denial of a City Council-initiated designation by a minimum of ten votes.” Cultural Heritage Ordinance, 5–7.

an HCM, such threats are not entirely beyond the realm of possibility.⁴⁶ In L.A., this comes in the form of a 180-day stay on demolition which, because it can be renewed once, allows for nearly a year in which viable preservation alternatives can be explored. At the time of this writing, over 1100 HCMs have been listed in the city's official database, with more constantly being considered, debated and added.⁴⁷

Declaring an HCM entails the involvement of multiple civic entities and is reflective of the growing and complex role that preservation plays in contemporary urban development. The efforts of preservationists in the mid-twentieth century was a direct response to urban renewal, which in L.A. was typified by the construction of freeways and the redevelopment of Bunker Hill. The resultant impetus to preserve largely concerned itself with the artistic and cultural losses produced by the destruction of vast swathes of historic urban fabric. As a result, the subsequent ordinance adopted in 1962 initially placed responsibility for the designation of individual HCMs within the more loosely defined Cultural Affairs Department. While this administrative structure made sense at the time, there is an ever-growing recognition that preservation today not only deals with the artistic qualities of historic resources, but also the authority to regulate urban land use generally. To reflect this, a series of changes were undertaken in the 2000s to restructure L.A.'s preservation infrastructure:

In 2004, the [CHC] and the two staff members of the Historic Preservation Division of the Cultural Affairs Department were moved to the Department of City Planning. In 2006, this function became the new Office of Historic Resources (OHR). The OHR also managed SurveyLA, the comprehensive Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey Project, to identify and record significant historic resources throughout Los Angeles.⁴⁸

Though the institutional role of preservation in L.A. is arguably more complex and bureaucratic than it used to be, the effects of these changes are varied. The increasing role of OHR, in addition to providing a more stringent and diligent review process, has helped to

⁴⁶ While owner consent is not required for listing an HCM, recent changes have amended the ordinance to require owner notification earlier than before to avoid blind sighting them. These changes have also extended the deliberation-related stay on demolition, which is now initiated by planning staff deeming an application "complete," whereas beforehand the demolition stay was contingent on the CHC's initial consideration hearing.

⁴⁷ "The Historic Designation Process | Office of Historic Resources, City of Los Angeles," accessed September 28, 2019, <https://preservation.lacity.org/commission/historic-designation-process>; "Designated Historic-Cultural Monuments," Office of Historic Resources, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://preservation.lacity.org/commission/designated-historic-cultural-monuments>.

⁴⁸ "About the OHR | Office of Historic Resources, City of Los Angeles," accessed September 30, 2019, <https://preservation.lacity.org/about>.

standardize local preservation efforts. As part of the first comprehensive citywide survey undertaken in L.A., SurveyLA not only gave critical professional exposure to previously ignored parts of the city, but it also provided “baseline information on historic resources to inform planning decisions and support City policy goals and processes.”⁴⁹ Despite the vague wording, SurveyLA data findings are a key starting point which has galvanized community involvement as a result of its recent culmination.

The involvement of advocacy groups such as the L.A. Conservancy is likewise a critical means of assisting eligible properties throughout every step of the HCM process. These non-profit groups not only work to educate the public on how preservation works, but also coordinate efforts to raise funds, awareness, and lend support for historic resources. Their campaigns, while invaluable, must also be backed by the necessary historical context that supports the significance of any historic resource. Without this context, it becomes increasingly difficult for marginalized resources to pass the increased professional scrutiny that today’s HCM process demands. In the case of LGBTQ historic resources, this context was often delayed by the previously discussed issues of professional bias and lack of representation. The first efforts to preserve LGBTQ L.A. were also contingent on the ability to conduct authoritative research and connect it to the built environment. Establishing this connection was a key factor in beginning to identify significant LGBTQ places.

Queering L.A.’s Heritage:

Marginalized communities—and their histories—can be understood and engaged in terms of urban geography. While this statement may not seem groundbreaking, attempts to bring this idea forward and test its efficacy with respect to preservation and urban planning are very recent. In L.A. they can be traced to the efforts of an urban historian and academic by the name of Dolores Hayden. The work she spearheaded focused on projects that would reify women’s and ethnic history in urban public places. Hayden, and those she collaborated with, sought to re-examine and engage urban landscapes as public history:

Early in the 1980s, when I was teaching at the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), I founded *The Power of*

⁴⁹ “SurveyLA Findings and Reports | Office of Historic Resources, City of Los Angeles,” accessed September 30, 2019, <https://preservation.lacity.org/surveyla-findings-and-reports>.

Place as a small, experimental nonprofit corporation, to explore the ways to present the public histories of workers, women, and people of color in Los Angeles. It began as an unpaid effort with a few student[s] as interns – I also had a full-time teaching job ... I was tremendously excited by the new, ethnic urban history and its potential to broaden my teaching in a professional school whose students were concerned with the physical design of the city, in areas such as preservation, physical planning, public art, and urban design (I was looking for ways to enable students to take something back to their own communities).⁵⁰

Though *The Power of Place* projects ceased upon moving to teach at Yale, Hayden would go on to publish a book, giving it the same name as the non-profit that she founded in 1984. Framed as “an extended reflection,” it aimed to contextualize, and assess, work done up until the mid-1990s.⁵¹ By disseminating new ideas, *The Power of Place* ultimately sought to forge connections between student-scholars, professional-practitioners, and engaged reader-citizens.

The significance of *The Power of Place* is multivalent depending not only on how you read it, but also on how any given reader happens to see themselves in relation to place. In its second chapter concerning urban landscape history, the social and political meaning of spatial terms (such as barrios, plantations, ghettos, etc.) are discussed as a means of understanding of how space is socially produced. This production is loaded with political implications within a period of late-capitalism, and like many scholars, Hayden employs Marxist theories of power and space to frame the discursive and conceptual gulf between architectural and social history.⁵² She argues that traditional urban histories center on the “civic father” perspectives of white men, reinforcing an American Western “conquest” narrative. Per Hayden, an inclusive practice of public history will bring attention to power struggles by focusing on the histories of socially produced spaces, which she refers to as “territories,” that can be represented and understood geographically:

The territories of the gay and lesbian communities can be mapped. So can those of childhood and old age. The spatial dimensions of class can be illuminated by looking at other boundaries and points of access. Since many of these categories interlock, studying

⁵⁰ The italicization here is my own. Dolores Hayden, “The Power of Place Project,” in *Restoring Women’s History Through Historic Preservation*, ed. Gail Dubrow (JHU Press, 2003), 200–201.

⁵¹ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995), xi.

⁵² This gulf is exemplified by a 1975 debate between Ada L. Huxtable (architectural critic and preservationist) and Herbert J. Gans (sociologist and historian) concerning the role of landmarking in New York City. Hayden’s subsequent theoretical analysis depends heavily on the work of Henri Lefevre. Ibid, 18.

how territories defined by gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, or age affect people's access to the urban cultural landscape can be frustrating.⁵³

In calling out issues that arise when studying these identities, *The Power of Place* touches upon intersectionality (though Hayden doesn't use the term outright) as an inherent feature of L.A.'s multi-ethnic urban history.⁵⁴ The respective struggles of ethnic groups to claim space in the urban environment and define themselves are key in this regard. LGBTQ people are—to varying degrees—attuned to and familiar with these causes because many directly participated in them (despite often being closeted). While none of the projects in *The Power of Place* deal with LGBTQ history outright, it is safe to assume that Hayden's inclusion of it as a possibility was a result of her own teaching practice. As an instructor, her work at UCLA went on to influence a small cadre of LGBTQ historian-activists to pursue scholarship inspired by her ideas. Whether focused on planning, heritage conservation, or traditional academic history, this work has served to contribute to, and provide critical context for, the preservation of LGBTQ L.A.

In terms of advocating for LGBTQ preservation at the national level, the first and most significant of these proponents has been Gail Dubrow. As a UCLA graduate student, Dubrow worked with Hayden to assist on the first project undertaken by *The Power of Place*, a walking tour of downtown L.A. that focused on working landscapes and the economic development of the city.⁵⁵ Dubrow, with Hayden's mentorship, not only went on to do pathbreaking work on the interpretation of women's history, but also the preservation of sites related to Japanese-American heritage.⁵⁶ While this work took her to Washington State, and then on to Minnesota, her exposure to L.A. and the notion that urban landscapes can serve as a form of public history have undoubtedly influenced her scholarship-activism. She is arguably the first academic to explicitly

⁵³ Ibid, 23.

⁵⁴ Much of the history discussed in *The Power of Place* embodies the notion that these stories, such as the project commemorating Biddy Mason's life, must be viewed considering the totality of her experience as a black (formerly enslaved) woman. In effect, her ethnicity and gender cannot be accurately understood exclusive to each other. Hayden, 168–87. For more on intersectionality as a theory, the work of Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw has proved instrumental. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>.

⁵⁵ Hayden, "The Power of Place Project," 201.

⁵⁶ Gail Dubrow, "Preserving Her Heritage: American Landmarks of Women's History" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1991); "Gail Dubrow 1980," School of Architecture & Environment, June 16, 2017, <https://archenvironment.uoregon.edu/gail-dubrow-1980>.

advocate for many of the goals and aims that *LGBTQ America* would adopt in 2016, serving in the extreme as an editor and contributor.⁵⁷

Dubrow's most prominent contribution to *LGBTQ America* was the fifth chapter, which serves as a progress report for the preservation profession. In writing this, Dubrow is in the position of measuring efforts that she herself has been at the forefront of promoting long before it was popular or easy to do so. Her prognosis is hopeful, but it is also upfront about many of the growing challenges that need to be overcome, especially in terms of urban development pressure and the potential erasure of LGBTQ resources generally. This chapter reiterates the point that boosting representation of LGBTQ heritage as part of preservation praxis not only necessitates a forceful engagement with planning but must also deal with the ongoing politicization of LGBTQ existence generally.⁵⁸ In summarizing a host of challenges and opportunities related to the preservation of LGBTQ resources, Dubrow also recognizes "theses and dissertations by students pursuing graduate degrees in historic preservation and related fields (particularly architecture, urban planning, museum studies, and public history), who are eager to connect their political concerns and identity to their chosen profession."⁵⁹

Of the student-scholars that Dubrow credits, perhaps the first direct contribution towards a spatial understanding of LGBTQ L.A. is a 1994 dissertation by Moira Kenney, titled *Strategic Visibility: Gay and Lesbian Place-Claiming in Los Angeles*. By centering on case studies concerning L.A. LGBTQ activism over a 24-year period, Kenney analyzes cognitive maps in order to develop a theory of "place-claiming." This in turn serves to explore "powerful connection[s] between place and activism and points the way for a deeper understanding of social movements and urban space."⁶⁰ Her focus on "place-claiming" is intended to differentiate it from "placemaking," which is a more common term in the field planning and dates to the

⁵⁷ Dubrow's LGBTQ preservation essay contributed to the anthology she helped to edit. While it was published in 2003, it "grew out of papers presented at the first National Conference on Women and Historic Preservation which began in 1994 ..." Dubrow, "Blazing Trails with Pink Triangles and Rainbow Flags," ix, 298–99; "LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History," iii.

⁵⁸ Gail Dubrow, "Chapter 5: The Preservation of LGBTQ Heritage" (National Park Foundation, October 31, 2016), 3, 43–45.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 49.

⁶⁰ Moira Rachel Kenney, "Strategic Visibility: Gay and Lesbian Place-Claiming in Los Angeles, 1970-1994" (Los Angeles, Calif., United States, University of California, Los Angeles, 1994), xi–xii.

1960s.⁶¹ This is done for semantic reasons, and as a term borrows heavily from Kenney's exposure to Dolores Hayden's research with *The Power of Place*, which by the time she had written her dissertation was already winding down:

Although Hayden circumscribes the notion of place rather narrowly, her project – to explore the hidden histories of American cities through a mapping of sites which resonate for marginalized communities – is very close to the project I am undertaking here... [where] a theory of place-claiming is intended to [provide] a framework for understanding, at the macro level, the relationship between place and politics in gay and lesbian activism.⁶²

Kenney's dissertation provides a typology of strategies, grouped loosely into seven categories which, though illuminating, does not explicitly address heritage conservation itself as a form of place-claiming.⁶³ At the surface level, this reflects the dissertation's focus on activism and the political strategies of LGBTQ communities generally. When considering the broader context in which this document was written, and to which it was arguably responding, it becomes clear that works like *Strategic Visibility* belong to a newer phase of LGBTQ scholarship. While just as self-consciously politicized, this research is no longer part of the aforementioned "gay scholarship" period that concerned itself with "queering" history by challenging a heteronormative academic outlook. This was frequently done by delving into and/or revising the biographies of significant individuals who had been posthumously "straightwashed."⁶⁴ For many, this process of (un)straightening history was and remains a valuable means of helping LGBTQ folks build self-esteem and claim a place in the historical record.⁶⁵ This newer phase instead tended to focus on self-identified LGBTQ political movements outright, and is better

⁶¹ Placemaking as a term owes much to the writings of Jane Jacobs and William H. White, and today functions as a conceptual rubric for managing and designing public space in an urban context especially. In Kenney's view, choosing "claiming" over "making" reflects a more nuanced perspective that views the city "not as a clean slate upon which something new is built, but as a thing constructed, upon which activists and communities layer new meanings." Kenney, 23. For an analysis on societal relations to space generally, see Dolores Hayden, "The American Sense of Place and the Politics of Space," in *American Architecture: Innovation and Tradition*, ed. Robert A. M. Stern, First edition. edition (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 184.

⁶² Kenney, "Strategic Visibility," 23–24.

⁶³ Ibid, 33.

⁶⁴ Straightwashing refers to the process by which queerness, with respect the identities and behaviors of significant individuals, is expunged from (or simply left out of) official records.

⁶⁵ While the scholarship immediately following stonewall did not initially employ the term "queer" in this way, it ultimately led to questions regarding what constituted "standard" history that queer theorists would work to help mount responses to during the 1980s and '90s. As a result, the process of "queer[ing]" gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual." Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (U of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxiii–xxxi.

understood as developing in response to the AIDS crisis. The noticeable spread of AIDS within the LGBTQ (and especially gay male) community began in the early 1980s and had arguably become the dominant concern for many LGBTQ people by the start of the 1990s.⁶⁶

The political struggles and concerns of the AIDS crisis era are prominent in *Strategic Visibility*, which seeks to clarify “new forms of organizing [that] are particularly suited to the diversity of Los Angeles.”⁶⁷ Kenney’s analysis is circumscribed within a set time period, and its intent is not to provide historical context outright. It analyzes specific instances of activism through a theoretical framework which is characterized more in terms of planning than historiography. The analysis period is intended to better understand (then) recent and ongoing developments in how LGBTQ communities inhabit L.A. and organize for social, communal, and political purposes. Though *Strategic Visibility* would provide an excellent start for looking at LGBTQ communal presence through an advocacy and social geography lens, it was Kenney’s subsequent work which would help to open the way for establishing direct connections between LGBTQ people and heritage conservation in L.A. This was accomplished with the assistance of Bill Adair, a graduate student at UCLA planning, who became involved by assisting Kenney in conducting oral interviews and verifying research for sites of LGBTQ significance. These efforts would lead to the first map of LGBTQ places drawn specifically for heritage conservation purposes in L.A.

Adair’s master’s thesis, *Celebrating a Hidden History: Gay and Lesbian Historic Places in Los Angeles*, consists of a report meant to accompany the first driving tour focused on LGBTQ places in L.A.⁶⁸ It simultaneously analyzes “the history of the preservation movement [and] offers various models and methods from which this project can learn,” while “also [illustrating] exclusive and hierarchical practices from which this project must diverge.”⁶⁹ In

⁶⁶ While AIDS is still very much an ongoing issue, the urgency and perception of it as a “death sentence” has faded. This shift began as combination antiretroviral therapy was introduced in the mid-1990s. Additionally, it is no longer viewed as an exclusively LGBTQ concern, as general transmission rates among women and in ethnic minority communities (irrespective of sexual orientation and gender identity) are starting to receive more attention and exposure statistically. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Who Is at Risk for HIV?,” HIV.gov, May 15, 2017, <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/about-hiv-and-aids/who-is-at-risk-for-hiv>.

⁶⁷ Kenney, “Strategic Visibility,” 32.

⁶⁸ Adair lists 20 sites as part of the tour, which include the Hay Residence and The Black Cat (see chapters three and four respectively). Adair, Bill, “Celebrating a Hidden History: Gay and Lesbian Historic Places in Los Angeles” (Los Angeles, Calif., United States, University of California, Los Angeles, 1997), 5, 54–55.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 6.

presenting both the problems and potentials that preservation provides, *Celebrating a Hidden History* echoes the same concerns then being voiced at the national level:

In the last several years, the preservation movement has been challenged to consider the concerns of groups other than the dominant white male Anglo culture—the nearly exclusive target of preservation efforts. Because members, and particularly leaders, of the movement have acted monoculturally, their efforts and concerns have led to the preservation of only one version of history ... Thus, the interpretation of most historic sites has told a narrow story of America's history which has left out women, the working class, non-whites, and, of course, gays and lesbians.⁷⁰

Adair's subsequent response to these conditions was to propose LGBTQ-centric initiatives that outright mirror and advance *The Power of Place* efforts, which had begun in L.A. but were no longer active by 1997.⁷¹

The motives underlying the resultant mapping effort were varied, but they indicate increasing interest on behalf of L.A.-based LGBTQ scholars to recognize, document, and conserve their own history. To an extent, this interest was inspired by the profound sense of loss and trauma brought about by the most intense years of AIDS crisis.⁷² Emerging professionals such as Kenney (who from 1994-2000 worked as a program associate at the Getty Research Institute) and Adair were able to engage this spatial interest, in large part because UCLA (their home institution) still grouped designers and planners within the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning.⁷³ The partnerships that resulted from this close proximity helped contribute to a “heady” period of time where fruitful work could be pursued with the support of a progressive and understanding faculty, though it was still relatively unusual to talk

⁷⁰ Ibid, 20. Dubrow is more forceful when calling out “the glaring omissions, deafening silences, misleading euphemisms, and outright lies we repeatedly encounter in relation to our gay heritage and our gay lives.” Dubrow, “Blazing Trails with Pink Triangles and Rainbow Flags,” 282.

⁷¹ The effort to memorialize Biddy Mason (a prominent ex-slave and early L.A. pioneer, landowner, and entrepreneur) is cited directly as a precedent. While Adair expresses regret that *The Power of Place* made no significant effort to commemorate LGBTQ history, he acknowledges that it “has a great deal to teach the gay and lesbian community about ways to begin investigating and celebrating our culture's history.” Adair, Bill, “Celebrating a Hidden History: Gay and Lesbian Historic Places in Los Angeles,” 26–28.

⁷² Bill Adair, interview by Rafael Fontes, Telephone, August 10, 2019.

⁷³ This changed when, “in 1994, the UCLA Professional Schools Restructuring Initiative resulted in the administrative separation of GSAUP's programs. Urban Planning became a department within the new School of Public Policy and Social Research (now the School of Public Affairs). The architecture and urban design program merged with the School of the Arts, to become the School of the Arts and Architecture (UCLA Arts).” “Architecture Department History - UCLA,” UCLA A.UD, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://www.aud.ucla.edu/welcome/history.html>.

about “alternative” histories.⁷⁴ Contemporary publications by architectural historians were likewise critical in helping to open up academic conversations dealing with space, focusing especially on its relation to both gender and sexuality.⁷⁵

While *The Power of Place* would employ several UCLA architecture students for the production of its graphics, Adair’s *Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian History Tour* only required one additional partner (Jeffrey Samudio) to assist in drafting an accompanying map, which by the time of its publication at end of the decade had begun to receive notice for its preservation potential:

Funded in part with a \$1,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the ‘*Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map*’ grew out of Bill Adair’s UCLA urban planning graduate school thesis that explored gay landmarks. The project’s third partner, Moira Kenney, is a UC Berkeley urban planner and author of a forthcoming book on gay activism. Adair, Kenney and Samudio spent three years tracking down older gays and lesbians and visiting sites. Between conflicting memories and transient landscapes, the trio sought corroboration through, among other things, police records and the gay-oriented ONE Institute & Archives, a library affiliated with USC.⁷⁶

The process by which this map was produced helped to illuminate some key historiographic issues. For one thing, much of the history discussed was predominantly oral, and several difficulties arose when attempting to corroborate stories. These struggles reflected the fact that first hand sources, which could frequently be unclear or biased, needed to be taken with a grain of salt. Morris Kight and Harry Hay, two prominent activists who were still living and involved with the map’s production, kept trying to emphasize their own role in L.A.’s LGBTQ history over that of the other.⁷⁷ This tension led to Kight’s public criticism of the map’s veracity, even though he had been included and consulted extensively on its formulation.⁷⁸ These activists were grateful and (in the case of Morris Kight especially) eager to share their stories and struggles with the research team. At the same time, most were seniors living in various states of near or

⁷⁴ Adair, interview.

⁷⁵ Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Sexuality & Space*, 4th edition (New York, N.Y: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997); Aaron Betsky, *Building Sex: Men, Women, Architecture, and the Construction of Sexuality*, 1st ed. (New York: William Morrow, 1995); Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*, 1st ed. (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1997).

⁷⁶ Italicization here is mine. Larry Gordon, “A Guide to Where L.A.’s Gays Came of Age,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 2001, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-jul-08-cl-19702-story.html>.

⁷⁷ Adair, interview; Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement*, 1st ed. (Boston: Alyson, 1990), 229–30.

⁷⁸ Gordon, “A Guide to Where L.A.’s Gays Came of Age.”

abject poverty by the 1990s. The sense that their contributions had been forgotten, spurned or misunderstood by younger activists was inescapable. Additionally, many prominent elders took umbrage at the use of the word “queer” by younger generations that followed them, earning further opprobrium from them as a result.⁷⁹

Issues related to source reliability have always been encountered by scholars of LGBTQ history generally, and in the case of L.A.-centered scholarship were (thankfully) not enough to thwart these projects leading up to the 2000s. While the work on behalf of historian-activists helped to provide a framework for engaging heritage conservation in L.A. from an LGBTQ perspective, sustaining community efforts outside of the academe would prove to be more challenging. In the conclusion to his thesis, Bill Adair addresses this challenge to Triglyph, a professional LGBTQ affinity group that was willing to stand in as a named “client” to which *Celebrating a Hidden History* officially addressed itself:

Triglyph has the opportunity to become involved in important work in Los Angeles. As architects, designers, and planners, we have the responsibility to act as stewards for the historic buildings and sites of our city. As members of the lesbian and gay community, we have a particular responsibility to unveil and celebrate our hidden histories. The members of Triglyph stand in a powerful, professional place to begin expanding preservation discourse to include gay and lesbian sacred sites. With energy and enthusiasm, Triglyph can break new urban ground. It is the hope that this report and its proposals can act as a catalyst and a guide for the organization’s engagement in this meaningful and essential work.⁸⁰

Despite Adair’s hopeful tone here, initial efforts to landmark a site based on this research would ultimately prove ineffective.⁸¹

In the case of Triglyph, the notion of bringing together LGBTQ designers and planners to advocate for a shared heritage was hampered by the difficulties of trying to organize in a city as decentralized and physically spread out as L.A.⁸² It nonetheless managed to hold a series of salon style talks about critical urban issues and educational site visits to historic buildings. These efforts, significant in terms of engaging the process of “re-understanding” heritage as part of the

⁷⁹ The resultant language employed by the “Gay and Lesbian” history map, along with the report, makes no mention of bisexual or transgender people, as individuals who identified with these labels had historically been excluded and/or viewed as problematic by many gay and lesbian liberationists of the 1960s and ’70’s. Adair, interview.

⁸⁰ Adair, Bill, “Celebrating a Hidden History: Gay and Lesbian Historic Places in Los Angeles,” 40.

⁸¹ For more details on the first attempt at landmarking LGBTQ resources, see Chapter 2.

⁸² Email correspondence. Benjamin Clavan to Rafael Fontes, “MHC Thesis: Triglyph Question,” September 12, 2019.

built environment, were never explicitly intended to be Triglyph's mission. Rather, its primary function evolved into that of a social network, helping to provide a means of support and commiseration for LGBTQ architects dealing with homophobia and harassment in the workplace.⁸³ Though many political gains had been made during the post-Stonewall gay liberation era, being "out" in any field was still a dangerous (if not impossible) thing for many LGBTQ professionals during the 1990s. While Triglyph became defunct soon after the completion of *Celebrating a Hidden History*, organizations like them were a critical means of moral support long before digital media would become sophisticated enough to meet these needs.

Efforts to save tangible remnants of LGBTQ history would ultimately come to fruition only towards the end of the 2000s. These were arguably affected not only by the lack of an established historiography when it came to LGBTQ L.A. generally, but also by the departure of researchers engaged in this work. By the time the *Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map* was receiving exposure, Bill Adair had already moved to Pennsylvania. Moira Kenney had moved on to the Bay Area, and was able to re-tool and publish her dissertation as a book titled, *Mapping Gay L.A.* This version expanded on her case studies by augmenting them with oral histories from prominent L.A. activists; the very same sources that had informed the *Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map*. In some ways this work reflects a sense of alienation from more stereotypical portrayals of LGBTQ progress in the U.S. By the start of the twenty-first century, these narratives were already beginning to establish themselves along familiar lines that Kenney sought to address:

The popular narrative of the gay and lesbian movement in the United States tends to be a tale of two cities, centering on New York and San Francisco. Seen as models of freedom and sophistication, these two cities are accepted as uniquely enabling gay and lesbian community formation and as models for communities in other cities. Their enclaves—Greenwich Village and the Castro—are celebrated as offering the best of gay and lesbian community life, and these cities, as well as their satellite neighborhoods are similarly cosmopolitan. Like most popular narratives, this one ignores complexity.⁸⁴

Within L.A., Kenney addresses this complexity as contingent on understanding the city itself, a feat that is so involved that attempting to do so becomes a central feature of her work overall.

⁸³ Email correspondence. Clavan to Fontes.

⁸⁴ Moira Kenney, *Mapping Gay L.A.: The Intersection of Place and Politics*, American Subjects (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 1.

The compelling nature of planning-based efforts to understand and preserve LGBTQ L.A. in the 1990s are laudable, but their ability to effectively engage preservation tools outright would depend on written context to ground landmark nominations in history-oriented academic research.

Coming out in Edendale:

The first major attempt to provide an LGBTQ-centered history of L.A. came in 2006 with the publishing of *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians*. Authored by Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.* attempted to counter the narrative marginalization highlighted by Kenney in *Mapping Gay L.A.* By coordinating copious amounts of archival research and oral histories, the authors sought to assert L.A. as an epicenter of LGBTQ activity:

We wanted to locate the photographs, examine the written records, and talk with the people who knew about the hidden gay world of Los Angeles in bygone eras. We wanted to prevent fading memories from begin snuffed out forever and more photos from becoming permanently obscure. We also wanted to capture more recent history, to find out how Angelenos were able to establish the biggest, wealthiest, longest-lived gay and lesbian international church, community center, and national magazine; how they became major players in city and state politics and in the movie industry that influences the world; how they entertain themselves in a city devoted to entertainment; how the steady stream of immigrants that flock to L.A. for refuge have been able to make a life for themselves.⁸⁵

The book itself is grouped in into three loosely defined historical periods, which roughly correspond to the pre/post Second World War (The Silent Era), the gay liberation period of the 1960s and '70s (The Bold Ones), and the AIDS crisis era leading into the twenty-first century (Smash Hits...)⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 5.

⁸⁶ While tripartite structures are a common organizational tool, the attempt to qualify themes and periods reflects the influence of earlier LGBTQ historical urban surveys. It is hard not to view the title of *Gay L.A.* as a response to George Chauncey's book on the gay male experience in New York City in the half century leading up to the Second World War, George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (Basic Books, 1994); Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: 1940-1996* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). Books on San Francisco have also been influential in cementing the Bay Area's LGBTQ historical legacy, see Susan Stryker and Jim Van Buskirk, *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Chronicle Books, 1996); Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (University of California Press, 2003).

Reading as a kind of “greatest hits” of LGBTQ L.A. milestones, *Gay L.A.* provides critical exposure for, and likewise works to legitimize, a marginalized aspect of L.A. history. Though its authors provide historical context for every theme and subsection, *Gay L.A.*’s enthusiastic adherence to the “gay and lesbian” perspective can, at times, seem myopically focused on prominent historical events and figures.⁸⁷ This is especially apparent given copious gaps in the record, and part of “work [that] has been frustrating because we know that much has been lost.”⁸⁸ Audiences not familiar with the history of L.A. as a region will, understandably, have more trouble grasping the place-based significance and meaning of certain events. The diversity of peoples, communities, and stories that comprise *Gay L.A.* is astounding but also difficult to tie together thematically. Owing to its herculean scope of analysis, the authors generally neglect to factor in how engagement with groups outside the bounds of LGBTQ identity interacted with and influenced the development of that very same community.

The effort to bridge these gaps came almost immediately after *Gay L.A.*’s release with the publication of Daniel Hurewitz’s *Bohemian Los Angeles: and the Making of Modern Politics* in 2007. This book, a re-working of his 2001 dissertation *Made in Edendale: Bohemian Los Angeles and the Politics of Sexual Identity 1918-1953*, is also the result of the phase of scholarship that produced *Strategic Visibility/Mapping Gay L.A.* and *Celebrating a Hidden History*.⁸⁹ By focusing on Edendale, the historic name for the hilly area immediately northwest of downtown L.A., Hurewitz traces connections between “a rich network of artists, writers, and impresarios; a cohort of Communist Party organizers and fellow travelers; and a subculture of homosexual men and women.”⁹⁰ While the scope of *Made in Edendale* is heavily narrowed, the mustering of resources for research goes farther than *Gay L.A.* (which purposefully emphasized

⁸⁷ This is not to say that other perspectives aren’t addressed. The authors explain their terminological choice within the book’s introduction: “We chose to call our book *Gay L.A.* because, as our older informants told us, ‘gay’ in the 1930s, ’40s, ’50s, and ’60s was the term that included homosexual men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, and even bisexuals. Some of our younger informants called themselves ‘queer.’” Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 5–6.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 3.

⁸⁹ While Hurewitz wrote his dissertation as part of a History PhD at UCLA, the influence of the (then extant) GSAUP is evident in his reliance on planning theory as a means of analyzing his chosen historical period. The most prominent example of this is his inclusion of Ed Soja’s work on “thirdspaces” which, like Dolores Hayden’s research for *The Power of Place*, leans heavily on the work of Henri LeFebvre in order to understand how the socio-spatial character of a given place can work to foster “counter-hegemonic” attitudes and communal expressions of resistance. Though Hurewitz doesn’t discuss *The Power of Place* projects outright, its inclusion as part of his bibliography, along with *Strategic Visibility*, indicates an awareness of its aims and motives. Hurewitz, “Made in Edendale,” 24–26.

⁹⁰ Ibid, xiv.

archival materials and personal interviews) to also understand how phases of LGBTQ scholarship since the late 1960s have evolved in tandem with the gay rights movement itself.

Bohemian Los Angeles, which was intended for a broader audience, eschews much of the scholarly analysis to emphasize parallels between the activities of Edendale's communities to concurrent instances of racial and political strife in L.A. It reiterates the thrust of Hurewitz's research focus, which "links the formation of post-New Deal identity politics directly to the changed notions of personal identity, self-expression and political activism that emerged after World War One."⁹¹ Hurewitz's choice to use the Edendale name, rapidly falling out of favor by the 1950s, is intended to evoke a specific temporal and geographic milieu that no longer exists in the socio-economic sense.⁹² This isolated zone of hilly topography and rural character, in part, allowed for a distinctively "bohemian" community to evolve beyond the socially conservative flatlands that had dominated L.A. development.⁹³

Made in Edendale is successful in illustrating L.A. as a "complex metropolis" in its own right, "vibrant with opposition politics and opposition cultures that both influenced each other and affected the city as a whole."⁹⁴ While this urban complexity helped scholars like Kenney recognize and understand the LGBTQ history of L.A. in the late twentieth century, Hurewitz's focus on these conditions within the inter- and post-war period clarifies a key conceptual shift in the relationship between politics and individual personae. The implications of this shift for LGBTQ history and development are profound:

Leftist activism about race relations and discrimination brought political attention to bear on how personal and minority identities were becoming steadily reified as categories of social oppression. By 1950 the homosexuals [in Edendale] used the connection between social categorization and self-articulation to launch the nation's first sustained gay rights movement. That effort ... was emblematic of the kind of action that dominated urban political culture in the ensuing decades.⁹⁵

The legacy of Harry Hay, the pivotal figure who conceived of this effort, was deemed significant enough to justify the first attempt to landmark an LGBTQ resource in L.A.

