



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

## Parks and Recreation Department

725 Summer St. NE, Suite C

Salem, OR 97301-1271

(503) 986-0707

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stateparks.oregon.gov

April 24, 2024

Joy Beasley, Keeper  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C St. NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places

Dear Ms. Beasley:

This submittal contains the true and correct copy of the nomination form listed below to the National Register of Historic Places. I hereby recommend and submit the following National Register Nomination Form for your consideration:

**HOTEL ALMA**  
1201-1217 SW STARK ST  
PORTLAND, MULTNOMAH COUNTY

### Notification

Our office opened the public comment period and notified the property owner(s), preparer(s), Chief Elected Official, and Oregon's federally recognized Native American tribes on December 7, 2023.

- No objections to the nomination were submitted to the SHPO during the public comment period
- An objection to the nomination was submitted to the SHPO during the public comment period. A copy of the objection is included with this submission.
- Other public comment was submitted to the SHPO during the public comment period. A copy of that comment is included with this submission.

### Certified Local Government

- The nominated property is located in a Certified Local Government's jurisdiction. A copy of the local commission's review is attached.
- The nominated property is not located in a Certified Local Government's jurisdiction.

### **Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program**

- This property is being rehabilitated using the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program
- This property is not utilizing the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program

### **NPS Grant Funded Submissions**

- Not funded with a NPS grant
- Underrepresented Communities Grant
- Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant
- History of Equal Rights Grant
- African American Civil Rights Grant
- Tribal Heritage Grant
- Disaster Recovery Grant

### **State Review Board**

The Oregon State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation recommended the above-named National Register Nomination Form on February 16, 2024. Minutes from that meeting are available on our website at [www.oregonheritage.org](http://www.oregonheritage.org)

We appreciate your consideration of this nomination form. If questions arise, please contact Robert Olguin, National Register Coordinator, at (503) 602-2468 or [robert.olguin@opr.d.oregon.gov](mailto:robert.olguin@opr.d.oregon.gov).

Sincerely,



Christine Curran  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Encl.



**City of Portland**  
Historic Landmarks Commission

1900 SW Fourth Ave., Suite 5000 / 16  
Portland, Oregon 97201  
Telephone: (503) 823-7300  
TDD: (503) 823-6868  
FAX: (503) 823-5630  
[www.portlandonline.com/bds](http://www.portlandonline.com/bds)

February 5, 2024

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
725 Summer St. NE, Suite C  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Hotel Alma National Register Amendment

Dear Chair Beckham,

The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission (PHLC) reviewed the National Register amendment for the Hotel Alma (Majestic Hotel & Club Baths, Club Continental Baths, Club Portland, Crystal Hotel), located at 303 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Ave., Portland, OR 97205 on Monday, January 22, 2024. At this review, the PHLC heard from staff and the preparer of the nomination amendment. The PHLC finds that the documentation included in the amendment meets the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places.

We offer the following comments on the nomination:

1. The Amendment document was very well researched and written. The preparer is to be commended.
2. Because the property is already listed on the National Register, the case regarding its historical importance has already been made and ratified. However, PHLC feels that this amendment supplements and enriches the historic record of the Hotel Alma.
3. The prominent location of the Majestic Hotel within the "gay triangle" district along present-day Harvey Milk St., the consolidation of the LGBTQ+ community to that district during the proposed additional period of significance (1969-1985), and the duration of time within that period in which the building was completely dedicated to LGBTQ+ uses makes a compelling case for the amendment.
4. The commission does not have any specific comments or suggestions to offer regarding the content of the amendment.
5. In general, the Commission is very pleased that properties with important LGBTQ+ histories are being further explored and nominated by the City of Portland for listing on the National Register.

Based on the unanimous vote of its members present at the January 22, 2024 hearing,, the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission supports the nomination.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Maya Foty in black ink.

Maya Foty

Handwritten signature of Hugo Hamblin-Agosto in black ink.

Hugo Hamblin-Agosto

Handwritten signature of Peggy Moretti in black ink.

Peggy Moretti

Handwritten signature of Hannah Bronfman in black ink.

Hannah Bronfman

CC: Brandon Spencer-Hartle, Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability  
Robert Olguin, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

My name is Donnie/Don Horn. I'm the Executive Director and founder of one of the oldest LGBTQ-identified theaters in the nation.

I had the honor to spearhead two nominations in the past couple of years one being the Elmer and Linnie Miller House and the Darcelle XV Showplace and through my efforts along with several others, both received full approval and placed on the National Parks Service with the Darcelle XV Showplace being the first Oregon LGBTQ business to be placed on the NPS. In 2021 myself and my company **triangle productions!** were honored with one of the State of Oregon's highest awards, The Oregon Heritage Excellence Award for our efforts along with other portions that made up what is known as The Darcelle Project.

I believe that history should be preserved, honored, and shared in hopes that we may understand who came before us, how we have arrived at where we are presently, and what we in this period can accomplish for future generations.

The Alma Hotel addendum is one of these. It is understood that adding historical facts to an already listed building is something I feel very strongly about.

The building had various usages over time but during a specific period from the late 1960s through the mid-2000s the building served on various levels as a place where those deemed to be immoral by politicians and for that matter society found a place where not only, could find safety but a community.

The hotel portion of the building with an entry on 12<sup>th</sup> was low-key to what was going on with the café'/bar located on the main level with the entry on Stark Street. Through the 1950s gangsters and racketeering led the way to various homosexual/gay bars. It was with the switch of the café'/bar led to the hotel became a bathhouse operated beginning in late 1971 until 2007.

This one building complete with both a hotel and café'/bar is unique in gay culture. Normally, they are found to be separate in physical terms as most buildings cannot accommodate both types of businesses. Through my research, I found none in the United States that enjoyed this unique mix. That said, the hotel/bathhouse was owned and operated separately with ownership of the building changed hands several times. That said, both served the homosexual/gay community and not exclusively, many straight, trans, and lesbians enjoyed the entertainment value of the café'/bar however, the bathhouse was mostly frequented by the homosexual/gay community.

I have tried through my research to piece together this history of the complete building and believe I have detailed it closely with how this addendum has been written, with my expertise being sought, and used in the document.

I will again reiterate, that the building known as the Alma Hotel has a unique history in the LGBTQ community for a) its lasting existence (1968-2007) - the oldest continuing gay bathhouse in the city; b) for providing a safe place where the community came together in the café'/bar meetings were held, parties, fundraisers, memorials as well as used for celebrations and having a 'night on the town'. During the STD crises of the '70s into the AIDS crises of the '80s information and testing were distributed in the hotel portion as the bathhouse continued whereas, in many major cities, those places either were forced to close or closed down due to low attendance and fear.

Adding this history to the history of this building will allow future generations know the full history and that the LGBTQ community had a place to go, that was safe, to be seen and heard, and flourish. This is one step in incorporating the complete history of this building and ensuring that all Portland and Oregon's citizens who have utilized this business have recognition.

Thank you.

Donnie/Don Horn

Executive Director/Founder **triangle productions!**

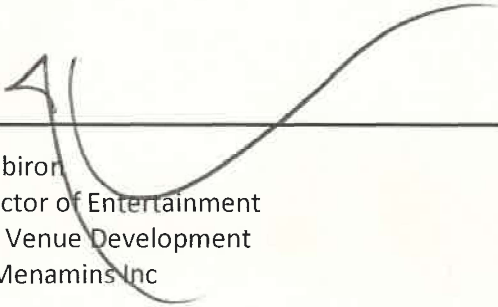
[Umbrellaprojectoregon.com](http://Umbrellaprojectoregon.com)



11/20/2023

The City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has notified McMenamins Inc. of a proposal to amend the National Register of Historic Places nomination document for the Crystal Hotel (Hotel Alma) at 303 SW 12th Avenue in Portland, Oregon. The proposed amendment will include the LGBTQ+ history of the Crystal Hotel as an area of historic significance for the purposes of the National Register of Historic Places. The amendment will not obligate McMenamins Inc. to any new requirements or regulations as the Crystal Hotel is already listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is already designated as a City of Portland Historic Landmark.

McMenamins Inc. consents to an amendment to the Crystal Hotel National Register of Historic Places nomination to include LGBTQ+ history as an additional area of historic significance.

  
jimi biron  
Director of Entertainment  
And Venue Development  
McMenamins Inc

11.20.23

Date

McMENAMINS  
**CRYSTAL BALLROOM**

1332 WEST BURNSIDE · PORTLAND, OREGON 97209

(503) 225-0047 · FAX: (503) 225-0841

EMAIL: CRYSTAL@DANCEONAIR.COM

WWW.DANCEONAIR.COM

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Hotel Alma
Name of Property
Multnomah County, OR
County and State
09000706
NR Reference Number

**Amendment:**

**Hotel Alma**

303 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Multnomah County, Portland OR 97205  
**NRIS # 09000706**  
**Listed Date: September 9, 2009**

Located in Multnomah County, Oregon, the Hotel Alma was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2009 under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development, and under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. For both of these criteria, the Hotel Alma was listed under the Multiple Property Document "Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1906-1914."

The purpose of this additional documentation is to update the Hotel Alma nomination to provide additional information and justification for the addition of LGBTQ+ history under Criterion A as a third area of significance for the property; for an associated new period of significance, including criteria consideration G; and for updated ownership and address information for the building. Additional documentation provided herein updates sections from the current NRHP nomination form: Section 1; Section 2; Section 6; Section 7 narrative; Section 8 including the Areas of Significance, Period of Significance, Criteria Considerations with justification for Criterion G, and the narrative; Section 9 Bibliography; Section 11 including the property owner; and additional photos and Continuation Sheet documents.

**State Agency Certification:**

I hereby certify that this  X  additional documentation   move   removal   name change meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.



04/24/24

Signature of Certifying Official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date of Action

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

**National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- additional documentation accepted
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Date Listed: May 20, 2024

NRIS No. AD09000706

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Hotel Alma

other names/site number Majestic Hotel & Club Baths; Club Continental Baths; Club Portland; Crystal Hotel

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

street & number 303 SW 12th Avenue

not for publication

city or town Portland

vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zipcode 97205

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: \_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D



04/24/24

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_ entered in the National Register

\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



Hotel Alma  
Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
0	0	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

1

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Hotel

DOMESTIC: Hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: \_\_\_\_\_

Hotel Alma  
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County and State

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

#### Summary Paragraph

Located at 303 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Portland, Oregon, in Multnomah County, the Hotel Alma was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2009 under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development, and under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. For both of these criteria, the Hotel Alma was listed under the Multiple Property Document "Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1906-1914." The 1911 four-story building takes up the majority of its triangular block, with street frontage on W Burnside Street to the north, SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the east, SW Harvey Milk Street to the south, and a shared lot line to the west, with the small adjacent lot— the point of the triangular block— occupied by the National Register-listed two-story Flat Iron Building.

Since the 2009 nomination, the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Commercial style building has been renovated in 2009-2011 and returned to its original hotel use at the upper stories, with repaired and repainted double-hung wood windows. The ground floor bays, almost entirely filled in with concrete block at the time of the nomination, have since been rebuilt, with transoms, clear glass storefronts, and paneled wood bulkheads. Storefront bays have new flat projecting metal canopies below the transom glazing. Lit blade signs have been added to the north and south façades. The changes do represent some losses in integrity relative to the new period of significance of 1969-1985, particularly the interior removals of all bathhouse features, the complete renovation of the ground floor space, and the installation of new operable glass storefront and transoms in storefront bays. Features relevant to the building's 1911 date of significance remain as described and photographed in the 2009 nomination, but several character-defining features also remain extant relating to the property's importance to LGBTQ+ history in Portland.<sup>1</sup> These features are the two exterior entries facing SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which led to the hotel and bathhouse uses, and the layout of the upstairs corridors and original stairway, reflecting the iconic trapezoidal shape of the building and lined with multiple doorways leading to more private rooms or spaces, all with transoms and historic wood trim.

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### Narrative Description

The 2009 nomination assessed integrity by comparing the building at the time of its original construction (1911) with the changes to it up to the point the nomination was written. However, with an added period of significance of 1969-1985, the building's character and features of that period of time must be compared to its present appearance. The 2009 nomination describes the exterior as follows:

Despite years of neglect and abuse, the building's exterior retains a good degree of integrity. In form, scale, and massing, the building is intact with no additions. The storefront bay structure has largely been retained hidden behind concrete block, plywood and stucco. Generally windows on the upper floor also are intact though many have been covered with plywood and some have broken glazing.<sup>2</sup>

Alterations to the exterior of the building subsequent to the writing of the nomination include:

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<sup>1</sup> LGBTQ+ is an acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender.

<sup>2</sup> John M. Tess, *Hotel Alma*, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, NRIS # 09000706. National Park Service, 2009, 7:2, 7:3.

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- Two illuminated blade signs, both reading “Crystal Hotel” were installed in 2011, one on the W Burnside Street (north) façade and one fronting SW Harvey Milk Street (south). See photos 0001 and 0003.
- Rooftop generators, HVAC units, fan ducts, and associated mechanical ductwork were added to the roof in 2009.<sup>3</sup>
- New operable storefronts and transom windows were constructed for existing storefront bay openings, with louvers in four of the transom windows, also in 2009.<sup>4</sup>
- Fire escape lowest sections to sidewalk were removed, and flat projecting metal canopies were installed at almost every ground floor bay around the building. The canopies at SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and at W Burnside St. project about 3’, and the canopies along SW Harvey Milk St. project 6’. Radiant heaters were also affixed to the underside of the canopies, except along W Burnside St.<sup>5</sup> See photos 0001 and 0004.

The plans submitted with the 2009 nomination (see Documents 5, 5-a, 5-b, and 5-c) show larger hotel rooms, some with new private restrooms and others with a lavatory and access to shared bathrooms on upper floors. The steam, shower, and sauna rooms and private rooms on second floor (partitions and room configurations constructed in 1971) and the series of small rooms on third and fourth floors (partitions and room configurations built in 1975 and/or in 1987) were, at this point, already removed. Compare the 1971/1975 plans (Figures 9-11) with the 2008 plans in the original nomination (Documents 5 through 5-c).<sup>6</sup>

Alterations to the building interior since 2009 include:

- A second stair was installed in the building, with exit onto W Burnside Street (see Figure 12). This stair may have previously existed as a ground-to-basement stair only, as shown in the 2009 nomination Document 5 ground floor plan.
- A few minor changes to room partitions or layouts occurred mostly on the south side of the floor plates,
- A soaking pool was constructed in the basement, and
- Dining, kitchen and prep areas on the ground floor and basement were completely renovated and altered.

### Character-defining features

Surviving features at the exterior related to the building’s association with LGBTQ+ history include the location and configuration of the two entrances at the east side of the building, both leading to what was the small reception area for the hotel and bathhouse upstairs, and also to the basement. Doors are no longer solid, and the “Men Only” sign is no longer present, but there is still a level of filtering that allows only patrons with a room reserved or have been OK’d at the front desk to proceed upstairs (or to the basement). These doors were the gateway to the gay-centered world inside the building, and generally face what would have been the larger LGBTQ+ district to the south and east. See 2009 nomination photos 01, 02, 03, and 06.

- One of these doors is at the southeast corner of the building (Photo 0003) and is set into a highly distinctive beveled angle extending up the entire building. The ground floor expression of this bevel is just wide enough to allow for a single person door. Though the door during the 1969-1985

<sup>3</sup> Permit MT11-138224, on file at the Bureau of Development Services.

<sup>4</sup> Portland land use case file LU-08 172070 DZ (2008).

