

Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME			
address:	208 NW 3rd Ave Portland, Multnomah County	historic name:	Darcelle XV
assoc addresses:		current/other names:	Lyndon Musolf Manor, Demas Tavern, Darcelle XV Showplace
location descr:		block/lot/tax lot:	
		township/rng/sect/qtr sect:	
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS			
resource type:	building	height (stories):	3.0
elig evaluation:	eligible/significant	total elig resources:	1
prim constr date:	1910	NR Status:	Individually Listed
	second date:	date indiv listed:	11/02/2020
primary orig use:	Hotel	orig use comments:	Domestic: Multiple Dwelling
second orig use:	Business	prim style comments:	
primary style:	Late 19th/20th Amer. Mvmts: Other	sec style comments:	
secondary style:	Commercial (Type)	siding comments:	
primary siding:	Brick:Other/Undefined	architect:	Bennes, Hendricks, and Thompson
secondary siding:		builder:	Friberg Bros.
plan type:			
comments/notes:			
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS			
Survey/Grouping Included In:	Type of Grouping	Date Listed	Date Compiled
LGBTQIA+ Historic Properties in Oregon	Thematic Grouping		
Old Town Historic District	Listed Historic District	06/29/2001	
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY			
NR date listed:	11/02/2020	106 Project(s):	None
ILS survey date:		Special Assess Project(s):	None
RLS survey date:		Federal Tax Project(s):	None
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION			
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>			
<p>Darcelle XV (often called Darcelle XV Showplace), at 208 NW Third Avenue, Portland OR, is a drag performance venue located in a larger three-story brick building completed in 1910. Under its original name, the Foster Hotel, the 20th Century Commercial style building is a contributing resource to the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, a National Historic Landmark. This nomination is of the building, but focuses on the west-facing commercial storefront spaces (about a third of the building's west-facing storefront) at the ground floor level, plus the "back of house" spaces in the basement, where the venue Darcelle XV has been owned and operated by Walter Cole since 1967. As a nightclub and drag venue, the aesthetic of Darcelle XV Showplace reflects the improvised, low-budget, and self-reliant illusion of glamour that resulted from its development during the late 1960s and early 1970s when drag was celebrated mostly behind closed doors due to gay discrimination and the threat of harassment. The nightclub interior has changed over time, but retains its essential components illustrating its use as a performance venue and strongly reflects the same character as the space had by the mid-1970s. These include features such as the location and configuration of the stage, the open floor plan, and the original central interior columns and beam, marking where a wall between two narrow storefront spaces was removed in a "do-it-yourself" project to expand the performance and seating areas. The storefront was largely rebuilt to its historic appearance in a 2007 seismic retrofit of the building, but still retains its layout, composition, and some of the original materials present from the period 1967-1975. Like the interior finishes, the exterior storefront finishes changed several times during this period as part of the rebranding and promotion efforts of the nightclub. Significant and character-defining exterior features of the nightclub include its original exterior blade sign, the distinctive "x"-patterned transom, the configuration of openings at the two storefront bays, and the presence of an entry canopy at the south bay. Its storefront windows continue to block direct views in, an important part of the "protected" space offered by the nightclub. Despite the exterior and interior changes, Darcelle XV still retains the aspects of location, design, setting, feeling, and association and is therefore able to convey a sense of the historic character as it had in the early to mid-1970s. Its physical presence still conveys the significance of the drag venue to LGBTQ history.</p>			
HISTORY			
<i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i>			
<p>Darcelle XV, the Portland performance venue operated by Walter Cole/Darcelle, is nationally significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History: LGBTQ History. Under this theme, the nightclub's period of significance spans the period 1967 to 1975. This period brackets the pre-Stonewall date when the business came under Walter Cole's ownership as a tavern, soon becoming a lesbian bar, until 1975, by which time the nightclub was well established as a drag venue with its own company performing full-time. Though the early 1970s were less than 50 years ago, Darcelle XV meets Criteria Consideration "G" for exceptional importance due to its unprecedented public alignment with gay culture, earning support and admiration from the mainstream. Darcelle XV Showplace was well-known on the west coast starting as early as 1968 for its unwavering support of all facets of the LGBTQ community, especially drag performers. The venue was also able to consistently pull in a mixed gay and straight audience starting in about 1970, because it was demonstrably both gay-owned and community-supporting. Darcelle XV was one of the early drag clubs to participate in, sponsor, and