⁹¹ Ibid, xiv.

⁹² Hurewitz claims to use the Edendale name "as much for reasons of poetry and metaphor as for any others." Beyond its connotations of paradise, the bohemian "Eden" described in his dissertation can be understood (if read in the biblical sense) as a genesis, or significant place of origin, for the concept of gay rights itself. Ibid, 2.

⁹³ Ibid, 27.

⁹⁴ Ibid, xv.

⁹⁵ Hurewitz, xv.

Chapter 2

The Harry Hay Residence and Mattachine Steps

Significance:

Historic houses, whatever their size, style or significance, command an outsize role in the preservation field. Their predominance reflects a culture that regards the single-family home as holding a (nearly) unassailable sacred status. This status is reinforced by financial, land-use planning, and policy mechanisms which have worked to reinforce the cultural supremacy of this building type both historically and up to the present day.⁹⁶ In *LGBTQ America*, the ubiquity of houses as a subject of preservationist attention is both cited for its “potential to interpret LGBTQ lives,” while also “reflect[ing] a prior generation’s emphasis on extraordinary individuals as agents of change and underlying biases that favored preserving the architecturally distinguished heritage of a property-holding elite.”⁹⁷ Within the current framework, efforts to interpret LGBTQ history in single-family homes have often relied on their associations with historically significant persons, corresponding to criterion B of the NRHP criteria for evaluation.⁹⁸

Any effort to landmark a house for criterion B must deal with both the problems and privileges associated with historic houses, which in the eyes of most are primarily seen in terms of real estate transactions. The presence of LGBTQ history adds another layer of complexity, which becomes problematic if the person in question has not lived a geographically static life. The effort to center significant individuals becomes more difficult when they may never have

⁹⁶ While cultural preferences are difficult to conclusively trace, the American view of the single-family home can be understood as having originated as far back as the colonial period. Additional legislation, such as the Homestead Act of 1862 have also tied this housing type to landownership. Perhaps one of the most indicative (and subsequently influential) events is tied to the 1926 Supreme Court decision of *Euclid vs. Ambler*, which provided a judicial basis of support for modern day zoning nationwide. The preference for single family homes is reflected in the majority court’s opinion, asserting that “the development of detached house sections is greatly retarded by the coming of apartment houses, which has sometimes resulted in destroying the entire section for private house purposes; that in such sections very often the apartment house is a mere parasite ... [when] the coming of one apartment house is followed by others ... until, finally, the residential character of the neighborhood and its desirability as a place of detached residences are utterly destroyed.” Opinion of the Court: Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co., No. 272 U.S. 365 (U.S. Supreme Court 1926).

⁹⁷ Dubrow, “Chapter 5: The Preservation of LGBTQ Heritage,” 22.

⁹⁸ In the National Park Service’s section on understanding criterion B, subject properties must be “associated with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented.” This is mirrored in L.A.’s Cultural Heritage Ordinance, in which relevant properties must be “associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history.” Rustin A. Quaide, “Section VI: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, National Register of Historic Places Bulletin (NRB 15),” November 28, 2001, https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_6.htm#crit%20b; Cultural Heritage Ordinance, 3.

publicly identified as LGBTQ. Even if documentation supports such an assertion, the ethics of “outing” historical figures presents another point of contention that is still very polarizing.⁹⁹ Prominent writers, artists, and politicians are often the most frequent subjects of these erasures and omissions.¹⁰⁰ The absence of this perspective from NRHP and NHL nominations supported by criterion B are also difficult to rectify within official records like NRHP applications. Amending these records can also seem futile when the associated resource in question has already been successfully listed and/or is in no immediate physical danger.

LGBTQ erasure, or posthumous “closeting” in an interpretive sense, becomes untenable when the significance of a given historical figure is derived from them self-identifying as LGBTQ in the context of their own time. While many of the early post-war activists self-identified as queer or different in some fashion, understanding the meaning of their achievements demands recognition of the oppressive gender conformity that marked life in the mid-twentieth century. For these early activists, choosing to go against everything they were taught and advocate for their rights demanded an incredible amount of bravery, but it also required the capability to understand how their differences would be defined. This complex struggle to identify one’s individual perspective is evident in Walt Whitman’s poem *Song of Myself*, where the phrase “I contain multitudes” has become culturally prominent to the point of being clichéd.¹⁰¹ It is nonetheless appropriate when looking at the legacy of a figure as complex and controversial as Harry Hay, whose residence constitutes the first attempt to landmark an L.A. resource specifically *because* of its LGBTQ associations. Stuart Timmons reflects on Hay’s multi-faceted legacy in the introduction to his 1990 biography, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*:

I learned [from him] the contradictions of a committed life, Harry is an anti-patriarchal patriarch, a future-looking visionary ruled by nineteenth-century manners and ethics. The mix of communism and homosexuality may be his most volatile contradiction, and it is at the core of his existence. The skills for organizing and belief in revolutionary change he acquired during his years in the Communist Party USA fostered Hay’s founding in 1950 of the Mattachine Society, the underground organization acknowledged by historians as the starting point of the modern gay movement.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Dubrow, “Blazing Trails with Pink Triangles and Rainbow Flags,” 287.

¹⁰⁰ Some salient examples listed in *LGBTQ America* are Walt Whitman, Georgia O’Keefe, and Francis Perkins. Dubrow, “Chapter 5: The Preservation of LGBTQ Heritage.”

¹⁰¹ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Auckland, New Zealand: The Floating Press, 1998), 151.

¹⁰² Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, xiv.

By the time of Timmons' writing, two major historians of the gay liberation era, Jonathan Ned Katz and John D'Emilio, had already established Hay's importance in bringing the tactics of political organizing to bear on LGBTQ identity and activism. D'Emilio describes the most significant event as having taken place when, "on a Saturday afternoon in November [11th], 1950 ... five men ... gathered at Hay's home to discuss the formation of a homosexual rights organization. Frequent meetings over the next several months led to the formation of the Mattachine Society."¹⁰³ In addition to Hay, the members present at that first meeting included Rudi Gernreich, Bob Hull, Chuck Rowland, and Dale Jennings.¹⁰⁴

Hay's creative background(s) in the visual and performing arts, when combined with his experience in leftist activism and personal charisma, made the Mattachine Society a possibility. Though the contextual influence of Edendale is left out of *Gay L.A.*, Faderman's analysis helps give critical insight to how the organization operated in secrecy. It relied on a structure "designed to protect members from exposure and ruin, no master lists were kept. The leaders and the rank-and-file were separate, and the latter did not know who the former were."¹⁰⁵ While these measures were necessary during the early 1950s, they subsequently made it difficult to understand the extent of the Mattachine's significance for historians during the gay liberation era onwards. A year after their founding, real traction for the Mattachine would come when Dale Jennings, one of the original founding members, was arrested on a "morals charge" in 1952. Jennings, after openly admitting his homosexuality in a plea against entrapment, launched a legal case with Mattachine's help.¹⁰⁶ His acquittal "caused a sensation on the gay male grapevine. A dozen Mattachine chapters immediately proliferated in Southern California and then quickly spread to Northern California and beyond."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 62.

¹⁰⁴ There is a predominance of last names and initials in D'Emilio's work, respecting Hay's desire, in line with the Mattachine oath of secrecy, that respected still-living individuals who wished to have their involvement kept anonymous. Intentionally or not, Hay is erroneously introduced in D'Emilio's chapter as "Henry Hay," an error that continued to be printed in other publications up through the mid-1990s. D'Emilio, 58. Mark Thompson, Don Alan Romesburg, and Masha Gessen, eds., *Long Road to Freedom: The Advocate History of the Gay and Lesbian Movement*, First Edition (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: St. Martin's Press, 1994), xviii, 140, 186.

¹⁰⁵ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 111–12.

¹⁰⁶ In the context of LGBTQ history, "entrapment" specifically refers to the process by which undercover policemen would trick men into engaging in sexually explicit or intimate acts as a means of securing an arrest for committing a crime. In Southern California, the practice of employing policemen and specialized (quasi-police) bounty hunters has been dated to as far back as 1914, with the accused typically being prosecuted in violation of the state's anti-sodomy statutes. *Ibid*, 32–37.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 113.

Organizations such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis are today referred to as “homophile” organizations.¹⁰⁸ As with so many other things, the word itself can be traced to Hay, who worked with the Mattachine’s founding membership to find an etymological alternative to “queer,” which at the time was exclusively viewed as a slur.¹⁰⁹ While homophile groups frequently used the term “homosexual” out of familiarity, that word also reflected the oppressive and pathologizing views held by the psychiatric field at the time. The combination of the Greek roots *homo* and *philo* (homo + philo = same + love) resulted in homophile. This conveyed the core tenant of “identity” that Mattachine worked to impart to its membership. This identity-based message centered the idea that one’s sexual attractions and feelings were an integral part of one’s personality. By holding space for LGBTQ folk to discuss themselves in a non-oppressive social setting, the Mattachine society allowed them to grapple with the subsequent political implications of viewing themselves as a minority. In doing so they established the conceptual and discursive foundations of what LGBTQ rights would come to mean in the twentieth century.¹¹⁰

Despite its revolutionary beginnings, the Mattachine Society would succumb to what is today referred to as “respectability politics” within two years of its founding.¹¹¹ As the fear of communism became widespread via the influence of “red-baiting” senators such as Joseph McCarthy, a growing number of chapters shifted to a more conservative position that reflected these fears.¹¹² The end result of this was that, in 1953, “Harry Hay and other early Mattachine founders ... resigned [after] they were dubbed communists who would ‘disgrace us all.’”¹¹³ While this turn of events would prove personally devastating for Hay and his friends, it also

¹⁰⁸ Founded in 1955 in San Francisco, the Daughters of Bilitis was “the first Lesbian organization in America ... and had a bit more success in attracting women than did Mattachine.” Faderman and Timmons, 128.

¹⁰⁹ Eric Marcus, “Harry Hay,” *Making Gay History* (blog), June 2017, <https://makinggayhistory.com/podcast/harry-hay/>; Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 222.

¹¹⁰ Hurewitz, “Made in Edendale,” 380–89.

¹¹¹ In Springate’s introductory chapter for *LGBTQ America*, respectability politics is defined as “the self-policing of marginalized groups to enforce social values compatible with mainstream values (assimilation) as a strategy for acceptance, rather than challenging the mainstream’s failure to embrace difference.” Springate, “Chapter 2: Introduction to the LGBTQ Heritage Initiative Theme Study,” 15.

¹¹² While many of these members were understandably terrified of being targeted by law enforcement, others preferred to not “get political” and simply saw no connection between their homosexual identity (the discursive construction of which was a central tenant of Mattachine’s mission) and Marxist-inspired ideology. More recent scholarship has brought attention to the concurrent “lavender scare,” which in seeking to “root out” homosexuals and “sex perverts” within the State Department and federal government stoked homophobia generally. See David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

¹¹³ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 113.

served to make homophile organizations appear outdated by the late-1960s. It was around this time that the national network of Mattachine chapters would begin to fold and diminish due to a lack of strategy and purpose.¹¹⁴ Hay would move on from this difficult period of ostracization to become an even more fervent activist, creating the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations, co-founding the L.A. chapter of the Gay Liberation Front, and finally the Radical Faeries.¹¹⁵

With so many varied achievements, it can be difficult to understand the relevance of place in the context of Hay's prolific life. The founding of the Mattachine Society not only represented a turning point for him personally, but also sparked a political turning point for LGBTQ communities long before many would even become aware of it. By the time said awareness reached any sort of national prominence, it took the tone of "gay liberation" as opposed to homophile affiliation. Despite this, the importance of Hay's homophile achievement—his formulation of identity-based ideas of selfhood and its political implications—is integrally tied to the Edendale home where he lived and worked. This is attested to in Hurewitz's writing, which focuses on the setting in which Hay formulated these ideas. For Hay, this process was borne out in the house that he had moved into with his (then) wife Anita and their daughter in 1943.¹¹⁶ Its role as a locus for Edendale's leftist social scene, is described in vivid detail by Timmons:

The Hay family's new home was an old three-story house beneath a spreading pine on a cul-de-sac named Cove Avenue. The house was split-level, with kitchen and dining room below and more rooms above. There was even a study for Harry. The center piece was a huge, high-ceilinged living room with a picture window overlooking the reservoir for which the Silver Lake district was named ... The acreage was generous, extending far downhill, which was landfill and could support no more building ... The house at 2328

¹¹⁴ Hurewitz, "Made in Edendale," 410.

¹¹⁵ Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 221–23, 230, 248–79.

¹¹⁶ Hay's marriage to Anita Platky (erroneously referred to as "Platsky" in some sources), who came from a Jewish family of progressive-leftists, occurred for multiple reasons. While Hay had known of—and was familiar with expressing—his homosexuality from a young age, a psychiatrist suggested he marry a woman in order to substitute for his lack of finding an ideologically aligned (male) lover. Moreover, Hay's increasing involvement in the Communist Party made marriage convenient. Party membership at this time was contingent upon a strict (heteronormative) morality code, and though Platky was aware of Hay's past homosexual relationships, they agreed that their marriage would help them advance politically as social partners on the condition that he had "reformed" his behavior. Hurewitz, "Made in Edendale," 338; Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 100–114.

Cove Avenue hosted an endless cycle of [communist] meetings, classes, and parties. Pete Seeger was a guest there during some of his West Coast concert appearances.¹¹⁷

Even before the Mattachine's conservative shift and rejection of its founding leadership, Hay's critical role as the ideological motivator, composing the manifestos and leading meetings, led to significant consequences for him personally.¹¹⁸ These began "within six months of the first November gathering, [when] he had informed Anita, his wife, of the Mattachine's efforts. Shocked, she asked him to seek therapy, but he refused. After several more months, explaining that she was worried that the Mattachine might be discovered, she asked for a divorce in order to protect herself and their daughters."¹¹⁹ Now a social pariah, Harry moved out and cut himself off from the creatively rich Edendale scene of left-wing activists and artists that he'd become greatly attached to. He then shared apartments with other Mattachine members, eventually settling in his mother's home for the remainder of the decade. Throughout this time, he continued to work odd jobs, supporting Anita and the children financially for the next twelve years that she remained in the house.¹²⁰

Because the Hay family only lived in the house as renters, it's highly unlikely they would've been able to make major architectural alterations during the period they inhabited it.¹²¹ The absence of permitted building records on file for 2328 Cove Avenue for the years between 1943 and 1951 (when Harry, Anita, and the children were in residence) attests to this. The closest recorded changes to this period are from a series of permits for interior and landscape work done in 1961, when Anita and her daughters would've still been living there.¹²² Instead, the most detailed descriptions of Harry's material influence concern the interiors, which were as eclectic as the activities that the house hosted:

¹¹⁷ As a prominent folk singer and social activist, Pete Seeger's influence continues to be felt as part of the early history of leftist-socialist activism in the United States. Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 118–19.

¹¹⁸ The most salient of his works in relation to the Mattachine were published following Timmons' 1990 biography. These two books constitute the most in-depth explorations of Hay's legacy to date. See Harry Hay, *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of Its Founder*, ed. Will Roscoe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

¹¹⁹ Hurewitz, "Made in Edendale," 410.

¹²⁰ Harry and Anita had adopted two daughters, who were five and eight years old at the time of the divorce. Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 158, 161.

¹²¹ The couple moved into the home to have space for raising the children. As Timmons describes it, "Harry kept Sundays free of meetings to maintain the huge yard. Rent was forty dollars a month." Ibid, 118.

¹²² "2328 Cove Ave. Permit for Building Alteration and Repair," September 20, 1961, <http://ladbsdoc.lacity.org/idispublic/>; "2328 Cove Ave. Building Permit for Grading," November 3, 1961, <http://ladbsdoc.lacity.org/idispublic/>.

It was always a house of mixed elements. In 1944, Anita's sister moved to an apartment in San Francisco too small to house the jade mosaics and screens she had bought in Macao years before, so amidst Harry's collection of American books and records, the exotic furnishings were somehow fit in. The neighborhood around the cul-de-sac was peaceful. Down the hill spilled several bungalows of Craftsman or Japanese style, accessible from landings off a long stretch of concrete stairs. In the 1980s the neighbors still recalled in hushed voices that the large house at the end of Cove Avenue had once been a Communist cell.¹²³

This last portion of Timmons' description indicates that the Hay family activities were significant enough to leave a lasting impression on the surrounding community long after they had moved away. Harry Hay's founding of the Mattachine Society, which put an end to this period of activity, also reflected the influence of the Edendale community that the Hays themselves contributed to. Despite this unique legacy, material remnants from this period were likely long gone by the early 1990s. The subsequent attempt to landmark this resource, while not failing outright, nonetheless raises several issues that, when taken together, help to understand what hindered the effort.

Process:

Harry Hay's importance is attested to by the fact that historical engagement with his legacy, and that of the Mattachine, dates to the first phase of "gay scholarship." This early work was mainly political in focus and did not factor in theorized notions of space and place as part of its analysis. The effort of planners such as Moira Kenney and Bill Adair provided the intermediate step by helping to survey potential resources, though it was not alone enough to mount a serious landmarking attempt. Preservation, which is integrally related to the fields of architecture and art history, necessitates the inclusion of this expertise to be successful. This perspective is crucial when it comes to assessing the physical condition and level of integrity that a historic resource retains. Expertise in this area was then provided by Jeffrey Samudio, a graduate of the USC School of Architecture, who assisted in the creation of the *Gay and Lesbian*

¹²³ Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 119.

L.A. History Map.¹²⁴ It was Samudio who first highlighted the Hay residence as an ideal opportunity for landmarking an LGBTQ-centric resource in L.A.¹²⁵

The main residence at 2328 Cove Avenue, which dates to 1905, was set relatively far back from the street compared to the homes that began to slowly surround it through the decades. The property today is gated and surrounded by high hedges, with the house only visible from the concrete steps that lead northwest and downhill towards Silver Lake Boulevard (Fig. 2.1). By the time the mapping effort began in 1996, the property was owned by Charles K. McWhorter.¹²⁶ A year prior he had completed alterations to the house (which he had likely purchased around 1990) that included moving portions of an exterior wall and adding a raised porch to take better advantage of the same commanding views of the Silver Lake reservoir that the Hay family had

¹²⁴ Samudio was featured in an anthology focusing on the role of gay men in preservation. Interview with Jeffrey Samudio: Will Fellows, *A Passion to Preserve: Gay Men as Keepers of Culture* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 150–55; Bill Adair, Moira Rachel Kenney, and Jeffrey Samudio, *Gay & Lesbian L.A. History Map*. (Los Angeles, Calif., United States: Center for Preservation Education & Planning, 2000).

¹²⁵ In the 2001 L.A. Times article about the map, a picture of Samudio standing in front of the Hay residence accompanies his own speculative assessment of its eligibility. It notes that “of the 31 locations on the Los Angeles map, the one most likely to be considered for [NHL] designation, Samudio said, is a beige and white two-story wood-frame house on Cove Avenue with spectacular hilltop views of the Silver Lake reservoir. It was the home of Harry Hay, who hosted the founding meetings of the Mattachine Society there.” Gordon, “A Guide to Where L.A.’s Gays Came of Age.”

¹²⁶ McWhorter, who was active in Republican party politics from adolescence onward, served as an aide in the 1950s to (then) Vice President Richard M. Nixon. He subsequently became a lawyer for A.T.&T. and was later appointed to a position on the National Council of the Arts at the start of the Nixon administration in 1969. Upon his retirement from A.T.&T. in 1987, he lived a bi-coastal life in New York City and L.A. “Charles K. McWhorter, 77, Aide to Nixon,” *The New York Times*, May 16, 1999, sec. U.S.



Figure 2.1: The Hay Residence, April 20th 2019. Photo by author.

enjoyed.¹²⁷ While it is unknown whether or not McWhorter was aware of the house's history or significance, any potential conversations or outreach efforts that may have taken place would've been stymied by his untimely death from a car accident in 1999. McWhorter, who never married or had children, was survived only by a sister.¹²⁸

As part of the team working on the map, Samudio reached out to fellow preservationists to inquire about the home's eligibility in 1997.¹²⁹ By 2001, the *L.A. Times* article focusing on this effort mentioned a new owner for the property, an openly gay screenwriter who was described as "delighted" to learn of its significance.¹³⁰ Enthusiasm on behalf of the new owner nonetheless waned following further discussion with relevant city employees, who at this point were housed in the city of L.A.'s Cultural Affairs Department.¹³¹ By the time a subsequent visit to gauge eligibility in 2002 took place, the owner's displeasure with the possibility of landmarking his new home had become clear to inspectors. Jay Oren, the city's head staff architect at the time, decided not to pursue the effort, and it was subsequently shelved.¹³²

Outcome:

Though this first attempt did not result in any "lavender landmarks" for L.A., there is much to be said given the lack of resources available to preservationists like Samudio at the

¹²⁷ "2328 Cove Ave. Permit for Building Alteration and Repair," August 21, 1995, http://ladbsdoc.lacity.org/IDISPublic_Records/idis/Report.aspx?Record_Id=21924171&Image=Hidden&ImageTOOpen=.

¹²⁸ "Paid Notice: Deaths McWhorter, Charles K.," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1999, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/18/classified/paid-notice-deaths-mcwhorter-charles-k.html>.

¹²⁹ In her 2003 essay, Dubrow cites correspondence with Samudio and Howard Smith describing the filing of a pre-application for evaluating the Hay residence's eligibility for listing on the NRHP and California Register. As the house is currently unlisted, this effort is presumed to have been unsuccessful. Dubrow also cites communication with Samudio, who at the time had been appointed a State Historical Resources Commissioner, where he claims to have added gays and lesbians to a list of the state's "historically significant" communities for a statewide preservation plan in 1997. While Samudio's non-profit, *The Center for Preservation Education and Planning*, appears in the plan, the words "gay" and "lesbian" are nowhere to be found. Dubrow, "Blazing Trails with Pink Triangles and Rainbow Flags," 292, footnotes 50, 51; Office of Historic Preservation, "Forging a Future with a Past: A Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for California" (Department of Parks and Recreation Resources Agency, December 1997), 37.

¹³⁰ Gordon, "A Guide to Where L.A.'s Gays Came of Age."

¹³¹ "History of the Cultural Heritage Commission | Office of Historic Resources, City of Los Angeles," accessed October 17, 2019, <https://preservation.lacity.org/commission/history-cultural-heritage-commission>.

¹³² Rafael Fontes, Interview with Lambert Giessinger and Melissa Jones, In person conversation, September 30, 2019.

time.¹³³ Interest in conserving the Hay residence came during a period where Hay himself had just begun to receive focused recognition for his life's work. Timmons' 1990 biography was inaugural in this regard, followed five years later by a city commendation and publication of Hay's manifestoes in 1996.¹³⁴ As a living figure of advanced years, Hay's famous energy and loquaciousness were rapidly diminishing by the 1990s. Because of this, the urgent need to capture his recollections, along with the oral histories of other contemporaneous activists, was the primary concern for scholars engaging in this history. Hay himself was not consulted during the creation of the *Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map*, passing away soon after the ill-fated city inspection to his former residence. His obituary in the *New York Times* did much to posthumously raise the profile of his legacy nationally, while a local epitaph written for *Los Angeles Magazine* mentions the (recently failed) attempt to landmark the Edendale home where the Mattachine was founded.¹³⁵

While the historical perspectives of ethnic and racial minorities were just beginning to be officially acknowledged in states like California, LGBTQ people still had to contend with oppressive forces that had not been addressed during the civil rights period. Towards the end of the twentieth century these communities were still struggling to assert their existence due to ongoing heteronormative bias, which as a mindset knows no ethnicity.¹³⁶ This broader societal hostility was reinforced by the rising tide of political and social conservatism that began during the Reagan administration, strengthening during the (George H.W.) Bush years. While Bill Clinton's election in 1992 brought some relief, it did not speed up the complicated process of medical research upon which tens of thousands of lives depended during the height of the AIDS crisis, which only began taper off by the end of his first term in office. Clinton's tendency to

¹³³ The term "lavender landmark" is Dubrow's, describing the landmarked equivalent to historic resources that center LGBTQ history and people as part of their historical significance. Her use of "lavender" reflects a color that has come to mean several things beyond just connoting LGBTQ presence. For instance, the lavender stripe on the rainbow flag (there was a value assigned to each of its seven original colors), symbolizes the "spirit" of the LGBTQ community. Dubrow, "Blazing Trails with Pink Triangles and Rainbow Flags," 285; Dubrow, "Chapter 5: The Preservation of LGBTQ Heritage," 2.

¹³⁴ Ruth Galanter, Jackie Goldberg, and Joel Wachs, "Resolution of Commendation: Harry Hay" (City of Los Angeles, May 12, 1995); Hay, *Radically Gay*.

¹³⁵ Kevin Roderick, "Epitaph: Harry Hay," *Los Angeles Magazine*, January 2003, <http://www.kevinroderick.com/harryhay.html>.

¹³⁶ Social attitudes regarding gender and sexuality still vary by community. In the interest of asserting that racial and ethnic groups are not monolithic, it bears repeating that these attitudes are not uniformly predictable. They are dependent on a variety of factors that must account for political and religious affiliation, in addition to socio-economic status, level of education attained, and beliefs specific to region and national origin.

compromise with conservatives on social issues also resulted in the passage of Don't Ask Don't Tell and the Defense of Marriage Act. In hindsight these laws are regarded as serious political setbacks for the LGBTQ community nationally, taking years of work and struggle to repeal. All these things worked to direct collective energy and resources towards more pressing political and community issues, moving preservation concerns and LGBTQ history down the list of priorities.

Local resources for preservation were also scarce, and glaringly evident in the lack of context necessary to establish significance. While L.A.'s LGBTQ community was to some extent aware of its activist and artistic roots, meaningful texts documenting this history were not published until the latter 2000s, finally culminating in the city's 2014 LGBT context statement.¹³⁷ Preservation efforts in L.A. had, until the creation of OHR and SurveyLA, been primarily considered a matter of cultural affairs, then reflecting an overwhelming bias towards white, straight males that was called out by both Dolores Hayden and Bill Adair.¹³⁸ While there's scant evidence of overt antagonism on the part of preservation officials to recognizing this history at the local level, reluctance on the part of some LGBTQ people for the sake of respectability politics was also a factor.¹³⁹ Lack of (respected) historical context likewise resulted in draft applications that were fairly "weak" from a scholarly perspective.¹⁴⁰ Submitting them would've hindered the CHC's ability to understand the significance of the Hay residence, potentially resulting in a negative decision on their part.

For the Hay residence, the decision not to pursue landmarking was mainly driven by a homeowner who did not wish to be told what to do with his property. While owner consent is not required to landmark in L.A., the problem of trying to determine what was materially significant about the residence presented issues for city staff, who would've taken a more "academic" approach during this time.¹⁴¹ This attitude, presuming that architectural integrity and historic significance would neatly align, was problematic for a 1905 house that had several additions and alterations well before the Hay family moved into it. Preservationist interest in restoring postwar remnants (at this point practically non-existent and vaguely documented) of Harry Hay's presence also came into conflict with the new owner's desire to "restore" the house in a way that

¹³⁷ Grimes, "LGBT Historic Context Statement."

¹³⁸ Hayden, "The Power of Place Project"; Adair, Bill, "Celebrating a Hidden History: Gay and Lesbian Historic Places in Los Angeles."

¹³⁹ Interview with Jeffrey Samudio Fellows, *A Passion to Preserve*, 154.

¹⁴⁰ Rafael Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe, In person conversation, September 9, 2019.

¹⁴¹ Fontes, Interview with Lambert Giessinger and Melissa Jones.

would make it reflect its earlier architectural origins, eliminating the quirky “house of mixed elements” feel that Timmons described. Oren, who wanted to ensure that L.A.’s first lavender landmark would be a certainty, was shrewd in his decision to shelve the effort.¹⁴² At present the Hay Residence has been recorded by SurveyLA and the city of L.A.’s *LGBT Historic Context Statement*, with an option to landmark it still open in the future.¹⁴³

All these factors aside, the meaning of this house’s history—especially Harry Hay’s legacy—would prove significant enough to generate interest nearly a decade later in 2011. Wes Joe, a prominent community activist based in Silver Lake, was informed about the house while canvassing the area. In the same way that Timmons had picked up on a lingering communal memory, neighbors confirmed that the house at the end of the cul-de-sac was significant, this time openly acknowledging its associations with Harry Hay.¹⁴⁴ At this point Joe had already interacted extensively with OHR from his experience with landmarking The Black Cat Tavern, and when he inquired about the house, he was told of the failed effort to landmark it.¹⁴⁵ As he continued to press for alternative options, staff suggested he try nearby features instead, recommending the adjacent concrete stairway as a viable option that could be re-named. In this case, “landmarking” could be accomplished with a commemorative plaque using available grant money from the L.A. Department of Transportation.¹⁴⁶

The predominance of concrete steps, in lieu of roads or creating shortcuts through blocks, is a character defining feature of the Edendale landscape. Historically these features were the

¹⁴² Fontes, Interview with Giessinger, Jones.

¹⁴³ SurveyLA, “Silver Lake – Echo Park – Elysian Valley Report: Individual Resources” (Los Angeles, Calif., United States, May 13, 2014), 78; Grimes, “LGBT Historic Context Statement,” 30.

¹⁴⁴ This piqued Wes Joe’s interest because the Margaret and Harry Hay house at 3132 North Oakcrest Drive had already been declared an HCM (#981) in 2010. While this house is mentioned in Timmons’ biography, it was built as a retirement home for Hay’s mother Margaret, who helped Hay and his co-founders organize the Mattachine after being ejected from Edendale. The property’s location in the Hollywood Hills makes it far too removed geographically to be considered part of the social scene that inspired Hay to begin with. As a result, the main argument for its significance rests on criterion C, which describes a resource that “embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen, inherently valuable for the study of a period style or method of construction.” The house today is an intact example of the International Style designed by Gregory Ain, who would go on to become a significant modernist architect in postwar L.A. Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 162; Constanze L. Han, “Recommendation Report: Margaret and Harry Hay House” (Los Angeles, Calif., United States: Los Angeles Department of City Planning, January 21, 2010).

¹⁴⁵ Though Gail Dubrow claims the Margaret and Harry Hay House as L.A.’s “first gay landmark,” she also cites the Black Cat, which was listed in 2008. Dubrow, “Chapter 5: The Preservation of LGBTQ Heritage,” 23, 54. For more details on the landmarking effort, see Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁶ Joe’s decision to not revive the former landmarking attempt was also the result of his own discomfort with advocating for a single-family home, especially given the current owner’s lack of consent. Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

result of a time before local road engineers knew how to (economically) grade steeply sloped streets.¹⁴⁷ Residents living in the hilly neighborhoods surrounding Silver Lake Reservoir still use these features today, and since much of L.A. before the Second World War developed around streetcars, many homes in the area are only accessible by these steps. Because they are part of the public thoroughfare—and aren't bought and sold like private parcels—property owners cannot restrict access to them. Motions to re-name these features also do not need a direct spatial-historical connection to the history (or person) being commemorated. The ability to avoid bureaucratic hoops associated with the HCM process not only made this a more attractive option for local preservationists like Wes Joe, but also saved time and money by dealing mainly with the Public Works Committee and the City Council directly.

The fact that this feature, then known as the Cove Avenue steps, terminated at the Hay residence proved helpful. In communicating with Timmons, Joe was able to verify its importance as a means of telling the story of the November 11th meeting between Hay and his Mattachine cofounders in 1950, which initially took place at the point where the house driveway met the cul-de-sac and stairway terminus.¹⁴⁸ Wes Joe then went to present his “Harry Hay Steps” initiative to the local neighborhood council, which he regarded as a “formality” since they were already enthusiastic and received over twenty letters from neighbors supportive of this effort.¹⁴⁹ Joe's ultimate success was accomplished by leveraging his relationship with the local council office, headed by (then) councilmember Eric Garcetti.¹⁵⁰ The only serious hiccup in this process came from the council office itself, which objected to naming the steps after Harry Hay owing to his

¹⁴⁷ Glen Creason, “These Nondescript Stairs in Silver Lake Are Actually a Memorial to a Gay Rights Game-Changer,” *Los Angeles Magazine* (blog), June 1, 2016, <https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/mattachine-society-stairs-map/>.

¹⁴⁸ Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

¹⁴⁹ The Eastsider, “Silver Lake Stairway May Be Renamed in Honor of Gay Activist,” *The Eastsider LA*, June 1, 2011, https://www.theeastsiderla.com/archives/silver-lake-stairway-may-be-renamed-in-honor-of-gay/article_4a60621d-5ecb-5b19-9a8b-75ddb1bc9b9c.html; Clint Lukens et al., “Meeting Agenda,” § Silver Lake Neighborhood Council (2011).