<sup>5</sup> Land use case file LU-08 172070 and permit MT11-140217, on file at the Bureau of Development Services.

<sup>6</sup> The 1970s plans are more rudimentary than the 2008 plans and do not show the existing, projecting bays on levels 2 and 3.

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period was solid to protect the privacy of those inside (see Figure 8), and is now wood and glass, the size, location, and general configuration of the doorway with a single upper transom panel still remains.

- The other entry, historically the hotel entry, occurs mid-block on the short 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue side of the building. Though this double-door entry during the 1969-1985 period also had solid doors, the size, location, and configuration with upper transom panels still remains.
- The metal canopy at the east (12<sup>th</sup> Avenue) hotel entry may have been replaced from a 1980s-era canopy, but it remains differentiated from the other canopies.<sup>7</sup> The 2009 nomination photos show a flat canopy present at that doorway (photographs 01, 02, and 03 in the 2009 nomination). The lobby entry canopy today still projects more and is visually differentiated from the other canopies.

Character-defining features at interior include:

- The corridor layout at second to fourth floors. Many of the sizes, shapes, and finishes of individual rooms have been altered over time, but the pattern of the spatial layout with smaller rooms (now all hotel rooms) at the upper floors, reached by corridors that follow the building's triangular shape, are still present. The corridors, dimly lit and lined with many individual doorways to more private spaces, are still semi-public space that would have been social space during the bathhouse era starting in 1971. See 2009 nomination photos 13, 17, and 21 and amendment photos 0005 and 0006.
- The original stair (basement to 4<sup>th</sup> floor), with its trapezoidal shape reflecting the floor plate and the lot itself. The stair would have also been an important circulation hub, and for years the only way to access different levels within the building, allowing patrons to go up or downstairs to various spaces and ensuring that the stair was consistently a social place. See 2009 nomination photos 16 and 20.

## Integrity

The 1990s and early 2000s brought an infusion of cash into the vicinity around the building, which is noticeably upscale as compared to its character and condition during the (added) period of significance of 1969-1985. By the time the Hotel Alma nomination was written in 2009, the 2002 Blitz Weinhard brewery redevelopment of five city blocks on the north side of W Burnside Street had taken place and the glassy half-block tower at 1221 SW Washington Street was just finishing construction. Still, many older buildings in the vicinity such as the Crystal Ballroom (1913), the Fish Grotto/ Joyce Hotel (1912), and the Ace Hotel (1912) survived and were refurbished with sensitivity to the original design. As compared to the period 1969-1985, the environment retains much of its setting and feeling.<sup>8</sup>

On the exterior, the building has not noticeably changed above the storefront level since it was listed in the National Register, though the 2009 nomination photographs show most upper windows covered with plywood at that time. Since 2009, the windows are still extant, though laminated glazing was installed to

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<sup>7</sup> The plan drawings in City of Portland land use case file LU-08 172070 show new canopies around the building but call out an existing canopy to remain at the hotel entry. It is not clear if the current canopy in place (Photo 0002) is the same as that shown in the 2009 nomination. It may have been retained and refurbished.

<sup>8</sup> The seven aspects of integrity, addressed in the 2009 nomination on pages 8:6-8:7, are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. While the surroundings of the building have changed somewhat in an urban setting over time, the vicinity was and remains urban, with a mix of buildings that continues to include older brick low-rise structures that express their era of construction, the same era that the Hotel Alma (Majestic Hotel) was built.

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provide some acoustic buffering from traffic noise.<sup>9</sup> Rooftop equipment was added, but it is largely out of sight from the ground plane and does not affect the perception of the building's design.

It is important to note that the recent reconstruction of the ground floor storefronts is a loss of integrity relative to the LGBTQ+ history of the building. Storefront bays had been infilled starting in the late 1940s with the tenure of the Desert Room and Club Mecca— both notorious nightclubs of the 1950s that occupied the ground floor of the building (see 2009 nomination Document 9, 1957 photo). Most, if not all, of the storefront bays were infilled to prevent people from seeing directly into the ground floor, an important characteristic of the ground floor nightclub space in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Since the 2009 nomination, these infilled bays have been reconstructed with storefronts and transoms. The structural pattern and rhythm of these storefront bays was present during the 1969-1985 period and still exists today. The bays now reflect a refurbished appearance similar to the building's original storefront bay design, including paneled bulkheads, glazed large windows, and multipane transoms. Canopies were also added at storefront bays, except at the original hotel entry facing SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue where there is a deeper metal canopy, held up by tie rods. The integrity of the exterior of the building overall remains quite good; it retains its location, design, setting, most of its materials, its workmanship, and feeling as compared to the period 1969 to 1985.

The interior as a whole is significantly more impacted with the building's redevelopment as a hotel, but the primary circulation layout of corridors and doors, the primary, original central stair, and the sense of the ground floor as a separate bar or club space are all retained. The circulation spaces including the trapezoidal stair and corridors, especially before a second stair (c. 2010) and the elevator (1977) were added, were highly important to the building's history as a men's bathhouse. These were the places men would have interacted with each other as they moved to various places inside the building. The sense of the stair and corridors as public space (but only for gay men), with doorways leading off each corridor to semi-public or private spaces (for gay men) is retained, although the direct association the building had with LGBTQ+ history ended in 2007 (see 2009 nomination photos 13, 17, and 21). Most of the finishes and a few of the doorway locations have changed with the building's renovation, c. 2010, but the overall sense of the primary corridors and primary original stair as public space for a certain admitted population remains. The stair retains its materials and finishes, though it is now carpeted. Photos 16 and 20 from the 2009 nomination show the same wood wainscot trim along the walls, the same wood handrail and simple vertical wood railing, and the same painted post newel caps as present today.

The building no longer functions as a place primarily by and for the LGBTQ+ community, though the building is still near to several remaining vestiges of the gay triangle.<sup>10</sup> Today in 2023, there are photographs on the walls of the hotel dating from the building's LGBTQ+ venues, so the owners have kept a visible link to this history. The building's prominent location at the end point of SW Harvey Milk Street, what was once the thriving heart of the gay district of Portland, also helps to keep some of its historical associations with LGBTQ+ history from fading.

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<sup>9</sup> Nathalie Weinstein, "Crystal Hotel promises wild nights for West End," *Daily Journal of Commerce*, January 25, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> For discussion of terminology of the area, see "Gay Triangle District of Portland" in Section 8 of this nomination/addendum. As of 2023, some of the remaining establishments nearby that draw a predominantly gay clientele or have a queer focus include Scandals, a bar on SW Harvey Milk St.; Spartacus Leathers, an adult entertainment store on W Burnside St.; and the office of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus on SW Washington Street.

Hotel Alma  
Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY: LGBTQ+ History

**Period of Significance**

1969-1985

**Significant Dates**

1969: Opening of Pied Piper, first known  
business in building with LGBTQ+ association  
1985: Majestic Hotel and Club Baths closed

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (if applicable)

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Hans Hanselman

**Period of Significance (justification)**

For decades, the building at 303 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue retained a strong association with the center of Portland's LGBTQ+ life and culture that began to develop in the 1960s in the area of downtown Portland often called the "gay triangle" or the "Burnside triangle."<sup>11</sup> The added period of significance for the property starts in 1969 with

<sup>11</sup> This addendum, like the 2009 nomination, uses the term "gay triangle," but there have been other names for the area of downtown where many LGBTQ+ businesses converged. The understanding of the boundaries of the area has changed over time; so, too, has its

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the opening of the Pied Piper in the ground floor restaurant space, a nightclub that is the first known establishment in the building to draw an LGBTQ+ clientele. The Pied Piper joined just a couple of other early establishments in the developing LGBTQ+ district around Stark Street (now SW Harvey Milk St.). In the early 1970s, a men's bathhouse opened in part of the hotel space and the building became not only entirely dedicated to various LGBTQ+ uses, but representative of the burgeoning district. By 1985, the Portland queer community, especially gay bars and establishments in the gay triangle, had coalesced and created a grass-roots support strategy in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The end of the period of significance is 1985, when the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths closed, though the building was purchased by a new owner and re-opened in 1987 with hotel/bathhouse spaces for the gay community and a strong commitment to safer-sex strategies.

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**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

There are two justifications for why the Hotel Alma/ Majestic Hotel and Club Baths (now Crystal Hotel) demonstrates exceptional significance during the period from 1969 to 1985: the first is its foundational relationship with the surrounding LGBTQ+ area. The location of the hotel and bathhouse was very important, defining the west end of the gay triangle district of downtown Portland during the time the area became known for its association with an LGBTQ+ population. The site marks the gateway, or point, of this downtown district, and the building's unusual form makes it more noticeable than most buildings due to its trapezoidal footprint. The period from 1969 to 1985 represents the ascendancy of the area around it as the predominant LGBTQ+ enclave in downtown Portland, lasting through the early years of the HIV/ AIDS epidemic in Portland when the queer community, predominantly downtown gay bar patrons and owners, led the response to the crisis. Especially for this community, the building anchored the gay triangle and served as its visual marker.

Second, the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths has exceptional importance for its unique combination of uses in one building, all catering directly to gay and bisexual men. As a place to stay for the night as well as to have sexual encounters, the combination of hotel and bathhouse uses was rare in Portland.<sup>12</sup> The Majestic Hotel and Club Baths created a uniquely protected space, elevating and centering gay men's relationships with other men. These relationships certainly included quick and relatively anonymous sexual encounters, but also included a safe and affirming opportunity for gay or bisexual men to spend time together, including overnight. Men who identified as sexual minorities were welcomed within the entire building as opposed to many other bathhouses, often situated in just part of a building, more than likely in a basement, and with no overnight lodging. The third use, that of LGBTQ+ bar or restaurant, provided additional safety and support as well as fertile ground for the development of socio-political support networks, especially crucial during the HIV/ AIDS epidemic. Finally, the building was a site of support for gay men's health, first in the early 1970s with intermittent confidential venereal disease testing, and later a testing and counseling space, run by volunteers from the Cascade AIDS Project in the 1980s. Though the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths closed in 1985, it re-opened under new ownership as Club Portland in 1987 and stayed open until 2007. For much of the period 1969 to 1985, the entire four-story building was dedicated to serving LGBTQ+ people exclusively. No other property in Portland held a wider and more encompassing variety of uses catering to LGBTQ+ populations during this time period. The Majestic Hotel and Club Baths building therefore merits listing under Criteria Consideration G.

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name. See "Gay Triangle District of Portland" section of this document.

<sup>12</sup> The Olympic Uptown Baths ran ads noting "Open 24 hours," and did offer overnight accommodations as well, but they were rented by the hour, so one could pay for the whole night or just a part of it. Damron's Travel Guide [a leading gay travel guide], 1973 edition, lists the Majestic as hotel and baths, but the Workout and the Olympic as just baths.

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2009 under the Multiple Property Document "Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1906-1914," the Hotel Alma in Portland, Oregon, in Multnomah County, was found significant under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development, and under Criterion A in the area of Commerce.

The property, known as the Majestic Hotel or the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths in the 1969-1985 period, is also locally significant under Criterion A for LGBTQ+ history as the most enduring and most representative building within the district of downtown Portland known sometimes as the gay triangle. The building was home to a series of overlapping uses by and for the LGBTQ+ community, including a men's bathhouse, site of support for men's health, various bars and nightclubs, and a hotel. While these uses or commercial establishments fostered community, it was not always an inclusive one, as drag performers were not welcome at least in the early- to mid-1970s, and women and transgender individuals were excluded from the hotel and bathhouse uses.<sup>13</sup> It is also unclear if a non-white clientele was welcome before the 1980s. Still, there were no other buildings that held such a variety of LGBTQ-affiliated uses in Portland during the period 1969 to 1985, and for most of this time, those uses took up the entire multistory building and were exclusively for LGBTQ+ people. The building was the heart of the gay triangle during the period of time that the center of gravity of the downtown queer community migrated from the area closer to the riverfront to the area around SW Stark Street (see maps, Figures 2 to 4). The period of significance starts in 1969 with the opening of the Pied Piper, a ground-floor nightclub that featured male go-go dancers and attracted attention from the San Francisco gay press, and ends in 1985, when the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths closed.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Majestic Hotel building's early gay-friendly uses, starting in 1969 and possibly even earlier, helped to anchor, define, and attract the density of LGBTQ+ places in Portland centered around SW Stark Street (now SW Harvey Milk Street). The increasingly conspicuous LGBTQ-centered uses in the building over time mirror the district's rise as the neighborhood became the preeminent gay district in downtown Portland, starting in the late 1960s and eventually becoming more dispersed by the mid-1990s.

The 2009 nomination mentions the building's bathhouse history and touches briefly on some of the building's importance within the gay triangle district of downtown Portland:

[T]he Hotel Majestic became the "Club Baths" and both the hotel and restaurant became openly homosexual enterprises. This publicly-acknowledged use was part of a major transformation in the city. Prior, Portland— like most cities across the United States— actively persecuted homosexuals with the active enforcement of laws that banned such behavior. A riot at the Stonewall Inn in New York City in June 1969 asserted gay opposition to this persecution and directly led to the modern gay rights movement [sic].<sup>14</sup> A proliferation of gay activism across the country immediately followed in the years after Stonewall. In Portland, one manifestation was the rise of gay-oriented businesses, such as the "Club Baths," amid the area immediately surrounding became an entertainment district known as "the gay triangle." Over the next several years, gay rights became more consolidated... the building remained a gay bathhouse and club from the 1970s until it closed in 2007. In 2008, the building was

<sup>13</sup> The term "drag" refers to a performance art that uses costumes, makeup, and other tools to present exaggerated forms of gender expression. Many people who do drag may not wish to present as a different gender all of the time.

<sup>14</sup> This sentence grossly oversimplifies the gay rights movement in the United States; there were many instances of activism and protest prior to 1969.