initiate drag competitions and performances, especially those related to the now-international Imperial Court system. The nightclub held drag pageants and competitions which drew participants from all over the United States. By the early 1970s, Darcelle XV was a well-known powerhouse of drag support and sponsorship on the west coast. The nightclub, with its glam-on-a-budget aesthetic, serves the theatrical illusion of drag and still conveys its original character. Due to its ability to welcome, educate, and rally straight allies combined with its uniquely authentic celebration and promotion of drag culture, led by a gay owner, Darcelle XV Showplace contributed to a cultural shift in the acceptance of gay rights and drag performance. The nightclub is one of perhaps only two long-running establishments in the United States to open before 1970 in which a publicly gay owner was a regular part of the on-stage drag performance, a brave and vulnerable role in the pre-Stonewall era.</p>			
RESEARCH INFORMATION			
Title Records	Census Records	Property Tax Records	✓ Local Histories
Sanborn Maps	Biographical Sources	✓ SHPO Files	✓ Interviews
Obituaries	✓ Newspapers	✓ State Archives	✓ Historic Photographs
✓ City Directories	Building Permits	State Library	

Local Library:	University Library:	Harvard University, Portland State University
Historical Society:	Other Respository:	
Bibliography:		
<p>The Advocate, various dates 1975, 1981, 1986. Balzer, Carsten. "The Great Drag Queen Hype: Thoughts on Cultural Globalisation and Autochthony." <i>Paideuma: Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde</i> 51, 2005, 111-31. Bay Area Reporter, various dates 1971-1976. Boag, Peter. "Does Portland Need a Homophile Society? Gay Culture and Activism in the Rose City Between World War II and Stonewall," <i>Oregon Historical Quarterly</i>, Vol. 105, No. 1, 2004. Brown, Valerie. "From Folk to Acid Rock in Portland Coffeehouses, 1967-1970," <i>Oregon Historical Quarterly</i>, Vol. 108, No. 2, 2007. Carter, David, Andrew Scott Dolkart, Gale Harris and Jay Shockly. <i>Stonewall. National Register of Historic Places National Historic Landmark Registration Form</i>. National Park Service, 1989. Chauncey, George. <i>Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940</i>. New York: BasicBooks, 1994. City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Portland Parks and Recreation. <i>City of Portland Civic Planning, Development, & Public Works, 1851-1965: A Historic Context</i>. Portland, Oregon, 2009. Accessed online at https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/299256. Cohn, Sally. Interview with Jade Davis & Erin Babcock Musick. Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course, Winter Term 2011, with instructor Pat Young. Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN), 2011. Transcript accessed at https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/gay-and-lesbian-archives-of-the-pacific-northwest-oral-histories Cole, Walter & Sharon Knorr. <i>Just Call Me Darcelle</i>. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010. Cook, Tom, and George Painter. "1999 Portland Gay History Walking Tour," <i>Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest</i>. Accessed online at https://www.glapn.org/6045walkingtour.html Council, Maria. Interview with Gary Knapp and A. Krummenacker. Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course, Winter Term 2010, with instructor Pat Young. Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN), 2010. Transcript accessed at https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/gay-and-lesbian-archives-of-the-pacific-northwest-oral-histories Cumfer, Cindy. Interview with Erik Funkhouser & Tim Aguirre. Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course, Winter Term 2009, with instructor Pat Young. Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN), 2009. Transcript accessed at https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/gay-and-lesbian-archives-of-the-pacific-northwest-oral-histories Dauphin, Mara, "A Bit of Woman in Every Man: Creating Queer Community in Female Impersonation," <i>Valley Humanities Review</i>. Pennsylvania: Lebanon Valley College, Spring 2012. DuPree, Robert, "Drag City, U.S.A.," <i>NW Fountain</i>, November 1981. Eskridge, William N., Jr. <i>Gaylaw: Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet</i>. 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Accessed at https://www.glapn.org/6022TimelineSince1970.html Haaken, Jan, Director; Jan Haaken and Wendy Kohn, Writers. <i>Queens of Heart: Community Therapists in Drag</i> [film], Kwamba Productions, Portland State University Foundation in association with Ostrow & Company, 2006 Ho, Nelson Chia-Chi. <i>Portland's Chinatown: The History of an Urban Ethnic District</i>. Portland, OR: City of Portland Bureau of Planning, 1978. Holman, William. "A Gay History: Lest We Forget," <i>The Northwest Gay Review</i>, Special Issue, June 1977. Horn, Donald (donnie) with Walter Cole/Darcelle. <i>Looking from my Mirror: Darcelle</i>. Self-published, November, 2019. Just Out, various dates 1988-1999 Kohl, David Grant. <i>A Curious and Peculiar People: A History of the Metropolitan Community Church in Portland, and the Sexual Minority Communities of Northwest Oregon</i>. Portland, OR: Spirit Press, 2006. Morimoto, Lucas Y. 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