¹⁵⁰ Garcetti would be elected mayor of L.A. in 2013, with his vacated council seat subsequently occupied by his former senior advisor, Mitch O'Farrell.

public support of pederasty.¹⁵¹ Wes Joe suggested the “Mattachine Society Steps” instead, and the motion was successfully passed.¹⁵²

The Public Works Committee installed the sign at the base of the steps comprising the western portion of Cove Avenue (Fig. 2.2).¹⁵³ This sign then was marked by an unveiling ceremony, attended by councilmember Garcetti and State Assemblyman Mike Gatto, held on April 7, 2012 to mark Harry Hay’s one hundredth birthday.¹⁵⁴ The accompanying motion letter, submitted by Garcetti, briefly describes “the accomplishments of [the] Mattachine Society” which “resonate strongly with Silver Lake’s traditions of tolerance, modernity and creativity. It is only fitting that the City should commemorate the Mattachine Society’s achievements in naming the Cove Avenue steps in their honor.”¹⁵⁵ Garcetti’s sentiments reference Silver Lake’s Edendale roots as described by Hurewitz’s writings, giving insight into how this area views itself with respect to L.A.’s broader social landscape generally.

In an ideal world, critical academic scholarship would’ve preceded any attempt at landmarking resources associated with Hay. Though the results of preserving this facet of Edendale’s heritage are mixed, they reflect the complexities of dealing with a history that is largely intangible. That said, intangibility here should not itself be viewed as synonym for powerlessness. The ability of this heritage to resurface despite all the professional, procedural, and societal factors stacked against it would seem to speak to the power that place-based legacies

¹⁵¹ Harry Hay’s approval of pederasty, which describes sexual relations between teenage boys and older men, was borne out of nineteenth century views of “Greek love” as interpreted most famously from works such as Plato’s *Symposium*. In Hay’s case, this expressed itself via interactions with the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), an infamous pedophilia advocacy group. While Hay himself was never a card-carrying member of NAMBLA per se, his approval of, and willingness to speak at, their events created trouble for LGBTQ organizations working hard to dispel the canard that homosexuality and pedophilia were somehow linked or identical. This came to a head during the 1986 L.A. Gay Pride Parade, where Hay narrowly avoided arrest due to organizer complaints from his choosing to wear a sign that read “NAMBLA walks with me.” This also opened Hay up to political attacks from conservatives looking to discredit LGBTQ activists during the “culture wars.” Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, 295, 310; Jeffrey Lord, “When Nancy Met Harry,” *The American Spectator*, October 5, 2006, https://spectator.org/46366_when-nancy-met-harry/; Ben Miller, “Remembering Harry Hay,” *Jacobin*, April 10, 2017, <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/04/harry-hay-communist-mattachine-society-lgbtq>.

¹⁵² “Council File 11-1432: Public Stairway / Cove Avenue to Rockford Road / Mattachine Society Steps” (Los Angeles City Clerk, February 10, 2012), <https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=11-1432>.

¹⁵³ Wes Joe, “Where Harry Met Rudi, Chuck and Bob and Dale...,” *The Pride LA*, October 9, 2015, <https://thepridela.com/2015/10/where-harry-met-rudi-chuck-and-bob-and-dale/>.

¹⁵⁴ Joe; Vincent Brook, *Land of Smoke and Mirrors: A Cultural History of Los Angeles* (Piscataway, UNITED STATES: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 224, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/socal/detail.action?docID=1051869>.

¹⁵⁵ “Council File 11-1432.”

retain over time. Identifying and tracing these instances of heritage resurgence can help us develop a more nuanced understanding of how much power place-based histories have when it comes to affecting change in the built environment. This struggle would be more directly expressed with the effort to landmark The Black Cat Tavern, a resource just south of the Hay Residence on Sunset Blvd.



Figure 2.2: The Mattachine Society steps, April 20th 2019. Photo by author.

Chapter 3

The Black Cat Tavern

Significance:

It is no coincidence that homophile organizations like the Mattachine Society began to confront a crisis of confidence and energy in the mid-1960s. Their shift towards an assimilationist position from more radical origins had come to look hopelessly out of date to younger generations.¹⁵⁶ While this period is nostalgically remembered as a time of heady social and political change, insurgent efforts leading to the birth of gay liberation would critically alter the tone of LGBTQ life in complex ways. Looked at holistically, these changes may be understood as part of a broader response to the stifling conformist values of the immediate postwar period and its perceived failings. The most visible examples of this were anti-Vietnam War protests, the struggle to advance civil and voting rights for ethnic minorities, second wave feminism, and the rise of a counterculture that culminated in the sexual revolution.¹⁵⁷

Social attitudes regarding these controversial issues, being fluid and varied, are difficult to measure objectively. Despite statistical information available from the midcentury period, efforts from professional entities such as the Kinsey Institute to increase understanding of sexuality and gender, while pioneering, don't alone give us an accurate sense about the embedded systemic oppression that LGBTQ people faced. Artifacts and pieces of evidence—whatever their medium—provide critical insight to a topic that was rarely discussed in a public forum at the time. One of the most influential of these was a CBS documentary, produced in 1964, titled *The Homosexuals*.¹⁵⁸ Hosted by Mike Wallace, this program attempted to address the subject of homosexuality, specifically concerning the lives of gay males, in an evenhanded and objective fashion.

¹⁵⁶ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 151–54; Thompson, Romesburg, and Gessen, *Long Road to Freedom*, xviii.

¹⁵⁷ Perhaps the most significant character defining feature of gay liberation was the willingness of activist groups to center sex and sexuality as part of their self-consciously revolutionary rhetoric. This marked a distinctive shift from homophile organizations, which tended to shy away from any explicit focus on sex. Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 154.

¹⁵⁸ While the documentary was produced in 1964 and '65, difficulties completing the episode related to corporate cost-cutting were compounded by the inability to find sponsors willing to purchase commercial time for the program. The documentary eventually aired on March 7, 1967, leading many LGBTQ activists in L.A. to perceive it as a direct response to protest efforts undertaken months earlier. Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media*, *Between Men--between Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 70–71. Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

The Homosexuals categorically fails to do this by today's standards. Presenting homosexuality as a disorder and social disease exclusively, the program served to reinforce a pathologizing viewpoint. It did critical damage to the educational efforts that homophile groups had undertaken in the previous decade by messaging to millions of viewers nationwide that gay people were a public menace; a threat to society above all. Most of the psychologists interviewed expressed views that would be broadly rejected by the American Psychological Association less than a decade later, and interviews with gay men were edited to cast them in a far more negative light than the interviewees themselves were led to believe.¹⁵⁹ The most indicative testimony provided by *The Homosexuals* came from an interview with police captain (introduced simply as "inspector") James Fisk of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD):

During the year of 1964 we arrested three thousand homosexuals who committed their lewd acts in public places. I can state conclusively that the problem is growing. I'm concerned with the moral atmosphere in the community ... I'm opposed on the matter of principle to making anything which is improper or immoral conspicuous, and by its conspicuousness making it easy for persons to engage in this kind of activity. The law itself is such that, really, there isn't a great deal we can do about those things that occur in private places. But the most important thing to emphasize here I believe--this applies also to other kinds of vice activities--that our primary effort goes to the reduction of prohibited behavior in public places.¹⁶⁰

Fisk's words are carefully measured in *The Homosexuals*, but he expressed his concerns more bluntly in a *Life Magazine* report in 1964, saying "the [gay] pervert is no longer as secretive as he once was. He's aggressive and his aggressiveness is getting worse because of more homosexual activity."¹⁶¹ This concern was clearly shared by the LAPD, as (then) Chief of Police William H. Parker would later appoint Fisk coordinator of community relations following the Watts riots in 1965.¹⁶² These attitudes were reflective of the LAPD's self-perceived role as the enforcer of moral standards for the community, which in the context of midcentury L.A. took the form of institutionalized homophobia.

¹⁵⁹ Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis*, 162; Steven Capsuto, *Alternate Channels: The Uncensored Story of Gay and Lesbian Images on Radio and Television*, 1st. (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2000), 52–53.

¹⁶⁰ William Peters, "The Homosexuals," Film, *CBS Reports* (New York, N.Y., United States: Columbia Broadcasting System, March 7, 1967).

¹⁶¹ Paul Welch, "The 'Gay' World Takes to the City Streets," *Life*, June 26, 1964.

¹⁶² Jon Thurber, "Obituaries; James G. Fisk, 91; Made Mark in LAPD With Outreach Effort," *Los Angeles Times*; *Los Angeles, Calif.*, March 19, 2006, sec. California Metro; Part B; Metro Desk.

The LAPD's explicitly homophobic approach led to increasing instances of oppressive vice squad activities targeting LGBTQ people and places. Sting operations consisting mainly of entrapment, crackdowns on cruising, and raids on gay bars continued and strengthened during the 1960s.¹⁶³ Despite that fact that nearly all activities in gay bars occurred out of sight and on private property, raiding these establishments was seen by police as an ideal way to arrest scores of "perverts" and, once taken to the station for booking, register their names publicly. Arrestees were also registered as sex offenders, leaving a permanent stain on one's record in the eyes of the law. While the effects of these practices varied by case, victims would typically be fired from their jobs, ostracized by their family or community, and in many instances commit suicide.¹⁶⁴

LGBTQ community reaction to these worsening conditions began in the fall of 1966 with the founding of PRIDE (Personal Rights in Defense and Education) by Steve Ginsburg.¹⁶⁵ As part of a new generation of radical community activists, Ginsburg forcibly distanced himself from pre-existing homophile groups by referring to them as "prissy little old ladies" and refusing to obfuscate PRIDE's sexual stance and political agenda for the sake of respectability politics.¹⁶⁶ Despite PRIDE's stated goals of fostering pride within L.A.'s LGBTQ community, its defining moment would come only a few months after its founding.¹⁶⁷ This began on New Year's Eve 1966, when the LAPD raided a Silver Lake gay bar called The Black Cat Tavern.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ "Cruising" here refers to the solicitation of sex in public places. Owing to the increased freedom of movement that men generally enjoy in public space, it's assumed that gay men were disproportionately affected by police crackdowns. Though it's admittedly difficult to compile reliable statistics, there are several documented instances of LAPD harassment of trans people, lesbians, and any woman perceived as too masculine or gender non-conforming in dress and appearance. While L.A. gay bars during the 1960s were often consciously unisex to make them appear heteronormative to the uninitiated, women were largely unaffected by police entrapment in L.A. The LAPD, which employed women as early as 1909, never directed female officers to entrap lesbians in the same fashion. Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 23–27, 47, 67, 72; "Women in the LAPD - Los Angeles Police Department," accessed November 3, 2019, http://www.lapdonline.org/history_of_the_lapd/content_basic_view/833.

¹⁶⁴ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 27–37.

¹⁶⁵ This is the first recorded use of the word "pride" to be applied to an LGBTQ organization. Today, the word is typically used to refer to annual LGBTQ commemorative parades and celebrations occurring both nationally and globally. Thompson, Romesburg, and Gessen, *Long Road to Freedom*, xviii.

¹⁶⁶ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 155.

¹⁶⁷ PRIDE's initial goals presaged issues that would come to define the LGBTQ movement in later decades. Ginsburg embraced bar-goers as members of the community. This was done in opposition to L.A. homophile groups that refused to associate with bars generally. PRIDE also sought to organize a variety of events for more "wholesome" forms of LGBTQ socializing, and called for a center to serve the community years before the L.A. chapter of the Gay Liberation Front would get around to founding one. Ibid, 155–56.

¹⁶⁸ The Black Cat Tavern, while colloquially referred to as the Black Cat, is distinguished here from the Black Cat Bar (or Black Cat Café), a site in San Francisco that is also significant for bar-based LGBTQ activity. Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 57; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 187.

The sequence of events that transpired were typical of the treatment that many had come to expect from police at this point:

Twelve plainclothes Vice officers had positioned themselves in a large crowd at the Black Cat [Tavern] to overserve the goings-on. At 11:30, when a costume contest had ended at New Faces, a bar down the street, dozens of men in drag crowded into the Black Cat [Tavern]. As [performers]... sang a rock version of 'Auld Lang Syne,' balloons fell from the ceiling and gay men exchanged the traditional midnight kiss. That was when uniformed police, who had been alerted by the undercover officers, rushed in and began to swing billy clubs, tear down leftover Christmas ornaments, break furnishings, and beat several men brutally ... officers chased two men across Sanborn Avenue to the New Faces bar. There, the officers knocked the woman owner down and beat her two bartenders unconscious. One of the bartenders, Robert Haas, suffered a ruptured spleen from the beating. He remained in critical condition for days, and when he recovered, was charged with felony assault on an officer. Six men were charged with lewd conduct: They were seen kissing other men on the lips for up to ten seconds. A jury found them all guilty.¹⁶⁹

In addition to documenting the raid and subsequent trial through its newsletter, PRIDE worked with sympathetic youth groups to organize a series of protests outside of The Black Cat Tavern to draw attention to police abuses all along the Sunset strip.¹⁷⁰ Beyond the local publicity that PRIDE's 1967 protests received, the organization also worked to support (financially) those convicted at The Black Cat Tavern raid, though attempts to appeal their convictions were ultimately unsuccessful.¹⁷¹ As a result, PRIDE itself would dissolve within the following year owing to "internal squabbling and piled-up legal bills."¹⁷² Despite this, its most enduring legacy came as a result of the newsletter, which had picked up a decent circulation following its coverage of The Black Cat Tavern protests, and was subsequently acquired by Dick Michaels

¹⁶⁹ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 156.

¹⁷⁰ The Black Cat Tavern is located at 3909 E. Sunset Boulevard in L.A. While there had been a "truce" between police and the LGBTQ community, Ronald Reagan's inauguration as governor was seen as a motivating factor in the raid. thirstyinla, "Alexei Romanoff and the LGBT Civil Rights Legacy of The Black Cat," Thirsty in LA, June 12, 2015, <http://thirstyinla.com/2015/06/12/alexei-romanoff-lgbt-black-cat/>.

¹⁷¹ Defended by Herb Selwyn, a longtime LGBTQ ally and straight lawyer, the brief argued from the basis of the equal protections clause of the fourteenth amendment, in essence asserting that two heterosexual men wouldn't have been subjected to the same violent treatment for kissing as the homosexual defendants had been. Though Selwyn's brief made it all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court, they ultimately declined to hear the case. Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 157.

¹⁷² Thompson, Romesburg, and Gessen, *Long Road to Freedom*, xix.

and Bill Rand.¹⁷³ While both men had joined PRIDE as part of the surge in membership following The Black Cat Tavern raid, they were interested in expanding the newsletter to create a LGBTQ news source free from the homophobia-laden outlets that tended to regurgitate attitudes evident in *The Homosexuals*. Their efforts resulted in *The Advocate* (initially titled *The Los Angeles Advocate*), which by the end of the twentieth century would become the national news magazine of record for the LGBTQ community.¹⁷⁴

The LAPD raid—and the protests that responded to it—were relatively brief, and initial energy fizzled out fairly quickly. Despite this, the significance of these events is due to them being the earliest documented instance of open defiance on the part of self-identified LGBTQ people. Police raids on gay bars had long been a fact of life in LA and elsewhere during the postwar period. The collective sense that these practices were wrong was not new. However, resentment on behalf of bar patrons and raid victims was always accompanied by an overwhelming sense that these raids were carried out with the approval of a heterosexual majority. In beginning to organize themselves, The Black Cat Tavern protest is evidence of a growing awareness among LGBTQ people that there could be strength in numbers. More importantly, they began to realize that countering homophobic oppression could be more successful if done collectively.

Many significant achievements and events are tied to The Black Cat Tavern raid in 1967, but the failure to launch a sustained and radical gay liberation movement in any sense was undeniable. While *The Advocate* in later years had always been aware of its geographic origins, the events of 1967 were quickly overshadowed by the Stonewall Uprising, which occurred two years later in New York City.¹⁷⁵ Instead of PRIDE, the most prominent LGBTQ protest

¹⁷³ Both men used pseudonyms, Michaels was really named Richard Mitch, and Rand was Bill Rau. Thompson, Romesburg, and Gessen, xix; Advocate Staff, “Gay Passion, Gay Pride,” *The Advocate*, January 29, 2007, <http://www.advocate.com/politics/commentary/2007/01/29/gay-passion-gay-pride>; Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 159–60.

¹⁷⁴ While this prominent designation is a common and uncontested one, *The Advocate*’s early issues were almost exclusively dominated by (and catered to) gay male concerns. This gradually changed when it was purchased by David Goodstein, an investment banker who moved its base of operations to San Francisco. The Advocate eventually moved back to L.A. in a more professionalized form. Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 160–62.

¹⁷⁵ This event, “where a police raid of a Greenwich Village Gay bar sparked several nights of rioting...” is also referred to as the Stonewall Rebellion, or simply Stonewall. It’s commonly regarded as the beginning of the modern movement for LGBTQ rights nationally. While early historians never go so far as to declare it an absolute beginning, it is a critical turning point for queer people, and has begun to develop a global resonance in recent years. D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 1; “NYC Pride 2019 | WorldPride NYC | Stonewall50,” accessed September 19, 2019, <https://2019-worldpride-stonewall50.nycpride.org/>.

organization of the early 1970s became the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), which was founded in New York City in reaction to Stonewall. While the L.A. chapter of the GLF made huge leaps for the community through protests, boycotts, and holding the city's first pride parade in 1970, its founding was by extension a reaction to Stonewall. Many of its achievements were likewise overlooked in favor of political gains being made on the east coast. This is reflected in LGBTQ historiography during and after the gay liberation period, ultimately leading to LGBTQ L.A.'s narrative marginalization as described by Moira Kenny in *Mapping Gay L.A.*

Comparisons between The Black Cat Tavern and Stonewall have increased in recent years, largely resulting from their fiftieth anniversaries in 2017 and 2019 respectively.¹⁷⁶ Attempting to understand why events transpired as they did is a common pastime for historians generally, and *Gay L.A.* is no exception in this regard:

Topography played a role in the significance of both events: Los Angeles is an area spread out over 450 square miles, where (unlike New York's Greenwich Village, the site of Stonewall) people seldom take casual walks. The Black Cat [Tavern] protests attracted multitudes of people who drove across town to participate, but chance passers-by (such as many of the Stonewall protesters had been) were scarce.¹⁷⁷

The Black Cat Tavern eventually changed its name to Basgo's Disco, and by the summer of 1989 had transitioned into a prominent nightclub associated with the local queer and punk scenes.¹⁷⁸ The Black Cat Tavern itself was subsequently forgotten by scholars until the publication of the *Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map* in 2000. The L.A. Times article describing the map begins with an interview of Jeffrey Samudio at the site, which was operating as a gay bar specializing in Spanish language drag performances.¹⁷⁹ Though the article discusses the significance of The Black Cat Tavern raid and its aftermath, it would be another eight years before interest in preserving the site would lead to L.A.'s first LGBTQ landmark.

¹⁷⁶ Laura Dominguez, "The Black Cat: Harbinger of LGBTQ Civil Rights | KCET," February 11, 2017, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/the-black-cat-harbinger-of-lgbtq-civil-rights>.

¹⁷⁷ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 157.

¹⁷⁸ *FUCK!* or "*Club Fuck!*" aimed to counter the exclusion and conformity of other gay clubs at that time in L.A." The club was raided in 1993 by the LAPD vice squad and replaced by LeBarcito. In 2016 it was the subject of a retrospective exhibition at the ONE Archives and gallery. Andrew J. Henkes, "A Party for the 'Freaks': Performance, Deviance and Communitas at Club Fuck!, 1989–1993," *The Journal of American Culture* 36, no. 4 (2013): 287, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jacc.12050>; "FUCK! Loss, Desire, Pleasure | ONE Archives," accessed November 9, 2019, <https://one.usc.edu/exhibition/fuck-loss-desire-pleasure>; Myriam Gurba, "L.A.'s Legendary Queer Night Club," KCET, February 29, 2016, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/resurrecting-an-expetive>.

¹⁷⁹ Gordon, "A Guide to Where L.A.'s Gays Came of Age."

Process:

Serious preservation interest in The Black Cat Tavern began in the Spring of 2008 with Wes Joe, a longtime resident and activist in Silver Lake. At the time, the building was split between a laundromat and Le Barcito, a Latino gay bar.¹⁸⁰ When Joe became aware of potential city interest in up-zoning along Sunset Junction's commercial strip, he began to inquire about the bar, situated on the northwest corner of Sunset Boulevard and Hyperion Avenue.¹⁸¹ When community members recalled that significant protests had occurred there during the '60s, Joe began to do his own research, finding varying accounts of what had occurred at The Black Cat Tavern in 1967.¹⁸² Joe then reached out to Charles J. Fisher, a locally-based architectural historian for hire, to further investigate the building and its LGBTQ significance. When Fisher's initial round of research indicated that the bar was significant with respect to LGBTQ history, Joe and like-minded colleagues created a non-profit, called Friends of the Black Cat, to formally advocate and pursue HCM status for the site.¹⁸³

In working to further this effort, the Friends of the Black Cat also recognized a need to increase general awareness and interest in LGBTQ history.¹⁸⁴ They began by assisting Zócalo, an L.A.-based nonprofit media partnership, to sponsor a panel discussion, held on June 19, 2008. Titled *Gay L.A. vs. Gay San Francisco*, the discussion was held at the Arclight Hollywood

¹⁸⁰ The structure at 3909 W Sunset Blvd dates to 1939 and was originally built as a Safeway grocery store. It was likely sold off as many grocery chains contracted in size due to scarcities related to the second World War. In 1963 it was subdivided into a bar (The Black Cat Tavern) and a laundromat; a set of uses that remained in place up through the 2008 landmarking process. Appended application by Wes Joe and Charles J. Fisher, "Recommendation Report: The Black Cat" (Los Angeles, Calif., United States: Los Angeles Department of City Planning, September 18, 2008).

¹⁸¹ Sunset Junction is a semi-official term describing the southernmost portion of Silver Lake where Sunset and Santa Monica Boulevards intersect. Up-zoning refers to the process by which cities approve changes in land use, allowing for more (or higher density) uses on parcels within a designated area. The city of L.A. uses Floor Area Ratio (typically referred to as FAR) along with height limits to determine how much property owners and developers can build on a given parcel. Because so much of greater L.A.'s historic built fabric consists of low-rise structures, up-zoning is seen as a danger to these historic resources from a preservationist standpoint. This is because it incentivizes property owners to build at higher densities, often demolishing (rather than restoring or rehabilitating) existing structures. "Guide to the Current Zoning String | Los Angeles City Planning," accessed November 3, 2019, <https://planning.lacity.org/zoning/guide-current-zoning-string>.

¹⁸² Jim Burroway, "Box Turtle Bulletin » The Temerity of a Kiss," 2006, <http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2006/12/27/171>.

¹⁸³ Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

theater.¹⁸⁵ J. Edwin Bacon, a prominent LGBTQ ally and Episcopalian priest, acted as the moderator. The first panelist was Gary J. Gates, an expert on LGBTQ demography in the U.S, who provided a data-based perspective on comparing the LGBTQ populations of the two cities, specifically with respect to how stereotypical perceptions belie demographic realities. The two historians representing each city were Nan Alamilla Boyd, whose book *Wide Open Town* details San Francisco's pre-Stonewall LGBTQ history, and Daniel Hurewitz, the author of *Bohemian Los Angeles*.

As an ally, Brown brought up the commonplace perception that LGBTQ politics began in New York City (and on the east coast generally) in order to allow Hurewitz and Alamilla Boyd the opportunity to introduce their research as a counterpoint. Hurewitz, who by this time had moved to the east coast after finishing his PhD at UCLA, describes New York City's dominance of the LGBTQ narrative as a "puzzle." His attempt at an answer reveals much about differing cultural values, saying "somehow I think that we Angelenos or we Californians don't boast enough—or celebrate enough—[about] our history unlike New York. Maybe [New Yorkers] do a better job *telling their stories*."¹⁸⁶ While this says much about how each place is perceived (it's common to deride L.A. as a city that places little to no value on its own history), Hurewitz's take would've signaled to any preservationists in the audience that night that there was much work needing to be done in telling the story of LGBTQ L.A.

Following the panel, the Friends of the Black Cat earnestly resumed the process of engaging support among relevant community members and preparing an HCM nomination. While six books, including *Gay L.A.*, helped to give the application scholarly support, the most critical resources came from the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, which provided valuable source materials ranging from contemporaneous news coverage (primarily clippings and PRIDE newsletters) to photos of The Black Cat Tavern protest itself. Two significant letters of support were also included in the application. The first came from Mark Thompson, a long time journalist for *The Advocate* and editor of *The Long Road to Freedom*, which was the first

¹⁸⁵ "Gay L.A. vs. Gay San Francisco | The Takeaway," June 19, 2008, <https://www.zocalopublicsquare.org/2008/06/19/gay-l-a-vs-gay-san-francisco/events/the-takeaway/>.

¹⁸⁶ Italicization added.

non-news publication to detail The Black Cat Tavern's historical significance in hindsight.¹⁸⁷ The second letter came from Lillian Faderman who, in addition to reiterating the points made when she and Stuart Timmons wrote *Gay L.A.*, stated that designation "would help restore to [L.A.] its rightful place as the true pioneer in a gay rights movement that has positively affected millions of lives worldwide."¹⁸⁸

After having their application reviewed by city planning staff to ensure completion, The Black Cat Tavern was scheduled as the sixth item for the next CHC meeting on July 17, 2008.¹⁸⁹ This constituted the first official step in the landmarking process, where the commissioners would vote on whether to take the resource up for consideration as an HCM. By the time this first meeting occurred, Joe had already brought the matter to his local council district office (CD 13). By leveraging pre-existing relationships and engaging the sincere interest of the council office, Joe succeeded in securing a letter of support from Eric Garcetti, the councilmember for CD 13. Received by the CHC a month in advance of their consideration vote, it reiterates many of the same points of historical significance that former scholars had already identified about the site's LGBTQ significance, asking the commission to "please give the Black Cat every consideration in making this designation possible."¹⁹⁰

Once the CHC voted to take The Black Cat Tavern up for consideration, OHR sent a notification letter to the registered building owner (Roco Investment Holding, LLC) to which there was no reply.¹⁹¹ In the meantime, a letter received immediately following the July 17th meeting helped give the CHC even more scholarly perspective with respect to LGBTQ history, reiterating the significance of The Black Cat Tavern. Written by Elizabeth Armstrong, a professor researching the sociological origins of the U.S. gay liberation movement, the letter provides an additional reason for The Black Cat Tavern's historiographic marginalization:

¹⁸⁷ Published in 1994 on the 25th anniversary of Stonewall, *Long Road to Freedom* is structured like a large timeline of significant events interspersed with articles and interviews that *The Advocate* had previously published. Mark Thompson, who wrote the introduction that details The Black Cat Tavern, served as the main editor. Thompson, Romesburg, and Gessen, *Long Road to Freedom*, xvii–xxvi; Mark Thompson, "Letter Addressed to Cultural Heritage Commission," April 27, 2008; Joe and Fisher, "Black Cat Report," 33.

¹⁸⁸ Faderman goes on to state her conviction "that Mr. Timmons, who has been hospitalized with a stroke since March, would heartily endorse my support of this proposal." Lillian Faderman, "Letter Addressed to Cultural Heritage Commission," May 5, 2008; Joe and Fisher, "Black Cat Report," 34–35.

¹⁸⁹ Richard Barron et al., "Agenda," § Cultural Heritage Commission (2008).

¹⁹⁰ Eric Garcetti, "Re: Cultural Heritage Landmark Designation of the Black Cat: 3909 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90026," June 17, 2008.

¹⁹¹ Edgar Garcia, "Notice of Commission Action Re: 3909 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90026," July 21, 2008.

The Black Cat [Tavern] did not come to be remembered as the origin of the gay movement because, given the harsher nature of the policing in Los Angeles as compared to New York, gay activists did not experience this protest as a success. Instead of registering the historical novelty of what they had accomplished by pulling off what may have been the first definitely gay liberation—as opposed to homophile—protest in the U.S., they were demoralized by how little headway they made with the [LAPD].¹⁹²

Armstrong goes on to support landmark designation, saying that doing so “will help the community understand that movements don’t arrive out of thin air, and it really isn’t just one riot that changes everything.”¹⁹³ Within two weeks, an additional letter from the Silver Lake Community Association arrived to reinforce local support for the designation, which would underscore the history of an area that “has been known for its diversity and tolerance.”¹⁹⁴ OHR again attempted to notify the property owners by mail and, receiving no reply, went ahead with a requisite site visit where commissioners conducted an inspection of the property on August 7, 2008.¹⁹⁵

By the end of August, another letter of support from Beth Chayim Chadashim had been sent to the CHC.¹⁹⁶ Soon afterwards OHR was contacted by David Cohen (the owner of Roco Investment Holding, LLC) regarding the CHC’s July 17th consideration vote. Cohen commended the advocacy efforts of Friends of the Black Cat, but voiced his objection to the designation based on its ability to restrict potential development options on the site.¹⁹⁷ Referencing a conversation between him, OHR, and preservationists, Cohen cites “a consensus that the significance of the property is primarily associated with events that occurred immediately outside of the building. Therefore, it is recognized that the façade, storefronts and entrances to the

¹⁹² Elizabeth Armstrong, “Letter Re: Designating the Black Cat Bar Building as an HCM...,” July 17, 2008.

¹⁹³ This is an explicit reference to the common misconception that the Stonewall Uprising in New York City represents the absolute beginning of the gay rights movement. Thompson, “Letter,” April 27, 2008; Armstrong, “Letter,” July 17, 2008.

¹⁹⁴ Genelle LeVin, “Letter Addressed to CHC Re: CHC-2008-2708-HCM The Black Cat Bar, 3909 Sunset Blvd.,” July 30, 2008.

¹⁹⁵ Edgar Garcia, “Notice of Commission Action and Inspection Re: 3909 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90026,” August 1, 2008.

¹⁹⁶ Founded in L.A. in 1972, Beth Chayim Chadashim is the first self-identified LGBTQ synagogue anywhere. In this case their support for the HCM designation was not only a matter of personal affinity but also an expression of the biblical commandment to pursue justice. Brett Trueman, “Letter Addressed to CHC Re: CHC-2008-2708-HCM The Black Cat Bar, 3909 Sunset Blvd.,” August 28, 2008.

¹⁹⁷ David Cohen, “Re: Notice of Objection to Designation of Property Located at 3909 West Sunset Boulevard as Historic (CHC-2008-2708-HCM)(Black Cat),” September 3, 2008, 2.

building are the key features that have associative value with the Black Cat [Tavern].”¹⁹⁸ Cohen also acknowledges that the interior features are “worthy of documentation,” but diminishes their importance for preservation in favor of the signage and architectural features facing Sunset Blvd.

Since the building in question is essentially a simple shed structure, its main architectural ornamentation consists of an Art Deco parapet with chevron patterned geometry. Claiming to have purchased the property “with a long-term view of renovation and rehabilitation,” it’s less likely that Cohen would’ve altered such a unique and marketable feature to begin with.¹⁹⁹ However, the concerns of preservationists wanting to save aspects of the building that told the whole story of The Black Cat Tavern (both the initial LAPD raid and protests) were not limited to the façade alone. This was alluded to in the application reviewed by the CHC, ultimately affecting Cohen’s desire to develop the building’s adjacent corner parking lot. This would’ve been done by creating openings in the building’s unadorned eastern wall (keeping intact a row of original geometric piers/pilasters that relate to the building’s design) in order to turn the lot into an outdoor seating area. Alternatively, the wall could be left alone, with the adjacent lot simply being infilled by a new building.

Cohen’s objection letter ends by offering a written agreement clarifying which features of the building and site are significant in advance of designation.²⁰⁰ This came in the form of an addendum submitted to OHR by Roger A. Brevoort, an architectural historian (working for Historic Consultants, Inc.) hired by Cohen to help him navigate the landmarking process. While Brevoort reiterates the owners’ desire to respect the façade and architectural features, it privileges “the form of the Black Cat (Le Bar), which relate[s] most closely to the actual events of January 1967...” and that “the form of the current entry is more important in this case than the fabric.”²⁰¹ While these statements contradict the preservationist norm of saving historic material to the greatest extent possible, they reflect the challenges of advocating for marginalized spaces

¹⁹⁸ Cohen, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 3.

²⁰⁰ Cohen was essentially negotiating here, and while one could envision this being a preservation easement (a legal agreement protecting specific character defining features), it’s hard to imagine one being effective here given all the managing and oversight issues associated with easements generally. In quibbling with the list of character defining features spelled out in the Friends of the Black Cat application, Cohen was likely looking for ways to test how rigid the HCM status would be with respect to his investment. When alterations are made to an HCM (interior, exterior, or otherwise), the plans are typically subject to administrative review conducted by the planning staff at OHR.