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sold and vacated. Current ownership intends to return the hotel to its original use, redeveloping the property using state and federal historic preservation tax credits.<sup>15</sup>

The 2009 nomination also addresses the club/restaurant history prior to the Club Baths, starting with Club Mecca in 1949, and then the notorious Desert Room. Nathan Zusman, who owned the Desert Room with his wife Tillie, testified in U. S. Senate hearings on racketeering charges in 1957, but managed to keep his local liquor license. Two years later, however, after additional complaints, the license for the Desert Room was finally revoked. In the late 1960s, the building's ground floor space became the Pied Piper, and by 1974, the Red Garter.<sup>16</sup>

### **Gay Triangle District of Portland<sup>17</sup>**

The development and understanding of the "gay triangle" or "Burnside triangle" of Portland as the most visible area of the city to be identified with LGBTQ+ culture happened over a period of many decades. The Majestic Hotel and Club Baths, along with numerous establishments such as Flossie's, Stark Street Station, and Silverado, all located in the building's ground floor restaurant or club space in different times, helped to fortify and define a proliferation of LGBTQ+ establishments in this area of downtown. The area was a regional destination as well, providing a safe and joyful place not only for LGBTQ+ people in Portland, but for visitors and residents of many smaller towns and rural areas outside Portland. The building's location at the end of SW Harvey Milk Street (then SW Stark Street) where it joins W Burnside Street gave the gay community a deep sense of belonging there, reinforced by many other businesses and places that welcomed and served LGBTQ+ groups.<sup>18</sup> During most of the period of significance, every space and use in the building exclusively catered to LGBTQ+ people, mostly gay or bisexual men. The significance of the building to LGBTQ+ history in Portland is deeply tied to the history of the gay triangle itself.<sup>19</sup>

#### *LGBTQ+ gathering places in downtown Portland before 1965*

Centers of downtown gay and lesbian life began to emerge in Portland in the 1940s and 1950s, though the locations were still fairly dispersed and had two general centers. The larger area was close to the Willamette River and had a more working-class character; the other small pocket forming to the north and west of that was a more middle-class concentration.<sup>20</sup> These centers of early LGBTQ+ activity in Portland first developed around transportation nodes, such as the waterfront area which was close to sailors docking along the Willamette. The most prevalent gathering sites were bars or taverns, but also included music or vaudeville theaters, bookstores, or bathhouses. One early bar, the Dahl & Penne, was located in the heart of that older working-class neighborhood at SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Alder Street, and developed a predominantly gay affiliation starting in approximately 1962 (it was open long before that, but did not attract an LGBTQ+ clientele until the early 1960s). The other early foundational establishments in what was then called the "dirty triangle" were The Other Inn, Portland's first leather bar, which opened in 1964 at 242 SW Alder Street; and (some years later) the Grand Oasis Tavern across the street at 243 SW Alder Street (see maps, Figures 2 and 3).<sup>21</sup> People with

<sup>15</sup> John M. Tess, *Hotel Alma*, 8:3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The terms "Burnside triangle," "gay triangle," and occasionally "pink triangle" referring to a specific area of downtown Portland with a prevalence of gay bars began to appear in the LGBTQ+ publication *Just Out* at roughly the same time, in about 2000-2001. The use of gay triangle in this nomination is not meant to claim that this is the most accurate or historic term. The area was sometimes called "Vaseline alley" by gay-identified men at least in the late 1990s to early 2000s. Another common term was simply "Stark Street," now renamed SW Harvey Milk Street. See maps, Figures 2-4 for a representation of selected LGBTQ+ establishments downtown.

<sup>18</sup> SW Harvey Milk Street will be referred to as SW Stark Street in this nomination when discussing establishments that used Stark as part of their street address.

<sup>19</sup> See Figure 6, a (partial) article from 2000 in *Just Out* using a photo of the building as the most representative and known building of the area.

<sup>20</sup> This class-based boundary was well-presented by Jayden McKay Dirk, "In a Garden of Deviant Roses: Encountering Queer History in Portland, Oregon, 1941-1974," Thesis, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington, 2020, [map: p40; text: 43-52, 155-156].

<sup>21</sup> The "dirty triangle" was the term most often used by Walter W. Cole/ Darcelle [see Donnie/ Don Horn, *Darcelle: Looking from My*

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same-sex desires were drawn to these bars, part of a larger concentration of places that was mostly located on SW 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues close to the riverfront in the period from 1946 to about 1965.

### *Emergence of the gay triangle*

Further west, in the area just south of W Burnside St. around SW Harvey Milk St., a handful of other establishments were vital in beginning to foster a density of LGBTQ+ places there, including the Music Hall on SW 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Washington St., which offered burlesque and female impersonator shows as early as 1938.<sup>22</sup> A bar called the Tel & Tel opened in 1957 at 820 SW Oak Street. This establishment was called Derek's by 1965, and later the Annex and the Family Zoo. "The site had a long history, dating back to World War II when as the Linnton Trolley waiting room it was a drop off site for GIs."<sup>23</sup> As with some other transportation hubs, this site developed a tie to the queer network in the wider Portland region. The young servicemen who were staged at the Linnton Trolley waiting room may have created an environment conducive to same-sex desire. There were also two early and often-surveilled lesbian bars that were outposts in this western area of downtown; the Buick, at 1239 SW Washington St. which was open from 1949 into the 1960s, and the Milwaukee Tavern on W Burnside St., open for only about a year from 1964 to 1965.<sup>24</sup> The Riptide, a bar at 923 SW Stark Street, opened in 1965 and may have been the first gay bar located directly on SW Harvey Milk St. When the City shut down the notorious gay and lesbian Harbor Club on SW 1st Avenue in 1966, most of the Harbor customers went to the Riptide, though it "was definitely not interested in obvious clientele, in or out of drag."<sup>25</sup> The Riptide was shut down in 1969, and re-opened as Roman's Riptide at 949 SW Stark St. in 1970, at that point openly advertising for a gay clientele.<sup>26</sup> The area centered on SW Harvey Milk St. began to attract more LGBTQ+ establishments from the late 1960s to early 1970s.

The previous history of the nightclubs The Desert Room and The Mecca, with their strong connections to Portland's underworld and criminality may have created a reputation or an opportunity for other "vices" to gain a foothold in the Majestic Hotel building at 303 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. As with the Dahl & Penne, a known illicit gambling location that seemed immune to the City's anti-vice crackdowns before it gained an association with an LGBTQ+ population, the Majestic Hotel "was a site where queer Portlanders could gather without risk of coming under fire."<sup>27</sup> The Pied Piper, opened in the late 1960s, was not explicitly nor exclusively a place for sexual minorities, but was nevertheless known to the gay press in San Francisco by 1969.<sup>28</sup>

Another reason for the emergence of LGBTQ+ life around the west end of SW Harvey Milk Street was simply its affordability, yet it still offered a central location that was easy to get to. Portland in the postwar period through the 1980s was much more blue-collar than larger cities of the west coast such as Seattle or San Francisco, and real estate tended to be somewhat accessible to lower-income groups even into the 1980s. West Burnside Street, the northern edge of the area, had been perceived as "skid row" since Portland's early timber days, with men's cheap flophouses, saloons, and inexpensive entertainment available among the

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*Mirror*, 122 and 161] as well as Gay & Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN) historians Tom Cook and George Painter [see "1999 Portland Gay History Walking Tour"], to refer to a small, LGBTQ+-affiliated, and now historically erased area of town. "The **Grand Oasis Tavern** was one location in what was referred to as "The Dirty Triangle," the other two points being **The Other Inn** and **Dahl & Penne's**. No doubt this area got its name from the close proximity of three rather popular bars which attracted both the drags and the leather crowd." [Tom Cook, "1999 Portland Gay History Walking Tour," revised by George Painter in 2011, GLAPN: <https://www.glapn.org/6045walkingtour.html>]

<sup>22</sup> David Grant Kohl, *A Curious and Peculiar People: A History of the Metropolitan Community Church in Portland, and the Sexual Minority Communities of Northwest Oregon*. Portland, OR: Spirit Press, 2006, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Mylott Morehouse, "Public Policy and Sexual Geography in Portland, Oregon, 1970-2010," Ph.D. Thesis at Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, 2012, 185.

<sup>24</sup> The Milwaukee Tavern is spelled as such in R. L. Polk's 1960 City Directory, Portland Oregon. See map, Figure 2.

<sup>25</sup> W. Holman, "A Gay History, Lest it be Forgotten," *Northwest Gay Review*, June 1977, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Cook and Painter. Also see Kohl [2006], 29 and 402.

<sup>27</sup> Dirk, 52.

<sup>28</sup> "City of Roses," *Vector*, November 1969, 22.

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“derelicts and winos” populating the area.<sup>29</sup> Portland’s urban renewal bulldozers started at the south end of downtown in the early 1960s, but soon expanded north, displacing and closing working-class LGBTQ+ bars and bathhouses such as the Aero-Vapor Steam Baths, Mama Bernice’s, and the Model Inn (see Figures 2 and 3).<sup>30</sup> Dahl & Penne in the “dirty triangle” managed to stay open until December 1983 but was ultimately demolished and replaced by a bank tower. The Other Inn was demolished for a parking lot. These were not the only LGBTQ+ bars to be pushed out of the downtown and midtown area. Redevelopment of the downtown area began to creep westward in the late 1970s, concentrating the LGBTQ+ presence in downtown mostly to the area west of Broadway by the 1980s. In the 1980s, the Alphabet District in nearby northwest Portland, and then the Pearl District, just east of the Alphabet District and north of W Burnside Street, began a wave of redevelopment, and ultimately, gentrification as well.

#### *Consolidation and growth of the downtown LGBTQ+ district*

The prevalence of queer-affiliated places and businesses in the northern and western part of downtown dramatically increased from the early 1970s into the 1980s, even as older gay and lesbian venues to the south of this district were closing. Counter-cultural establishments, including LGBTQ-friendly bars and restaurants as well as rock and jazz clubs, were still able to afford the area around W Burnside St. and SW Harvey Milk St. and were not yet as affected by redevelopment pressures. The city’s “lack of action against gay bars and their patrons in the late 1960s and early 1970s also may have reflected the growing tolerance among Portland’s citizens through this period.”<sup>31</sup> The opening of the Club Baths within the Majestic Hotel in 1971 energized the scene in the gay triangle, “with a lot of late-night activity between the bars and the baths” creating what sometimes felt like a street party.<sup>32</sup> Another gay men’s bathhouse in the area, Club Continental, opened in 1977. By 1980, the gay triangle was more public, and a big draw for LGBTQ+ people, predominantly gay men, in the Portland region. There were at least eleven bars or restaurants in proximity, as well as the Club Baths and the Club Continental Baths.<sup>33</sup> Tim Hills, the historian for McMenamins, the current owner of the subject property, told the *Daily Journal of Commerce* that in the 1970s “gays were coming out into the city and feeling comfortable for the first time. I’ve talked to people who said this building was their home away from home.”<sup>34</sup>

The Majestic Hotel and Club Baths building is conspicuous. It occupies the point where SW Harvey Milk Street meets W Burnside Street, created by the convergence of two street grids and the resulting irregular blocks. The lot’s unusual trapezoidal shape extends up four stories and creates the building’s recognizable tapering form. The building physically marks the end of SW Harvey Milk Street. Both due to the building’s iconic shape as well as its location, then, it became the gateway to the surrounding LGBTQ+ district during the same period of time that the district itself was becoming a true center for the Portland LGBTQ+ community.<sup>35</sup> Moving southeast on SW Harvey Milk St. and including SW Washington St. a block south, one would find The Mark Spencer Hotel, Slaughters, Roxy Hearts, Riptide, The Axe Handle, Fight 181, Hotel San Marco, and many other businesses that were queer-owned or queer-friendly. This is not to say that Portland did not see a rise in anti-LGBTQ sentiment during the early 1980s; there were unfortunately a number of violent attacks on people assumed to be sexual minorities.<sup>36</sup> Though urban renewal had displaced many of the older gay and lesbian places closer to the Willamette River by the early 1980s including the closure of the Other Inn in 1982 and the

<sup>29</sup> W. Holman, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Dirk, 158-159.

<sup>31</sup> Boag, 34.

<sup>32</sup> Dave Kohl, “Traipsing the Triangle: Walking into the Past, Discovering the Present,” *Just Out*, Nov. 18, 2005, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Kohl [2006], 31.

<sup>34</sup> Weinstein, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Note that there were other LGBTQ+ centers in Portland with other distinct populations; a lesbian and feminist community flowered in the early 1970s on the east side of Portland, for instance.

<sup>36</sup> George T. Nicola, “A History of Oregon’s Major LGBTQ Equality Organizations,” updated 5/14/2015. Accessed at <http://glapn.org/6026EqualityOrganizations.html>

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Grand Oasis and Dahl & Penne (both 1983) consequently erasing the old “dirty triangle,” the newer area centered on SW Harvey Milk Street (then SW Stark Street) was thriving.<sup>37</sup>

The early 1980s brought challenges as well as significant internal rapprochement within LGBTQ+ groups. By 1983, Portland’s queer community had repaired some of the animosity between gay men and lesbians that had marked the PRIDE celebrations of 1982.<sup>38</sup> LGBTQ+ people in Portland were more visible. Gay sports leagues of all types were in full public view, often sponsored by one of the approximately 19 bars or taverns that catered to the LGBTQ+ community by the end of 1982.<sup>39</sup> The majority of these were located in the gay triangle.

#### *Crisis and activism in the LGBTQ+ community*

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) was first recorded in the United States in 1981. It is caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and while HIV infection can be asymptomatic for some time, it can ultimately cause a wide variety of devastating issues, most related to the body’s ability to fight infection. HIV/AIDS began to affect Portland by 1982, and the bathhouses across the United States were immediately suspected of spreading the disease. San Francisco and New York permanently closed all of their bathhouses in those cities by 1985.

As a significantly smaller city, Portland took a different tactic. In 1982, the Town Council Foundation (soon to be renamed Phoenix Rising) and Legacy Health co-sponsored the first public forum on AIDS in Oregon for both health professionals and the gay community.<sup>40</sup> The Cascade AIDS Project (CAP) in Portland came together as a committee of Phoenix Rising in 1983, started by Brown McDonald, Reese House, and others to support gay and bisexual men affected by HIV and AIDS. CAP was incorporated as a separate organization in 1985.<sup>41</sup> Bathhouse operators in Portland met with Bob DeWalt of Phoenix Rising and with Reese House, the director of CAP, to discuss how to educate and protect bathhouse patrons from HIV/AIDS.<sup>42</sup> CAP then began a condom campaign and a series of safer sex workshops throughout gay bars and baths, including the Club Baths, marking a pivotal moment in the city’s strategy against HIV/AIDS.<sup>43</sup> The private business community in Portland was funding almost all of the work initially. Robert Dunn, editor of the gay publication *Cascade Voice*, said that Portland’s gay bar culture was the foundation for all of the political and fundraising work for the LGBTQ+ community. A single annual fundraising dinner was expected to gross over \$30,000 in 1984, as one example.<sup>44</sup> Esther’s Pantry, the Brinker Fund, and Community Health and Essential Support Services (CHESS) were all AIDS-related community organizations founded by the mid-1980s.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Kohl [2006], 402.

<sup>38</sup> Many lesbians as well as people of color did not feel represented by “Gay Pride,” and there were boycott threats and many letters to the *Cascade Voice* over months alleging sexism. A discussion group calling itself TKO, for “technical knock out,” was formed to talk through the issues. Anndee Hochman, “Decade in Review: The Eighties,” *Just Out*, December 1, 1989, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Kohl [2006], 199.

<sup>40</sup> GLAPN Timeline since 1970, <http://glapn.org/6022TimelineSince1970.html>. See also Jerry Weller, Interview with Libbey Austin. Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course with instructor Christa Orth. 2007, (transcript) p.21.

<sup>41</sup> Phoenix Rising was initially called the Town Council Foundation, which was one of the first eight lesbian and gay tax-exempt organizations to be officially recognized by the IRS. With the new name “Phoenix Rising,” the organization became more of a counseling center for LGBTQ+ people. CAP first originated in 1983 as a committee of Phoenix Rising.

<sup>42</sup> Kohl [2006], 255.

<sup>43</sup> Brown McDonald, “C.A.P. Receives grant for condom campaign,” *Just Out*, August 1 1985, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Jesse Katz, “Gay Community wants chance to ‘contribute’ to Portland,” *Oregonian*, October 19, 1984, 39.

<sup>45</sup> Again, these organizations were funded by the LGBTQ+ community in Portland, mostly gay men. After Chester “Esther” Brinker’s death from AIDS, Esther’s estate was donated to the Cascade AIDS Project which established Esther’s Pantry, Portland’s only HIV/AIDS food bank. The Brinker Fund was also established to provide emergency funds for people living with HIV/AIDS. The three separate organizations: CAP, the Brinker Fund, and CHESS, were consolidated into a single organization (CAP) by July 1986, per Steve Fulmer, interview with Judith Rizzio, undated (circa 2011?), CAP Archives Oral Histories, accessed at <http://caparchives.org/oralhistory/>, part 2.

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Bathhouses in Portland were closing rapidly, not by city proclamation but simply as a result of fear and loss of business. The Club Continental Baths closed early in 1985; the Olympic Uptown (previously the Workout Baths) closed in 1983. Yet, by 1985, Portland's plan of action for dealing with the HIV/ AIDS crisis was firmly established as a compassionate, grass-roots strategy for providing information and testing, and helping people with HIV/ AIDS. The first HTLV-III screening tests became available to people who wanted information about their health in 1985 as well, though many avoided the tests initially for fear the results would be known to the larger community and that they could be discriminated against.<sup>46</sup>

By 1985, Portland's LGBTQ+ community had come together to create a multi-pronged response to HIV/ AIDS in Portland, with active and impressive funding, much of it raised by the private-sector gay bars and clubs in Portland. City, county, and state agencies and organizations provided funds as well for various programs, but generally this funding lagged behind the initial money raised within the LGBTQ+ community. When public funding did come, it went to the organizations started by LGBTQ+ groups themselves, especially the Cascade AIDS Project (CAP) started in 1982. There were a number of LGBTQ-supportive elected officials who helped swing public policy towards support and advocacy during the mid-1980s, such as Bud Clark, a strong and public ally of the queer community, who took office as Portland's mayor in 1985.<sup>47</sup> CAP was incorporated in 1985, marking the end of the initial phase of the AIDS crisis in Portland. Today CAP is the "oldest and largest community-based provider of HIV services, housing, education and advocacy" in Oregon and Southwest Washington."<sup>48</sup>

### *Adaptation*

With mechanisms in place to support people and businesses, even through the deaths, political anger, and fear caused by AIDS, Portland's gay triangle and the LGBTQ+ community began to look to the future again. This last, most contemporary period in the gay triangle's evolution illustrates the ongoing reckoning with HIV/ AIDS including the start of vigils in Portland, and a re-affirmation of sexualized spaces even as Portland's queer community continued to help and fundraise for people with, or affected by, HIV/ AIDS. This adaptive attitude filtered into the wider city government; one example was the installation of condom machines in city swimming pools and all nine of the Portland Parks' community centers by the early 1990s.<sup>49</sup> However, in 1989, to the disgust and anger of activist groups such as Act Up Portland, the *Oregonian's* editor Fred Stickel refused to run condom ads in the largest newspaper in Oregon.<sup>50</sup>

Dick Lawson, who shuttered the Club Continental Baths at 531 SW Park Avenue in 1985, took over the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths and remodeled it throughout the end of 1986, re-opening it as "Club Portland" in early 1987.<sup>51</sup> He added a military-themed sex club in the basement, complete with an actual jeep. During the

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<sup>46</sup> Philip Dawdy and Taylor Clark, "1985," *Willamette Week*, March 8, 2005, accessed at <https://www.wweek.com/portland/article-4184-1985.html>

<sup>47</sup> Mayor Bud Clark held numerous campaign events, including his victory party, at the Dirty Duck Tavern, a gay bar in Old Town now demolished. Once in office, he took a strong public stance in support of the LGBTQ+ community. For instance, he proclaimed June 28th as Portland Gay Men's Chorus day in 1985. During a period of rampant public blame and fear towards gay and bisexual men in particular, Bud Clark and other elected officials such as Oregon Secretary of State Barbara Roberts exemplified the local governmental support that was building through the mid-1980s.

<sup>48</sup> Cascade AIDS Project website, <https://www.capnw.org/our-story>

<sup>49</sup> Letter from Julie Convisser, Project ACTION, to Charles Jordan, Bureau of Parks & Recreation, May 25, 1993. City Archives folder AF/153997. This condom campaign was not without controversy.

<sup>50</sup> ACT UP/Portland poster protesting the *Oregonian's* "Censorship," 1989. Oregon Historical Society Act Up archives.

<sup>51</sup> There are contradictory dates for the club re-opening. A large ad [*The City Open Press*, October-November 1986] advertised a re-opening date of November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1986, but it is not clear if that event occurred. City of Portland permit 86-115644 for remodeling the upper three floors was opened 11/3/86 but includes a note on 10/29/86 "windows boarded up on exterior and interior" and "remodeling of building in progress without building permit." Another note on 11/26/86 says "work without building permit is in violation of city code..." and the building was then posted with signs: "it is unlawful to occupy this building because of non compliance with city regulations". The final inspection took place in March 1987. Other permits were applied for even later such as mechanical permit 86-309304 in December 1986. Several articles written later say the club opened in 1987, including Will O'Bryan, "Happy Hunting," *Just*

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height of the HIV/ AIDS epidemic and even until the “Club Portland” bathhouse finally closed in 2007, the Cascade AIDS Project continued to organize ongoing testing and information sessions, events, and even had a room set aside within the building.<sup>52</sup> A 2004 letter to the editor in *Just Out*, however, complained that CAP volunteers in the early days used to “strip down to towels and join the patrons, offering them condoms and lube,” but that in 2004 the volunteers were scarcely seen and “never left the room the club has set aside for them.”<sup>53</sup>

Eventually in the early 2000s, as LGBTQ+ clubs were found in more places across the city and mainstream bars and clubs became more comfortable with a mixed crowd, or with hosting “gay nights,” the density of LGBTQ-affiliated spaces holding the gay triangle together decreased.

The City of Portland assembled a task force in 2001 to consider the formal designation of the Stark Street area as a district representing LGBTQ+ culture and history in the city as part of the redevelopment study of a larger area called the West End.<sup>54</sup> But the community was divided. Many noted that (white) gay bar culture was not necessarily the most representative of LGBTQ+ history. By 2010, an article in the *Portland Mercury*, an alternative newspaper, speculated that the center of sexual minority cultural life had shifted again, leaving SW Stark Street for a new area on North Lombard.<sup>55</sup> SW Stark Street, one of the most densely-populated with LGBTQ-friendly establishments in Portland, was renamed SW Harvey Milk Street in 2018 in honor of the openly gay San Francisco politician, who was assassinated in 1978.

### Conclusion

Portland’s gay triangle area, where LGBTQ+ (predominantly male) social structure and spaces were nurtured and developed, was supported by the series of queer-friendly or queer-affiliated businesses that operated in the highly visible Majestic Hotel building.<sup>56</sup> The Pied Piper’s opening in 1969 took place during the emergence of the gay triangle as a second gay district in downtown Portland. The period 1971 to 1982 represents the initial heyday of the gay triangle, with the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths offering a conspicuous and LGBTQ-affirming combination of hotel, bar, and men’s bathhouse in Portland and serving as an anchor of the increasingly popular gay district. Finally, the period 1982 to 1985 represents the final eradication of the older gay district including the “dirty triangle” nearer to the riverfront, the era of increasingly coming “out of the closet”, and the unfolding of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Portland and the immediate rise of local supportive networks and strategies to protect gay men’s health and gay culture. Again, the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths played a very central role in this response by doing what it had done before- actively supporting gay men’s

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*Out*, June 4, 1999, 23. Further research may provide more evidence of a 1986 re-opening, but 1987 is assumed at this time.

<sup>52</sup> Kohl [2005], 27.

<sup>53</sup> Jon Sauer, “Reality Check,” *Just Out*, January 23 2004, 4. The room in the building used over time by CAP has not been identified.

<sup>54</sup> Concurrent with the City planning process for the West End, a 2001 Portland State University (PSU) study by April Bertelsen et al, “Strengthening Small Business Clusters Serving Minority Communities,” looked at two study areas in Portland with different minority populations, one of which was “the Burnside Triangle,” as it was termed for the purpose of the study. It is not clear whether this term had been used previous to the study to refer specifically to a concentration of LGBTQ+ places in downtown, especially by people who identify as LGBTQ+. See Figure 6, referring to “what is now being called the Burnside Triangle.” Though the PSU study mapped a specific boundary for “the Burnside triangle,” there is no well-defined (or agreed-on) eastern or southern boundary for the gay triangle/Stark St. area and its perception as a defined area was probably relatively elastic over time. In 2002, the Burnside Triangle Advisory Group was assembled to represent the voices of those in the planning area.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Marc Beaudoin, “Here Comes the Gayborhood! Searching for (and Finding) Portland’s New Queer Neighborhood,” *Portland Mercury*, June 17, 2010, accessed online at <https://www.portlandmercury.com/Queer/2010/06/17/2610442/here-comes-the-gayborhood>

<sup>56</sup> No evidence has yet been found to illustrate that the Club Baths was racist, or to the contrary. An article in *Just Out* quotes Rupert [his first name only was used] as saying “I don’t think the gay community is any different in its racism from the community at large. The shame of the matter is that we gay people could use our experience as a discriminated minority to understand the plight of other people, but we don’t.” (Dennis Peterson, “Unlearning Racism,” *Just Out*, January 6, 1984, 7.) While the drag community in Portland included many Black performers as early as the late 1960s, it is clear from this comment that there were racist elements within Portland’s larger LGBTQ+ network.

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health directly within the building, exemplifying Portland's early, strong, LGBTQ-supportive, and grass-roots response to the HIV and AIDS crisis.

### Uses in the Majestic Hotel Building

The combination of bathhouse and health service location, hotel, and bar or nightclub uses catering exclusively to LGBTQ+ people, mostly gay men, was uniquely welcoming and centering of this population, during a time when sexual and gender minorities were typically shunned or even could be actively persecuted in most spheres of life. Bars or nightclubs that existed in the building such as Flossie's or Stark Street Station were welcoming to all LGBTQ+ people. Whether travelers or locals, men seeking to be with other men could openly stay overnight in the building, while taking advantage of the bathhouse's sociosexual opportunities there. Starting intermittently in the early 1970s and then more regularly after 1983, there was also a continuing social service and health care use within the bathhouse space itself, also geared exclusively towards gay men (see Figure 5). With the exception of only a few years during the period 1971 to 1985, then, every space and use within the building was queer territory. No other building in Portland held such a variety of spaces and uses, all specifically and exclusively for the LGBTQ+ community, and no other building represented the gay triangle district more than 303 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

#### *Hotel and Bathhouse Uses in the Building*

The history of the Alma Hotel is covered in the existing nomination, though not mentioned is the Japanese-American ownership of the hotel lease after World War II that bears an added mention. As west coast Japanese-American families returned from incarceration in camps further inland, the Zakiji family took management of the Majestic Hotel, as it was named by then, in 1946.<sup>57</sup> There was quite a bit of lingering post-war discrimination against Japanese-Americans in Portland, making it very difficult for them to find places to live and work. It therefore may be that the Majestic Hotel was considered run-down and less attractive by white Portlanders, even by the mid- to late-1940s. The Zakijis stopped leasing the Majestic Hotel by about 1962.<sup>58</sup>

In 1971, The Majestic Hotel became The Majestic Hotel and Club Baths, a franchise of bathhouses around California, Nevada, and Colorado. It is not known if this is the same bathhouse chain as one also known as The Club Baths which was the largest gay bathhouse chain in the United States, with the first location opened in 1965 in Cleveland.<sup>59</sup> An *Oregonian* ad in December 1971 said, "men only, open 24 hours," and noted it was a "Club Bath" operation.<sup>60</sup> Mr. Dale Bentley had leased the hotel in 1970 or 1971 from the Menashe family, who had owned the building since 1953.<sup>61</sup> Mr. Bentley first made alterations to the second floor of the building, dividing up some of the existing hotel rooms into smaller cubicles and installing several steam and shower rooms in 1971 (see Figure 10).<sup>62</sup> The Majestic Hotel and Club Baths was listed in the Damron Address book, a gay travel guide, between 1973-1980, with a note "very popular." City records, however, also list a series of building alterations and code violations that did not receive proper permitting at the time. Menashe family owners' representatives Carl Westling and Waldemar Spliid stepped in to ensure the compliance of the building. In 1975, the shower rooms and private dressing rooms expanded up from the second floor to include large parts of the third and fourth floors as well (see Figure 11).<sup>63</sup> An elevator was installed in 1977.

<sup>57</sup> Kiichi and Tamae Zakiji created a legal apartment for their family in the hotel in 1947, according to historic plumbing permit, 303 SW 12<sup>th</sup>, dated 4/10/47. Also, Polk City directory 1950, Majestic Hotel.

<sup>58</sup> 1962 *Oregonian* ads for the Majestic Hotel stated it was "under new management."

<sup>59</sup> Jeff Auer, "Gay Bathhouses," in online blog called Queer Designs for Living in My America, part of a course at the New School. Posted Feb 5, 2013. Accessed at <http://homonormativity2020.blogspot.com/2013/02/gay-baths-outhistoryorg.html>

<sup>60</sup> "Steam Bath," *Oregonian*, December 21, 1971, 48.

<sup>61</sup> Multnomah County Deed Book 169, p.128.

<sup>62</sup> 1971 permit drawings (#465944) by Baker Hicks & Associates for D. Bentley, on file (microfiched) at City of Portland.

<sup>63</sup> 1975 permit #496441, on file (microfiched) at City of Portland. It is possible that the upper two floors did get remodeled from hotel uses to bathhouse/hotel uses earlier than 1975, but the work was not permitted or inspected until 1975.



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The Majestic Hotel, however, was very much still in operation. As a hotel, the Majestic catered to gay men, making it possible for two men to travel openly together as a couple, or for a man to sleep overnight with another man in a hotel room.<sup>64</sup> The Majestic Hotel and Club Baths had shared sexual spaces of the saunas and group showers— as well as smaller “changing rooms”— intermixed with more conventional hotel rooms. As a 1972 mainstream newspaper article put it, Portland’s gay community members “have their own bars and taverns— 13 of them downtown – as well as their own newspaper, a ‘gay’ church and even a ‘gay’ hotel.”<sup>65</sup> At least one LGBTQ+ publication in San Francisco was also recommending the Majestic to their readers as a place to stay.<sup>66</sup>

Several past employees of the Club Baths spoke about their experiences. Journalist and author Randy Shilts, who worked at the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths in the summer of 1974, wrote an unpublished essay about the experience, noting that his job as “towel boy” and desk manager included charging older, unattractive men a higher price for cubicles than younger, cuter patrons, and refusing drag queens entry entirely.<sup>67</sup> In 1972, the *Oregon Journal* newspaper interviewed a Majestic Hotel attendant supposedly named Jim Smith “whose duties include enforcement of temperance rules.” He said, “[w]e get people here from as far away as Vancouver, BC, and Los Angeles. Really, we’re unique. Even the visitors from San Francisco can’t get over how truly elegant it is.”<sup>68</sup> The article noted that the hotel offered overnight and daytime accommodations to gay men.<sup>69</sup>

By 1985, the owner of the Majestic Hotel building, the Menashe family, was probably already thinking about putting it on the market and did not negotiate a new lease with Mr. Bentley. Without a lease, the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths closed at the end of 1985. Sharon A. Bates then purchased the building from the Menashe family in the summer of 1986.<sup>70</sup> Richard (Dick) Lawson, with deep experience in owning men’s bathhouses in Portland, leased the hotel portion of the building from the new owner to reopen the hotel/bathhouse, and began to remodel parts of the interior in 1986.<sup>71</sup> The LGBTQ+ media in Portland soon reported that Dick Lawson was the new owner who would be remodeling it and taking it over.<sup>72</sup> It therefore may have felt less like the end of an era and more a pause to restructure, adapt, and nurture the queer community during a time of loss and anxiety.