²⁰¹ Roger A. Brevoort, “Re: 3909 West Sunset Blvd. (CHC-2008-2708-HCM) Character Defining Features Addendum for the Black Cat Property,” September 18, 2008.

so often associated with LGBTQ history. In the case of the Black Cat, declaring its period of significance to be 1967 would mean privileging a 1960s curtain wall inset into a 1930s building façade, something that doubtlessly struck the owner as frustratingly illogical (Figure 3.1). This was compounded by the alterations that the bar's entry sequence had gone through in subsequent decades. What was then (in 1967) a pair of curtain wall entry doors covered with posters had been altered into a set of metal-clad double doors reflecting LeBarcito's self-consciously dingy and "industrial" aesthetic.²⁰²

In this case the property owner's objections weren't coming from an overt place of social prejudice or religious intolerance. The items listed in Breevort's addendum letter express the concerns of a developer wanting to maximize their return on investment. Cohen reiterated this at the second CHC meeting on September 18th, taking issue only with the scope and scale of the HCM designation with respect to interior and site features.²⁰³ By this time, the CHC had received three more letters demonstrating support from local scholars, preservation-planners, and the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center (today known as the L.A. LGBT Center).²⁰⁴ Of the nine individuals requesting a decision letter copy following the commission's deliberation, only David Cohen was not a member of the preservation and/or LGBTQ community.²⁰⁵ With local support now well established alongside copious academic research, the CHC voted to submit their recommendation that the Black Cat be declared an HCM. Their report was sent to PLUM a couple of weeks after, and scheduled for a hearing on Tuesday, October 28th.

²⁰² This is evident in a historic photograph The Black Cat Tavern from 1967 as compared with Wes Joe's photos from 2008, at which time the Black Cat had become LeBarcito. Joe and Fisher, "Black Cat Report," 28, 46.

²⁰³ Cohen's earliest objections, communicated verbally through phone calls and meetings with OHR, were initially opposed to any form of designation outright. These were quickly retracted once the established significance of the site for LGBTQ history was made apparent to him. Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

²⁰⁴ One letter writer, Vincent Brook would go onto use the effort to designate The Black Cat Tavern to inform a chapter devoted to "LAnglos and LAGBTs" in his book *Land of Smoke and Mirrors: A Cultural History of Los Angeles*. Cason Anderson, a second letter writer, worked as a preservation-planner and would contribute to the LA LGBT Context Statement six years later. Vincent Brook and Karen Brook, "Re: Cultural Heritage Landmark Designation of the Black Cat," September 5, 2008; Brook, *Land of Smoke and Mirrors*, 223; Carson Anderson, "Re: Cultural Heritage Landmark Designation of the Black Cat: 3909 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90026," September 17, 2008; Grimes, "LGBT Historic Context Statement," i; Jim Key, "Re: L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center Support for Designation of the Black Cat: 3909 Sunset Boulevard," September 8, 2008.

²⁰⁵ Another one of the signatures was from Tara Jones-Hamacher, historic tax credit consultant and principle at Historic Consultants, Inc. "CHC Determination Letter Request Sign Up Sheet" (City of Los Angeles, September 18, 2008).



Figure 3.1: The Black Cat Tavern, April 20th 2019. Photo by author.

In order to counter the possibility of only having certain portions of The Black Cat Tavern landmarked, the Friends of the Black Cat took the opportunity to address the site's material aspects in advance of PLUM's hearing. In a letter responding to Cohen's assertions that only the sign and façade were worthy of designation, Joe defends the material integrity of the site, listing various interior features such as the floor, walls, bar, and raised dance floor. Joe connected these to the associated permits to show that nearly everything in the interior (excepting the ceiling and a now absent kitchenette) was essentially unchanged.²⁰⁶ His assertions were bolstered by another letter (received by PLUM simultaneously) from Alexei Romanoff, a gay man and co-owner of the New Faces bar during the 1967 raid. Alexei's first-hand testimony of the raid and ensuing protest only served to strengthen an application that had already passed the CHC's scrutiny.

Scheduled as item 12 for the PLUM meeting, The Black Cat Tavern HCM recommendation was introduced by Ken Bernstein, the head of OHR (which at this point had existed for only two years). Though adopted by PLUM on consent, the committee chose to hear testimony, first from Wes Joe and Avram Chill. The latter, a board member and representative for Beth Chayim Chadashim, read Alexei Romanoff's letter in his stead. Elizabeth Bougart-Sharkov, as chair for urban design and preservation for the Silver Lake neighborhood council, voiced the neighborhood's support of designating both the building that housed The Black Cat Tavern and its adjacent lot.²⁰⁷ Given the overwhelming support, from both the community and the CD 13 office, PLUM handily voted to forward the designation to city council, scheduling for a meeting on November 7, 2008.

A significant factor during this entire process—one left largely unrecorded in all the application research and correspondence—was the influence of events unfolding in California and the nation leading up to 2008. Discussions of broader social issues are often avoided during the landmarking process, but they remain a contributing factor nonetheless. Though often dismissed as a local concern, preservation is ultimately political, with contemporary events greatly affecting the tone of its discourse generally. This was certainly the case with The Black Cat

²⁰⁶ Wes Joe, "Letter Addressed to PLUM Re: CF# 08-2689, CHC-2008-2708-HCM The Black Cat Bar, 3909 Sunset Blvd.," October 20, 2008.

²⁰⁷ Bougart-Sharkov spoke on behalf of herself, acknowledging that the majority of the neighborhood councilmembers felt they had too many financial investments to be viewed as objective in voicing official neighborhood council support. Taped recording.

Tavern, which was being nominated not only for representing the difficult history of past LGBTQ oppression but was also seen as indicative of the strides that the gay rights movement had made in the four decades since. That this movement was still progressing was undoubtedly on the minds of everyone involved. In California, the rights of LGBTQ people took center stage when the state supreme court declared on May 15, 2008 that Proposition 22 was unconstitutional. From then on “all counties [in California] had to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.”²⁰⁸

The initial response from LGBTQ people, and allied social progressives, was one of general elation as images of gay and lesbian couples tying the knot throughout the state were broadcast nationwide. This increased level of exposure was unprecedented, not only bringing copious media attention to the gay rights movement nationally, but also drawing ire from social conservatives as well. Founded in 2000, the Protect Marriage/Proposition 22 Legal Defense and Education Fund immediately went into action and successfully put a new anti-same-sex-marriage initiative on the ballot for the upcoming 2008 election, titled Proposition 8 (colloquially referred to as “Prop 8”). The counter effort, led by Equality for All/No on 8, was characterized by a relatively weak and “de-gayed” campaign that failed to communicate what marriage could mean for LGBTQ people.²⁰⁹ On election day November 4th, three days before the L.A. city council was set to vote on nominating The Black Cat Tavern as an HCM, Prop 8 passed, revoking the right to same-sex marriage in California.

While approval of The Black Cat Tavern was not in doubt by the time of the council meeting, the recent passage of Prop 8 was addressed and alluded to by nearly everyone speaking in support of the nomination. The same three parties who’d addressed PLUM also reiterated their support to the council.²¹⁰ By now they were able to strengthen their arguments for significance by acknowledging that the sites like The Black Cat Tavern, much like the passing of Prop 8, help

²⁰⁸ Put on the ballot in 2000, Proposition 22 by was essentially a California version of the 1996 federal Defense of Marriage Act (typically referred to as DOMA), stating that “only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in the State of California.” It was proposed by William “Pete” Knight, former fighter pilot and ultraconservative state senator. In response to Massachusetts beginning to legalize same-sex marriages in 2004, Gavin Newsom, then the mayor of San Francisco, began to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The lawsuits resulting from the revocation of those licenses per Prop 22 eventually led to the state supreme court’s decision. Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, First Simon&Schuster hardcover edition. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 602, 606; In Re: Marriage Cases: (43 Cal. 4th 757 2008).

²⁰⁹ The zealous energy of the Prop 8 proponents was also fueled by an alliance of Catholic and Mormon activists bolstered by out of state money. Faderman, *The Gay Revolution*, 606–9.

²¹⁰ Wes Joe and Elizabeth Bougart-Sharkov restated their support, and BCC sent Brett Truemann (instead of Avram Chill).

to disrupt popular assumptions of social progress as always linear and positive. Perhaps the most spirited and influential commentary came from Bill Rosendahl who, then representing CD-11, was the first openly gay councilmember in L.A.'s history.²¹¹ The city council—already supportive of this nomination—jumped at the chance to send a political message, repeatedly referencing notions of struggle, progress, and human rights as themes that The Black Cat Tavern would help to preserve as part of L.A.'s history. Among the eleven councilmembers present, The Black Cat Tavern was unanimously approved, added to the official HCM list, and became L.A.'s first lavender landmark.

Outcome:

Following the HCM designation, the *LA Times* described “thousands flood[ing] the streets of Sunset Junction rallying for the rights of same-sex couples to marry, some demonstrators rested their placards under the sign and crowded into the Silver Lake bar now called Le Barcito.”²¹² Informed by interviews with Alexei Romanoff and Herb Selwyn (the lawyer who defended the Black Cat Raid victims in 1967), the article described the recent designation of The Black Cat Tavern as a means of highlighting a history that, until its designation, had been largely forgotten by younger generations of L.A.'s LGBTQ community. By contextualizing the progress that the gay rights movement had made, interviewees underscored the hope that this site would be preserved as part of a history that was still unfolding. Prop 8 would subsequently be ruled unconstitutional in 2010, a decision that was upheld in 2012.²¹³

In the same year Prop 8 was struck down, efforts to rehabilitate the property began to move forward when a meeting was held with OHR on September 17, 2010 to discuss a design review package from Valerio Inc., an architecture firm contracted to draw up designs for a Starbucks. Intended to take the place of the laundromat that had vacated the (eastern) tenant

²¹¹ In 2013, Rosendahl was succeeded as councilmember by another openly gay man, Mike Bonin. To date, councilmembers Bonin and Mitch O'Farrell (the latter as CD 13 councilmember and Garcetti's former planning director) are the highest-ranking LGBTQ officials in L.A.

²¹² Joanna Lin, “Bar Still Symbolic in Gay Community,” *Los Angeles Times* (1996-Current); *Los Angeles, Calif.*, November 16, 2008, sec. California.

²¹³ Faderman, *The Gay Revolution*, 618–20; Perry, et al. v. Schwarzenegger, et al., No. C 09-2292 (U.S. District Court for Northern California 2010); Perry, et al. v. Brown, et al., No. 10-16696 (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit 2012).

space adjacent to Le Barcito, the plans depict an untouched Le Barcito and revitalized façade facing Sunset Blvd. The design also depicted three curtain wall bays, punched into the existing east-facing wall, between the building's historic piers/pilasters. An outdoor seating area was also proposed, jutting out at an angle (in plan) into the parking lot. While this design was never built, it reflected Cohen's continuing wish to open the building toward Hyperion, activating the street corner.

Le Barcito announced it would close the following year, hosting a farewell party on Halloween night 2011.²¹⁴ A few months later, OHR received a letter from Brevoort committing to recognizing the bar's history with a plaque as part of any new renovation and addressing the question of the bar structure as a significant feature. The former owner of Le Barcito, which had been operating since July 1993, informed Brevoort by telephone that he'd resurfaced the bar top in the early 2000s.²¹⁵ Additional permits from 1981 also indicated that the paneling in the bar had been replaced, with liquor license records citing different operators in the space throughout the 1980s. At this point, it seemed that keeping the original bar as an interpretive feature was now in conflict with the owner's desire to have a more leasable space moving forward.

By now rumors had been circulating that the Village Idiot, a prominent restaurant on Melrose, had leased the space.²¹⁶ Village Idiot's owner, Charlie Conrad, had signed a lease and, as luck would have it, took an interest in the history of the site after approaching Wes Joe for advice.²¹⁷ Joe closely reviewed the design of a new bar that would revive The Black Cat Tavern name and theme in the form of an upscale gastropub, depicted in a bid set of architectural drawings submitted to the city by Soler Architecture on February 3.²¹⁸ These were accompanied by a letter, detailing eight main points that the new design would adhere to:

1. At this time, there is only one tenant committed to the building, so this project will be submitted in two phases, with a second submittal occurring when a tenant for the eastern section of the building has been identified and a lease finalized.

²¹⁴ The Eastsider, "Silver Lake Gay Nightclub to Throw One Last Party," The Eastsider LA, October 31, 2011, https://www.theeastsiderla.com/eastsider_on_the_go/silver-lake-gay-nightclub-to-throw-one-last-party/article_dad6b89b-02bf-557f-9f9f-1a58dbe37fa7.html.

²¹⁵ Roger A. Brevoort, "Re: Black Cat Building 3903 Sunset Boulevard HCM #939," January 12, 2012.

²¹⁶ Emma G. Gallegos, "Le Barcito Closes in Silver Lake — And There Goes the Gayborhood," LAist, November 2, 2011, https://laist.com/2011/11/02/le_barcito_closes_and_there_goes_th.php.

²¹⁷ Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

²¹⁸ The Eastsider, "A New (Fancy) Life for Silver Lake's Black Cat Tavern," The Eastsider LA, October 10, 2012, https://www.theeastsiderla.com/eastsider_on_the_go/a-new-fancy-life-for-silver-lake-s-black-cat/article_28fda926-ffc0-5fe6-8512-ec0de78a8b4.html.

2. The current owner ... intends to add a commemorative plaque on the exterior at a future date.
3. The west [Sunset Blvd.] storefront will be reconstructed to its ca. 1966 design based on the historic photographs and images that show solid glass panels. In order to retain the original character of the façade, the project is requesting a variance to the ADA guidelines under the California State Historic Building Code to allow a 5x5 foot landing area and very slight ramp to be placed inside the building so that the appearance of the façade can be more accurately restored.
4. The eastern storefront, which dates from the 1960s era, will be repaired as carefully as possible as part of a reglazing procedure intended to retain the historic storefront material. The existing paint will be stripped to reveal the mill-finish appearance from that time.
5. The original framework of the Black Cat sign panel will be retained and reused.
6. The interior of the west [Black Cat Tavern] portion will [...] feature a new design that will reflect the layout and spatial configuration of the prior bar although it does not intend to be an accurate restoration of the 1967 appearance. The bar itself, as rehabilitated, will remain in the same location and have the same footprint. Subsequent to our most recent letter discussing the bar [...] it has been revealed that the primary construction material of the [extant] bar surfaces is Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF) which was not manufactured and in common use until the 1980s, which further verifies the conclusion that the actual bar was modified in the 1980s (and perhaps afterward) and nothing appears to remain in place from 1967.
7. A proposed addition to the rear elevation of the building has been deleted from the plans. The alternative shown on these drawings is a fenced enclosure that surrounds a refrigeration unit, as well as a rear access, and an ADA compliant wheelchair lift. The proposal for the minor alteration and fenced enclosure on the rear does not have any impact on the historic aspects of the building.
8. The entire building will be painted in a grey color. The repainting will occur in conjunction with the rehabilitation and restoration of the east and west portions of the storefront.²¹⁹

Once finished, the revived Black Cat Tavern sported a more lavish interior than any that had existed on the site before. In typical design marketing language, it was intended to be “reminiscent of an upscale London pub with a timeless feel and warm atmosphere,” along with “artwork on the walls ... curated to complement the traditional interior, with many tongue-in-cheek references to the restaurant’s name and historic images of the gay rights demonstrations

²¹⁹ Roger A. Brevoort, “Re: Black Cat, HCM #939 3903 Sunset Boulevard Rehabilitation Plans,” February 8, 2012.

that took place at the site in the 1960s.”²²⁰ Though it’s easy to dismiss the revived Black Cat as privileging the form-over-fabric approach that Brevoort had advocated for in his letters to OHR, the retention of the bar’s placement with respect to the entry sequence (along with its underlying structure) proved sufficient enough to meet Wes Joe’s scrutiny.²²¹ At the end of the day this also made formal sense, since bars are typically large and not easy to move given that they depend on power and water connections often embedded in the building. Brevoort himself acknowledges that the design team recommended this to save money and construction hassle by simply recladding the existing bar structure and adding interior features that could, if desired, simply be removed in the far-off future without extensive damage to existing exterior and party walls.

The return of The Black Cat Tavern in a more affluent form, though a victory for preservationists, seemed indicative to many of a wave of gentrification taking hold in Silver Lake at the time.²²² Embodying the role of a progressive “angel” developer in this case, Conrad’s desire to embrace The Black Cat Tavern’s history was also informed by his own experience as a Silver Lake resident who wanted to maintain good relations with his politically active neighbors. The building for A Different Light, an LGBTQ bookstore that had long been a neighborhood anchor, was demolished just months before The Black Cat Tavern’s revival.²²³ That same year, the Sunset Junction festival, which had operated since 1980, terminated its operations under a cloud of unpaid debts.²²⁴ Though many of these local changes were often overshadowed by the increasing progress same-sex marriage was making nationwide, they did not go completely unnoticed. *The Advocate*, one of the most significant entities born of The Black Cat Tavern’s historical legacy, re-enacted the 1967 protest in front of Le Barcito (with activists holding signs

²²⁰ Jeffrey Soler, “Projects,” soler architecture, accessed November 10, 2019, <https://www.solerarch.com/projects>.

²²¹ Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

²²² Gallegos, “Le Barcito Closes in Silver Lake — And There Goes the Gayborhood.”

²²³ Founded in Silver Lake in 1979, “A Different Light eventually added locations in West Hollywood, San Francisco and New York, becoming one of the nation’s largest gay-owned booksellers.” While there were no immediate plans to redevelop after A Different Light closed its doors in 1992, word of an attempt by local preservationists to landmark the site in 2011 had likely reached the developer, who hastily bulldozed the building overnight. As of this writing the site remains undeveloped. The Eastsider, “Silver Lake Gay Landmark Gets Bulldozed,” The Eastsider LA, accessed November 10, 2019, https://www.theeastsiderla.com/archives/silver-lake-gay-landmark-gets-bulldozed/article_a24c2346-974f-5e66-89fc-d3c0b4e2853a.html; Anthea Raymond, “Gay Literary Landmark Leveled at Sunset Junction Saturday,” Echo Park-Silver Lake, CA Patch, September 24, 2011, <https://patch.com/california/echopark/gay-literary-landmark-leveled-at-sunset-junction-saturday>.

²²⁴ Originally founded as a means of reconciling tensions between Silver Lake’s LGBTQ community and their working class Latino neighbors, the Sunset Junction festival typically took the form of a parade with multicultural performances, vendors, and musical acts. Nathan Masters, “A Brief History of Sunset Junction: Street Cars, Gay Rights and Its Namesake Festival,” KCET, August 25, 2011, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/a-brief-history-of-sunset-junction-street-cars-gay-rights-and-its-namesake-festival>.

speaking to contemporary LGBTQ issues beyond marriage equality) on its 45th anniversary in 2012.²²⁵

In a 2015 interview (arranged by Conrad) with the blog *Thirsty in LA*, Alexei Romanoff served to underscore the importance of keeping the significance of the bar alive, comparing it to other prominent civil rights sites such as Selma, Alabama and Gettysburg. Romanoff's husband, David Farah (also a local LGBTQ historian), voiced his hope that the revived Black Cat "could parlay the history of this place—they've done such a wonderful job of it—[though] the real significance is not this artwork, but the few little pieces they have on the wall about the demonstration here."²²⁶ In response to this, and as an extension of his ongoing engagement with the heritage of the site, Charlie Conrad chose to incorporate its history beyond the requisite plaques and pictures as part of an interpretive program. In addition to hosting occasional workshops on queer subjects and lectures, The Black Cat Tavern ensures that every server who works there knows about—and can recount to curious patrons who ask—the site's LGBTQ history and significance.²²⁷

While The Black Cat Tavern has been saved in the physical sense along with its critical interpretive features, it is no longer the "living" gay bar that it was at the time of its designation.²²⁸ Despite this, the site still maintains a critical significance, not only for L.A.'s LGBTQ community but also for allies and social justice progressives of all stripes. On February 11, 2017, a reenactment of the Black Cat protest was held to commemorate its 50th anniversary.

²²⁵ "Revisiting the Black Cat," February 17, 2012, <http://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/features/2012/02/17/revisiting-black-cat>.

²²⁶ As the co-owner of the New Faces bar with a woman named Lee Roy, Alexei has continued to give interviews and speak about The Black Cat Tavern's context and significance. Located just up the street from The Black Cat Tavern at 4001 Sunset Blvd, the New Faces bar eventually became a prominent gay porn emporium called Circus of Books in 1982. In 2016, Circus of Books closed its Silver Lake location, which as of this writing is now a marijuana dispensary called MOTA. Rachel Mason, a queer filmmaker whose parents (Barry and Karen Mason) owned and operated Circus of Books, produced a documentary detailing the role and significance of the business for the LGBTQ community. The documentary, *Circus of Books*, was released on Netflix in 2019. While the West Hollywood location of Circus of Books is listed as an eligible historic resource, the original "Circus of Books" neon sign from the Silver Lake location was donated to the Museum of Neon Art in Glendale, CA. thirstyinla, "Alexei Romanoff and the LGBT Civil Rights Legacy of The Black Cat"; Elijah Chiland, "Silver Lake's Circus of Books Is Closing Up Shop," Curbed LA, August 8, 2016, <https://la.curbed.com/2016/8/8/12404716/silver-lake-circus-of-books-closing-gay-porn-store-dispensary>; Rafael Fontes, JQ Queer Sunday Screening Series: Question and Answer session with Rachel Mason and Buck Angel, Karen and Barry Mason., Zoom Meeting, May 24, 2020.

²²⁷ Rafael Fontes, Interview with Adrian Scott Fine, In person conversation, November 4, 2019.

²²⁸ This isn't to say that The Black Cat Tavern today is in any way unwelcoming towards LGBTQ people. The space as it currently exists, while welcoming everyone, can no longer be defined by a self-consciously LGBTQ-focused program or understood as a queer space in this sense.

Volunteer reenactors led by Mark Henning, an LGBTQ activist and founder/director of The Blank Theater, recreated protest signs and graphics from photos of the original event a half century earlier. This time around, the slogans and chants uttered were a response to Donald Trump, who had assumed the office of the presidency in an inauguration ceremony just three weeks before.²²⁹ Owing to the lack of space on the sidewalk in front of the Black Cat façade and sign, this protest occupied the corner lot adjacent to the building, surrounding a raised stage that had been set up for the occasion.

Mitch O’Farrell, the former planning director and now councilmember for CD 13, spoke about the sacrifices that the Black Cat protesters made, referring to them as “the pioneers that we have been able to build our lives on the backs of.”²³⁰ O’Farrell was followed by Eric Garcetti, the CD 13 representative during the 2008 landmarking process and now mayor of L.A., who spoke on the importance of “marking history in order to make history.”²³¹ Garcetti’s words culminated with Alexei Romanov (standing next to Wes Joe) raising hands with a female LAPD officer. Eliciting cheers from the assembled crowd, this act was meant to symbolize the “turning of the page” of history with respect to the political and social status of LGBTQ people. While the Black Cat is today more of a queer memorial than a queer space, it not only represents the struggle for civil rights, but also the struggle to secure a place for LGBTQ memory in L.A.

²²⁹ While Trump purported to support LGBTQ people during his election campaign, these claims lacked any substantial backing in terms of policy proposals. Under the Trump administration, the Department of Justice argued against considering sexual orientation under employment discrimination protections. The administration also instituted a ban on transgender soldiers in the military. Julia Manchester, “Federal Appeals Court Rules in Favor of Gay Rights,” Text, TheHill, February 26, 2018, <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/375612-federal-appeals-court-rules-in-favor-of-gay-rights>; Dave Philipps, “New Rule for Transgender Troops: Stick to Your Birth Sex, or Leave,” *The New York Times*, March 13, 2019, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/13/us/transgender-troops-ban.html>.

²³⁰ Mark E. Potts, *50th Anniversary of the Black Cat Demonstration* (Los Angeles Times, 2017).

²³¹ Ibid.

Chapter 4

The Tom of Finland House

Significance:

Sex and sexuality are intrinsic to the human experience. While few would disagree with this statement outright, sexual expression—both in physical fact as in representation—is loaded with cultural meanings that vary and shift over time. In her pioneering essay *Thinking Sex*, renowned cultural anthropologist and sex theorist Gayle Rubin describes these shifts in order “to contribute to the pressing task of creating an accurate, humane, and genuinely liberatory body of thought about sexuality.”²³² As part of an effort to better understand how western societies construct a hierarchy of values related to certain kinds of sex, Rubin details specific historical periods (largely in England and the U.S.) where struggles to define sexual meanings became particularly contentious. The resulting laws and consensuses reached by a heteronormative mainstream, especially during the immediate post-war years, held significant consequences for anyone who did not fit in:

In the 1950s, in the United States, major shifts in the organization of sexuality took place. Instead of focusing on prostitution or masturbation, the anxieties of the 1950s condensed most specifically around the image of the “homosexual menace” and the dubious specter of the “sex offender.” Just before and after the Second World War, the “sex offender” became an object of public fear and scrutiny... From the late 1940s until the early 1960s, erotic communities whose activities did not fit the postwar American dream drew intense persecution.²³³

The post-war shifts that Rubin describes played out in public spaces where sexual activity, and anyone associated with deviant behaviors or identities, would be forcefully targeted. Even today, spaces, businesses, and neighborhoods associated with sex (and the sex industry especially) are subject to restrictions and regulations that vary depending on the social standards of any given state or local community. While these standards are subjective, they continue to

²³² Gayle Rubin, *Deviations a Gayle Rubin Reader*, A John Hope Franklin Center Book (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 145.

²³³ Rubin uses the term “erotic communities” to include sex workers of all identities, along with individuals (including cisgender heterosexuals) who choose to engage in sexual acts subject to disapproval. Rubin employs the theoretical framework of a “charmed circle” to diagram out which forms of sex are viewed positively and negatively. For instance, sexual acts described as falling within the circle of acceptance are those free of overt monetary exchange, private, heterosexual, and reproductively-oriented sex occurring within a marriage. Acts outside of the circle (subject to disapproval) would likewise be those that are purchased/transactional, public, queer, non-reproductive, and outside the bounds of any matrimonial or legal status. Ibid, 139–40.

reflect social biases and commonly held assumptions of where, when, and how sex or activities related to the prurient interest should take place.²³⁴ Historically, the results of this persecution for LGBTQ sexual expression have not only been temporally enforced but also representational in scope. With respect to the former, temporal controls were more viscerally experienced, forcing queer and erotic communal activities to take place at night or in marginal urban areas. When it comes to representation, whether in literature, art, film, music, or theater, the most telling evidence lies in the immense absence of overtly queer characters, images, themes, and stories.

When LGBTQ representation did occur, it was often coded, usually negative, and typically meant to characterize queer people as sinister or villainous. Historical analyses of these tendencies tend to emphasize the role of Hollywood, since movies quickly began to drive, define, and produce twentieth century popular culture.²³⁵ Within the film industry, LGBTQ people not only contributed as prominent actors and directors (often closeted), but also in the realms of production and set design. The early development of the film industry helped turn L.A. into a locus of creative industries, attracting queer artists of all stripes to a region that was otherwise extremely conservative well into the mid-twentieth century. The slow and uneven waning of this conservatism toward the end of the postwar period allowed various segments of L.A.'s creative scene to evolve beyond the social constraints of homophobic moralists:

Los Angeles emerged as an important center for modern art in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s when LGBT[Q] artists were becoming more visible within the art community and when lesbians were seeking autonomy from the gay liberation movement. During this period, artistic expressions of homosexuality became more acceptable, but were not without controversy.²³⁶

Instances of awareness and acknowledgement of an LGBTQ artistic legacy reached the broader culture sporadically during this period, often being met with disapproval (or at best

²³⁴ While the forceful control of LGBTQ and erotic communities was more overt in terms of oppressive police practices (see Chapter 3), this targeting had long existed in some form or another, strengthening as western societies (and urban areas especially) began to change rapidly during the industrial revolution of the mid-nineteenth century. In the U.S., attitudes toward non-approved forms of sex with respect to LGBTQ people have continued to shift through the gay liberation and AIDS crisis eras. Spatially expressed, anti-sex attitudes have generally fueled policy crackdowns via increasingly draconian zoning codes designed to expel sex-centered businesses and enterprises out of inner-city areas as a prelude to redevelopment. Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 149–93.

²³⁵ This influence, and the coded but visible presence of LGBTQ people in the interwar period of the film industry is detailed extensively in the second “Going Hollywood” chapter of *Gay L.A.* Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 38–69.

²³⁶ Grimes, “LGBT Historic Context Statement,” 89.

ambivalence) in a generally conformist culture. While the value of queer creativity was rarely disputed—and routinely celebrated—in niche artistic and creative circles during the mid-twentieth century, attention paid to it often reinforced harmful stereotypes outside of those circles. With respect to gay males and queer men especially, the trope of the sensitive, artistic, and effeminate “sissy” has continued to be reiterated in complex ways.²³⁷ In a machoistic postwar context, this contributed to the common perception of gay men as incapable of embodying traditionally masculine roles. These assumptions, when coupled with stigmas related to the mechanics of specific sexual acts, led to the common perception of gay men as not being “real” men to begin with.²³⁸

There is perhaps no other twentieth century artist whose work more forcefully reacts to—and rejects—these assumptions than the person who worked under the pseudonym of Tom of Finland, born Touko Valio Laaksonen in Kaarina Finland in 1920.²³⁹ Tom traced his fascination with depicting masculinity to a rural upbringing where most of the men surrounding him were farmers and loggers. His ability to draw, evident early on in childhood, allowed him to explore the kinds of male archetypes that would come to dominate his erotic work.²⁴⁰ Unquestionably masculinist in focus, Tom’s art portrayed male homosexual acts as natural, healthy, and fun. He did this by focusing on “big, uncomplicated, physically oriented men, proud of their muscles and ... easily aroused, whether to anger or to lust, but also—and this is important—easy to please and quick to forgive, always ready with a handclasp and an embrace.”²⁴¹

²³⁷ While the word sissy is used to denote anyone exhibiting feminine behavior generally, it also connotes cowardice and feebleness. Women perceived as too masculine were subject to just as much violence and intimidation in real life as queer men, but the level of social anxiety and vitriol in media tended to be directed more forcefully towards feminine men. In focusing on the legacy of LGBTQ representation in film, Vito Russo devotes a chapter to the sissy as “a symbol of the rank betrayal of the myth of male superiority, [whereas] tomboy [masculine] women have seemed to reinforce that myth and have often been indulged in acting it out.” Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*, Rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 3–60.

²³⁸ Steven G. Underwood, *Gay Men and Anal Eroticism: Tops, Bottoms, and Versatiles* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2003), 1–18, 29–38.

²³⁹ For the sake of consistency with supporting sources and essays—and out of respect for the artist’s chosen persona—Touko Laaksonen will be referred to as “Tom” or “Tom of Finland” from this point forward.

²⁴⁰ This specifically refers to work that Laaksonen produced under the Tom of Finland label (or just “Tom” in his earliest drawings). At the start of his career, Laaksonen worked as a freelance commercial illustrator, eventually working as a full-time commercial artist at McCann Erickson from 1958 to 1973. Durk Dehner and Tom Cho, “Recommendation Report: The Tom of Finland House” (Los Angeles, Calif., United States: Los Angeles Department of City Planning, August 4, 2016), 2–3.

²⁴¹ F. Valentine Hooven, *Tom of Finland: His Life and Times* (New York: StMartin’s Press, 1993), 2.

Due to Finland's socially conservative post-war environment, much of Tom of Finland's early erotic work was drawn in secret and kept hidden.²⁴² The turning point for his exposure came when a drawing of his was featured on the cover of the Spring 1957 issue of *Physique Pictorial*, a subscription-based magazine owned and managed by the L.A. photographer Bob Mizer.²⁴³ So called "beefcake" magazines such as *Physique Pictorial* skirted obscenity laws by featuring young, muscular and scantily clad men in athletic or whimsical settings, ostensibly marketing themselves as guides for male body-building and good health.²⁴⁴ The importance of these publications for gay men during the post-war era cannot be understated, as they were (for many) the safest or sole connection to their desires, fantasies, and sexuality. In the U.S., this was underscored by a deep-seated cultural resonance detailed by Edward Lucie-Smith, the British art critic and historian:

The [Tom of Finland drawings] presented the American gay audience with a new, far more positive image of male homosexuality, one that fitted in with other aspects of American life: The love of sports, of the outdoors, and the free and easy male camaraderie that survived from the years when many Americans were frontiersmen. In some respects this artist from a remote Nordic country seemed to revive the spirit of Walt Whitman.²⁴⁵

The enthusiastically positive response to his work made Tom of Finland drawings a regular *Physique Pictorial* feature for the next two decades. This initially niche exposure would eventually lead to legions of gay fans, opening a new market for private commissions that Tom pursued in earnest.