In 1987, the building re-opened as the second iteration of the Continental Club Baths, which was previously at 531 SW Park Avenue and owned by the same Dick Lawson from 1977 to 1985. Now known as Club Portland, the newly appointed bathhouse joined a consortium of such facilities called the Independent Gay Health Clubs of America (IGHC), which had been formed in Indianapolis in 1985.<sup>73</sup> Bathhouses across the country were under pressure during this period as local health officials pointed at gay bathhouse and sauna facilities as places that could spread AIDS. The IGHC helped individual owners by countering misinformation and providing advice on legal and political pressure encountered by the venues.<sup>74</sup> Dick Lawson purchased the building outright from Sharon Bates in 1996. By the time Club Portland closed in June 2007, there was only one other men’s gay bathhouse in Portland; a place called Steam Portland, which had opened in 2003 across the

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<sup>64</sup> The hotel and bath space upstairs were exclusively limited to men- there was a prominent sign on the door that read “Men Only,” and attendants would not allow women in.

<sup>65</sup> James Long, “‘Gay’ Community Here Runs Hotels, Church,” *Oregon Journal*, August 30, 1972, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Emperor Marcus, “Southern Scandals,” *Bay Area Reporter*, August 8, 1973, 28.

<sup>67</sup> Andrew E. Stoner, *The Journalist of Castro Street: the life of Randy Shilts*, University of Illinois Press, 2019, [unnumbered, end of Ch.2]. By the early 1980s, many (though not all) gay men had shifted their attitudes and become more accepting of drag and drag performers, as compared to just a decade earlier when the common sentiment was often anti-drag.

<sup>68</sup> James Long, “‘Gay’ Community Here Runs Hotels, Church,” *Oregon Journal*, August 30, 1972, 2.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Multnomah County Deed Book 1926, p147.

<sup>71</sup> Dick Lawson previously owned both the Workout Baths and Club Continental, see comparative section of this nomination for more information.

<sup>72</sup> “Continental Club in Portland Acquires Nation’s Largest Gay Health Club,” *City Open Press*, October-November 1986, 11.

<sup>73</sup> “Places of Interest,” *City Week*, April 17, 1987, 10.

<sup>74</sup> Jeff Auer, “Gay Bathhouses” [blog].



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Willamette River in northeast Portland. The Club Portland venue was impacted by the growing popularity of online hookup sites, starting in about 1997, which caused gay bathhouses to see less attendance and revenue.<sup>75</sup> Further, redevelopment and gentrification was a real factor by 2007, and developers of nearby properties wanted the bathhouse out of the neighborhood.<sup>76</sup>

#### *Significance of bathhouses in Portland's gay history and culture*

Bathhouses, including Japanese baths, Finnish baths and saunas, Turkish baths, and other public hygiene facilities have been a part of Portland's built environment since its early days.<sup>77</sup> Many low-cost apartment buildings or rooming houses did not have a bath for the tenants even in some cases through the 1940s and 1950s, meaning that the working classes often needed to depend on regular trips to the public baths. These were mostly same-sex environments. Ethnic and cultural groups also valued their shared bath or sauna facilities as social spaces in addition to hygiene. Portland's first such venue with an LGBTQ+ affiliation – or the point at which an existing bathhouse developed a gay reputation – would need further research to determine.<sup>78</sup>

The first American gay bathhouses comparable to what we see today opened in the 1950s and '60s and exclusively centered the social and erotic needs of gay men. Some offered full restaurants and nightclub entertainment in addition to fitness equipment and saunas. It was not uncommon for bathhouses to host theme nights or book singers (Bette Midler, for instance, found early success performing in these venues). The baths provided refuge from the outside world and an alternative to expensive hotel rooms and public cruising, which although a fun sport, carries high risk for violence, blackmail, and police involvement. ...[B]athhouses preceded the gay rights movement by providing men a social setting to assemble that incorporated established health and safety policies—what some today would label a “safe space” to be gay.<sup>79</sup>

It is important to place the bathhouse of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in context. Bathhouses were just one type of space for gay or bisexual men to find a safe community which involved social interaction and sexual partners; other spaces included adult theaters, parks, rest stops, bars, bookstores, alleys, and restrooms. Yet bathhouses, according to George Chauncey, were the “safest, most enduring, and one of the most affirmative of the settings in which gay men gathered in the first half of the 20th century.” Unlike the streets, parks, and other places where gay men engaged in sex, bathhouses “were theirs alone.”<sup>80</sup> Bathhouses were regulated, protected spaces where gay men knew they could let down their guard. Most of the time, it was not safe to bring a partner even to their own home. In the early 1960s, every state in the U. S. had some form of antisodomy law in place.<sup>81</sup> While there were still numerous morality crusades and crackdowns on known gay bars or gathering places in Portland especially in the 1950s and 1960s, Oregon's sodomy law was repealed on July 2, 1971, taking effect in January of the next year.<sup>82</sup> LGBTQ+ people in Oregon were regularly

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Morehouse, 214.

<sup>77</sup> A listing for “Turkish baths” appears in the Polk directory for Portland, Oregon 1891, and there may be earlier instances. Japanese steam baths operated in the basement of the Royal Palm Hotel building from 1932 to 1944, for instance; see Judith Rees and Northwest Heritage Property Associates, *Portland New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. National Park Service, 1989, 7:10.

<sup>78</sup> Gay bathhouses were operating in San Francisco during World War II, so it is possible that Portland also had its own gay bathhouses by this period, but no LGBTQ+ associations can definitively be tied to bathhouses in Portland until 1964, when the Aero-Vapor Baths was listed in several gay travel guides. Damron's 1964 travel guide is the first known gay travel guide in the U.S.

<sup>79</sup> Stephan Farris, “Out of the Tubs, and Into the Streets! Tracing the history of bathhouse regulations in San Francisco, CA,” *LGBTQ Policy Journal*, May 22, 2021, accessed at <https://lgbtq.hkspublications.org/2021/05/22/out-of-the-tubs-and-into-the-streets-tracing-the-history-of-bathhouse-regulations-in-san-francisco-ca/> on May 8, 2023.

<sup>80</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York, BasicBooks, 1994.

<sup>81</sup> Rick Lyman, “Trial is Testing Louisiana's Sodomy Law,” *New York Times*, October 31, 1998, A8.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Boag, “Gay and Lesbian rights movement,” *Oregon Encyclopedia*: [https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/gay\\_lesbian\\_rights\\_movement/](https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/gay_lesbian_rights_movement/)

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discriminated against, evicted, or fired without recourse throughout the 1970s. In 1986, the U. S. Supreme Court made the decision that an individual did not have the right to engage in certain sexual acts whether in “private” or “public” spaces in *Bowers vs Hardwick*.<sup>83</sup> Laws persisted in some states against sodomy until the early 2000s. Portland Police’s strategy was comparatively permissive, believing that “containment” was better than “dispersal.” The tactic was to keep LGBTQ+ establishments under watch, but generally allow them to operate.

Bathhouses allowed for men to have private space and time to be in proximity to each other, be with other unclothed bodies, and to have sexual encounters. These were social spaces where men could be entirely open about who they were, and could form community and a social network based on their shared experience relating to and being oppressed by the larger society. The lack of garments or material goods in bathhouses may have had a somewhat democratizing effect on the relationships gay men had with each other, according to author Ira Tattelman. Tattelman specifically emphasized the safe space bathhouses represented for gay men. “As vital sites of everyday actions and spatial functioning, the baths provide the safety and freedom within which to enjoy a multiple set of interrelations.”<sup>84</sup> Spending time there, with other men in a queer-centered space provided a relief for many men who were constantly otherwise checking their behavior in heterosexually-dominated jobs or living situations. One might never know who might target you out of homophobia, so having such protected spaces were— and are— very important for both closeted and “out” LGBTQ+ individuals. Bars and restaurants were known to be watched and sometimes raided by the police, so having places like a bathhouse or even a bookstore allowed the community to connect, whether for sex or simply to find other likeminded people. There were also known outdoor “cruising” spots in Portland (see Comparative Properties section, “the Camp,” for instance) for men to pick up other men, or in some cases, youths. The risk in using these known spots was even higher than going to queer bars or restaurants— undercover police were often waiting and watching to make arrests.

Bathhouses in Portland were not only supportive of men’s sociosexual needs, they also often took a proactive role in providing health information, especially being vigilant about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), which were on the rise in the early 1970s. Three Portland bathhouses operating in 1974 (The Workout, the Olympic, and the Majestic) were the locations of “free and confidential venereal disease checks” provided by Multnomah County Health Department in cooperation with the bath owners and managers.<sup>85</sup> Well before the 1980s, bathhouses in Portland, and specifically the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths, were a site of service for LGBTQ+ health.<sup>86</sup>

With the arrival of HIV in Portland in the early 1980s, the bathhouses were among the primary places where volunteers from the Cascade AIDS Project would distribute materials about safer sex. Working with the State Health Division, CAP began its educational programs by 1983. In 1985, CAP commissioned artists to produce materials such as a tri-fold brochure entitled “Great Northwest SEX.”<sup>87</sup> These materials were targeted towards a high-risk population of gay and bisexual men and distributed in community places where LGBTQ+ populations gathered. By 1987, money from government sources was starting to come in, and CAP received over \$70,000 in funding from Multnomah County to educate the public, primarily gay men, about high-risk sexual behavior. The funding was to go towards creating additional brochures, posters, condom displays, and AIDS information that would be displayed and distributed at 13 gay establishments.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Tattelman, 72.

<sup>84</sup> Ira Tattelman, “Speaking to the gay bathhouse: Communicating in sexually charged spaces,” *Public sex/gay space*, ed. W. L. Leap, 1998; 4.

<sup>85</sup> “Operation steamclean,” *NW Gay Review*, May 1974.

<sup>86</sup> Katie Batza, ed. by Megan Springate, “LGBTQ and Health,” *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*. Published online by the National Park Service, 2016. 22-18 to 22-24.

<sup>87</sup> Brown McDonald, interview with Judith Rizzio, undated (circa 2011?), CAP Archives Oral Histories, accessed at <http://caparchives.org/oralhistory/>, part 1.

<sup>88</sup> Jerry Weller, “Cascade AIDS Project Plans Education Efforts for Men in Risk Groups,” *City Week*, July 13, 1987, 1.

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CAP also staffed a safe-sex education and testing program with volunteers in the building, welcomed by the building's owners. Available counseling and HIV testing via the Cascade AIDS Project demonstrated sensitivity and care for gay men's health and served to protect the gay lifestyle and culture in Portland. There was reportedly a room set aside in the building for the CAP volunteers to use on an intermittent basis, usually Fridays, for sexually-transmitted disease testing and counseling for clients who wanted such services.<sup>89</sup>

#### *Club/Restaurant Uses (from 1969) in the Building*

A more detailed look at the establishments over time in the ground floor of the hotel building even prior to the "Club Baths" opening reveals indications of its growing importance to the LGBTQ+ community in Portland. The first definitive ties to LGBTQ+ history in the building begin in 1969 with the establishment of the Pied Piper, owned by Thomas Lombardo.<sup>90</sup> The Pied Piper featured both young women and men performers at different times. A gossip column in the *Oregon Journal* newspaper noted that "The Pied Piper (formerly "the Desert Room") on SE [sic] Stark Street is currently featuring five go-go dancers completely topless. The management expects no trouble with Mayor Terry Schruck's vice squad for the simple reason that the dancers are all legally male..."<sup>91</sup> A 1969 mention in *Vector*, a San Francisco-based gay periodical, said "[i]f dancing is your scene, the PIED PIPER at 1217 S.W. Stark is where you should go. They feature 'GO GO' boys every night of the week."<sup>92</sup> The scene was described as boisterous and crowded, with tables frequently knocked over by energetic dancers.<sup>93</sup>

It is possible that the site, especially the ground floor space, may have had some association with a gay clientele even earlier than the opening of the Pied Piper, however. In 1960, the owner of the Tel & Tel Tavern, a nearby bar also in the gay triangle district, "attempted to open this site under the name of the Mocambo," a notorious Seattle restaurant and bar from the 1950s. The Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) refused the application for a liquor license in the previous Desert Room space. The refusal may have been tied solely to the reputation of the Tel & Tel and its owner, Robert Saunders, or it may have been tied to some other pre-existing queer associations at the building that the OLCC became aware of.<sup>94</sup>

A series of bars or nightclubs, most of which were LGBTQ-affiliated, occupied the space from 1974 to the early 1980s. By 1974, the Pied Piper had been remodeled to a "Gay 90s atmosphere," and renamed the Red Garter. The club was owned by Claude Tate, who had previously owned a bar and restaurant in Redmond, Oregon.<sup>95</sup> Tate was probably trying to disassociate the venue with a 1971 charge (later dropped) by the OLCC that the establishment was "lewd" and "a gathering place for homosexuals."<sup>96</sup> By December 1974, though, the Red Garter was fined for not meeting cleanliness standards and for having an employee drunk at work.<sup>97</sup> The next commercial venue in the space at 1217 SW Stark St. was Riddles, which does not appear to have had an LGBTQ+ owner or client base. One 1976 event at the bar/restaurant, a classical string quartet, was advertised in a publication from Clackamas Community College, otherwise there appears to have been almost no advertising.<sup>98</sup> The Kachina Lounge, which took over by about 1977, likewise is not well represented in the mainstream press. The Kachina, however, advertised in a local LGBTQ+ newspaper and also was known to

<sup>89</sup> Kohl [2005], 26-27. Research has unfortunately not yet been able to pinpoint where this room was located in the building, or if it remained in the same place after the 1986 remodel.

<sup>90</sup> R.L. Polk's City Directory, Portland, 1971. The opening date of the Pied Piper could have been as early as 1968.

<sup>91</sup> Doug Baker, "Baker's Dozen," *Oregon Journal*, July 9, 1969, 3.

<sup>92</sup> "City of Roses," *Vector*, November 1969, 22.

<sup>93</sup> W. Holman, "A Gay History, Lest it be Forgotten," *Northwest Gay Review*, June 1977, 6.

<sup>94</sup> Tom Cook and George Painter

<sup>95</sup> "Fashion Show Being Planned," *The Bulletin* [Bend, Oregon], March 12, 1964, 14.

<sup>96</sup> Harry Bodine, "New OLCC Chief Faces Old Woes," *Oregonian*, December 21, 1971, 13; and "Two Clubs Reissued Licenses," *Oregon Journal*, October 23, 1973, 2.

<sup>97</sup> Watford Reed, "Low-Calorie Ads OKd for Brewery," *Oregon Journal*, December 17, 27.

<sup>98</sup> "Calendar," *Cougar Prints*, December 2, 1976, 8.

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the San Francisco gay press by 1978.<sup>99</sup> The Kachina was listed in Damron's Travel Guide, a popular gay and lesbian U. S. travel publication, in 1979 and 1980. Subsequently, the bars The Bushes and Stark Street Station occupied the ground floor space for short periods of time, both publishing ads in Portland's LGBTQ+ press.<sup>100</sup>

In 1982 or 1983, new owners Stephen Boden and John Ahlquist renamed the venue Flossie's, in honor of Boden's drag persona.<sup>101</sup> As Flossie's, the bar hosted potlucks for the gay community and was open 24 hours, seven days a week.<sup>102</sup> McMenamin's historian Tim Hills, "citing several of Flossie's regulars, says the makeshift family shared everything, regardless of whether bar-goers were unemployed, broke, strung out or abandoned because they were HIV positive. It didn't matter."<sup>103</sup> In 1992 or 1993, Don Sexton then took ownership of the ground floor space, transforming it into Silverado, a men's strip club.<sup>104</sup>

In 2000, the owners of the building, Richard (Dick) Lawson and Gary Nelson, sold it to Gerding Edlen Development.<sup>105</sup> Silverado moved to other locations in Portland at that time, but continues to be recognized as a prominent men's strip club in locations across the Pacific Northwest. From the time the Pied Piper opened in 1969 until Silverado moved out in 2007, the ground floor commercial space held over 30 years of almost continuously operating gay-owned and/or gay-centered establishments. The building was sold in 2008 to McMenamins, a regional company known for refurbishing historic properties and turning them into hotel, restaurant, and other tourism-related uses. The building reopened as the Crystal Hotel in 2011, with an associated restaurant in the ground floor space now called Hal's Café.