Tom of Finland's work changed over time, reflecting and responding to cultural shifts in various ways. While early drawings maintained a focus on strapping young outdoorsmen-laborers, the increasing predominance of bikers spoke to subcultures that were increasingly becoming well-known by the 1960s via Hollywood films.²⁴⁶ Tom often employed a comic book format to tell stories, maintaining a consistent visual attitude in his depiction of exaggeratedly

²⁴² This early period, covering Laaksonen's time in the military, also informed subsequent Tom of Finland works dealing with uniformed laborers, soldiers, and policemen. Durk Dehner et al., *Tom of Finland XXL* (Köln ; Taschen, 2009), 21.

²⁴³ Dehner and Cho, "Tom of Finland Report," 2–3, 11–12.

²⁴⁴ It was Mizer who appended "of Finland" to Laaksonen's original mononymic "Tom" signature. Ibid, 3.

²⁴⁵ Dehner et al., *Tom of Finland XXL*, 21.

²⁴⁶ Films such as *The Wild One* (1953) starring Marlon Brando were key in this regard, in addition to various "peplum" or "sword and sandal" films dealing with ancient Greek and Roman themes. Ibid, 21.

muscular male bodies.²⁴⁷ The bodybuilding culture in Southern California, then resurgent in the 1950s and '60s, was also a significant influence for Laaksonen due to his publishing connection with Mizer. Images from the Athletic Model Guild (Mizer's photography studio) would often serve as models for preparatory sketches. By engaging and mirroring the "beefcake" images of the time, Tom of Finland drawings cemented the aesthetic ideal of the "Tom's man" as "square-jawed, broad-shouldered and with an engaging smile."²⁴⁸

The relaxing of obscenity laws in the late 1960s allowed beefcake magazines to become more explicit, giving Tom more freedom and artistic license.²⁴⁹ Loosening attitudes in the broader culture, along with the increasingly confrontational and anti-assimilationist stance of a post-Stonewall LGBTQ community, opened the way for depicting more graphic scenes. Tom's work during this period entered a thematic lockstep with an evolving gay male culture "of the 1970s and early '80s, [where] sex was increasingly ritualized."²⁵⁰ The sartorial and stylistic choices he employed allowed Tom's characters to subvert the hyper masculine roles that had, until his work, almost exclusively been perceived as heterosexual. Whether depicting construction workers (hardhats), cowboys (wide-brimmed hats and leather chaps), leathermen (harnesses and jackets), or military officers and sailors (peaked caps and flared pants), Tom's men were proudly, enthusiastically, and aggressively homosexual.²⁵¹ While the bodies Tom depicted were never intended to be naturalistic and were heavily stylized, they nonetheless "influenced what the gay world wore and how its denizens behaved."²⁵²

The peak of Tom's influence on gay male culture coincided with his deciding to pursue erotic artwork full-time in 1973. After an initial exhibit that same year in Hamburg, where most

²⁴⁷ Laaksonen would also center many of his stories and vignettes on specific characters of his own invention, often based on popular male models or actors. The most prominent and recurring of these was a mustached, dark-haired leatherman named Kake. Dian Hanson and Tom of Finland, *Tom of Finland. The Complete Kake Comics*, Multilingual edition (Köln: TASCHEN, 2019).

²⁴⁸ Dehner et al., *Tom of Finland XXL*, 22.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 22.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 25.

²⁵¹ In her dissertation dealing with leather culture in the Bay Area, Rubin defines leather as "a key symbol for a distinctive population of male homosexuals who coalesced into coherent groups just after the end of Second World War. These communities exhibited a unique concatenation of sexual tastes, gender preferences, and social structures that were expressed by and through the iconography of leather. All of these erotic desires and symbols exist elsewhere and find other expressions in different social contexts. What is unique to gay male leather is this singular combination and the fact that this way of arranging desires, institutions, and symbolism has been an effective vehicle for creating communities, identities, and experiences." Gayle Rubin, "The Valley of the Kings: Leathermen in San Francisco, 1960-1990" (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1994), 22.

²⁵² Dehner et al., *Tom of Finland XXL*, 25.

of his displayed works were stolen, it would be another five years before he would travel (this time to L.A.) to exhibit work again.²⁵³ In that brief period, the stylistic expression of queer men shifted dramatically from casually low-key, hippie-influenced androgynous styles to more aggressively masculine ensembles, appropriating the working class symbols that Tom had long been representing in his work. Often referred to as the “clone” or the “Castro clone,” this shift was a significant one:

The remaking of the homosexual male body—the birth of the muscular, masculine “clone”—was one of the chief projects and achievements of the gay liberation movement. While the black civil rights movement [of the 1960s] has been primarily about laws, and women’s liberation was about consciousness, gay liberation was about the assertion of physical presence ... as the gay movement evolved, its logic seemed to lead to what marketers would term a “rebranding” of homosexuality, to make it seem modern, acceptable, and above all, masculine.²⁵⁴

The exclusionary overtones of this rebranding effort aren’t difficult to discern, with willingness to embody this image controversial even within the broader LGBTQ community.²⁵⁵ Derisively acknowledged by contemporaneous writers, clone culture was part of the post-Stonewall fragmentation of the LGBTQ movement generally.²⁵⁶ This in turn sowed alienation and separatism in the broader LGBTQ movement, inspiring many lesbian and queer woman to go

²⁵³ Dehner and Cho, “Tom of Finland Report,” 3.

²⁵⁴ Thomas Hine, *The Great Funk: Falling Apart and Coming Together (On A Shag Rug) in the Seventies*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 117, 118–19.

²⁵⁵ In this instance, a resurgence of aggressive masculinity within gay male culture (to the extent that it had ever truly receded to begin with) not only directed itself at queer women but also effeminate men (especially men of color) who did not fit into the clone scene, which today is more commonly described as “masc.” Joshua Gamson, *The Fabulous Sylvester: The Legend, the Music, the Seventies in San Francisco* (New York: H. Holt, 2005), 221–23.

²⁵⁶ While the “clone” archetype was perceived as having originated in San Francisco’s Castro district (by the late 1970s a visibly prominent gay area), its resonance endures for queer men throughout western countries especially. More recent attention to the aesthetics of this period came with the release of the film *Milk* (2008) which told the story of the prominent gay politician and civil rights leader (assassinated in 1978) at a time when Prop 8 had brought the discussion of LGBTQ rights into the political mainstream. “Glad to Be a Clone ...,” *Gay News*; London, August 21, 1980; Eddie Shapiro, “Remaking the Castro Clone,” *OUT Magazine*, December 1, 2008, <http://www.out.com/entertainment/2008/12/01/remaking-castro-clone>; Neil Broverman, “Op-Ed: The Gay Clones Everyone Knows,” *The Advocate*, October 21, 2013, <http://www.advocate.com/commentary/2013/10/21/op-ed-gay-clones-everyone-knows>.

their own way socially. By extension, queer unity in this period was largely maintained to counter reactionary political threats from social conservatives.²⁵⁷

In the midst of all this, Tom came to L.A. in 1978 to exhibit his work in solo gallery shows, staying with Durk Dehner and three other men in the neighborhood of Echo Park, eventually becoming a semi-permanent resident by 1980.²⁵⁸ Located on a quiet hilltop street north of Sunset Boulevard, the house at 1421 Laveta Terrace (Fig. 4.1) was significant for Tom because it allowed him to fully engage erotic art in a supportive setting. In L.A., he was not only able to be Tom on a full-time basis, but also connect to his primary audience:

Curiously, the artist whose work has inspired men all over the world remains underappreciated in his native Finland. Most of his art is considered [too] pornographic by Finnish standards and consequently has never been widely circulated there. ‘People think Finland is as liberated as Sweden or Denmark, but that just isn’t the case,’ says Tom. ‘Most of my work *is* pornographic—it *is* meant to excite ... that’s one of the reasons I enjoy visiting the United States; so many gays there are unafraid to show the strong masculine side of themselves.’²⁵⁹

L.A. provided Tom with new inspiration in the form of diverse subjects, evident in his increasing depiction of men of color during this period.²⁶⁰ As the AIDS crisis emerged and continued to worsen throughout the 1980s, he responded by advocating for safe sex and depicting condom use as part of a healthy, shame-free, and proudly homosexual life. This grappling with illness and death, to an extent reflected in many of the (slightly) older characters that he drew in this period, presaged his own death from an emphysema-induced stroke in 1991.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ While scholars like Faderman have referred to these trends as “internecine wars” over political and economic clout within the gay movement, they were also reflective of internalized gay male misogyny. Early efforts to form serious political advocacy committees came from the creation of the Municipal Elections Committee in L.A., which supported LGBTQ allies (and eventually LGBTQ individuals themselves) for local elections. This happened alongside efforts to counter the Briggs Initiative, a reaction to the repeal of California’s anti-sodomy law in 1975 which would’ve required public educators to forbid or fire LGBTQ (in the language of the proposal simply “gay”) teachers statewide. Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 210–29. Faderman, *The Gay Revolution*, 367–70.

²⁵⁸ In addition to the *Physique Pictorial* connection, Tom was drawn to L.A. by “Durk Dehner, a gay man who was then 28 years old. Two years earlier, Durk had seen an image of Tom’s art in an advertisement at a gay bar in New York. Struck by the image, he had written Tom a fan letter and they had begun a correspondence.” While he had his own room, visa restrictions would require Tom to return to Finland every six months. Dehner and Cho, “Tom of Finland Report,” 4; Martyn Thompson and Mayer Rus, *Tom House: Tom of Finland in Los Angeles*, ed. Michael Reynolds (New York: Rizzoli, 2016), 11–12.

²⁵⁹ Thompson, Romesburg, and Gessen, *Long Road to Freedom*, 257.

²⁶⁰ Dehner and Cho, “Tom of Finland Report,” 8.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5, 8–9.



Figure 4.1: The Tom of Finland House, April 20th 2019. Photo by author.

Process:

Tom's work, with its politically charged subject matter, had plenty of detractors within the LGBTQ community. His graphic depictions of sex were not only shocking to anyone with chaste sensibilities, but also for their settings, which included everyday public environments such as parks, bars, and alleyways.²⁶² This reflected his own experiences as a soldier in Helsinki during the Second World War, acknowledging a near universal reality of public sex that the LGBTQ community at the time (especially the homophile organizations of the 1950s and '60s) would've preferred not to acknowledge for the sake of respectability. This controversy only increased in the post-Stonewall era, where leather (and BDSM practices) became the focus of heteronormative anxiety and persecution during the AIDS crisis.²⁶³ In light of all this, it may seem improbable that a historic resource in L.A. would not only be landmarked to commemorate the legacy of Tom as an openly gay artist, but one whose work centered on explicit—and intentionally pornographic—depictions of gay male sexuality.

The shift in attitudes regarding Tom's work was no accident, beginning before his death with the creation of the Tom of Finland Foundation in 1984. Durk Dehner—Tom's L.A. host, muse, and business partner following the death of his longtime companion Veli in 1981—initially proposed creating a foundation to secure copyrights for Tom's art and ensure that he would receive just financial compensation for his work.²⁶⁴ Practically speaking, this would counteract the theft, unauthorized reproductions, and plagiarism that had dogged Tom's erotic art career. At a deeper level, it was also an effort to safeguard Tom's significant artistic heritage and legacy for posterity. The more Durk saw how his friends (and other queer men of different generations) flocked to meet Tom and thank him for changing their lives for the better, the more apparent it became that Tom's artwork stood for more than single-minded prurience alone.²⁶⁵

²⁶² Dehner et al., *Tom of Finland XXL*, 47–49.

²⁶³ While not mutually exclusive, the terms “leather” and BDSM have often been conflated. BDSM, which stands for bondage, domination/submission, sadomasochism, describes individuals who engage in a range of sexual practices involving roleplay and the use of sex toys, etc. Gayle Rubin addresses this in the introduction to her dissertation, where debates over the funding of the National Endowment for the Arts reached a boiling point concerning leather, sexual, and sacrilegious themes in the works of photographers Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. Such debates speak to, among other things, “the systematic misuse of leather to promote a variety of repressive social and political agendas.” Rubin, “The Valley of the Kings,” 21.

²⁶⁴ Dehner et al., *Tom of Finland XXL*, 49.

²⁶⁵ Rafael Fontes, Interview with S.R. Sharp, Durk Dehner and Marc Bellenger, In person conversation, November 22, 2019.

In the final decade of Tom's life, the bulk of his original drawings and unsold work was shipped to the Dehner's Echo Park home, which by the end of the 1980s was becoming known simply as "TOM house."²⁶⁶ A simultaneous effort was undertaken to give Tom himself more exposure, responding to critics and clarifying his artistic intent:

Some of [Tom's] more overt drawings have proved controversial, with critics accusing the artist of possessing a fascist mentality. Although the complaint is a familiar one, it still disturbs Tom a great deal. 'In the sixties, a French publication printed a story which said I was a Nazi,' he explains, 'and they advised their readers not to buy my work. It's a nasty rumor and much to my dismay it continues to surface ... all I want to communicate through my art is that it's okay to be gay and masculine.'²⁶⁷

Following Tom's death, his work continued to be shown in both solo and group exhibits internationally. In his native Finland, a documentary about Tom's work titled *Daddy and the Muscle Academy* was produced in 1991. This was followed by a biography *Tom of Finland: His Life and Times* the following year, which led to the first mainstream publications of his artwork by the renowned art publishing company Taschen.²⁶⁸

Additional Taschen books followed, fashion-merchandising deals were signed, and by the mid-2000s Tom of Finland works were being acquired by LACMA, MoMA, the Art Institute of Chicago, and SF MoMa. The largest of the Taschen publications, *Tom of Finland XXL*, is a 15 by 19 inch tome (with an intentional 666 pages) containing large reproductions of some of Tom's most iconic images. Previously unpublished early works and preparatory sketches abound, in addition to a series of commissioned essays where Tom's significance is acknowledged by prominent queer cultural figures such as Armistead Maupin and John Waters.²⁶⁹ High praise is also provided by the polemical feminist art historian Camille Paglia:

The swaggering sexual personae of Tom of Finland's world demonstrate the intimate intertwining of art and pornography, which moralists of both the right and the left have tried to drive apart ... Thus Tom's erotic designs have an ancient lineage: He is meditating on one of the great themes of Western culture, the pagan glorification of the ideal male body ... In masculinizing the gay persona, Tom broke, for good or ill, with the

²⁶⁶ Dehner and Cho, "Tom of Finland Report," 9–10.

²⁶⁷ Thompson, Romesburg, and Gessen, *Long Road to Freedom*, 257.

²⁶⁸ Dehner and Cho, "Tom of Finland Report," 1–6 CV and Attachment.

²⁶⁹ Maupin is an author known primarily for his *Tales of the City* series, while Waters is one of earliest filmmakers to deal with explicit queer themes through his transgressive cult films such as *Pink Flamingoes* (1972), *Female Trouble* (1974), and the more mainstream *Hairspray* (1998). Dehner et al., *Tom of Finland XXL*, 93, 485.

cultural legacy of the brilliant Oscar Wilde, who promoted and flamboyantly embodied the androgynous aesthete.²⁷⁰

While the Foundation had been considering pursuing HCM status for its headquarters (the Echo Park home) since the Black Cat Tavern was landmarked in 2008, the “lynchpin” came with the book *Tom House: Tom of Finland in Los Angeles*, published by Rizzoli in 2016.²⁷¹ Interspersing photographs of the interiors with Tom of Finland artwork, the book aims to provide a glimpse in to the rich artistic life of the house:

The gabled Craftsman abode now serves as the headquarters of the Tom of Finland Foundation, containing a vast trove of artworks, correspondence, historical documents, and ephemera. But this is no ordinary shrine to a famous artist, trapped in amber, à la Jackson Pollock’s studio in East Hampton or Paul Cezanne’s dreamy atelier in Provence ... It’s an extraordinary place, equal parts frat pad, utopian collective, art historical archive, sepulcher, community center, and den of iniquity. The character of the house morphs in response to whoever happens to be living there or visiting at any particular time. Some days, that might be a gaggle of art students or gay culture vultures; on other days, it might be a group of like-minded voluptuaries gathered for a sex party. Occasionally, it’s all those things at once.²⁷²

Having long been a gathering place for the aforementioned interest groups, the Tom of Finland Foundation had no shortage of researchers, experts, and contacts to draw from. Despite this, former attempts at compiling a well-researched and appropriately written HCM application proved difficult for more creatively-oriented writers, shelving earlier attempts.²⁷³ The professional expertise and enthusiasm of Tom Cho, a trans Australian-Asian writer and longtime admirer of Tom of Finland’s work, proved instrumental in providing a tone-appropriate and research-driven context statement.²⁷⁴

Informed by Durk Dehner (acting as the applicant and homeowner) and S.R. Sharp (foundation vice president, and curator), the resulting application is arguably one of the most

²⁷⁰ “Sex Play in Tom of Finland” Dehner et al., 81, 83.

²⁷¹ Fontes, Interview with S.R. Sharp, Durk Dehner and Marc Bellenger.

²⁷² Foreward Thompson and Rus, *Tom House*, 7–8.

²⁷³ Fontes, Interview with S.R. Sharp, Durk Dehner and Marc Bellenger.

²⁷⁴ Fontes; Tom Cho, “Tom and Me, Part One,” *National Post*, May 1, 2014, Afterward edition, <https://nationalpost.com/entertainment/books/tom-cho-tom-and-me-part-one>; Tom Cho, “Tom and Me, Part Two,” *National Post*, May 2, 2014, Afterward edition, <https://nationalpost.com/entertainment/books/tom-cho-tom-and-me-part-two>.

comprehensive and well-organized to ever be submitted for OHR review.²⁷⁵ The Foundation was able to count on the support of Mitch O'Farrell (a longtime fan of the house and the openly gay councilmember for CD 13), in addition to citing itself within the city's historic context statement.²⁷⁶ By this time the Foundation had secured (and appended to their application) eleven letters of support, from figures both political and cultural.²⁷⁷ The L.A. Conservancy also lent its support in addition to the Getty Research Institute, with the latter testifying to the importance of the site as it relates to LGBTQ history:

The physical site of the house is an absolutely crucial aspect of the Foundation. The notion of 'home' is one that was denied to generations of LGBT[Q] people, and it is deeply symbolic and significant that TOM House truly is a home, and that the use of all parts of the house [works] to create not only a functioning foundation but also, through the display of its collections, a significant re-invention of what the visual identity of a 'home' can and in fact does entail—this is one of the most resonant aspects of the Foundation, and one that goes absolutely to its core.²⁷⁸

Scheduled as the eighth item for hearing, the foundation prepared a presentation for a CHC meeting on August 4, 2016.²⁷⁹ The presentation, given by S.R. Sharp, focused on Tom's cultural legacy and his significance for LGBTQ history and culture. The commission subsequently voted to take it up for consideration and conduct a site visit via a CHC subcommittee.

Following their inspection, the TOM House was scheduled as the sixth item at a second CHC meeting on September 15th. The only pushback came from commissioner (and CHC president) Richard Barron, expressing an increased focus on the house as tangible resource:

I think that culturally this is a very important property. I thought that ... the previous presentation you made lacked a little bit in terms of the house. It seemed to me from the information that I had that [the house] was a very charming and beautiful home. I understand the cultural aspect of the nomination, but I also think that the house is part of

²⁷⁵ An appendix of over 120 pages not only shows copious (and relatively chaste) examples of Tom's art, but also reproduces publications and photographs of the various gatherings and events that have taken place there. Dehner and Cho, "Tom of Finland Report."

²⁷⁶ Fontes, Interview with S.R. Sharp, Durk Dehner and Marc Bellenger; Grimes, "LGBT Historic Context Statement," 92–93.

²⁷⁷ Three sitting West Hollywood public officials (John D'Amico, John Heilman, and John Duran) submitted letters of support, in addition to prominent gallery owners, art publishers and curators.

²⁷⁸ Glenn R. Phillips, "Letter Addressed to Office of Historic Resources," May 2, 2016.

²⁷⁹ Richard Barron, Gail Kennard, Jeremy Irvine, et al., "Cultural Heritage Commission Agenda," § Cultural Heritage Commission (2016).

it. I think that as time goes on, being a monument, it would be subject to the secretary of the interior standards, and I hope you realize that.²⁸⁰

Commissioner Barron, who was not on the subcommittee tour, deferred to commissioner Jeremy Irvine, who described the welcoming and casual atmosphere of the house as a “time warp.” Irvine reiterated that the nomination was being done by the Foundation who, as the homeowners, were securely tied to the art being shown and archived there as well. Moreover, maintenance and upgrades had already been done on the house with restoration in mind, with the Foundation viewing the house itself as an invaluable part of its art collection.

With all this in mind, the CHC voted to recommend the Tom of Finland house be listed as an HCM, referring their recommendation to PLUM a week later. The PLUM meeting, taking place on November 8th, was relatively uneventful, with Durk Dehner and other Foundation volunteers commenting in support of the nomination. O’Farrell’s support, combined with the owner-initiated nomination, made for very little to debate in this regard, and PLUM summarily voted to list the Tom of Finland house as an HCM. The item was then scheduled for a full city council meeting on November 23rd, where it was adopted on consent.²⁸¹ Throughout this entire process, the Foundation received overwhelming support and encouragement from planning staff and public officials, helping make the Tom of Finland house HCM #1135.²⁸²

Outcome:

The Tom of Finland Foundation’s 2016 holiday party, held on December 19th, not only celebrated the release of the Rizzoli book earlier that year, but also their recently acquired landmark status.²⁸³ Conferred largely on the basis of cultural importance, the Tom of Finland house not only frames a significant artistic heritage, but also stands for the type of communal and mutually supportive arrangements that queer people create outside their biological families:

Completed in 1912, the capacious but timeworn dwelling retained a few vestiges of its Craftsman roots—notably, its dark oak paneling, sliding doors, and staircase—as well as vague hints of the Art Nouveau influence that had migrated from Europe at roughly the

²⁸⁰ Taped recording. Barron, Kennard, Irvine, et al.

²⁸¹ In essence, items adopted on consent save the city council time by not being physically heard or discussed during the council meeting itself. This is largely done for non-controversial issues for which there is little to no debate or opposition by this point.

²⁸² Fontes, Interview with S.R. Sharp, Durk Dehner and Marc Bellenger.

²⁸³ Fontes, Interview with Lambert Giessinger and Melissa Jones.

same time. In addition to ample outdoor space, the house possessed a partly finished cellar, which the new occupants quickly painted black and outfitted with a sling, leather gear, and other essentials of a proper gay dungeon... Sex naturally played a big part in the social life of the defiantly polygamous household, but other, less visceral forms of brotherly love set the overriding tone for the home. 'There was always lots of activity and people. This was a place where we could simply be ourselves, a place without shame or judgement. It had a spiritual dimension,' Dehner explains.²⁸⁴

Dehner used the occasion of the holiday party to announce the (then) upcoming completion of a new biopic on Tom of Finland's life.²⁸⁵ An advance screening for *Tom of Finland* (2017) took place in L.A. the following year, with lead producers, Pekka Strang (the lead actor), and S.R. Sharp taking part in a roundtable discussion about Tom's legacy.²⁸⁶ At the time of this writing, the Tom of Finland House is the most recent HCM to be nominated specifically for its LGBTQ historical associations. It currently operates much as it has before, not only by safeguarding Tom's artistic legacy, but by advocating for free erotic-artistic expression generally.²⁸⁷

By 2017, the gay leather subculture that had long been represented in Tom of Finland's work began to receive broader attention. While Silver Lake had developed a reputation as a center of this subculture in L.A. by the early 1970s, the most prominent center was the South of Market Street (SoMa) neighborhood in San Francisco.²⁸⁸ With the opening of bars like *The Toolbox* in 1961, the coalescing of a gay leather community in SoMa began to receive mainstream attention by the mid-1960s onwards.²⁸⁹ Concerns over the potential state of this community, and its ability to resist gentrification, drove this effort:

The scene [during the 1960s] was underground and hyper-visible all at once, a moral scourge that was only beginning to conceive of itself as the nucleus of sexual liberation... yet much of this history has been lost. Dimly lit clubs with short lifespans that could be raided at any time didn't typically maintain archivists on staff, and HIV/AIDS decimated two generations. Today, SoMa's leather scene consists of fewer than half a dozen bars ... [confronting] a renewed threat of extinction in the face of displacement. To preserve this vital subculture, activists have chosen a novel strategy: partnering with City Hall to

²⁸⁴ Thompson and Rus, *Tom House*, 11.

²⁸⁵ "Tom of Finland House Historic-Cultural Monument," *The Leather Journal*, January 2017.

²⁸⁶ This screening took place at the USC School of Cinematic Arts on October 18, 2017. Personal recollection of the author.

²⁸⁷ This expanded mission was also a response to the AIDS crisis, where the artwork of queer erotic artists who had died of AIDS-related complications were rescued from unsympathetic family or destruction by disposal. "Tom of Finland Foundation Purpose and Goals - Erotic Art Education, Curation and Collections.," accessed September 19, 2019, <https://www.tomoffinlandfoundation.org/foundation/purpose.html>.

²⁸⁸ Larry Townsend, *The Leatherman's Handbook* (New York: Other Traveller, 1972).

²⁸⁹ Welch, "The 'Gay' World."

designate a portion of Western SoMa as the *San Francisco Leather District*. The degenerates are about to be officially sanctioned.²⁹⁰

While the idea of implementing cultural districts had been discussed as far back as the mid-2000s, *LGBTQ America* helped to underscore the importance of saving queer resources that it cited as being nationally significant.²⁹¹ The additional NPS-sponsored context helped to bolster the district goals that had been outlined back in 2010.²⁹² Signed into law on May 8, 2018, a ribbon cutting to celebrate the additional new district was held at *The Stud*, a historic San Francisco gay bar, the following June.²⁹³

As a planning and policy tool, the SoMa LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District, once adopted, established geographic boundaries in order to demarcate, identify, and classify what are referred to as “individual assets” (essentially historic resources).²⁹⁴ By working to support existing leather and LGBTQ businesses and help guide future development, the cultural district has also helped yield urban memorials in the vein of *The Power of Place*. In this case, the renovation of SoMa’s Ringold Alley as part of a development project by 4Terra Investments included a permanent installation by the landscape architect Jeffrey Miller (of Miller Company Landscape Architects). The memorial, entitled Leather Memoir, sought to commemorate a valuable part of the city’s LGBTQ legacy:

This permanent art installation consists of four custom fabricated features installed on Ringold Street [from 8th Street to 9th Street] that reveal Ringold’s rich history. A black granite marker stone mounted at 9th and Ringold features an etched narrative, a reproduction of Chuck Arnett’s long-gone mural (famously captured in a 1964 Life magazine spread about gay life in America), and an image of Mike Caffee’s Leather David statue. Granite standing stones recycled from San Francisco curbs are cut, polished and engraved to honor community institutions. The stones emerge through the pavement’s leather flag markings in new bulb-out areas in several locations along the new street alignment. In a rugged twist on the commemorative plaque, bronze boot prints

²⁹⁰ Peter Lawrence Kane, “Folsom and Jetsam,” *SF Weekly*, September 20, 2017, <https://www.sfweekly.com/culture/feature-culture/folsom-and-jetsam/>.

²⁹¹ Carrie Sisto, “LGBTQ Leather Cultural District Proposed For SoMa,” Hoodline, September 26, 2017, <https://hoodline.com/2017/09/lgbt-leather-cultural-district-proposed-for-soma>; Donna J. Graves and Shayne Elizabeth Watson, “Chapter 25: San Francisco: Placing LGBTQ Histories in the City by the Bay” (National Park Foundation, October 31, 2016).

²⁹² Draft Proposal: SF Planning, “Recognizing, Protecting and Memorializing South of Market LGBTQ Social Heritage Neighborhood Resources.” (City of San Francisco, March 4, 2010).

²⁹³ Joshua Sabatini, “SF Expands Cultural Districts to Include SoMa’s Gay and Leather Community,” *The San Francisco Examiner*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.sfoxaminer.com/news/sf-expands-cultural-districts-to-include-somas-gay-and-leather-community/>.

²⁹⁴ “SoMa” stands for South of Market Street. SF Planning, “Recognizing SoMa,” 2.

embedded along the street's curb lines conjure the footsteps and names of the men who once frequented Ringold Street in its heyday.²⁹⁵

When interviewed about the piece, Gayle Rubin stated that, to her knowledge, Leather Memoir “is the only such monument to leather history anywhere on a public street or sidewalk.”²⁹⁶ Since 1984, SoMa has hosted the Folsom Street Fair, often referred to simply as “Folsom.” It is broadly considered to be the largest public event for leather and BDSM culture anywhere, drawing hundreds of thousands of tourists to the area every September for San Francisco’s annual Leather Pride Week.²⁹⁷ While there is still much work to be done in countering heteronormative cultures of sexual shame, the growing prominence and recognition of resources such as the Tom of Finland house and the SoMa LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District help to demonstrate that progress is ongoing. They not only speak to the increasing visibility of LGBTQ communities in the U.S., but also to a broader acknowledgement of sexuality (in all its diverse forms, practices, and permutations) as a valid and normal part of the human experience.

²⁹⁵ Jeffrey Miller, “‘Leather Memoir’ at Ringold Alley,” Miller Company Landscape Architects, accessed December 14, 2019, <http://www.millercomp.com/ringold-alley>.

²⁹⁶ Laura Paull, “Honoring Gay Leather Culture with Art Installation in SoMa Alleyway,” *J. The Jewish News of Northern California*, June 21, 2018, <https://www.jweekly.com/2018/06/21/honoring-gay-leather-culture-with-art-installation-in-soma-alleyway/>.

²⁹⁷ “About Folsom Street Events,” *Folsom Street Events | Leather Events for Good Causes* (blog), accessed December 14, 2019, <https://www.folsomstreetevents.org/about-folsom-street-events/>.

Chapter 5: Advancing LGBTQ LA

Learning from Edendale:

Why is Edendale critical from the perspective of heritage conservation? There is no single or definitive answer to this question, but any insight to be gleaned must start by understanding how subsequent generations have sought to landmark the queer history of this place. What stands out is not only how a culture (or power) of place can persist over generations, but also how research efforts themselves constitute an invaluable component, affecting how memory is accessed and interpreted for posterity. Scholars like Kenney, Hurewitz, Adair, and Samudio not only worked to engage LGBTQ history towards varying personal and professional ends, but also helped to assert that this history is rooted in L.A. as a place.²⁹⁸ This may not seem particularly radical in hindsight, yet it was necessary to establish a conceptual foothold, ultimately opening the way for a more direct means of landmarking sites for queer heritage in L.A.'s historic built environment. The case studies examined can rightfully be seen as too few to show a consistent or predictable pattern for LGBTQ landmarking citywide, but lessons are nonetheless evident.

When looking at the Harry Hay Residence, the inability to successfully landmark the property highlights multiple issues when dealing with the significance and legacy of prominent individuals within social movements. As a matter of practicality, any attempt to successfully articulate the meaning of the house itself was hindered by the lack of committed people devoting extended time and effort to pursuing the landmarking process in good faith. No matter how much persistence an enterprising preservationist like Samudio had, establishing "objective" significance for a history that had yet to be broadly recognized was perhaps always going to be difficult from a professional vantage point. In addition to this, the socio-spatial impact of the house was never just about Harry Hay and the Mattachine Society. After all, how could an initial burst of small, late-night meetings in 1950 have looked any different to prying eyes than the typical activities the house had been hosting up to that point? Anita Hay (née Platky) and her

²⁹⁸ Kenney, "Strategic Visibility"; Kenney, *Mapping Gay L.A.*; Hurewitz, "Made in Edendale"; Daniel Hurewitz, *Bohemian Los Angeles: And the Making of Modern Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Adair, Bill, "Celebrating a Hidden History: Gay and Lesbian Historic Places in Los Angeles"; Adair, Kenney, and Samudio, "Gay & Lesbian L.A. History Map."

daughters lived alone in the house for a longer period of time after Harry left, and while their divorce (and the reasons behind it) were shocking enough in the early 1950s, it's difficult to know if neighbors outside their leftist circles were ever made fully aware of this.²⁹⁹

In a public sense, the role of this house as an event and hospitality space for the activist (and socialist) circles that gave the “red hills” of Silver Lake their reputation is paramount. Its prominent siting on top of a hill, and the fact that it had a semi-public life as a neighborhood gathering place and performance space is what made its cultural memory persist at the local level long after Harry and Anita had moved on. The formation of the Mattachine, and by extension the very idea of viewing queer people as “an oppressed cultural minority” is what makes this property significant. That said, this event did not occur as part of the home's public life. For the neighbors' part, awareness of its queer history was practically non-existent until the house's address was published as part of Hay's obituary in *Los Angeles Magazine*.³⁰⁰ Seemingly negligible, this increased awareness on behalf of the surrounding community was a key means of support for subsequent preservationist efforts. This persistence of collective memory led to the Mattachine steps being chosen as means of marking Hay's legacy in the built environment, even if his name couldn't be the most prominent part of it.