## Comparative Properties

This section will first compare the property with other centers of LGBTQ+ life in Portland, especially those that were located within a larger density of gay bars and queer establishments and that held multiple LGBTQ-centered uses. The second comparative section will focus on bathhouses as centers of community, looking especially at other socially supportive Portland gay bathhouses that existed before the mid-1980s.

### *Comparative: Buildings that centered LGBTQ+ life*

Pythian Building, at 918 SW Yamhill (extant), held numerous LGBTQ-centered events and enterprises over time, including meetings of the Metropolitan Community Church. The Pythian's ballroom hosted drag events in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>106</sup> In June 1971, as part of the first National Gay Pride week, the Second Foundation rented the Pythian Ballroom for a dance with a live band, an event that was the first Gay Pride celebration in Portland.<sup>107</sup> It became the location of Mildred's Palace, the first disco in Portland for LGBTQ+ youth, opened by Bill Hicks and Lanny Swerdlow from 1977-1979.<sup>108</sup> The club became a target of police harassment during that time. The Pythian, still present, continues to be a venue for a wide variety of

<sup>99</sup> *NW Fountain*, January 1979, and Dick Walters, "Sweet Lips Sez," *Bay Area Reporter*, Vol. 8 No 12, June 8, 1978; 34. The Kachina was owned by Herb Houts and Mark Mathews, according to the 1978 R. L. Polk's City Directory, Portland.

<sup>100</sup> An ad for Stark St Station appeared in *Northwest Fountain*, April 1982. In the Counseling Center for Sexual Minorities Referral and Resources book revised April 1, 1980, The Bushes was crossed out for Stark Street Station. See Figure 1, 1981 photograph; a small sign for the Bushes is visible at the ground level. Jerry Weller called The Bushes a "gay men's dance bar," in his interview with Libbey Austin, Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course with instructor Christa Orth, GLAPN, 2007, [transcript] p.20.

<sup>101</sup> Stark Street Station was still listed in R.L. Polk's City Directory, Portland in 1983 at this address.

<sup>102</sup> Aaron Spencer, "A Different Kind of Silver Anniversary," *Just Out*, February 4, 2011, 20-21.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* Several photographs of Flossie wearing a dress and flowered hat hangs on a wall in the building, now the Crystal Hotel, along with photographs of many other figures from the past.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Julie Sabatier, "He Said, He Said: Former Silverado landlord speaks up," *Just Out*, September 7, 2007, 14.

<sup>106</sup> Kristen Minor and Don Horn, *Darcelle XV*, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, NRIS # SG100005723. National Park Service, 2020; 24.

<sup>107</sup> Kohl [2006], 53.

<sup>108</sup> Lanny Swerdlow, interview by Art Smith, "Gay Barchives," Channel 125, 2021, about 17'-22'. Accessed at

<https://video.channel125.com/V2gDXFI6>

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community events. It is almost certainly individually eligible for the National Register for LGBTQ+ history, though it may also be eligible under other themes and other criteria.

The Other Inn, at 242 SW Alder Street (not extant), was Portland's first leather bar, catering primarily to gay men (see map, Figure 2). It opened in 1964 in the ground level of the Chambers Building under owner Jim Frantz. "Mama Bernice" Norris, known since she started tending bar at Dinty Moore's in 1949 as a caring mother figure to many gay men, went from Dinty Moore's to Mama Bernice's or Mama B's Inn until she moved to The Other Inn in 1964. She worked there until the building was torn down in 1982.<sup>109</sup> In May 1972, the Second Foundation opened a Gay Community Center upstairs (at 258 SE Alder), taking up the entire floorplate in what had been an Italian restaurant.<sup>110</sup> The space was divided, with other uses taking part of the upstairs as well. Offices for the LGBTQ+ newsletter *The Fountain*, counseling spaces, and meeting rooms were also created. The community center was especially focused on LGBTQ+ youth, seeking alternatives to "the Camp" (see below). As noted by Tom Cook and George Painter, the *Oregonian* newspaper wrote about the community center without using disparaging terms for gays or lesbians; possibly the first relatively respectful reference to the LGBTQ+ community in the mainstream Oregon press.<sup>111</sup> However, the community center there lasted only about half a year before moving to the Pythian Building (above). The Chambers building, along with others on the block, was demolished in 1982 to create a parking lot.

Dahl & Penne, at SW Alder St. and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (not extant), opened in 1898. During the Dahl & Penne's earlier years, the offices of the Montana Assay Co. were upstairs above the cardroom, and one could bring a pouch of prospected gold up to trade for cash, which could be more easily spent downstairs. It was unequivocally the center of the old "Dirty Triangle" and one of the centers of LGBTQ+ community for the period starting in the early 1960s. For most of the 1960s, the Dahl & Penne was considered a gay bar only during the late night period, after the regular crowd had headed home. The venue experienced an explosion of LGBTQ+ popularity at the very end of the 1960s or beginning of the 1970s. Like the street-level establishments in the Majestic Hotel, the Dahl & Penne transitioned from being known as a destination for so-called "vices," namely gambling, as pointed out by J. M. Dirk, to having an affiliation with the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>112</sup> The back room at the Dahl & Penne, called the Royal Flush Corral, held Mr. Leather contests and occasional drag shows, and a popular Sunday morning breakfast with waiters on roller skates was called "Sunday Mass" by the mid-1970s. There were several different LGBTQ+ friendly uses housed in the building, but Dahl & Penne was for the most part a bar. The building was demolished in 1983.

The Hoyt Hotel, on NW 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue (not extant), was a run down hotel near Union Station until it was refurbished in the mid-1960s, with the addition of the Roaring '20s Room featuring entertainer Gracie Hanson and a cadre of male dancers. The Hoyt became the location of drag shows by 1967.<sup>113</sup> The Hoyt Hotel closed in 1972 and the building was demolished in 1975, and remains an empty lot to this day.

#### *Comparative: Men's Bathhouses as Centers of LGBTQ+ life*

The Aero-Vapor Steam Baths, located at 1237 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (not extant), was perhaps the oldest bathhouse in Portland to be associated with a gay male clientele. It opened in 1958.<sup>114</sup> By 1964, the Aero-Vapor was listed in a National directory for the gay traveler as one of six Portland establishments welcoming to gay men, along with the Half Moon, Tel & Tel, the 19<sup>th</sup> Hole, The Tavern, and the Harbor Club.<sup>115</sup> It was located in the

<sup>109</sup> Kohl [2006], 196.

<sup>110</sup> Kohl [2006], 51, 62, 67, 197. The Second Foundation was founded as an Oregon non-profit in 1971 with the goal of providing a positive organization for gays and lesbians, with counseling services.

<sup>111</sup> Janet Goetze, "Organization helps homosexuals find place in society," *Oregonian*, May 7 1972, 103.

<sup>112</sup> Dirk, 51. Mecca and especially The Desert Room were notorious underworld hangouts in the street-level space of the Majestic Hotel, which may have paved the way for the rise of LGBTQ+ associations in the building in the late 1960s.

<sup>113</sup> Kohl [2006], 32-33.

<sup>114</sup> Polk's Portland (Multnomah County) City Directory, 1958.

<sup>115</sup> *Directory 43*, Second Edition, Minneapolis, MN, 1964, 48.



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ground floor and basement level in the building. The Aero-Vapor Steam Baths had a capacity for up to 67 guests, including 22 canvas bunks, and its association with gay men was likely formed quite early after its opening.<sup>116</sup> Its advertisements in the *Oregonian* newspaper, which ran for just a month in 1958, proclaimed "Open 24 Hrs," and "We Never Close!"<sup>117</sup> They did finally close in February 1972.<sup>118</sup> The block was demolished and is now the location of Terry Schrunk Plaza.

McMahon's Baths or McMahon's Mineral Baths, 509 S.W. Fourth Ave (now 404-418 SW Washington Street, extant). One of the older men's steam baths in the city, their ads claimed a history back to 1912.<sup>119</sup> It is likely that for much of that period of time, however, the basement baths were not considered a gay space. McMahon's may have closed in the early 1970s, and later reopened in 1979 (?) as the Olympic Down Town and perhaps briefly in 1978 as The Vapors.<sup>120</sup> The men's bathhouse use in the building remained open until about 1995.<sup>121</sup> McMahon's was across the street from the Circle Theater (at 516 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave) which also had a gay cruising association before it was demolished in July, 1964.<sup>122</sup> Some have stated that McMahon's was related to men's sexual activity going as far back as the 1950s, citing its proximity to the Circle Theater.<sup>123</sup> The building housed the Greek Cusina restaurant from the 1990s to the 2000s, with the restaurant, advertised by a large inflatable purple octopus above the entry, on the ground floor and a popular nightclub on the second floor. These establishments were known to be gay-friendly but were not exclusively LGBTQ+. The restaurant, which also used the basement level, was targeted by the city for code violations. In 2015, a redevelopment of the building included an extensive remodel of the basement level.<sup>124</sup> All remnants of the basement men's bathhouse would have been lost. It is likely, therefore, that integrity may preclude the building's eligibility for listing on the National Register for its LGBTQ+ history.

Olympic Sauna & Bath, at 359 SW Morrison (not extant). The Olympic at this location opened in 1973, or possibly a few years earlier, under manager John Yost, and closed in 1977.<sup>125</sup> The Olympic was noted as one of the three locations for venereal disease checks in 1974, so it did include a men's health component, but was closed by the time CAP's volunteer services went into Portland's bathhouses. The half-block including the Olympic and the Blue Mouse Theater (originally the Capitol Theater) was torn down in 1977 to construct a large parking facility.

Workout Baths, 531 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Ave, at the corner of SW 12<sup>th</sup> and Alder Street (extant). The Workout Baths was purchased by Dick Lawson in 1967 after he left banking and started in the men's bathhouse industry in Portland.<sup>126</sup> It may have been open from 1968 or 1969 until 1978. The men's club was located on the upper (second) floor of the small building. The venue was listed in a number of gay travel publications from the late

<sup>116</sup> Kohl [2006], 15.

<sup>117</sup> Ad, *Oregonian*, March 31, 1958, 19.

<sup>118</sup> Ad, *Oregonian*, February 18, 1972, 48.

<sup>119</sup> Ad, *Oregonian*, December 1, 1967, 74.

<sup>120</sup> Kohl [2006], 253. A mention in "Letters," *Just Out*, June 1, 1985, 4, may indicate that the Olympic Down Town closed and then reopened. The Olympic Down Town (and the Olympic Uptown) were first listed in Polk directories in 1979, with Cliff Pengra listed as manager of both. McMahon's continued to be listed in the Polk City Directory through 1977.

<sup>121</sup> Don Horn, Umbrella Project website, <https://www.umbrellaprojectoregon.com/mahon-olympic-baths-downtown>. Don's research does not identify the closure date for McMahon's, but places the Olympic Baths at this location much earlier, in 1971.

<sup>122</sup> "Circle Theater," *Oregon Theater Project*, an online digital research project by the University of Oregon. Accessed at <https://oregontheaterproject.uoregon.edu/theaters/circle-theater>

<sup>123</sup> 1950s and earlier dates noted by Cook and Painter. More research may confirm this, but no documentation or interviews with persons with knowledge of the time period have yet been found to confirm LGBTQ+ history at this property before the 1960s.

<sup>124</sup> Brett Schulz Architect, Oregon Pacific Building permit set, 4/10/15, shows the entire basement level floor slab removed and a new one constructed 18" lower. Permit set 110784-000-00-CO on file at City of Portland.

<sup>125</sup> The Olympic is listed in R. L. Polk City Directories from 1973 to 1977. The last ad for "steam and sauna room attendant" ran by the *Oregonian* was on September 9, 1974, 47. The Olympic was listed in "Gay Guide" section of *Contact*, April 16, 1975, 26. Don Horn, Umbrella Project website, <https://www.umbrellaprojectoregon.com/mahon-olympic-baths-downtown>, lists this location open from 1971-1977.

<sup>126</sup> "Continental Club in Portland Acquires Nation's Largest Gay Health Club," *City Open Press*, October-November 1986, 11.

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1960s into the mid-1970s.<sup>127</sup> It became the Olympic Steam Bath Uptown in 1979 at this location, possibly closing in 1983.<sup>128</sup> The Workout was noted as one of the three locations for venereal disease checks in 1974, so did include a men's health component, but was closed by the time CAP's volunteer services went into bathhouses in Portland. The building was extensively remodeled in the early 2000s, both inside and out, and is unrecognizable compared to its earlier appearance. There are now two apartments in the upper floor over the ground floor commercial space, and no remnants of the men's bathhouse use remain. It is likely, therefore, that integrity may preclude the building's eligibility for listing on the National Register for its LGBTQ+ history.

The Club Continental Baths /Club Portland, 531 SW Park Ave (located in what is now part of the Woodlark, formerly the Cornelius Hotel, extant), 1977-1985. A full-page ad for the baths' Grand Opening in a local newspaper said "From Gotham to Golden Gate, There's Nothing Like the Club Continental Baths," with imagery meant to evoke New York City's Club Continental Baths, with its iconic reputation as a disco-era social club, gay destination, and the place where celebrities such as Bette Midler would perform.<sup>129</sup> Portland's Club Continental was owned by Dick Lawson and the manager was Basil S. Goldblatts.<sup>130</sup> It was remodeled and renamed "Club Portland" in September 1982.<sup>131</sup> The interior "featured erotic black-light drawings on the walls, an orgy room, jacuzzi, and a number of individual rooms for private assignments."<sup>132</sup> Before the Club Continental Baths moved to the significantly larger Club Baths location in the Majestic Hotel building at 303 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the basement bathhouse hosted many gay community fundraisers and social events.<sup>133</sup> It also was very likely to have hosted CAP's volunteer services to support men's health in the last couple of years before it closed. "The rise of AIDS epidemic and the fear surrounding the disease helped to bring its closure due to lack of business."<sup>134</sup> The Woodlark Hotel, now encompassing not only the original Woodlark Hotel but also its neighbor, the original Cornelius Hotel, was extensively renovated in 2017-2018.<sup>135</sup> There are no remnants of the men's bathhouse layout or materials. The Cornelius Hotel was added to the National Register in 1986 and a single-bay entry sign reading "Club Portland" facing Park Avenue is visible in the nomination photos. Given the extent of the renovations, the integrity of the building may preclude its additional eligibility under the Criterion A theme of LGBTQ+ history.

The Camp (not extant). The Camp was not a commercial enterprise, but rather, a popular "cruising" spot.<sup>136</sup> Walter W. Cole described The Camp this way: "It was a wall on the northwest corner of SW Third and Yamhill between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue where underage gay men would line up against a wall and wait for – favors. There would be all types, ages, shapes, and sizes waiting at all hours. Some were hustlers, others were just wanting to experience sex."<sup>137</sup> The block was redeveloped in 1999 and is now the Pioneer Place Mall.