While this outcome could be written off as a consolation prize, the hypothetical question of what would happen had the house been landmarked is also worth considering as this is still (in theory) an open possibility. Assuming the owner had been enthusiastic about restoring the house to the period of Hay's residency, how exactly would it help tell the story of Harry Hay's life and achievement as one of the (conceptual) forefathers of gay liberation? How would it engage the broader queer communities of today via the discursive processes of meaning making that are so crucial to conserving and understanding the development of queer heritage itself? Converting it into a historic house museum (a typical preservationist model à la Monticello or Mount Vernon) would certainly do much to bring back a semi-public dimension that was present up until 1950, but it would also open up new issues with respect to establishing an endowment (and perhaps a non-profit) to manage a working residence, generating an income to further a clearly defined

²⁹⁹ It seems unlikely that Anita would've stayed if the surrounding community was aware and/or ostracized her for this. Beyond the irreconcilable personal differences between them, Anita insisted that Harry leave to shield herself and the children from being associated with a homophile organization by proximity. When the Mattachine began to really expand (and consequently receive attention from the FBI), it was operating logistically out of Hay's mother's house. Han, “Recommendation Report.”

³⁰⁰ Roderick, “Epitaph: Harry Hay.”

mission.³⁰¹ Commercializing this legacy based on Harry's achievements would likewise be problematic. Much of Harry Hay's work from this time took the form of theatrical scripts and written manifestoes, which are not widely read and require contextualization (or study) to be understood or appreciated.³⁰² While revolutionary for their time, these works don't lend themselves to reproduction and consumption in the way Tom of Finland works—which can be enjoyed by almost anyone regardless of linguistic ability or educational level—continue to do.

A successful interpretation of Hay's achievements would also have to credit the robust artistic and socialist circles that helped inspire his creation of the Mattachine. This Edendale-centric social milieu, self-consciously anti-capitalist and anti-racist, served as clear inspiration; even if the Mattachine's radical beginnings were quickly rejected in favor of queer conservatism and assimilationism. This struggle over respectability still speaks to major challenges and fissures within LGBTQ communities today, and while Harry Hay may have been born into wealth, enjoying the privileges of being an educated white man in twentieth-century America, the life of a committed activist was undoubtedly a difficult one. The founding of the Mattachine in 1950 marked his full transition to this activist role, and Hay spent the rest of his life agitating and critiquing the increasingly mainstream and institutionalized LGBTQ movement itself. Because of this, none of Hay's achievements have produced lasting institutions in their own right, and those that do exist (such as the L.A. LGBT Center, the Human Rights Campaign, etc.) generally don't spend their resources founding or operating house museums.³⁰³

Even this line of speculation with respect to a potential house museum would have to reconcile issues of ownership. While theoretical opposition to listing a house because of its

³⁰¹ Assuming the house were to be given a period of significance with respect to LGBTQ history, it would likely be November 11th 1950, which was the date that the first meeting between Hay and his Mattachine co-founders took place. That said, a more inclusive period of significance would also factor in the years of leftist organizing and progressive communion that preceded that night.

³⁰² Additionally, while Hay may have been one of the first to wrestle with the ideas evident in these works, he was certainly not alone. More recent investigations into the development of Hay's theories have demonstrated a pressing need for serious scholarship to investigate and contextualize the works of his contemporaries. Many of these thinkers and activists, most prominently Jim Kepner and Dorr Legg, were also based in Los Angeles. Ben Miller, "Children Of The Brain: The Life, Theory, & Activism of Harry Hay, 1953-1964" (New York, N.Y., United States, New York University, 2014), 81–83.

³⁰³ The L.A. LGBT center, whose primary role is as a provider of healthcare services to the region's broader LGBTQ communities, can trace its roots to Morris Kight. Kight was demonstrably more successful than Hay in creating lasting institutions of relevance because he focused more on the need for social services and direct action as opposed to Hay's discursive emphasis, which by comparison reads as navel-gazing. That said, recent scholarship on Kight's life has helped to emphasize that both men could be profoundly arrogant in attempting to "own" or take credit for the movement. Mary Ann Cherry, *Morris Kight: Humanist, Liberationist, Fantabulist* (S.I.: Process, 2020).

LGBTQ history might easily be dismissed as homophobia, the fact that this objection came from the homeowner—himself an openly gay screenwriter—would’ve made such a charge spurious. It also made city officials reluctant to engage all-too-familiar (and politically non-productive) disputes over preservation and property rights. While it’s easy to bemoan another preservation loss, the outcome is more accurately viewed as a *détente*. Subsequent alterations, which have likely resulted in the loss of historic fabric, have not greatly affected the setting, and the formal qualities that the Hay family appreciated seem to have proved compelling enough that the new owner chose to keep the house largely intact rather than demolish it. Moreover, the house is being used much in the same way it was when Hay himself lived there. It serves as a place for a gay man to reside, recharge, shape his own eclectic environment, and find inspiration for creative work.³⁰⁴ In this sense the Harry Hay Residence continues to serve nearly the exact same function it had during its period of significance, only now in an exclusively private capacity.

By contrast, understanding The Black Cat through a heritage conservation lens highlights a set of tendencies concerning how resources like it are being remembered in the twenty-first century. Gay bars have long held a venerated position within a positivist-progressive LGBTQ rights narrative, holding a near cherished cultural status.³⁰⁵ This cherishing often expresses itself as nostalgia, not only on behalf of queer people who engaged with these spaces in the twentieth century, but also for younger LGBTQ generations whose personal lives in and around these places are enhanced by newer means of social (and predominantly digital) engagement. With hindsight, gay bars are often romanticized as places of personal exploration, close-knit community building, and political activism. While these activities absolutely occurred in the pre-liberation era, gay bars were also seen as seedy, dangerous places at a time when the fear of extortion, police raids, and entrapment was a constant reality. This cast a pall of suspicion and tension over every social interaction that occurred in them, and while gay bars in many parts of the U.S. are not subject to these same institutional threats today, the possibility of violence,

³⁰⁴ The Los Angeles Times, “Producer Fuller Rights His Boathouse,” *The Denver Post* (blog), October 10, 2007, <https://www.denverpost.com/2007/10/10/producer-fuller-rights-his-boathouse/>.

³⁰⁵ Popular interest in the legacy of gay bars increased as the campaign for marriage equality progressed in the early 2010s. June Thomas, *The Gay Bar: Its Riotous Past and Uncertain Future* (Slate Magazine, 2011); Patrick Sisson, “How Gay Bars Have Been a Building Block of the LGBTQ Community,” *Curbed* (blog), June 17, 2016, <https://www.curbed.com/2016/6/17/11963066/gay-bar-history-stonewall-pulse-lgbtq>.

whatever its motivations, is still present.³⁰⁶ While unintentional, gay bars continue to hold residual dangers for many LGBTQ people who, in trying to cope with a hostile society, often resort to using alcohol as a means of self-medicating. Those who didn't drink, or queer people who didn't want to cruise for sex in public places, were left with precious few options in the pre-gay liberation period. Homophile organizations, and even more radical youth-driven groups such as PRIDE, earnestly sought to provide "healthy" alternatives to the bar scene, and sober options for the queer community are numerous in major urban areas today.³⁰⁷

By landmarking The Black Cat, preservationists such as Wes Joe were engaging community attitudes towards this resource as a powerful cultural touchstone and symbol for the LGBTQ struggle for civil rights. While its significance is established by the 1967 LAPD raid and the aftermath (PRIDE's response to it), the HCM application doesn't account for the ongoing queer life that the space hosted in the half century following. Interest on behalf of the Friends of the Black Cat, as their name suggests, did not extend to the space's subsequent queer iterations as Basgo's Disco (the 1970s), Club FUCK! (the 1980s), and Le Barcito (the 1990s and 2000s). To an extent this not only reflects the limitations of available research at the time, but also the scope of normative preservationist priorities. In The Black Cat's case, these priorities were driven by a need to tell a succinct story that would resonate with the CHC, generating community interest and support in this effort.³⁰⁸ This is reflected in the support letters received by the CHC (most prominently from neighbors and the council office), which emphasize The Black Cat's role as indicative of the "diversity and tolerance" that defines Silver Lake. While the Edendale-era history supports this in terms of progressive activism, the implication that other L.A. neighborhoods are uniformly less tolerant—or don't value diversity or progressive values to the same extent—reads as somewhat myopic a decade later.

³⁰⁶ The importance of gay bar's communal status was reinforced in the aftermath of the Pulse nightclub shooting, prompting increased speculation of the status of bars in the LGBTQ community and what the future holds for their status as a socio-cultural resource. Zachary Shane Kalish Blair, "The Pulse Nightclub Shooting: Connecting Militarism, Neoliberalism, and Multiculturalism to Understand Violence," *North American Dialogue* 19, no. 2 (2016): 102–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nad.12049>.

³⁰⁷ In L.A. the Los Angeles LGBT Center is the most prominent institution offering community resources regionally. "Home - Los Angeles LGBT Center," accessed December 19, 2019, <https://lalgbtcenter.org/>.

³⁰⁸ While Wes Joe wasn't an archivist or professional researcher, he worked extensively with the ONE Archives, verifying primary sources to counter Brevoort's objections to the material significance of the site's various features. Subsequent interest in Club FUCK!, which was radically inclusive of queer people of all identities and races, would occur much later. Henkes, "A Party for the 'Freaks'"; Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

The language of The Black Cat's HCM application also strikes a somewhat sententious tone, and its expressed concern for the LGBTQ struggle did not, as a matter of scope and appropriateness, extend to present day social issues with respect to queer spaces and the threat of gentrification. While gay bars have historically been marginalized, their ability to serve alcohol—by extension turning a profit and allowing them to justify their existence economically—was historically regulated at various levels.³⁰⁹ Though the property is privately owned, The Black Cat is not a wholly private resource in that its purpose is to engage a public clientele and customer base. There is no evidence that The Black Cat excluded straight people during its period of significance, and it doesn't exclude LGBTQ people today. However, while the lines between a gay and straight bar can be inexact or impossible to measure objectively, the current space can no longer be considered one of the former.³¹⁰ The fact that the space was a Latino-oriented gay bar during the nomination process was essentially ignored, and the subsequent remodel and “revival” of The Black Cat leaves much to be desired from the vantage point of rapidly vanishing social and community resources.

Contemporary anxiety over these changes reflects not necessarily the loss of historic resources in the architectural sense, but the loss of cultural resources generally. In other words, it speaks to shrinking opportunities for queer people to hold space collectively and enjoy each other's company in an affirming environment, as opposed to one that simply tolerates LGBTQ presence.³¹¹ The HCM plaque and interpretive program, no matter how progressive or enthusiastically maintained, is simply no substitute for a living, queer-oriented space. While the current bar is not unwelcoming to LGBTQ folk, its aestheticized interior (and relatively pricey menu) is evident of the type of sanitized and exclusive spaces of consumption that simply

³⁰⁹ By the late 1950s, the state of California's Alcoholic Beverage Control Board was confronting legal challenges with respect to the rights of gay bars to serve alcohol. At the local level, it's common today for city planning departments to issue conditional use permits in order to monitor specific uses (and potential nuisances), such as businesses where alcohol is either sold and/or consumed. Nan Alamilla Boyd, “San Francisco Was a Wide Open Town: Charting the Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Communities Through the Mid-Twentieth Century” (Providence, RI, Brown, 1995), 174–81.

³¹⁰ The interpretive program, though unique, would perhaps be more meaningful if it came with a commitment to hire LGBTQ bartenders and waitstaff, but there is no evidence that this was ever considered. Moreover, the interpretive materials consist mainly of a few framed historic photos, a visual footnote within a highly curated “pub-style” interior. Though not scientific by any means, various self-identified LGBTQ friends and acquaintances questioned by the author outside of the preservation profession have admitted, upon discussion, that they've visited The Black Cat Tavern multiple times without ever knowing that it was a gay bar, or even historically significant.

³¹¹ While this may be difficult to assert in fact, the perception is an evident factor nonetheless. Gallegos, “Le Barcito Closes in Silver Lake — And There Goes the Gayborhood.”

were not available to visibly out queer people during the resource's period of significance. In some ways this illustrates that political progress for the LGBTQ community has been very real, but also very uneven depending on who you happen to be in terms of ethnic/racial identity, gender identity, and economic status. While this is no reflection on the admirable and necessary effort to landmark The Black Cat itself, the bar in its current iteration stands as a monument to the commoditization (and to varying degrees the gentrification of) LGBTQ identity and history.

The Black Cat's ability to engage living LGBTQ communities, while diminished in the quotidian sense, has not been entirely erased in terms of heritage and commemoration. Though the interior bar, sign, and building stand as epitaphs to a longtime (if marginalized) queer presence, the effort to preserve exterior features is notable in that it has allowed for expressions of commemoration and public engagement to happen. This occurred not only when aggrieved activists began to lay flowers on the sidewalk following the passing of Prop 8, but also for the 2012 and 2017 reenactments.³¹² Taking place on the same corner lot that held the original protest fifty years earlier, the latter event would not have been able to host as large a crowd of people in the bar's interior. Staging it on the same street corner as the 1967 protest made its impact more meaningful, befitting a politically driven act of public defiance and constituting a heritage-centered instance of place-claiming.³¹³

This event likely would not have happened on the site at all if the property owner followed through with his expressed desire to develop another building on that corner lot. Highly self-conscious, and cunningly staged for media exposure, the 2017 commemoration helped to highlight ongoing issues regarding the status of LGBTQ history (and the living communities who embody it) in L.A. While the LAPD may not be the institutionalized homophobic oppressor it was a half-century earlier, its participation in the reenactment doubtless did not sit easily in many queer-progressive and leftist circles.³¹⁴ The recent opening of a pizza place in the space next to The Black Cat (in the building portion that had been a laundromat) has brought with it the

³¹² Lin, "Bar Still Symbolic in Gay Community"; "Revisiting the Black Cat"; Potts, *50th Anniversary of the Black Cat Demonstration*.

³¹³ While this event was a coordinated effort between the owners of The Black Cat Tavern and the city of L.A. (the LAPD, Mayor's Office, and CD 13 specifically), public interest was enhanced as a reaction to the beginning of the Trump administration.

³¹⁴ No matter how many women, queer folk and/or people of color become police officers themselves, the legacy of over-policing and police brutality in L.A. (as in the U.S. generally) is too long to be considered resolved in any honest sense. Any real change in this regard will have to start by confronting assumptions about the role of policing itself, especially in diverse urban contexts. Alex S. Vitale, *The End of Policing* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2017).

encroachment of outdoor seating and furniture on the side lot.³¹⁵ While this may make such commemorative events difficult to hold again in the future, the plethora of issues still being faced by the LGBTQ community may yet give The Black Cat more roles to play.³¹⁶

Engaging struggles for social and political advancement are critical to any informed understanding of LGBTQ history, but they do not give a fully accurate or complete rendering of queer life. Political issues alone—subject to rapid shifts, changes, and realigning interests over time—cannot support and sustain a community over generations. The Tom of Finland house demonstrates this by conveying a deeper set of values that are not easily monopolized as part of any political policy or activist agenda. Radical in a socio-cultural sense, the house’s queer legacy as a safe haven for erotic art is more enduring because it speaks to the freedom to express oneself, not only artistically but sexually as well. Its period of significance, being the most recent of the three resources discussed (1980-1991), marks the start of the house’s open—and still very active—queer life.

When comparing the Tom of Finland house to the Hay Residence—both single family homes associated with significant gay figures—it’s evident that the framing of their respective legacies was also key to their different outcomes. Initial efforts to landmark the Hay residence in 2000 mainly had one biography and a book of selected writings to demonstrate focused interest and land credible support to a preservation effort.³¹⁷ While Timmons’ biography of Hay is well written and detailed, admiring descriptions of his subject only served to reinforce a hagiographic “great man” approach.³¹⁸ Samudio’s decision to prioritize landmarking this resource before any of the others called out in the *Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map* unwittingly contributed to this

³¹⁵ Stephanie Breijo, “Take a Peek Inside California Sun, Silver Lake’s New Pizza Parlor and Beer Shop,” Time Out Los Angeles, February 9, 2019, <https://www.timeout.com/los-angeles/news/take-a-peek-inside-california-sun-silver-lakes-new-pizza-parlor-and-beer-shop-020919>.

³¹⁶ Per the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, this furniture has been designed in such a way that it can be disassembled and removed in the future. Oversight from OHR, and vigorous input from Wes Joe, has helped to ensure this. Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

³¹⁷ John D’Emilio’s book, *Sexual Politics Sexual Communities*, was arguably the most objective academic source available, but Harry Hay’s efforts constitute a minor/introductory part of its focus. Inconsistencies resulting from information that was still hidden at the time of its writing (such as the names of the original founding members of the Mattachine) also would’ve made it difficult to use as a dependable means of support for any potential applications.

³¹⁸ This tone, arguably taken to please the still living Hay, diminishes the work’s objectivity. The introduction to *Radically Gay* also acknowledges that “Hay’s influence on [the editor’s] life and work has been profound,” reiterating that much of this scholarly analysis is coming either from gay men who Hay mentored himself, or members of the Radical Faerie movement that still revere Hay as a founding figure. Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, xiv; Hay, *Radically Gay*, 11.

tired preservationist trope.³¹⁹ Hay's own "founder of the movement" complex was also a major issue for queer activists and historians during the 1980s and '90s, who had little time or patience for Hay's tendency to chide them for being less educated than he was.³²⁰ His enthusiastic advocacy of pederasty was also a huge political liability during the height of the AIDS crisis and culture wars of the 1990s, and arguably still is today.³²¹

By contrast, the Tom of Finland house exists not to celebrate Touko Laaksonen as a "great man" so much as the work he created under the assumed artistic persona of Tom. Beyond the controversial references to fascist aesthetics via military and authority figures, there is little in the way of overt references to contemporaneous queer politics in his images. For his part, Laaksonen did not prominently involve himself in the contentious LGBTQ protest movements and political struggles of the late 1970's and '80s (his depiction/promotion of safe sex practices being the most obvious exception). This likely reflected his precarious status as a Finnish citizen residing in L.A. on a semi-permanent basis, but likewise does not preclude political readings of his work. Though the HCM application consciously attempts to highlight his inclusion of African American men as part of his increasing exposure to L.A. in the 1980s, these works are still a

³¹⁹ Samudio, whose exposure to preservation began from a young age, was working with many of the scholars who made these very same critiques. Given this, his stated desire to pursue landmarking appears to have been a self-promotional effort undertaken with a lack of sufficient feedback from—or perhaps an unwillingness to listen to—his colleagues. This is evident in his interview as part of Will Fellows' book, *A Passion to Preserve*, where he describes having to defend his efforts to other gay preservationists, misogynistically characterizing them as "debutantes from the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities." Fellows, *A Passion to Preserve*, 154.

³²⁰ Eric Marcus, the author of *Making Gay History*, admitted in a retrospective podcast that his interview with Hay was so frustrating and unproductive that he left it out of the first edition of his book. Marcus, "Harry Hay."

³²¹ While Timmons' biography downplays this nearly to the point of omission, it doesn't change the fact that it happened. Whatever motivations Hay himself may have had, the fallout from his association with NAMBLA continued to affect resources associated with his legacy years after his death, in large part because the conflation of homosexuality and pedophilia is used by social conservatives to attack LGBTQ-focused scholarship and research (as a corollary to attacking LGBTQ people). A recent instance came from the arrest of Walter L. Williams. A respected LGBTQ professor of anthropology, history, and gender studies at the University of Southern California, Williams wrote *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, which extended Harry Hay's interest in the "berdache" tradition among indigenous societies (LGBTQ Native Americans in the U.S. prefer to use the term "two-spirit" to identify themselves today). Williams not only advised on and critiqued the *L.A. Gay and Lesbian History Map*, but also served as the director of the ONE Archives' Institute for Advanced studies. After quitting his post in 2011, Williams was arrested, extradited to the U.S. from Mexico, and convicted by the FBI on charges of sexual exploitation of children. He plead guilty and was sentenced to jail time, earning himself a page on the (anti-LGBTQ) fundamentalist Christian website Conservapedia.com. Gordon, "A Guide to Where L.A.'s Gays Came of Age"; Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 203–4; Richard Winton and Kate Mather, "Ex-USC Prof Pleads Guilty to Child Sex," *Los Angeles Times*; *Los Angeles, Calif.*, September 7, 2014, sec. Main News; Part A; Metro Desk; "Walter Lee Williams - Conservapedia," accessed January 13, 2020, https://www.conservapedia.com/Walter_Lee_Williams.

footnote for an oeuvre that largely glorifies exaggerated-muscular versions of white, male bodies. Women are less carefully rendered and appear rarely in his work (mostly as plot-related or framing devices), which is also notable for the near total absence of men from Latino, Middle-Eastern, and Asian-Pacific Islander backgrounds.³²² Tom's work nonetheless resonates in this respect because it prompts engagement with racial politics in matters of representation. To its credit, the Tom of Finland Foundation hasn't shied away from engaging these conversations, supporting and attracting promising artists of all ethnic backgrounds and gender identities to contribute and respond to Tom's legacy in their own ways.³²³

Understanding the Tom of Finland house as a conduit for heritage conservation is perhaps a bit more nebulous, since factors that typically frame debates over what is saved and why are often overlooked in the rush to preserve now and ask questions later. While the effort to landmark the Harry Hay residence didn't have the benefit of being able to explore those questions fully, the process for landmarking the Tom of Finland house was comparatively blessed in that it didn't necessarily need to.³²⁴ As property owners, Durk Dehner and the Tom of Finland Foundation not only knew why the house was significant to them—and a broader spectrum of queer and leather subcultures generally—but were the premier experts in the history being discussed. They'd already been recognized in the city's *LGBT Historic Context Statement*, consciously choosing to avoid hiring any preservation consultants.³²⁵ Instead, they marshalled their following's prodigious talents in order to submit an informed and well-researched HCM to OHR.³²⁶

The cultural importance of the Tom of Finland house also went undisputed during the landmarking process. Despite this, the architecture-centric criticism voiced during the second CHC hearing speaks to how differing priorities can sometimes muddle or confuse preservation

³²² While these ethnic groups may not have been as culturally predominant during the period of Tom's residency, they were undeniably present in L.A. by the 1980s. Cho, "Tom Cho," May 2, 2014.

³²³ In the interest of fairness, it must be stated that an artist's oeuvre shouldn't be understood solely in terms of diversity. Meanings and expectations concerning equal representation as a concept are not fixed, shifting constantly within a given social context. Consciously or not, most artists choose to pursue subjects that are interesting and/or familiar to them personally.

³²⁴ As understood within the context of this work, a full exploration of a resource's significance involves successfully engaging the landmarking process at any level. The fact that the Harry Hay Residence remains unlisted doesn't negate its potential to convey meaning. While the house's significance can also be engaged via interpretation, the absence of any listing makes establishing the legitimacy of any interpretive efforts (which at present are non-existent) a slightly more difficult feat.

³²⁵ Fontes, Interview with S.R. Sharp, Durk Dehner and Marc Bellenger.

³²⁶ This is the author's judgement, based largely on the length, breadth, and depth of documentation.

intent. The resource in question, which is indeed a handsome example of a craftsman style house, is not really significant because of its architecture. While this feedback was offered more as a helpful suggestion, it nonetheless rang as tone deaf.³²⁷ This perhaps stems from the inability to recognize that resources like the Tom of Finland house more closely embody Kenney's definition of queer place-claiming, as the house itself was already "a thing constructed, upon which activists and communities layer[ed] new meanings."³²⁸

The place-claiming that occurred at Tom of Finland House was pursued primarily for artistic and interpersonal reasons, as opposed to the political-strategic framework that constitutes Kenney's focus. The house provides the ideal amount of flexibility to frame the type of queer communal lifestyle that is so rarely encountered today, and it does this precisely *because* it's not a perfectly intact architectural specimen. The Foundation also knew that their real legacy—Tom's legacy—was contingent upon supporting a continuing artistic impulse by hosting *living* queer artists in residence. This effort speaks to the need to express oneself in an affirming environment; a near universal one for every LGBTQ person trying to understand themselves in a world that often provides little guidance or empathy. More than any other case study discussed, The Tom of Finland house comes the closest to engaging a consistently vital and enduring LGBTQ heritage.

Cast out of Edendale:

While the case studies chosen were part of the process of circumscribing this study geographically and temporally, the fact that they are the first three sites (in L.A.) to be subject to LGBTQ-focused landmarking interest reflects persistent biases in and of itself. The predominance of straight, white male histories as the subject of preservation focus is called out by Hayden, Dubrow, and Adair, but the development of queer historiography by subsequent generations has itself been plagued by an outsized focus on (mainly) white, cisgender, homosexual men. In many ways, this demonstrates who is able to wield privilege, not only in the form of social and cultural capital, but also in terms of securing their legacies within a queer-historical narrative framework. While gay men of all backgrounds still have to contend with homophobic and oppressive cultural forces, the very state of being oppressed does not make one

³²⁷ Part of what made the house resonate with Tom of Finland himself (in the creative sense) was its perceived resemblance to Finnish *Jugend* buildings, more commonly known as Art Nouveau in the U.S. Fontes, Interview with S.R. Sharp, Durk Dehner and Marc Bellenger.

³²⁸ Kenney, "Strategic Visibility," 23.

inherently sympathetic—or willing to empathize with—the oppression(s) that others face. This is not only evident in visible tensions between the “letters” themselves but also between LGBTQ people coming from different ethno-cultural backgrounds and racial identities.

The problems of viewing LGBTQ people as a monolithic (or singular) community are numerous, being addressed at length in Kenney’s dissertation.³²⁹ The unified community rhetoric she analyzes can ring especially hollow in L.A., a multi-ethnic metropolis which was—despite U.S.-Anglo desires to revise its early history—founded on indigenous land by a group of predominantly mixed-race colonists.³³⁰ With respect to the recent past, the gay liberation period is replete with instances of misogyny and racism perpetuated largely by gay men. While the early L.A. homophile groups were relatively open to collaborations between people of all backgrounds, the increasingly evident misogyny of gay male leadership often forced lesbians to seek community elsewhere.³³¹ *Gay L.A.* makes clear that institutions and spaces resulting from these fissures were not sustainable in the long-term since women of all orientations (who would in theory act as donors) had less disposable income due to the gender pay gap.³³² The transition towards lesbians being able to occupy major LGBTQ leadership roles came about, in large part, due to a combination of shifting attitudes towards women in the workplace along with the decimation of male leadership (and gay men generally) during the height of the AIDS crisis.³³³

³²⁹ Kenney critiques the “ideal of community” as a value that LGBTQ people are expected to aspire to as opposed to a more honest “politics of difference.” She connects this to place, calling out notions of community as an effort to erase differences within any group of individuals that are defined as such. Kenney, 25–28.

³³⁰ The “rediscovery” of the original *pobladores*’ African and Indigenous roots is attributed to William M. Mason, a prominent historian and curator specializing in Southern California. Mason wrote an op-ed in the *LA Times* in 1975 that brought the city’s multi-ethnic origins to a broader public at a time when translated versions of the first census of L.A. were receiving renewed scholarly attention. It’s likely that the original colonists would’ve likely preferred to diminish their own backgrounds within the (hierarchically racialized) colonial framework of their own time. Despite this, revealing their roots was an invaluable means of countering historical erasure, helping to lend weight to the contemporaneous needs of L.A.’s Black and Chicano communities. William M. Mason, “L.A.’s Founders Should Be Honored for What They Were: A Racial Mix,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); *Los Angeles, Calif.*, September 4, 1975; Myrna Oliver, “William Mason; California Historian, Author,” *Los Angeles Times* (1996-Current); *Los Angeles, Calif.*, November 25, 2000, sec. Ventura County; David J. Weber, *New Spain’s Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West, 1540-1821* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 33–35; Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972).

³³¹ In L.A. These conflicts reached a breaking point during the mid-1970s, when the Gay Community Services Center (which would become the L.A. LGBT Center) began to institutionalize, expand, and solicit funds from major donors via leadership connections. Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 198–210.

³³² The most significant example was an organization called Connexus, which in addition to funding was also hindered by disagreements between white, middle class lesbians and working-class lesbians of color. Faderman and Timmons, 212; Ch. 5: Separate Space and Separatism Kenney, “Strategic Visibility,” 163–95.

³³³ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 213–14.

The most recent instance of these tensions affecting a preservation issue surfaced with the effort to save The Factory building in West Hollywood, the longtime site of the Studio One disco. While its omission from the *Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map* constituted a valid critique, it underscores a justifiable trepidation around preserving a prominent building whose significance for LGBTQ history is complicated by being both a place for unfettered gay (male) hedonism and also one of exclusion.³³⁴ This latter aspect stems from the fact that Studio One employed an entrance policy that limited the number of women allowed in the space, while subjecting men of color to additional ID requirements in order to limit their presence as well.³³⁵ Debates over whether to preserve the building for this history were polarizing, prompting many older gay men to nostalgically reminisce about the possibility of commemorating their own youthful experiences and memories of Studio One.³³⁶ Conversely, some prominent LGBTQ elders maligned the site as an example of queer racism undeserving of any landmark status, even going against the efforts of younger generations who fought to save it.³³⁷ The site's location has also raised jurisdictional issues because West Hollywood, which was incorporated as its own city in 1984, is free to define its own community needs and planning agendas at the local level.³³⁸ The ultimate outcome has been to preserve most of the existing structure and reorient its siting as

³³⁴ In social terms, the ability of gay men to openly dance together and perform “liberation” at Studio One—beyond being a character defining feature of the 1970s disco scene—was an expression of progress in its own right. The omission of Studio One from the *Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map* was pointed out by Walter L. Williams. Gordon, “A Guide to Where L.A.’s Gays Came of Age.”

³³⁵ When questioned about the entrance policy during the height of Studio One’s popularity, Scott Forbes (the club’s founder and owner) essentially admitted that it was designed to rid the space of a “bad element.” As a donor to the (then) new Gay Community Services Center, he could afford to pursue the policy for years. Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 237.

³³⁶ During the final city council meeting to determine whether or not to allow the Robertson Lane redevelopment project to go forward, all but one of the City of West Hollywood councilmembers brought up their own personal experiences of fun, love, and loss related to the site. Personal recollection of the author.

³³⁷ While any attempt to rectify injustices by repudiating the wrongs of the past may stem from a well-intentioned place, it’s reductive to assume that buildings and sites aren’t capable of speaking to multiple, and discordant, histories and experiences. As a married lesbian couple committed to saving LGBTQ history, Krisy Gosney and Kate Eggert (of Gosney-Eggert Historic Preservation Consultants) understood this and led an effort to save Studio One for potential nomination to the National Register. The anti-landmarking attitude, promulgated by the still-living Don Kilhefner (a principal L.A. GLF organizer from the 1970s on) proved both socially helpful—by expanding the conversation about the site’s history—and a hinderance to preservationist aims simultaneously. Don Kilhefner, “Jim Crow Visits West Hollywood: Studio One and Gay Liberation,” *WEHoville* (blog), August 5, 2016, <https://www.wehoville.com/2016/08/05/jim-crow-visits-west-hollywood-studio-one-gay-liberation/>; Jonny Coleman, “‘White Men Only’: The Troubled Past Of Studio One, A Historic Gay Disco,” *LAist*, March 14, 2017, https://laist.com/2017/03/14/studio_one_history.php.