<sup>127</sup> One example: "City of Roses," *Vector* November 1969, 38. See also Don Horn, LGBTQ+ history website "The Umbrella Project" <https://www.umbrellaprojectoregon.com/workout-baths>

<sup>128</sup> *Drummer* magazine's travel section in the issue 30, 1978 issue, for instance, listed the Club Continental, Dahl & Penne, Majestic Hotel & Club Baths, The Other Inn, Olympic Baths on 12<sup>th</sup>, and the Tavern ("Half Moon") as places in Portland catering to "western/leather/macho" men. The Workout "health studio" is listed in R. L. Polk City Directories (Portland) in 1971-1978, and in 1969 as The Workout "men's baths."

<sup>129</sup> Ad in *Northwest Gay Review*, Vol. IV No. 5, June 1977, 2. For a description of New York's Club Continental and the scene there, see <https://splice.com/blog/continental-baths/>.

<sup>130</sup> R. L. Polk's City Directory, Portland, 1978.

<sup>131</sup> Don Horn, The Umbrella Project, <https://www.umbrellaprojectoregon.com/club-continental-baths>

<sup>132</sup> Cook and Painter

<sup>133</sup> Though definitely located in the basement of the old Cornelius Hotel, the bathhouse may have also occupied some ground-level space in the building.

<sup>134</sup> Cook and Painter

<sup>135</sup> Inga Sorensen, "Out of Steam," *Just Out*, October 18, 1992, 11.

<sup>136</sup> In 1984, a City Club of Portland bulletin noted that Portland's nickname was "Boys Town" due to the high number of male teen street prostitutes. City Club of Portland, "Report on Adult Prostitution in Portland," August 1984, 39.

<sup>137</sup> Don Horn (donnie) with Walter Cole/Darcelle. *Looking from my Mirror: Darcelle*. Self-published, November, 2019, 162.

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Luoma's Steam Baths at 825 NW 16<sup>th</sup> Ave, at Kearney (extant), was listed at that location from 1956 to 1963. It became Star Steam Baths, at the same address, in the early 1970s, then Aquarius Steam & Sauna in 1976. Multiple newspaper articles in 1973 and 1974 in particular involved arrests for "touching" and prostitution, so even if the building had an earlier gay male association, it was not present by the 1970s. There were quite a number of similar "massage parlors" or fronts for sex work in Portland during the 1960s and 1970s. Some undoubtedly offered same-sex services, but that is not the primary association this place (and most other baths, saunas, or massage parlors) had. This building is not National Register-eligible for its LGBTQ+ history and associations.

### **Comparative Summary and Conclusions:**

The Hotel Alma or Majestic Hotel building has been the home for a series of gay-owned or gay-affiliated businesses from at least 1969 until 2007. During the periods 1971 to 1974 and 1977 to 1985, the building was entirely dedicated to LGBTQ+ uses.<sup>138</sup> The only comparative property that was, even for a brief period, fully occupied with exclusively gay-affiliated uses, was the Chambers Building/The Other Inn, no longer extant and which was much smaller in size. Like Dahl & Penne in the older "dirty triangle" LGBTQ+ area of downtown Portland, the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths was foundational in terms of defining LGBTQ+ territory that extended beyond its own walls. The "dirty triangle" may not have existed without Dahl & Penne, and likewise the Majestic Hotel and Club Baths was critical to the development of the Stark Street area or gay triangle as the most visible LGBTQ+ area in Portland. As one of the few places in Portland to offer exclusively gay men's steam rooms and sexual spaces along with hotel rooms and a LGBTQ-centered downstairs bar or nightclub in the same building, the Majestic Hotel and Baths truly protected, dignified, and welcomed LGBTQ+ people. The addition of a social service for intermittent venereal disease testing, and later, a set-aside space for HIV/AIDS information and testing, added a historic site of service for LGBTQ+ health.<sup>139</sup>

The Pythian Building was not located near a concentration of other gay or LGBTQ+ places, but as one of the few extant buildings to host a series of events and enterprises significant to LGBTQ+ populations over time in Portland, it is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for LGBTQ+ history. The Pythian Building may also be eligible for association with other groups and events, however, since it has served many community functions over time.

The Club Baths, which occupied the 303 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue building from 1971 to 1985, was not the first gay men's bathhouse in Portland, but it was one of the first commercial enterprises in the gay triangle district to acknowledge, enable, and shelter the centrality of sex to gay culture. But perhaps even more so, it functioned as a sheltered place for gay and bisexual men to make social connections as well as a place for men to feel free from societal repercussions and discrimination. The men's bathhouse use in the building was highly significant to its anchoring role in the district. Earlier bathhouses did not have the same opportunity to protect and define LGBTQ+ territory in Portland because societal disapproval of sexual minorities was still too strong. The rise of the gay triangle in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with Portland's increasing "coming out," allowing the building itself to take on increasing visibility as representative of gay culture. The building, more than any other in Portland, provided an affirming focus on an LGBTQ+ population, hosting a unique combination of uses supporting and protecting the queer community.

<sup>138</sup> This leaves out the period that the ground floor was occupied by the Red Garter and Riddles, which were not gay-affiliated. The building also was 100% LGBTQ-affiliated in the 1987-2007 period, with Club Portland and Silverado.

<sup>139</sup> Katie Batza, ed. by Megan Springate, "LGBTQ and Health," *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*. Published online by the National Park Service, 2016. 22-18 to 22-24.



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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 45.522818° -122.683439° 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude Longitude Latitude Longitude

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude Longitude Latitude Longitude

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See 2009 nomination

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See 2009 nomination

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kristen Minor date Nov. 1, 2023

organization Minor Planning & Design (for City of Portland) telephone 503-706-9618

street & number 2146 NE 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue email kristen.minor.pdx@gmail.com

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97212

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Regional Location Map**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Tax Lot Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

**Name of Property:** Hotel Alma (addendum)  
**City or Vicinity:** Portland  
**County:** Multnomah **State:** Oregon  
**Photographer:** Kristen Minor  
**Date Photographed:** May 30, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- Photo 1 of 6:** OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0001  
Looking southeast at the north façade of the building
- Photo 2 of 6:** OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0002  
Looking northwest at the east façade of the building
- Photo 3 of 6:** OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0003  
Looking northwest at the beveled single-door entry at southeast corner of the building
- Photo 4 of 6:** OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0004  
Looking northeast at the south side of the building
- Photo 5 of 6:** OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0005  
Interior corridor on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, looking west
- Photo 6 of 6:** OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0006  
Interior corridor on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, looking south

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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National Park Service

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**List of Figures**

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

**Figure 1.** Regional Location Map

**Figure 2.** Downtown Portland, selected bars and bathhouses present in **1965** (map by City of Portland). Note that Figures 2-4 each illustrate a single year only as a “snapshot” in time for the overall purpose of tracking the shift in physical geography of LGBTQ+ clusters downtown.

**Figure 3.** Downtown Portland, selected bars and bathhouses present in **1975** (map by City of Portland)

**Figure 4.** Downtown Portland, selected bars and bathhouses present in **1985** (map by City of Portland)

**Figure 5.** *NW Gay Review*, May 1974.

**Figure 6.** Ad, 1983

**Figure 7.** Article (partial), *Just Out*, 2000

**Figure 8.** 1981 photograph

**Figure 9.** Ground Floor Plan, 1975

**Figure 10.** Second Floor Plan, 1975

**Figure 11.** Third/Fourth Floor Plan, 1975

**Figure 12.** Floor Plans, circa 2020



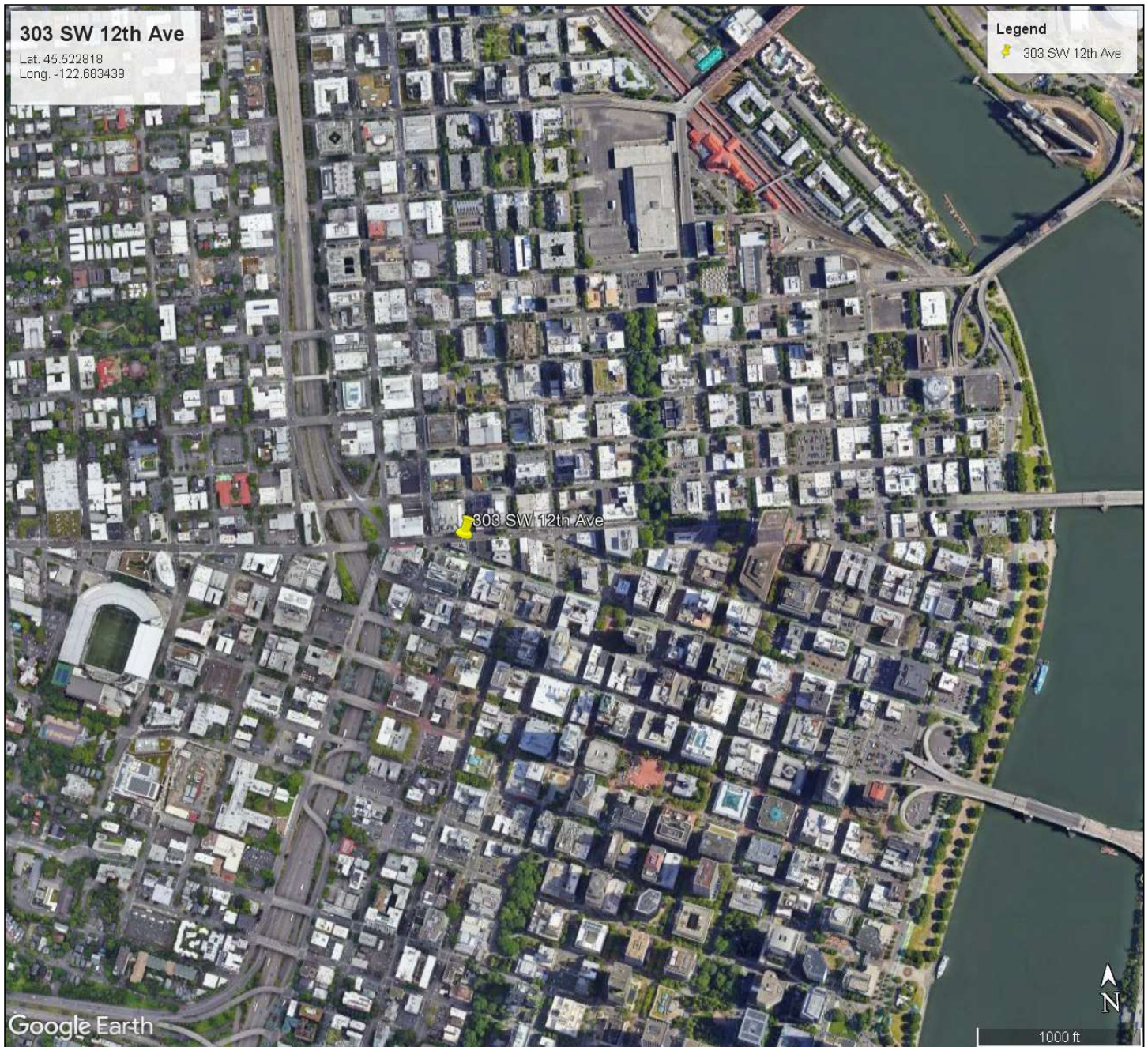
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Figure 1. Regional Location Map





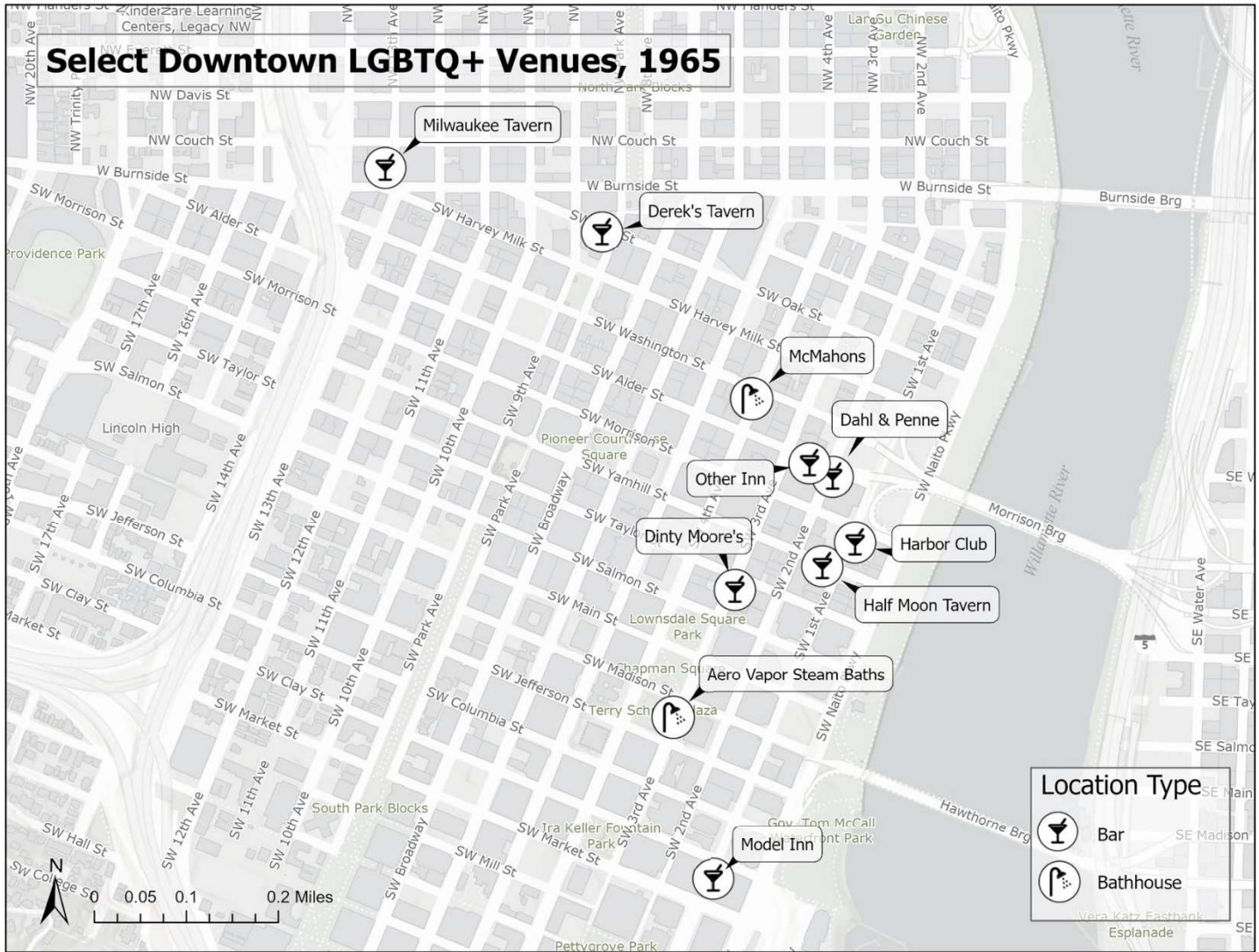
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Figure 2. Downtown Portland, selected bars and bathhouses present in 1965 (map by City of Portland)



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Figure 3. Downtown Portland, selected bars and bathhouses present in 1975 (map by City of Portland)





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Figure 4. Downtown Portland, selected bars and bathhouses present in 1985 (map by City of Portland)