³³⁸ Beyond being subject to a different preservation ordinance, the main effect of this stems from the city of West Hollywood’s lack of an LGBTQ context statement, the writing of which could go a long way towards establishing priorities regarding what’s historically significant and why.

part of a pedestrian-centered “paseo” (walkway). While this will likely preclude the possibility of any landmarking owing to loss of integrity, the site could still allow for instances of heritage and commemoration to occur.³³⁹

As discussed in *LGBTQ America*, unpacking the challenges facing these resources begins not only by looking at how queer history is interpreted by its inheritors, but also by who is left out of (or has had their presence diminished within) the historical record altogether. While internecine tensions are evident in sites like Studio One, absences and losses are even more difficult to address since—with respect to physical sites and historic resources—there is often little left materially to help tell a story. The most obvious evidence of this can be seen from the map component of a microsite titled *Curating the City: LGBTQ Historic Places in L.A.*³⁴⁰ Made possible by an internship-grant from the Getty Research Institute in 2015, and prompted by the completion of the city’s *LGBT Historic Context Statement* in 2014, the microsite constitutes the LA Conservancy’s central effort to definitively track and coordinate efforts to save LGBTQ places in greater L.A. County.³⁴¹ While the map is an invaluable means of helping to establish significance for these sites, the fact that only two of its listed resources have been landmarked primarily because of their LGBTQ significance reads as less than encouraging.³⁴²

³³⁹ Faring (the developer) has proved amenable to incorporating the site’s history as part of their redevelopment plans. This will take the form of permanent interpretation panels, and could potentially include a *Power of Place*-type installation in the vein of Folsom’s Leather Memoir. Wes Joe, “Opinion: History Disappearing on La Peer,” *WEHOnville* (blog), June 1, 2018, <https://www.wehonline.com/2018/06/01/opinion-history-disappearing-la-peer/>; Coleman Lloyd, “Opinion: Faring’s Plan to Save the Factory Would Have Made Scott Forbes Proud,” *WEHOnville* (blog), July 9, 2018, <https://www.wehonline.com/2018/07/09/opinion-farings-plan-save-factory-made-scott-forbes-proud/>.

³⁴⁰ In many ways, this is the digital inheritor of the first *Gay and Lesbian L.A. History Map*. “Curating the City: LGBTQ Historic Places in L.A. | Los Angeles Conservancy,” accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.laconservancy.org/lgbtq>.

³⁴¹ Three short animation-videos commissioned for the microsite detail specific preservation efforts—interviewing significant preservationists and individuals involved with a given resource’s history—and focus on the Women’s Building, Plummer Park, and The Black Cat Tavern. The last of these includes an interview with Wes Joe. Fontes, Interview with Adrian Scott Fine.

³⁴² These are The Black Cat Tavern and the Tom of Finland House (see chapters three and four). Additional landmarks have either been saved predominantly for their architectural value (such as the Harry and Margaret Hay house, the Biltmore Hotel, and the Van Luit Complex) or for their connections to broader socio-historical movements. The latter association is typified by the Women’s (Standard Oil Co.) Building, which benefitted from its association with Myron Hunt (a prominent L.A. architect) and for its critical role as a locus for L.A.’s (then nascent) feminist art scene. Han, “Recommendation Report”; “Millennium Biltmore Hotel Los Angeles | Los Angeles Conservancy,” accessed January 14, 2020, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/millennium-biltmore-hotel-los-angeles>; “Albert Van Luit Complex | Los Angeles Conservancy,” accessed January 14, 2020, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/albert-van-luit-complex>.

By the LA Conservancy's own admission, the microsite is "is just the beginning of an ongoing initiative..." emphasizing that their map "is not an exhaustive list of places that are important in the history of the LGBTQ community."³⁴³ Of the thirty-eight resources listed on microsite, only five can be reasonably described as centering the experiences of LGBTQ people of color. Two of these, the Hattie McDaniel Residence and the Samuel-Novarro Residence, are architecturally significant but, like the Harry Hay Residence, are privately owned homes and not open to the public.³⁴⁴ Of the remaining three, the most prominent resource for Black LGBTQ history is Jewel's Catch One which—while not yet landmarked—was the oldest Black-owned disco in the country at the time the proprietress (Jewel Thais Williams) herself closed it in 2015.³⁴⁵ The history of Jewel's has been extensively covered in a Netflix documentary, and the site continues to function much as it has historically, re-opening in 2016 as "a live music venue, nightclub & arts space [working] to celebrate creativity and instigate multi-disciplinary experimentation."³⁴⁶

The remaining two resources consist of Redz and Circus Disco. Despite their significance deriving primarily from the experiences of LGBTQ Latinos in L.A., they have simply not benefitted from a sustained level of community support. At present Latino communities make up a plurality of the Southern California region's ethnic groups, underscoring the need to save

³⁴³ "Curating the City: LGBTQ Historic Places in L.A. | Los Angeles Conservancy."

³⁴⁴ While this may hinder their ability to convey meaning in a heritage conservation sense, the landmarking of single-family homes that include (or better yet center) LGBTQ history is valid and should absolutely be pursued for the sake of claiming space in the built historical record. At present, neither house is at risk of demolition or significant alteration. Owing to its association with Lloyd Wright (the eldest son of Frank Lloyd Wright and a significant L.A. architect in his own right), the Samuel-Novarro Residence was declared HCM #130 in 1974. "Hattie McDaniel Residence | Los Angeles Conservancy," accessed January 14, 2020, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/hattie-mcdaniel-residence>; "Samuel-Novarro Residence | Los Angeles Conservancy," accessed January 14, 2020, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/samuel-novarro-residence>.

³⁴⁵ While the building dates to earlier, Jewel opened her disco in 1972, and though there is interest in declaring the property an HCM, efforts to do so have been hindered by Jewel's own statement that "[She] felt, and others have said, it's an institution. It was ours, but it's time to move on." Tre'vell Anderson, "Jewel's Catch One Disco's Demise Marks Era's End for L.A.'s Gay Blacks," *Los Angeles Times*; *Los Angeles, Calif.*, March 16, 2015, sec. Main News; Part A; Entertainment Desk; Lina Lecaro, "After 42 Years, Jewel's Catch One Says Goodbye," *LA Weekly*, July 20, 2015, <https://www.laweekly.com/after-42-years-jewels-catch-one-says-goodbye/>; Fontes, Interview with Lambert Giessinger and Melissa Jones.

³⁴⁶ While the current business is very much accepting of all identities, its fate is similar to The Black Cat Tavern in that it no longer operates as a specifically LGBTQ-oriented space. Dennis Romero, "Los Globos' Mitch Edelson Buys Legendary Mid-City Club Jewel's Catch One," *LA Weekly*, November 18, 2015, <https://www.laweekly.com/los-globos-mitch-edelson-buys-legendary-mid-city-club-jewels-catch-one/>; "Catch One – Los Angeles' Hottest Disco," accessed January 14, 2020, <https://www.catch.one/>.

spaces centering the experiences of their constituent LGBTQ individuals.³⁴⁷ Redz (originally Redheads) which had operated as a Latina-oriented lesbian bar in East L.A. since the 1950s, closed its doors in 2015. There is currently no significant effort to revive or commemorate it.³⁴⁸ The more indicative—and prominent—example is the Circus Disco founded by Gene La Pietra, who purposefully eschewed the racist/misogynist entrance policies of West Hollywood clubs such as Studio One. As a result, it became a gathering place for LGBTQ Latinos beginning in the mid-1970s, a period when the lack of welcoming places for them to go (even in established ethnic enclaves) often spurred nightly pilgrimages to Hollywood.³⁴⁹

Initial threats to Circus Disco, which had been operating continuously since 1975, became apparent in a 2008 draft Environment Impact Report (EIR) for a proposed development project called The Lexington, which asserted that the warehouse structure housing the club was not worth preserving:

In summary, the building has been extensively remodeled and does not possess any outstanding characteristics or unique architectural or historical significance. It has no unique or distinctive architectural characteristics or historical associations and has not achieved significance within the past fifty years. Therefore, it appears ineligible for the National Register, the California Register, and designation under a local ordinance.³⁵⁰

As the financial crash of 2008 likely delayed The Lexington from being built, the site continued its historic use for the next seven years, ultimately being added to SurveyLA. This delay gave the

³⁴⁷ In recent years the role of gender in romance languages has become a point of contention for LGBTQ communities in the U.S. While the masculine ending “os” is used here for the sake of readability and (Spanish) grammatical correctness, language is continuing to evolve in this aspect. The twelfth chapter of *LGBTQ America* stresses that, for the purposes of “sexuality and sexually-fluid identities the terms used are expressly significant. The same is the case in ethnic identity where a recent trend is to use Latinx to be inclusive of Latino/a, or of all self-identified people of Latin American origins.” Deena J. González and Ellie D. Hernández, “Chapter 12: Latina/o Gender and Sexuality” (National Park Foundation, October 31, 2016), 23.

³⁴⁸ The quiet demise of this community resource speaks to the increasing loss of lesbian and womyn’s space generally. As of this writing Redz is still vacant, with the building having undergone some minor alterations. Anonymous, “Lost Womyn’s Space: Redz,” *Lost Womyn’s Space* (blog), July 11, 2018, <http://lostwomynsspace.blogspot.com/2018/07/redz.html>; Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 285.

³⁴⁹ Per James Rojas, “in order to find our [queer] identity, we had to leave the Eastside,” which he characterizes as a “macho landscape.” Rojas, an LGBTQ planner and activist known for his focus on Latino Urbanism, describes joining groups of friends to take transit to Hollywood clubs in the 1970s, where welcoming places like Circus Disco allowed them to engage “gay life on [their] terms... [as] a group of Chicanos and other minority youth who... were discovering their sexual identities.” James Rojas, “From the Eastside to Hollywood: Chicano Queer Trailblazers in 1970s L.A.,” KCET, September 2, 2016, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/from-the-eastside-to-hollywood-chicano-queer-trailblazers-in-1970s-la>; “PLACE IT! - JAMES ROJAS - BIO,” accessed January 15, 2020, http://www.placeit.org/bio_james_rojas.html.

³⁵⁰ CAJA Environmental Services LLC, “Environmental Impact Analysis for The Lexington: Section C Historic Resources,” June 1, 2008, 18.

city's *LGBT Historic Context Statement* a chance to disagree with the draft EIR, describing Circus Disco as “reflect[ing] not only the geographic dispersion of the LGBT[Q] community, but also an increasing segregation of patrons along gender, ethnic/racial, and class lines.”³⁵¹ Two years later, the twelfth chapter of *LGBTQ America* would concur, adding that Circus Disco was “not just a social venue... [since it] played an important role as a place of community development and political organizing.”³⁵² Though helpful, this prominent call out proved to be too late, as Circus Disco was already slated for demolition following a zoning change that allowed for residential uses on the parcel.³⁵³

Triggered by the new development possibilities allowed by rezoning, Gene La Pietra himself sold the property for redevelopment, leading preservationists to submit an HCM application for Circus Disco upon its closing.³⁵⁴ As a locally-based non-profit engaged in preservation advocacy, Hollywood Heritage prepared and assembled a detailed nomination, which would have initiated the HCM process and put the site under temporary (deliberation-related) protections against demolition.³⁵⁵ Before a presentation could be made to the CHC, the developers (AvalonBay Communities LLC) agreed to a compromise, “promis[ing] to spare many of the remaining features of the old disco... and incorporate them into the project.”³⁵⁶ The new complex, AVA Hollywood at La Pietra Place, will bring nearly seven hundred apartments and twenty-five thousand square feet of street-level commercial space to the site. Similar to the

³⁵¹ Grimes, “LGBT Historic Context Statement,” 62.

³⁵² Per *LGBTQ America*, “in 1983, César Chávez addressed approximately one hundred members of the Project Just Business LGBTQ coalition at the bar. In his address, he discussed strategies for coalition fundraising and organizing boycotts.” González and Hernández, “Chapter 12: Latina/o Gender and Sexuality,” 25; Dubrow, “Chapter 5: The Preservation of LGBTQ Heritage,” 55–56; Doug Smith, “UFW Leader Addresses 100 at Buffet-Dance: Cesar Chavez Tells Gays How to Woo Corporate Funds: Boycott,” *Los Angeles Times* (1996-Current); *Los Angeles, Calif.*, March 23, 1983.

³⁵³ Phillip Zonkel, “Can Circus Disco Be Saved From Demolition?,” *Out in the 562* (blog), April 1, 2015, <http://blogs.presstelegram.com/outinthe562/2015/04/01/circus-disco-saved-demolition/>.

³⁵⁴ Dennis Romero, “The Founder of One of L.A.’s Earliest Gay Discos Isn’t Crying Over Its Destruction,” *LA Weekly*, December 4, 2015, <https://www.laweekly.com/the-founder-of-one-of-l-a-s-earliest-gay-discos-isnt-crying-over-its-destruction/>; Emily Alpert Reyes, “Gay Nightclub Nears Its End, At Crossroads,” *Los Angeles Times*; *Los Angeles, Calif.*, December 4, 2015, sec. California; Part B; Metro Desk.

³⁵⁵ Hollywood Heritage, “Recommendation Report: Circus Disco” (Los Angeles, Calif., United States: Los Angeles Department of City Planning, December 3, 2015).

³⁵⁶ Emily Alpert Reyes, “Hollywood Heritage Strikes a Deal to Save Artifacts of Circus Disco and Enshrine Them in a New Development,” *Los Angeles Times*; *Los Angeles, Calif.*, January 22, 2016, sec. California; Part B; Metro Desk.

Studio One redevelopment project, the design is oriented around a pedestrian paseo that includes (and interprets) salvaged elements of the site's LGBTQ history.³⁵⁷

Characterized by many to be a creative preservation solution, the loss of an active Latino-oriented LGBTQ space continued to be a sticking point within a growing discourse of gentrification anxiety.³⁵⁸ For undocumented queer folks especially, the demolition of Circus Disco spoke to the ongoing marginalization of their needs—via the loss of safe spaces for them to congregate—within an LGBTQ institutional framework.³⁵⁹ The unwillingness of the LA LGBT Center to engage the Circus Disco debate seemed to reinforce this assumption, as it was concurrently developing its new Anita May Rosenstein Campus directly across the street.³⁶⁰ The decision to present La Pietra with a “community hero” award added insult to injury, exposing fissures amongst L.A.’s queer Latinos. Defended by Richard Zaldivar, executive director of the Latino LGBTQ-focused non-profit The Wall Las Memorias Project, the choice to present the award was in no small part due to La Pietra’s role as a major donor. Responding to Zaldivar’s admonition to move on from the loss of Circus Disco and “go with the flow,” younger activists like Jorge Gutierrez made it clear that past legacies—no matter how progressive they may have been in the context of their time—shouldn’t supersede current needs:

The last thing we need are awards. We need spaces and resources. The closing of Circus Disco is representative of what’s been happening the past few years with LGBTQ spaces... For our community, clubs are so much more than that. They’re places where

³⁵⁷ Steven Sharp, “Renderings Revealed for AVA Hollywood,” *Urbanize LA*, May 15, 2018, <https://urbanize.la/post/renderings-revealed-ava-hollywood>.

³⁵⁸ In her contribution to *LGBTQ America*, Dubrow acknowledges that “while [Circus Disco] wasn’t a total victory from the perspective of preservation, it signaled a new level of activism to protect the tangible remains of LGBTQ heritage Dubrow, “Chapter 5: The Preservation of LGBTQ Heritage,” 56.

³⁵⁹ Alessandro Negrete, “Where Are Los Angeles Clubs for Queer, Transgender People of Color?,” *Q Voice News*, November 9, 2016, <https://qvoicenews.com/2016/11/08/where-are-los-angeles-gay-clubs-for-queer-transgender-people-of-color/>.

³⁶⁰ Overly hopeful as it may be, it’s not unreasonable to see the lack of connection between the two projects as a lost opportunity on both developers’ parts. Constituting only a portion of the AVA Hollywood site, the LGBT Center could easily have rehabilitated and/or occupied the Circus Disco building, which was essentially a large, open warehouse. Phillip Zonkel, “Los Angeles LGBT Center: We Don’t Care About Gay Latino History,” *Out in the 562* (blog), January 20, 2016, <http://blogs.presstelegram.com/outinthe562/2016/01/20/los-angeles-lgbt-center-care-gay-latino-history/>; Steven Sharp, “Steel Frame Rises for LA LGBT Center Expansion,” *Urbanize LA*, April 24, 2018, <https://urbanize.la/post/steel-frame-rises-la-lgbt-center-expansion>.

people can be themselves, hang out with friends. It wasn't just another club closing. It had a huge impact on the community.³⁶¹

Torn between competing urban interests, there's no one answer to understand how exactly preservationists can contribute positively. Despite the best efforts of advocacy groups like Hollywood Heritage to preserve for altruistic reasons, constructively engaging urban issues as part of ever-shifting development coalitions merits constant consideration and re-evaluation on a case-by-case basis. Even regionally prominent organizations like the LA Conservancy must ultimately produce workable compromises in order to maintain a viable negotiating position, and by definition these outcomes cannot satisfy everyone. Given the nature of work that consists largely of tackling one preservation crisis after another, it's no surprise that LGBTQ history—defined largely in terms of intangible cultural heritage—often falls by the wayside. At the local level, the LA Conservancy's microsite effort is a good start towards remedying this because it has marked the forging of productive connections between preservation advocates and scholar-archivists at the nearby ONE Archives.³⁶²

If faithfully developed and pursued, strengthening these connections between scholars, advocates, activists, and artists may yet reveal, save, and perhaps even landmark new LGBTQ resources, but it cannot alone remedy certain historical realities.³⁶³ The fact that L.A. queer activism during the gay liberation and AIDS/ACT UP eras “was largely white... [and] seen as operating within largely white areas of [L.A.]” is addressed extensively in Kenney's dissertation.³⁶⁴ Crediting the marginalization of queer people of color as a factor, oral interviews

³⁶¹ Jorge Gutierrez is the founder of Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement, an advocacy organization for trans, queer, and gender nonconforming Latinxs. Phillip Zonkel, “Circus Disco Owner Gene La Pietra - Who Tore Down Club for a Luxury Condo Development - To Receive Community Hero Award,” Q Voice News, November 16, 2016, <https://qvoicenews.com/2016/11/15/circus-disco-owner-gene-la-pietra-who-tore-down-club-for-a-luxury-condo-development-to-get-community-hero-award/>; “Mission & Vision,” Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://famiatqlm.org/mission-3/>.

³⁶² Fontes, Interview with Adrian Scott Fine.

³⁶³ A new resource called Queer Maps, conceived by artist Chris Cruse, combines archival and GIS data to produce a graphically compelling story map that surpasses the LA Conservancy's equivalent in terms of entry numbers and historical detail. While it doesn't focus on preservation efforts per se, the resource will work to expand the engagement of L.A.'s LGBTQ heritage in the realm of digital storytelling. The website was inaugurated with a launch party on November 15, 2019. Held at NAVEL, a downtown L.A. art gallery that describes itself as “test site for collectivity and kinship,” the launch party consisted of a series of installations that physically recreated vanished LGBTQ L.A. spaces with the help of performers and reenactors. Fulcrum Arts, “Queer Maps,” Queer Maps, accessed January 15, 2020, <http://queermaps.org/about>; “NAVEL: Queer Maps Launch,” NAVEL, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://navel.la/events/queermaps/>.

³⁶⁴ Kenney, “Strategic Visibility,” 219, 204–21.

conducted by Kenney also reveal a focus on the Silver Lake/Hollywood/West Hollywood areas to be a conscious spatial strategy, pursued “out of respect for the more pressing concerns facing ethnic neighborhoods and communities.”³⁶⁵ This goes a long way towards understanding why the LA Conservancy’s map looks the way it does, but does little to actively engage broader concerns in ethnically diverse LGBTQ communities. Preservation’s ability to be part of these discussions depends not only on the willingness of preservationists to question the implications of their professional role(s), but also to connect with other fields of expertise with respect to the growth and governance of the urban realm.³⁶⁶

A Communal Imperative:

The Edendale case studies not only illustrate how LGBTQ heritage is (or isn’t) conserved and interpreted, but also raise a host of additional questions concerning how queer memory relates to queer life in L.A. If the landmarking of significant bars like the Black Cat was only successful because the property owner was caught off guard, what are the implications for future resources now that L.A. developers are fully aware that this history is significant enough to merit preservation? If successful instances of landmarking sites like the Tom of Finland house can only happen in situations where a resource is already in queer hands, what does that mean for a wide array of resources not under LGBTQ (or even sympathetic) ownership? Does this mean that the only secure LGBTQ landmarks moving forward will be private (or at best semi-public) single-family homes? Are these types of resources alone an accurate representation of LGBTQ life in L.A.?

Many of these questions center on interpretation and advocacy strategy, but the role that preservation plays within an urban revitalization context necessitates a more forceful and urgent

³⁶⁵ Kenney, 219.

³⁶⁶ The geographic breadth of historic LGBTQ communities is also being explored through a mapping of the Damron guides, founded in 1964 and managed by Bob Damron until his death from AIDS in 1985. While national in scope, guides from the pre-1985 period largely reflect the white, gay male perspective of San Francisco-based Damron and his immediate friends. Entries in the guides nonetheless manage to give glimpses into thriving LGBTQ subcultures nationwide and are currently being developed by a project titled Mapping the Gay Guides. Though invaluable from a historiographic standpoint, the project makes clear that the vast majority of listings are no longer physically extant or in operation. Meilan Solly, “This Interactive Map Visualizes the Queer Geography of 20th-Century America,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed June 15, 2020, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/interactive-map-visualizes-queer-geography-20th-century-america-180974306/>; Amanda Regan and Eric Gonzaba, “Mapping the Gay Guides: About This Project,” December 14, 2019, <https://www.mappingthegayguides.org/about/>.

response. Specifically, how can preservationists avoid falling into the trap of being complicit while LGBTQ places are (at best) being replaced with inanimate monuments, memorials, or distorted/gentrified versions of themselves? Is this an inevitable process to which there is no remedy? Though these issues affect various LGBTQ people differently, a general anxiety over the future of urban places not only concerns specific queer spaces, but the areas and neighborhoods that host and support them. Historic districts—which have been used as a preservation tool for nearly a century—may seem promising, but in their current form are not enough. This is because preserving historic urban fabric alone doesn’t inherently extend to those inhabiting it, who can easily be priced out if they are renters and tenants. It’s in response to these issues that planners and activists have begun to engage preservation as part of a broader strategy towards mitigating urban displacement and addressing communities’ (justified) tendencies to fear these partnerships.³⁶⁷

If L.A. has any advantage in this regard, it comes from sharing a state with San Francisco, one of the few cities worldwide that has begun to implement policies designed to conserve and mitigate cultural erasure in specific neighborhoods. The centerpiece of this effort consists of the Cultural District, which has been defined not only in terms of addressing gentrification-related displacement, but also historical injustice:

[A] Cultural District shall mean a geographic area or location within the City and County of San Francisco that embodies a unique cultural heritage because it contains a concentration of cultural and historic assets and culturally significant enterprises, arts, services, or businesses, and because a significant portion of its residents or people who spend time in the area or location are members of a specific cultural, community, or ethnic group that historically has been discriminated against, displaced, and oppressed.³⁶⁸

Of the Cultural Districts declared thus far, three of them (Transgender, LEATHER and LGBTQ, and the Castro LGBTQ) directly center queer heritage.³⁶⁹ Once declared and drawn, planning reports identifying the districts’ cultural attributes are submitted to the Board of Supervisors and

³⁶⁷ This fear stems from the use of preservation as part of redevelopment and gentrification schemes generally. James Michael Buckley and Donna Graves, “Tangible Benefits From Intangible Resources: Using Social and Cultural History to Plan Neighborhood Futures,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 82, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 152.

³⁶⁸ “Process for Establishment of Cultural Districts,” Pub. L. No. 126–18, § 107.1, San Francisco Administrative Code 15 (2018), 2.

³⁶⁹ Additional districts include Japantown, Calle 24 (veinticuatro) Latino Cultural District, SoMa Pilipinas - Filipino Cultural Heritage District, and the African American Arts and Cultural District. “Cultural Heritage | SF Planning,” accessed January 16, 2020, <https://sfplanning.org/cultural-heritage>.

the Mayor's office. Made with community input, these reports must include strategies to acknowledge, preserve, and advance the cultural legacy of the district in question.³⁷⁰

Using the preservation of tangible historic resources as a jumping off point, these strategies focus explicitly on the district's intangible cultural heritage. A core aspect of this strategy is the city's Legacy Business Registry, which "works to save longstanding, community-serving businesses that so often serve as valuable cultural assets."³⁷¹ Initial resistance to implementing this policy from within the city planning department concerned the overextension of authority. Specifically, the emphasis on regulation of land use and architecture has rarely extended to favoring specific tenants.³⁷² Valid concerns over political favoritism aside, mounting pressure to counter the effects of displacement is acute in California, helping to lend popular support as these tools continue to be developed. San Francisco's Citywide LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage strategy adds a third component, serving as a guide to investigate and prioritize methods for meeting the living needs of the city's queer communities.³⁷³

These policy ideas should be extended to L.A. Despite vast differences, Southern California cities—and their constituent queer places—are undergoing many of the same pressures currently driving cultural and community displacement in the Bay Area. Intelligently responding to these pressures entails more than a rote replication of these cultural preservation tools, since even the San Francisco policies are still too new to understand what their effects will be in the long run. Doing so would mean engaging L.A.'s urban development landscape within the Southern California region's heavily racialized urban discourse. By contrast the city of San Francisco benefits not only jurisdictionally by being geographically discrete (the city is contiguous with the county) but also more uniformly managed. With over four times the population spread out over ten times the area, L.A. is more de-centered in almost every physical,

³⁷⁰ Process for Establishment of Cultural Districts, 1.

³⁷¹ Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of this program is that it allows for a legacy business to move to other locations within the district by "target[ing] the specific cultural activity, allowing it to grow and develop rather than freezing it in time and place." Consultants helping to draft this policy are continuing to finesse this, studying ways to link built resources and usage to prevent business re-location from becoming a go-to mitigation measure. Donna Graves, James Michael Buckley, and Gail Dubrow, "Emerging Strategies for Sustaining San Francisco's Diverse Heritage," *Change Over Time* 8, no. 2 (2018): 170, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cot.2018.0010>; "Cultural Heritage | SF Planning."

³⁷² Buckley and Graves, "Tangible Benefits From Intangible Resources," 160.

³⁷³ "LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage Strategy | SF Planning," accessed September 3, 2020, <https://sfplanning.org/project/lgbtq-cultural-heritage-strategy>; Graves, Buckley, and Dubrow, "Emerging Strategies for Sustaining San Francisco's Diverse Heritage," 170–73.

economic, and social sense.³⁷⁴ An L.A.-focused LGBTQ heritage strategy will have to factor in the city's unique economic and political climate, but these questions can only be explored if there is sufficient interest, support, and a clear idea of where to begin.

Having been referred to by an array of shifting academic terms, attempts to reach a common understanding of what an LGBTQ neighborhood is have not only been plagued by disagreements over definition, but also professional disdain on behalf of mainstream preservationists and planners.³⁷⁵ In L.A., the area that circumscribes the case studies discussed illustrates that current urban anxieties are anything but new:

Straddling Sunset Boulevard between Hollywood and downtown, Silver Lake had long served as a small, quiet gay enclave; but in the late 1970s, its cheap rents, Craftsman architecture, and bohemian ambiance drew large numbers of gays into the district. Gay realtors encouraged the trend, appealing especially to affluent homosexuals with the marketing slogan 'West Hollywood is Moving East.' Silver Lake's gay population was soon more than 20 percent. The [Latino] working-class community did not appear to welcome them... [and] a series of muggings and several murders, as well as the firebombing of ... [a] gay restaurant, created serious tensions. Some were certain that local street youth were attacking gay people out of homophobic contempt. Others, however, pointed out that the attacks might be less hate crimes than the acts of poor residents who worried about the effects of gentrification.³⁷⁶

Rejecting the idea of a demonstration as too aggressive, local LGBTQ activists responded to these tensions by forming partnerships with working-class youth, collaborating on a neighborhood celebration that evolved into the Sunset Junction Street Festival.³⁷⁷ As an intangible cultural resource, the success of the festival not only diminished the need for police presence, but fostered vibrant social situations and community cohesion. By the early 2000s, signs of progress in this respect led to a social scene that "include[ed] gay cholos and yuppies,

³⁷⁴ The city of L.A. also comprises one of eighty-eight municipalities in L.A. Country. Brittany Martin, "How Does Los Angeles Size Up to Other Cities?," *Time Out Los Angeles*, August 24, 2016, <https://www.timeout.com/los-angeles/blog/how-does-los-angeles-size-up-to-other-cities-082316>.

³⁷⁵ This disdain has significantly abated in the past decade. Largely coined in the latter half of the twentieth century, other names included "gay enclaves," "gay ghettos," "gay villages," and "gayborhoods." The privileging of Gay males (centering the "G" and erasing the contributions of LGBTQ people) is implicit in all of these labels, which perhaps explains why San Francisco has avoided re-using any of them. The earliest scholarly records of LGBTQ urban areas—and by extension some of the most thorough analyses of them—tend to come from sociologists and anthropologists. Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, Princeton Studies in Cultural Sociology (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 6–8.

³⁷⁶ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 298.

³⁷⁷ For more information on the street festival, see Chapter 3.

families and the elderly” in addition to “Mexican restaurants with the gay flag as part of their décor [and] gay salsa dancing at Rudolfo’s [restaurant in] Sunset Junction.”³⁷⁸

None of these latter events dealt with historic preservation outright, but they help to demonstrate that the Edendale legacy of progressive communion was (and perhaps still is) alive and well, deserving to be reassessed for its potential as a cultural district. From the vantage point of historical interpretation alone, some of the major themes and challenges of twentieth century queer experience are tied to this local history. However, this heritage is not fully apparent from the LGBTQ historical resources that have been landmarked thus far. When viewing the case studies as evidence, it doesn’t seem that the various preservationists involved were operating with a conscious intent to connect to (or revive) the Edendale scene of the immediate postwar period, though they were to varying degrees cognizant of it.³⁷⁹ Connecting these resources under a specific theme at the neighborhood level would not only underscore the fact that queer spaces don’t achieve significance in a vacuum, but may potentially uncover and recognize LGBTQ people who have yet to be fully acknowledged as part of this legacy. The most glaring absence from the Edendale case studies is that of lesbian and queer women, who have historically constituted a significant presence in Silver Lake and Echo Park up to the present day.³⁸⁰

While the Silver Lake/Echo Park area’s potential as a cultural heritage district would be contingent on many factors, work needs to be done undoing misconceptions within popular

³⁷⁸ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 299.

³⁷⁹ Wes Joe had long viewed the area (Silverlake) as friendly towards gay people, and while the reasons behind the creation of the Sunset Junction festival seem to belie that assumption, Hurewitz’s research leaves little doubt that Edendale’s “bohemian” heritage helped prime the area for the evolution of an active queer community by the late twentieth century. Fontes, Interview with Wes Joe.

³⁸⁰ For instance, Lillian Faderman details psychologist Evelyn Hooker’s first attempts to find research subjects for her early psychological studies in the early 1950s, which would later lead to removing homosexuality from the official list of mental illnesses. To help find subjects, a gay male co-worker introduced Hooker to “two lesbians who threw gay parties in a big ramshackle house in the bohemian Silver Lake district of Los Angeles, not far from where Harry Hay would hold the first meeting of the group that became the Mattachine. [Hooker] thought that these homosexuals were an impressive bunch.” Though not itself in Silver Lake, Hooker’s residence is called out on the LA Conservancy’s map and microsite. Faderman, *The Gay Revolution*, 98; “Evelyn Hooker Residence | Los Angeles Conservancy,” accessed January 17, 2020, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/evelyn-hooker-residence>.

narratives concerning queer neighborhoods.³⁸¹ Countering these assumptions can be done by reexamining how LGBTQ people are understood within preservation and the revitalization of cities themselves. Whether acting as preservationists or within an array of allied creative endeavors, blanket stereotypes that cast queer people as uniform gentrification agents need to be interrogated and disrupted.³⁸² An especially problematic trope is the idea that gay men specifically, by virtue of being “different,” are somehow innately attuned to matters of beauty, aesthetics, and design. This often leads many to view homosexuality itself as somehow a qualification for discursive authority in this respect, and only serves to reinforce caricatures of gay men as a superficial and materialistic cadre of gentrifiers.³⁸³ While such assumptions may be

³⁸¹ The demographic reality is that most major cities host a series of multiple, interconnected, and shifting gayborhoods and “sub-gayborhoods.” In the case of San Francisco this can be discerned with the three LGBTQ-centered Cultural Districts declared thus far. Variation in the character and focus of these areas can be attributed to differing priorities. Per Ghaziani, “when gayborhoods first formed in the [gay liberation] era, they were defined mostly by gay men. Distinct lesbian settlements emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, and they were influenced by feminist politics, rather than the sexual marketplaces that more often typified the places where gay men congregated.” Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, 234–35.

³⁸² These assumptions, having been formed largely during the gay liberation and AIDS crisis eras, are addressed in many discussions concerning gayborhoods and urban change. During these periods, neighborhoods such as San Francisco’s Castro and New York’s Greenwich Village achieved national renown as “meccas” and “free zones” for LGBTQ liberation. Since urban centers in the U.S. have experienced renewed reinvestment in the twenty-first century, these areas are no longer economically marginalized in terms of real estate values. This has led to the popular perception that attracting gay men and lesbians (i.e. “gaying” up a neighborhood) as a valid revitalization strategy in and of itself. Ghaziani, 21–22; Peter Moskowitz, “When It Comes to Gentrification, LGBTQ People Are Both Victim and Perpetrator,” *Vice* (blog), March 16, 2017, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/nz5qwb/when-it-comes-to-gentrification-lgbtq-people-are-both-victim-and-perpetrator; P. E. Moskowitz, *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood* (PublicAffairs, 2017), 33, 56; Scott Harris, “HILLCREST: Homosexuals Provide Vital Force Behind Community’s Renaissance,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); *Los Angeles, Calif.*, April 3, 1983, sec. SAN DIEGO COUNTY; Tony Perry, “Gays Recruited to Help Save Neighborhood: Residents Hand out Flyers at San Diego’s Annual Pride Parade. “The Gays Rescued Hillcrest, and We Hope They Can Help Do the Same for Azalea Park,”” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); *Los Angeles, Calif.*, July 26, 1993, sec. West Ventura County; John Paul LoCascio, “A Different Kind of Eden: Gay Men, Modernism, and the Rebirth of Palm Springs” (University of Southern California Digital Library USCDL, 2013).

³⁸³ This caricature is not entirely without some basis in fact. In a recently completed dissertation, anthropologist Zachary Blair charts the racialized overtones of gay neighborhood development, focusing specifically on Chicago’s Boystown. This analysis asserts that the gay neighborhood is “fundamentally a machine of racial violence,” being defined in terms of consumption-based exclusion. While relatively emergent, more of these studies are needed to “shed light on gay neighborhoods as contested and contradictory sites of struggle.” Zachary Shane Kalish Blair, “Machine of Desire: Race, Space, and Contingencies of Violence in Chicago’s Boystown” (Dissertation, Chicago, Ill, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2018), 55.

intended to flatter or compliment, they continue to be problematic as they're really only applied to gay men of means, and often exclude gay men of color.³⁸⁴

Queering Integrity:

Advancing efforts to landmark LGBTQ resources not only involves interrogating preservation's role, but the professional standards to which preservationists themselves adhere to. In L.A., as in many other metropolitan communities, the desire to save and recognize this history is earnest and sincere, with opposition to it being driven by attempts to secure realty and investment interests as opposed to any (openly stated) anti-LGBTQ animus. This is borne out in the Edendale case studies, which were all affected by debates over whether the tangible remains in question was capable of conveying their story. Intellectually engaging and necessary as these conversations may be, they don't change the fact that historically and culturally significant events occurred at each case study site. Moreover, the formally utilitarian nature of each resource (as opposed to large and more monumental structures) underscores the sense of urgency needed to landmark places that are far more vulnerable to casual damage and destruction.

These challenges are not only confronting LGBTQ resources, but any site or structure that speaks to the history of underserved communities generally. In terms of preservation practice, the most promising shift has been the recognition that marginalization is not only political and social, but also economic and material, and that the historic built environment is by extension reflective of this. How then, are preservationists to go about securing built histories that are lost or close to being obscured? L.A.'s northern neighbors continue to provide guidance for how to respond in this regard:

We assert that loss of integrity should not affect determination of a property's historical significance if that significance is rooted in cultural or social, rather than architectural,

³⁸⁴ Per Will Fellows, "gay men are a prominent and highly talented presence in many female-dominated fields that revolve around creating, restoring, and preserving beauty, order and continuity. It's a phenomenon that seems to grow out of an essential gay difference." Fellows' brand of queer essentialism, inspired by Harry Hay's teachings, is impossible to prove given the subjectivity of what constitutes "beauty" and "prominence" in a professional sense. Fellows neglects to interrogate why these types of professions are gendered to begin with. While this narrative may feel good, building self-esteem for gay men in the face of homophobia encountered in professional spheres, it rests on deeply flawed assumptions. The "prominence" that Fellows refers to is more likely attributed to male privilege, of which the gender pay gap is the most obvious example. The fact that only two (Jeffrey Samudio and Gerry Takano) of the twenty-nine gay men interviewed for this book were men of color further de-legitimizes these assertions as intellectually lazy, culturally myopic, and racially exclusive. Fellows, *A Passion to Preserve*, x.

histories. The San Francisco LGBTQ Historic Context Statement presents a strong argument and suggestions for recognizing properties that have poor integrity but significant histories. Properties no longer extant or that have undergone physical change can still retain powerful meaning for communities and remain important cultural sites.³⁸⁵

While San Francisco's LGBTQ context statement acknowledges that integrity still matters as a basis for professional judgement, it questions the relevance of specific aspects. A significant conceptual critique concerns the assumption of alignment, the "premise that resources can and should always convey their significance through their physical fabric," as untenable for LGBTQ resources.³⁸⁶

Per the Secretary of Interior Standards, integrity is measured in seven aspects dealing with materials, association, design, feeling, location, workmanship, and setting. These are to varying degrees subjective, and their respective relevance also varies depending on the reasons for significance in question.³⁸⁷ In order to focus on what truly matters for historically significant LGBTQ resources, San Francisco's Context Statement states that only three aspects (location, feeling, and association) should be considered when evaluating integrity for LGBTQ resources.³⁸⁸ This change of focus, if adopted in more places like L.A., could go a long way towards circumventing some of the landmarking issues encountered by sites like the Harry Hay residence but, as the Black Cat case study shows, preservation victories do not necessarily guarantee social relevance in a heritage conservation sense. While addressing this may be beyond the professional scope of normative preservation practice, securing places that continue to resonate for living communities (especially those whose history is ostensibly being commemorated) is a critical means of ensuring that they'll be cared for, maintained and monitored over generations.

³⁸⁵ Graves and Watson, "Chapter 25: San Francisco: Placing LGBTQ Histories in the City by the Bay," 7.

³⁸⁶ The context statement also notes that state standards for listing landmarks "provide more flexibility" than those at this federal level, which helps to partially explain why there are only three resources from California listed explicitly for their LGBTQ history on the NRHP, and why the only L.A. resource of these three is a mural. Shayne Elizabeth Watson and Donna J. Graves, "Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco" (City & County of San Francisco, March 1, 2016), 353.

³⁸⁷ Joeckel, "Integrity."

³⁸⁸ Watson and Graves, "Context Statement for LGBTQ San Francisco," 354.

Pursuing a Stable Heritage:

Understanding the role meaning plays within LGBTQ-centered landmarking efforts demands a recognition of—and better yet an engagement with—issues that are typically regarded as relevant only to community planning. If the case studies raise any central question in this regard, it's that while communities like L.A. are more than capable of preserving places for cultural reasons, then why is this rarely and so infrequently done? If L.A.'s outsized role in the development of U.S. LGBTQ history is as undeniable as many prominent scholars claim, why don't resources related to these themes receive the same amount of attention that more architecturally significant resources do? Aside from the obvious fact that architectural resources are more easily quantifiable and categorizable, perhaps one of the central issues here lies with the rapidly evolving—and until recently quite fragile—nature of LGBTQ historiography itself.

Historical narratives and themes matter because they provide guidance for acts of public history that include—but are certainly not limited to—historic preservation. LGBTQ history, which is ever shifting and has always escaped clear-cut definitions, is only now perceived by many as a reliable foundation for establishing significance.³⁸⁹ In 2020, it can no longer be said that this history is minor or inconsequential. As marginal as they may have been within the context of their own time, multiple generations of twentieth century activists have created one of the most vibrant, visible, and effective vehicles for social reform today. While efforts to interpret this legacy often frame this as parallel to other prominent civil rights movements, the reality is far more complex and in need of further exploration.³⁹⁰ By the time many of these twentieth century developments were beginning to be understood and contextualized, its success is evidenced by the attitudes of younger generations, currently evolving new ways of understanding gender and sexuality.

The LGBTQ label itself may also be seen as an indicator of these shifts. While it's the most increasingly accepted term to date, it doesn't represent "an identity in and of itself, but

³⁸⁹ Depending on which era one chooses to highlight, areas relevant to LGBTQ history may straddle any field, including art, politics, law, religion, sociology, anthropology, medicine and psychology, just to name a few. Despite previously discussed gaps in the historical record, the sheer diversity of materials alone would seem to indicate the reality that LGBTQ people are almost everywhere one chooses to look.

³⁹⁰ As research and understanding continues to advance, LGBTQ history and communal development begins to resemble a type of overlay with respect to civil rights. Specifically, significant LGBTQ figures often influenced via direct participation—and were themselves influenced by—the civil rights movements for African Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Native Americans. These relationships have only continued to strengthen up to the present day.

rather a contemporary political alliance that can conceal as much as it reveals about the individuals and communities designated by the acronym.”³⁹¹ This alliance—itsself a legacy of the twentieth century—was always a tenuous one, and is now being subject to ever more forceful critique. Given this, it’s likely that efforts to landmark queer sites in L.A. will continue to be hampered by conflicts over the meaning of community and solidarity. Recent suggestions for rectifying these tensions stress the need to emphasize the intersectional nature of place-based histories, by extension countering the preservationist tendency to narrowly highlight one theme.³⁹² While this is necessary for including all perspectives from an interpretation standpoint, it also highlights challenges for sites where histories of conflict and exclusion (among and between LGBTQ people) can reignite unaddressed grievances and exacerbate divisions, further stymieing preservation efforts.

If preservation-related conflicts over the meaning of LGBTQ places seem hyperbolic or especially fraught to outsiders, it perhaps stems from the fact that queer people do not inherit their history in a linear fashion, rediscovering and responding to it in ways that vary wildly from one generation to the next. While every human being may be born equally ignorant, individuals born into a socially (or ethnically) defined group often begin to develop their identity from an early age. For most, collective memory plays a major role, and is usually experienced within a pre-existing biological or socio-familial structure. The imparting of knowledge—which helps to create a sense of self early on—is often passed down through generations via oral history and other forms of intangible heritage. While some families may openly recognize and be tolerant (or in rare cases affirming) of their LGBTQ members, most youth who feel themselves to be different are given few resources to understand what queer life could mean for them personally. By extension, acquiring any sort of queer identity entails a journey of self-discovery unique to every individual.

In nearly every case, access to knowledge about queer existence is critical for breaking the early sense of isolation that nearly all LGBTQ people feel at some point. Today this often comes via media depictions, where LGBTQ representation is more prominent than ever. This has

³⁹¹ Donna Graves and Gail Dubrow, “Taking Intersectionality Seriously: Learning from LGBTQ Heritage Initiatives for Historic Preservation,” *The Public Historian* 41, no. 2 (May 1, 2019): 291.

³⁹² This is also referred to as “polyvocality” which, if not included, can result in “important aspects of experience are silenced [being] erased, even in projects with the best intention of fostering diversity and inclusion within historic preservation.” Graves and Dubrow, 294.

worked to diminish feelings of absolute isolation for many, but it has done very little to address widespread ignorance of LGBTQ history itself. While younger generations of LGBTQ people may not always see this history as relevant, it is more likely the failure to transmit knowledge generationally that keeps them from connecting it to their own experiences. Early historian-activists like Jim Kepner recognized that access to LGBTQ history is critical for anyone seeking to “get beyond the street understanding of who [queer people] are ... and to begin to define [themselves]; to use that history in the search for self-definition.”³⁹³ With respect to LGBTQ heritage, meaning and significance cannot be maintained without the successful transmission of knowledge itself. The consequences of this, if left unchecked, will continue to have a deleterious effect on efforts to preserve LGBTQ historic resources everywhere.

Recent attempts to directly secure the transmission of LGBTQ knowledge have been sporadic, uneven, and controversial. In 2011, California became the first state to mandate that LGBTQ history be included in public school curricula via the FAIR Education Act (SB 48).³⁹⁴ The law faced immediate backlash in the form of a failed repeal effort the following year, with only four more states having adopted similar measures.³⁹⁵ Incorporating LGBTQ historical material into the public school system, which involves training educators on how to appropriately contextualize the subject matter, has also taken years to implement in the few states that have bothered to do it. Well-intentioned and necessary as this is, the challenge of adding educational requirements for cash-strapped public schools is compounded by the fact that many teachers—who themselves were never taught this history—are having to learn it alongside their pupils.³⁹⁶ The uneven nature of resource allocation in public education, whereby individual district funding is largely based off of local property taxes, will also continue to cause problems.

³⁹³ Kepner’s personal collections and efforts would lead to the creation of the ONE Archives itself. Jim Kepner, quoted in “National Gay Archives,” *Lifestyle Update* (Los Angeles, Calif, United States, Los Angeles, Calif: Public Access Television, February 1, 1986), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMvKDgexzzE>.

³⁹⁴ Katy Steinmetz, “The Story Behind California’s Unprecedented Textbooks,” *Time*, November 14, 2017, <https://time.com/5022698/california-history-lgbt-textbooks-curriculum/>.

³⁹⁵ The repeal effort likely lost steam owing to the (then) recent overturning of Proposition 8 in 2010. Colorado and New Jersey implemented their own LGBTQ history mandates in 2019, with Illinois and Oregon following them in 2020. Ken Williams, “‘Stop SB 48’ Coalition Admits Failure in Bid to Overturn California FAIR Education Act,” *LGBTQ Nation*, July 16, 2012, <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2012/07/stop-sb-48-coalition-admits-failure-in-bid-to-overturn-california-fair-education-act/>; Casey Leins, “These States Require Schools to Teach LGBT History,” *US News & World Report*, August 14, 2019, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2019-08-14/states-that-require-schools-to-teach-lgbt-history>.

³⁹⁶ Olivia B. Waxman, “As More States Require Schools to Teach LGBTQ History, Resources for Teachers Expand,” *Time*, December 13, 2019, <https://time.com/5747670/lgbtq-history-resources/>.

Many districts already diminish history and social studies requirements in the face of frequent (and all too inevitable) budget cuts, with some states forbidding the teaching of LGBTQ subject matter outright.³⁹⁷ Given this, efforts to transmit LGBTQ history to those who need it the most are—as far as broad swathes of our public education system is concerned—still so politically fraught as to seem unproductive.

Access to the internet and other forms of digital storytelling now provide a primary means for LGBTQ people of all ages to access vital information about themselves. That said, the veracity of what can be found online continues to present a major challenge, undercutting efforts to assert the legitimacy of LGBTQ history in the eyes of outsiders. In L.A., the stabilization and growth of the ONE Archives exemplifies one of the most significant responses yet, which is the increasing institutionalization of LGBTQ history itself. The ONE Archives Foundation today manages a broad array of engagement programs beyond the role of a traditionally passive repository. Acquiring a stable physical location however, necessitated partnering with an existing institution large enough to provide real estate.³⁹⁸ If developed further, these partnerships can enable more preservation-minded activists to meaningfully devote time, effort, and capital towards preserving significant LGBTQ sites.

These initiatives may not seem radical in light of contemporary activist tactics, but the alternative—doing nothing and simply interpreting the resources that are already landmarked—will only hurt LGBTQ communities in the long run. A lack of advancement where recognized (but unlisted) and potential resources are concerned serves to further a history of heteronormative erasure, consigning valuable voices, records, and places to marginalization and loss. When discussing the demise of the feminist and radical lesbian neighborhoods of the 1970s, Gayle Rubin has acknowledged that stability required to accomplish this has too often been unavailable for LGBTQ people communally:

³⁹⁷ While the language in each individual law varies, Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina employ some form of prohibition on teaching LGBTQ history, often going as far as to demand it be portrayed in a negative light if the issue is raised. These measures are often referred to as “no promo homo” laws. “Laws That Prohibit the ‘Promotion of Homosexuality’: Impacts and Implications,” GLSEN, January 30, 2018, <https://www.glsen.org/research/laws-prohibit-promotion-homosexuality-impacts-and-implication>.

³⁹⁸ This came through the University of Southern California’s donation (to what was then called the One Institute/International Gay and Lesbian Archives), in 2000, of a building at 909 West Adams Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90007. The archives themselves were folded into the USC Library system in 2010. “History | ONE Archives,” accessed June 9, 2020, <https://one.usc.edu/about/history>.

There are complicated reasons for the collapse of these [historical] communities, but one of them was their infrastructural fragility... the built environment is expensive to obtain and challenging to maintain. Stability is resource intensive. Queer populations have an overabundance of marginality and an insufficiency of stability... we [LGBTQ people] could use some of that stability, and the resources required to sustain it.³⁹⁹

While there is much truth here, how can this “overabundance of marginality” Rubin describes be practically overcome when so much of it is due to centuries of ongoing heteronormative bias and oppression?

If most LGBTQ intuitions today are still too occupied by the struggle to meet the basic needs of their constituent communities, then how can they justify allocating their (often scarce) resources to putting in the time and effort to claiming more space in the historic built environment? Since local institutions such as the ONE Archives and the L.A. LGBT Center nominally help by providing research and writing letters of support, campaigning to raise preservation on the list of priorities will not be easy.⁴⁰⁰ This is because it puts preservationists (be they queer self-identified or sympathetic allies) in the position of advocating for historic fabric over the pressing needs of living communities. The appropriateness of such a strategy, if pursued, will vary depending on the specific geographic community in question. In L.A., preservationists must work to increase pressure on powerful LGBTQ institutions to not only engage in preservation efforts, but reconsider how those efforts may complement or augment their core missions.⁴⁰¹ A well-funded landmarking campaign, in conjunction with the same integrity reforms now being considered in San Francisco, could go a long way towards safeguarding significant sites.

³⁹⁹ Rubin’s comments here were made pertaining to Queer Studies infrastructure in the academe, but they are more than relevant for securing significant sites in the historic built environment. Rubin, *Deviations a Gayle Rubin Reader*, 356.

⁴⁰⁰ The GLBT Historical Society, specifically its Historic Place Working Group, has increased its involvement in San Francisco-based LGBTQ preservation efforts substantially in the past decade. Founded by Shayne Watson, the working group was instrumental in getting the Historical Society to act as a fiscal sponsor for San Francisco’s LGBTQ Citywide Context Statement. “Overview & Mission,” GLBT Historical Society, accessed September 3, 2020, <https://www.glbthistory.org/overview-mission>.

⁴⁰¹ Though the L.A. LGBT Center considers itself to be “a lean, fiscally disciplined organization,” its own website is not shy in describing itself as “provid[ing] services for more LGBT people than any other organization in the world, offering programs, services, and global advocacy that span four broad categories: Health, Social Services and Housing, Culture and Education, Leadership and Advocacy.” It currently manages nine facilities throughout the greater L.A. metro area. In addition to the new Anita May Rosenstein Campus, this includes Center South (in Leimert Park) and Mi Centro (in Boyle Heights), catering to L.A.’s historic Black and Latino enclaves respectively. “About the Center,” Los Angeles LGBT Center, accessed June 14, 2020, <https://lalgbtcenter.org/about-the-center>.

As seen in the case studies, instances of historical commemoration not only prompt reflection on the past but work to address ongoing issues in the present. A recent instance of this came with the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, providing the impetus for New York City to coordinate and host relevant events throughout the month of June 2019. Billed as “Stonewall 50 – WorldPride NYC 2019,” the resulting series of marches, parades, protests and gatherings are considered to be the largest LGBTQ gathering in recorded history.⁴⁰² Though arguably overshadowed amidst the euphoric celebrations, the New York Police Department’s issuing of an official apology to the LGBTQ community for their conduct at Stonewall was recognized for its historic significance.⁴⁰³ This “reconciliation,” largely symbolic and long overdue, prompted an op-ed seeking to make the case for “Gay Reparation” less than a week later. Written by Omar G. Encarnación, the article admits that, while the push for reparations has been relatively unexplored in the U.S., similar efforts have begun to yield fruit in other countries.⁴⁰⁴ Encarnación argues that reparations should be seen as “a logical progression in the maturation of the gay rights movement,” with activists in many countries “turning their attention to addressing the historical legacies of homosexual repression.”⁴⁰⁵

Encarnación highlights Spain and Britain as case studies, illustrating that sincere policy-based responses to reparations campaigns have largely taken place in Western Europe. Despite the relatively limited number of precedents, potential patterns and goals for implementing reparations are evident:

Although there is no one-size-fits-all model when it comes to gay reparation, countries have taken three distinct approaches. The most common is “moral rehabilitation,” which

⁴⁰² ABC. News, “About 5 Million People Attended WorldPride in NYC, Mayor Says,” ABC News, accessed June 14, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/million-people-crowed-nyc-worldpride-mayor/story?id=64090338>; “Photos: Massive Turnout For Euphoric NYC Pride March - Gothamist,” accessed June 14, 2020, <https://champ.gothamist.com/champ/gothamist/arts-entertainment/photos-massive-turnout-for-euphoric-nyc-pride-march>.

⁴⁰³ Michael Gold and Derek M. Norman, “Stonewall Riot Apology: Police Actions Were ‘Wrong,’ Commissioner Admits,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 2019, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/06/nyregion/stonewall-riots-nypd.html>.

⁴⁰⁴ As a professor and Program Chair of Political Studies at Bard College, Encarnación’s perspective is informed by his extensive research into the transition from dictatorship in Spain, as well as hispanophone countries throughout Latin America. Four months after publishing his initial op-ed, Encarnación penned a follow up article detailing the U.S. government’s homosexual purges during the Cold War-era “lavender scare.” Bard College, “Omar Encarnación,” accessed June 14, 2020, <https://www.bard.edu/faculty/details/?id=296>; Omar G. Encarnación, “Why Gay Reparation’s Time Has Come,” *The New York Review of Books* (blog), October 30, 2019, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/10/30/why-gay-reparations-time-has-come/>.

⁴⁰⁵ Omar G. Encarnación, “Opinion | The Case for Gay Reparation,” *The New York Times*, June 14, 2019, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/14/opinion/gay-reparation-stonewall.html>.

entails a formal apology by the state and the expunging of criminal records of those convicted of a homosexual offense. There's also financial compensation for loss of income and pensions. Finally, there's "truth-telling," or an official report on past wrongs that incorporates steps for reparation. These are not mutually exclusive approaches; in fact, as recent experiences show, they are often pursued simultaneously or sequentially.⁴⁰⁶

Heritage conservation's greatest potential impact as part of any reparations program in the U.S. will largely pertain to the final, "truth telling" (next steps) approach detailed above. To a certain extent, *LGBTQ America* embodies the most significant feature of this effort to date. Despite this, it should only be seen as a first—and relatively timid—step because its scope doesn't meaningfully extend towards any sort of concrete recommendations for collective justice beyond increasing representation in the historical record.⁴⁰⁷ Despite this, preservation advocates should make the argument that no reparations program is complete without significant investment in the ongoing effort to landmark and recognize LGBTQ resources themselves. Such a program should insist on implementing the integrity-based reforms from San Francisco nationwide, in addition to funding the creation of an LGBTQ cultural heritage action fund (which could begin at the state level but would preferably be national in scope), the latter of which is not entirely without precedent.⁴⁰⁸

A robust heritage conservation strategy, if framed as an overdue campaign for reparations, could make up for the lost time that LGBTQ people have spent trying to legitimize their history. It may also serve to galvanize the preservation profession itself, which too often retreats into the comfortably neutral spheres of materials science and aesthetic assessment devoid of social implications. For nearly half a century, this "unbiased" professional stance has been employed for the preservation movement's entrenchment in a country fraught with racial tensions and uncomfortable historical truths. While this role is useful in certain situations, an over-emphasis on neutrality for the sake of avoiding difficult history is itself a form of

⁴⁰⁶ Encarnación.

⁴⁰⁷ For instance, the commemorations of summer 2019 also inspired the notion that reparations could take the form of a museum, sited on the national mall, to honor LGBTQ contributions to U.S. history. James Driscoll, "Opinion | It's Time for Reparations for LGBT Americans," *Washington Blade: Gay News, Politics, LGBT Rights* (blog), July 2, 2019, <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2019/07/02/its-time-for-reparations-for-lgbt-americans/>.

⁴⁰⁸ Established in 2017, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund has invested over \$2.7 million in preservation projects nationwide. It currently stands as the most prominent example of a heritage-oriented reparative program in the U.S., though it doesn't identify itself as an expression of reparations. This is because its funding is mainly derived from prominent philanthropic donations and non-profits such as the Ford Foundation. "African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund | #PreservationForum," accessed June 15, 2020, <http://forum.savingplaces.org/build/funding/grant-seekers/specialprograms/aachactionfund>.

complicity, obfuscating the stories that preservationists claim to honor. If backed by secure public funding, a truly engaged reparations program can work to help counter the increasingly corporatized nature of preservation advocacy, giving a coalition of conservationists, artists, and activists the means to pursue this work in communities that are willing to embrace it. This policy could not only help to ensure that important resources are acquired and interpreted, but that meaningful programs and lasting institutions can be devised. While this cannot be thought of as a complete solution, it will go a long way towards ensuring that significant sites continue to engage LGBTQ communities now and in the future.

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to critically assess the efficacy of landmarking as a tool for conserving LGBTQ heritage in L.A. The intention to save places is often assumed to be an altruistic one, but understanding why these places matter—and how they can continue to convey their significance—is complicated by an ever-shifting social, political, and economic context.⁴⁰⁹ Until recently the most significant factor has been the role of active LGBTQ communities, whether defined by a small cadre of activist-scholars, a committed activist allied with sympathetic neighbors, or a chosen family of creative enthusiasts. As the meaning and definition of community has become ever more fraught, the ongoing effort to secure LGBTQ history will involve institutions that claim to represent or serve their interests. The increasing influence of these institutions was made clear at a recent CHC meeting, which took place on June 18, 2020.⁴¹⁰ As the last of the ten issues being discussed, the property in question concerned a ramshackle bungalow in L.A.'s Westlake neighborhood. To a trained professional eye, the house at 1822 West 4th Street was clearly not significant for its architecture. No analysis of integrity could change the fact that it was, for a period of seven years, the primary home and residence of Morris Kight.

Often referred to by historians as the “godfather” of gay pride in L.A., Kight’s significance as an activist is related to his role as a co-founder of the L.A. wing of the Gay Liberation Front, Christopher Street West, and the Gay Community Services Center (GCSC), which would later evolve into the L.A. LGBT Center of today.⁴¹¹ Kate Eggert, of Gosney-Eggert Preservation Consultants, introduced the project to the commission, explaining that Kight’s lifelong devotion to LGBTQ political progress was an extension of his earlier work advocating for civil rights (by protesting oppressive “racial mixing” laws) and organizing health services for

⁴⁰⁹ L.A. is not unlike many other major U.S. cities in this regard, and it’s not unreasonable to assume that investigations elsewhere would reveal similar stories of competing interests and aims behind every plaque, designation, and demolition.

⁴¹⁰ Richard Barron, Gail Kennard, Pilar Buelna, et al., “Cultural Heritage Commission Agenda,” § Cultural Heritage Commission (2020).

⁴¹¹ This resource is similar to the Hay Residence in that the primary subject’s prominence continued to increase primarily after they left the property. By the time Kight was being honored and venerated as an elder activist in the mid-1990s, most of the community was familiar with him residing at 1428 North McCadden Place. This property still exists at the time of writing, though it has yet to be subject to landmarking interest and doesn’t have the architectural significance of the Margaret Hay house.

indigenous communities in his native Texas. When Kight moved to L.A. in the 1960s, he was put off by the existing (post-Harry Hay) homophile movement which he considered too elitist and bourgeois. In addition to getting involved with the (then) new Gay Liberation movement, Kight also established himself as a “one-man gay community services center.”⁴¹² Exhaustively researched, the nomination form conclusively established that this site was the primary geographic locus of Kight’s activism, functioning as an underground LGBTQ community center years before the official founding of the GCSC would take place.

Mary Ann Cherry, a friend of Kight’s and the author of a recently completed biography on him, was the first to speak in support of taking up the property for consideration as an HCM.⁴¹³ She emphasized how important Kight’s work was at a time when everything about the LGBTQ community took place underground by necessity, and that Kight worked indefatigably to create systems that would “restore lives in peril.” Cherry was followed by Bill Delvac, representing an investor who had recently purchased the property hoping to build a 20-unit TOC project.⁴¹⁴ Delvac began by stating that the nomination had caused a change in his client’s plans, as they had no preservation experience generally, and even less so with respect to LGBTQ historic resources. Delvac then stated that he was working with his client to put together a request for proposal for a fitting re-use of the site that would conserve the house.

By this time the developer’s team had already begun reaching out to the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) and the LA LGBT Center, with Delvac acknowledging that while the client is happy to facilitate this effort, they aren’t seeking an HCM designation outright. Delvac ended his testimony by saying that “we need an LGBT organization to step forward and join with us,” and that if such a partnership could not be worked out, the owner would seek to demolish the home and redevelop the site. Remaining testimony given was all in support of the nomination, with one speaker stating that they were “shocked to know somebody [wouldn’t be] aware” of the site’s

⁴¹² Kate Eggert and Krisy Gosney, “Recommendation Report: The Morris Kight Residence” (Los Angeles, Calif., United States: Los Angeles Department of City Planning, May 10, 2020), 13.

⁴¹³ The following testimony is paraphrased from the CHC meeting, held virtually. Author’s recollection.

⁴¹⁴ TOC stands for Transit Oriented Communities, which in this case refers specifically to an ordinance that incentivizes denser construction for sites closer to fixed transit stops/hubs in L.A. In exchange for including affordable housing as part of the project, developers are given the option to choose from a variety of incentives (structured like a menu), allowing them to build more densely than what the current zoning would otherwise allow. This program effectively works as a form of upzoning without actually changing the zone of the land in question. It allows the city of L.A. to address an ongoing housing crisis while circumventing the otherwise onerous and controversial process of a zone change.

significance “given its online presence.”⁴¹⁵ While the house itself had not been active outside of residential uses, it was clearly listed as part of L.A.’s *LGBT Historic Context Statement* and the *LGBTQ America* theme study. This, in addition to the exhaustively researched recommendation report, led Richard Barron (still the CHC president from when the Tom of Finland House was listed) to characterize the house’s significance as “unquestionable.” The motion to take the resource up for consideration carried unanimously.

What went unsaid at the meeting was the fact that AHF, a non-profit founded in 1987 by Michael Weinstein, had actually initiated this HCM nomination to begin with. While the historical significance of the site may no longer be seen as contentious in socially progressive L.A., the nomination itself was clearly a politically motivated one. In recent years AHF has begun to engage anti-gentrification activism by opposing new development projects outright. The threat (or in this case initiation) of a nomination often serves as a way to force a negotiation with developers, and while the site is clearly significant and resonates with AHF’s history, the question of motive is a difficult one to put aside. Is the Kight residence meaningful enough that AHF is willing to oppose affordable housing for the sake of LGBTQ heritage? If the Kight residence is listed as an HCM (initial reactions from the CHC indicate that it very well may be) to merely prove a point, then who wins if it merely sits empty for a couple of years while the owner waits to make good on their intent to demolish the house, prepping the site for redevelopment?

When such a prominent non-profit decides to engage in preservation advocacy, it’s usually looked at as a convenient bonus by preservationists. That said, it’s necessary to question whether or not AHF is serious about rehabilitating resources like the Kight Residence in a way that’s relevant to LGBTQ Angeleños today. Is this dip into preservation advocacy a sincere extension of its mission to care for individuals dealing with HIV/AIDS, or is it simply being done out of a sense of personal obligation and safeguarding a legacy?⁴¹⁶ While there are no clear answers yet, these questions must be pursued if queer people are to strengthen meaningful geographic connections between their past and present struggles. History like this may indeed be

⁴¹⁵ The remaining speakers were Miki Jackson, a longtime friend of Kight’s and executrix of his will; Erik Van Breene, representing the LA Conservancy; and the third (quoted) speaker, whose given name was not audible/intelligible over the phone. Author’s recollection.

⁴¹⁶ Michel Weinstein, still the CEO of AHF, was described by Mary Ann Cherry as Morris Kight’s “protégé.” Cherry, *Morris Kight*, 4.

plagued by material marginality, but its importance will only increase as a response to rapid social, political and environmental changes.

Given this importance, the author believes that no effort should be spared, and no idea discounted—no matter how strange, impractical, or compromised it may seem—when it comes to conserving historic resources of this nature. The web of tensions and struggles that have characterized LGBTQ history is not new, and preservationists can only gain by acknowledging, accepting, and working with this. Understanding and conserving places that speak to this complexity can—if thoughtfully done—provide critical guidance and inspiration for communal struggles today. Despite all the challenges so often stacked against it, heritage remains a vibrant and restorative force for those that choose to value and act on it.

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