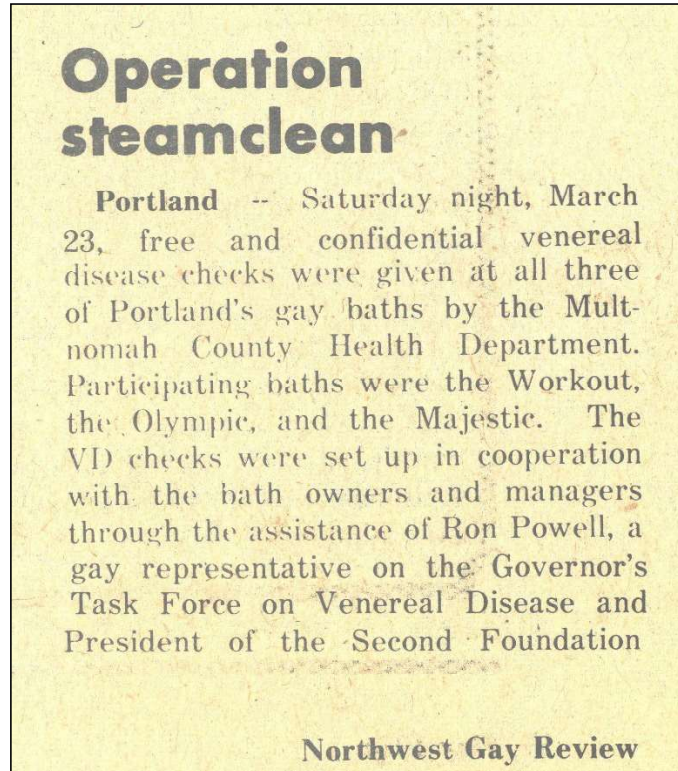
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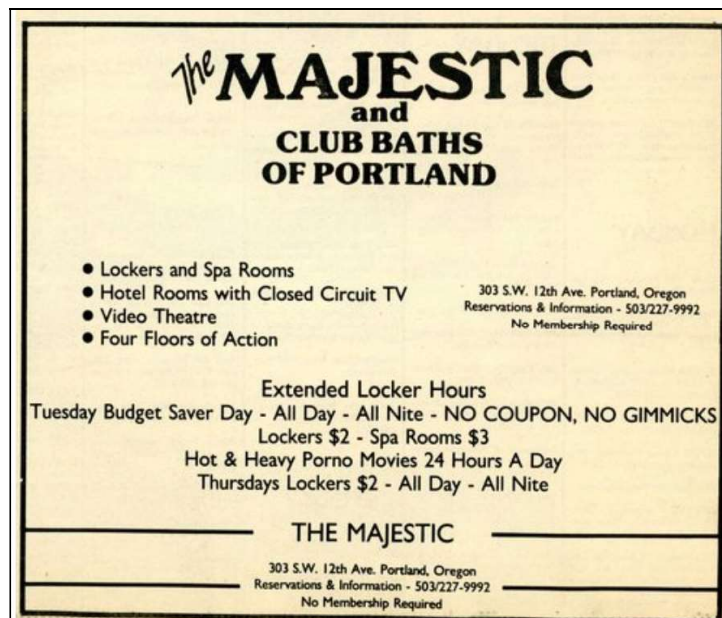
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**Figure 5.** Mention in *NW Gay Review*, May 1974.



**Figure 6.** Ad in *Cascade Voice* newspaper, November 11, 1983. Collection of Don Horn



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Figure 7. *Just Out*, August 18, 2000, page 19





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**Figure 8.** 1981 photograph, looking northwest. Portland City Archives A2012-008.772.12



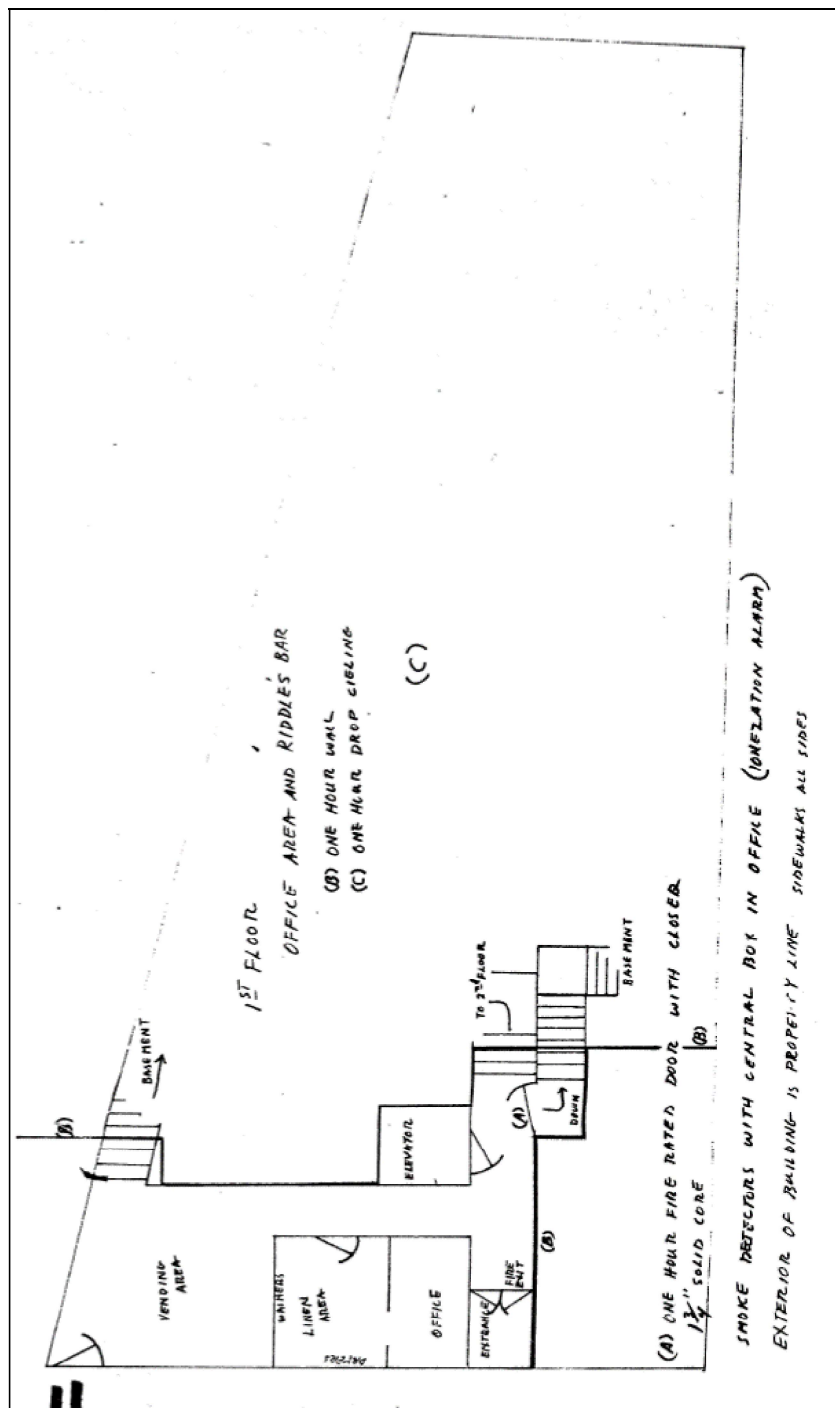
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Figure 9. Ground Floor Plan (partial) from City of Portland Permit #496441, 1975. The light lines illustrate the 1971 (or earlier) walls, and the 1975 changes are darker lines.





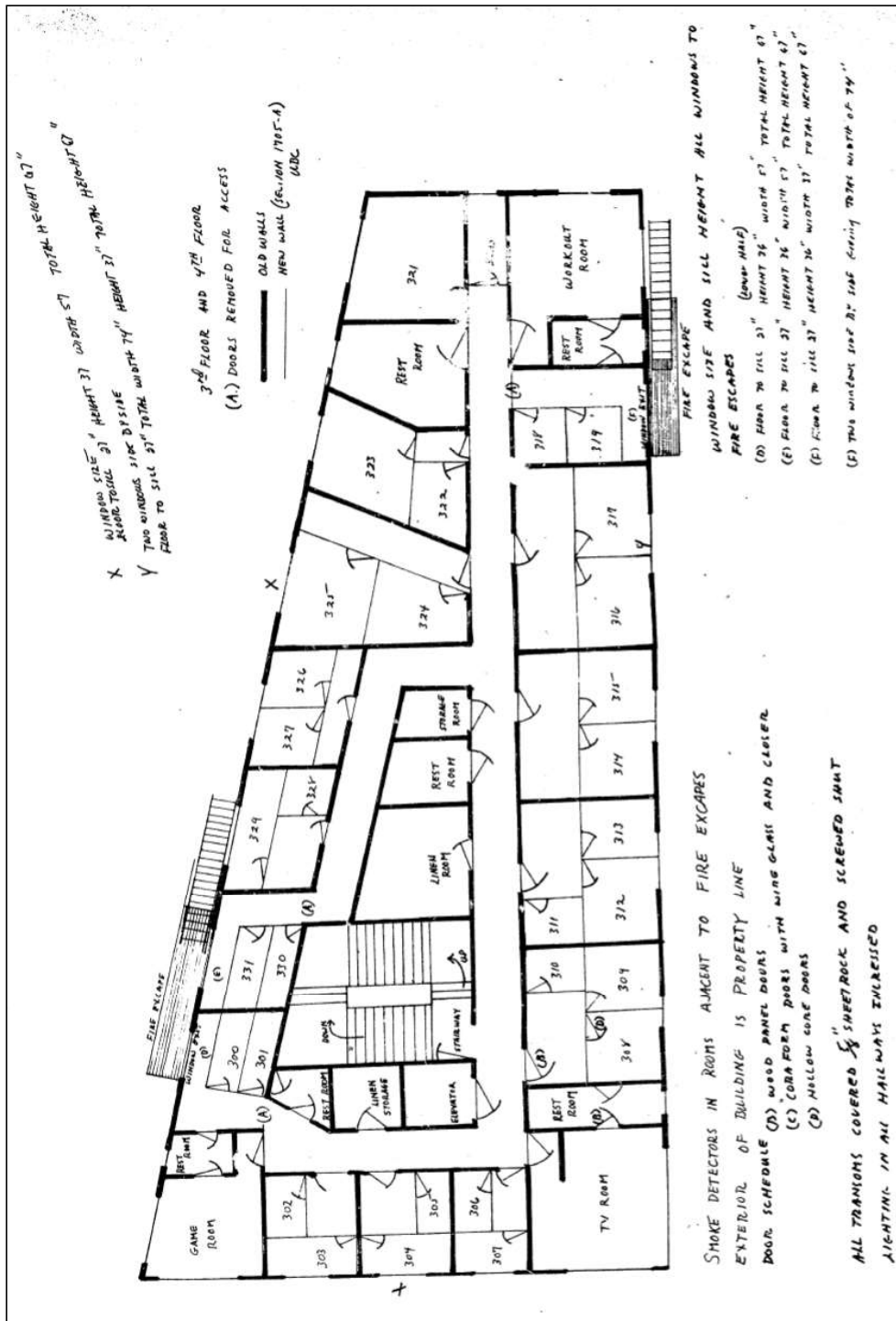
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Figure 11. Third/Fourth Floor Plan from City of Portland Permit #496441, 1975.





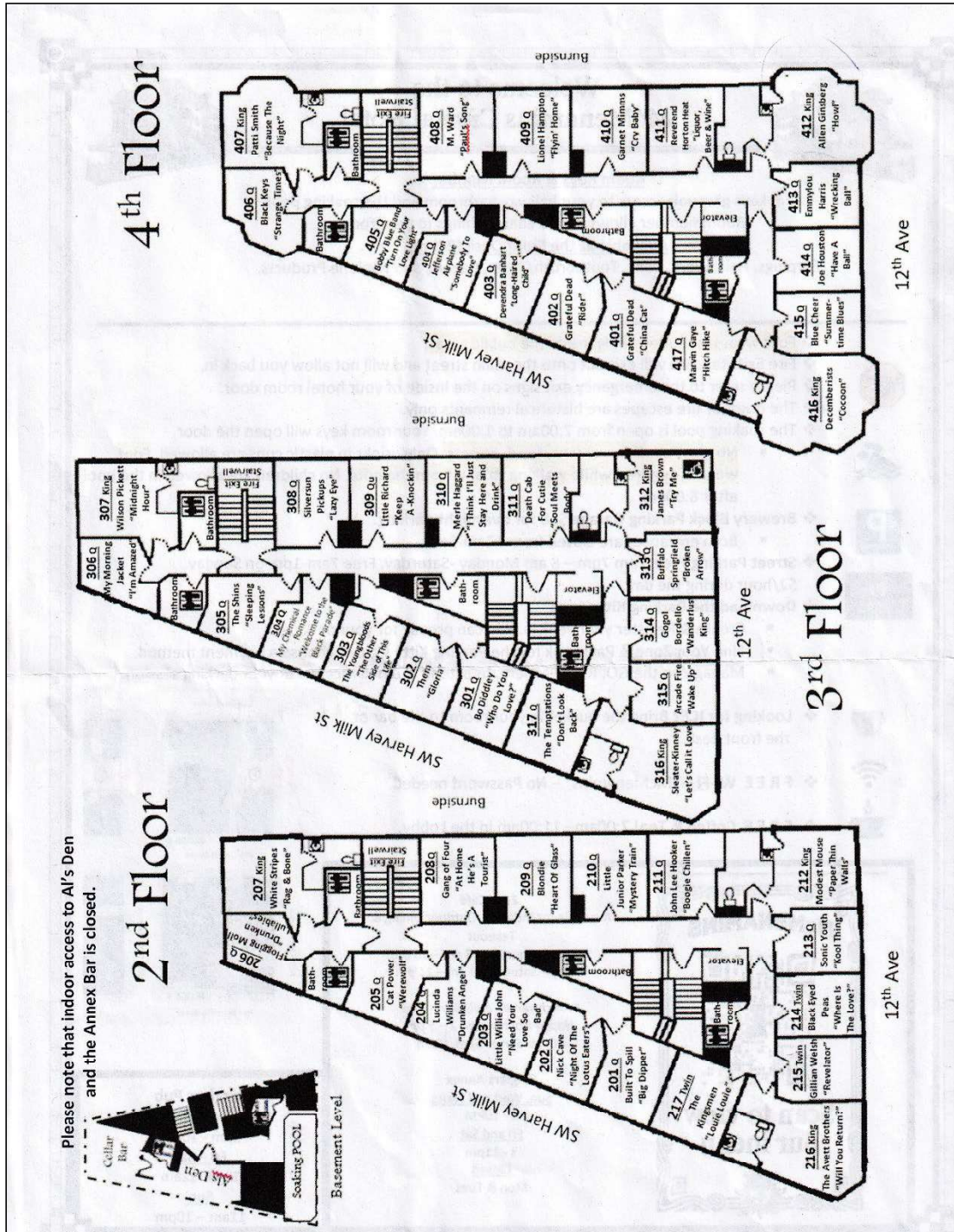
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Figure 12. Floor Plans, circa 2020. McMenemy's Hotels





**Hotel Alma**  
**Multnomah County: OR**



**Photo 1 of 6: OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0001**



**Photo 2 of 6: OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0002**



**Hotel Alma**  
**Multnomah County: OR**



**Photo 3 of 6: OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0003**



**Photo 4 of 6: OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0004**

**Hotel Alma  
Multnomah County: OR**



**Photo 5 of 6: OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0005**



**Photo 6 of 6: OR\_Multnomah\_HotelAlmaAdd\_0006**