

September 5, 2018

Andrew Wolfram
Commission President
Historic Preservation Commission
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Commissioner Wolfram:

As the fiscal sponsor and partner for the *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco*, the GLBT Historical Society wholeheartedly endorses the landmarking of the former Paper Doll at 524 Union Street in San Francisco. Not only would this be the first San Francisco Landmark inspired by the LGBTQ HCS, it is a landmark proposed by a property owner who is genuinely committed to honoring her building's LGBTQ history. Truly extraordinary.

LGBTQ historian and scholar Nan Alamilla Boyd was the first to describe the Paper Doll as a "community center" where LGBTQ people could "make friends, find lovers, get information, or plan activities." Public spaces such as the Paper Doll were vital in the formation of San Francisco's LGBTQ communities, especially in the 1940s and 50s when any display of nonnormative sexuality was criminal, and most people viewed nonnormative men and women as pathological. As noted in the LGBTQ HCS, "the concept of public spaces providing the protection needed for establishing and nurturing community is critical to understanding LGBTQ history." The Paper Doll was one of those places.

On a personal note, the Paper Doll has been close to my heart since 2009 when I completed my master's thesis on preserving the history of San Francisco's lesbian community in North Beach. At a time when North Beach was bustling with queer bars and nightclubs, the Paper Doll was unique as the only full-service restaurant catering to these communities. I imagined myself as a lesbian during that period and understood how good it would feel to gather in one of those famous booths for a meal with like-minded women in a place that not only tolerated but welcomed us.

Thank you for your consideration of this landmark!

Sincerely,

Shayne E. Watson
Founding Chair
GLBT Historical Society Historic Places Working Group

TENDERLOIN MUSEUM

WWW.TENDERLOINMUSEUM.ORG

• 398 EDDY STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

• 415-351-1912

Dear Historic Preservation Commission,

The Tenderloin Museum enthusiastically supports efforts to landmark the Paper Doll site at 524 Union.

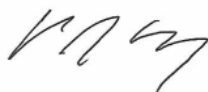
As a historical institution with exhibits and programming that shares the history of marginalized groups (that are often ignored in history books), the Tenderloin Museum sees the Paper Doll as having tremendous historical value. Commemorating the Paper Doll promotes LGBTQ history, specifically Lesbian history, which is frequently overlooked in traditional LGBTQ narratives.

The Tenderloin Museum produced a popular play about the Compton's Cafeteria Riots, which ran from Feb-May of this year. The play shared the history of trans women in the Tenderloin neighborhood and a riot that occurred in 1966, three years before the more famous Stonewall riot in New York. Educating the public about this important, little known historical incident highlighted the vital contributions trans women (and many trans women of color) made to the queer civil rights movement. It also highlighted the importance of the Tenderloin, the city of San Francisco, and the vital role our city played in sparking the nationwide queer liberation movement. Compton's directly challenges the narrative that the movement began in New York with Stonewall in 1969.

Granting landmark status to the Paper Doll achieves similar objectives. It shows the vital role San Francisco has played in fostering gay culture and gay civil rights, through the lens of an often overlooked group in the gay community. Mona Sargen, an early manager of the Paper Doll who went on own the first lesbian clubs in the city is a criminally unknown queer civil rights hero. Championing her and the Paper Doll, is incredibly important in telling a more complete story about gay life and gay activism, as well as challenging traditional, incomplete narratives about the movement.

Let me know if I can be of any service in promoting this important history.

Sincerely,



Katie Conry
Executive Director
Tenderloin Museum

September 23, 2018

Andrew Wolfram, Commission President
Historic Preservation Commission
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Commission President Wolfram and Historic Preservation Commissioners:

It is my pleasure and honor to write this letter in support of granting landmark status to the building located at 524 Union Street.

The years my father, Dante Benedetti, owned the Paper Doll is just one short period of its history, but one that could not be more San Franciscan. Being a native, I remain proud of my heritage and my birthplace. San Francisco has been on the forefront of many cultural shifts through its history, making 524 Union a landmark is one way to call out again how its citizens have stepped up and made the city great.

My father owned the Paper Doll Club/Restaurant located at 524 Union Street from the mid 1950's to the early 1960's. Although most often recognized for the work he did with San Francisco youth for over five decades or saving the baseball program at U.S.F. or being lifelong friends with Joe DiMaggio with whom he grew up, I have been as equally, if not prouder, of the integrity he held in regards to the Paper Doll.

When he bought the Paper Doll that hosted gay clientele in the mid 1950's, he held the same standards he had always held at our family's restaurant, the New Pisa: customers were treated with respect, but they were also expected to comport themselves with respect towards others. A man steeped in his Italian heritage, my father did expect all to maintain a certain decorum in public.

As at the New Pisa, his sense of protecting his customers was just as fervent at the Paper Doll, but it was more tested at 524 Union. Unfortunately, there were often people who did not approve of the LGBTQ community, but who would come into the restaurant to cause problems. My father and his cook would usher them out the door, and often needed to resort to physically removing them from the premises and away from the alley that bordered the Club. Having at one time being an amateur boxer aided the situation.

A common practice for restaurant owners while my grandparents and father owned the New Pisa from the 1920's through the 1970's, was to offer meals to the police officers on the beat, sometimes a flat of raviolis to take home or even a good sized prime rib. However, at the Paper Doll as at other establishments that served the LGBTQ community, police also expected payments each month or, if no payment was made, they would claim indecent acts were taking place.

True to form, and holding steadfast to his principles, knowing that the Paper Doll was a legitimate restaurant and bar, and a place where his customers, who happened to be gay, gathered, my father refused to be extorted because he knew his customers were doing nothing wrong. When he refused to pay the police, the Paper Doll was shut down, with my father ultimately losing his liquor license.

My parents spent their entire life savings fighting the case in court, going all the way to the U.S. Court of Appeals, with my father's attorney finally convincing him to give up. With no money left, and with no hope of winning, he decided to stop pursuing his case. Even though my father still owned the building at 524 Union until the early 1970's, he and our family were never able to recover financially from his legal battle for his license with the Paper Doll.

Although I did not know the full story until I was an adult, I do have some memories of the time, knowing the period when we didn't have much money, lucky to have other family who helped. But more importantly, I remain exceptionally proud of the principles and character my father had, even when it meant losing almost everything. As a straight man who stood up for the LGTBQ community and for his principles in the face of opposition from those in power, I will be forever proud.

When my father died in 2005, several gay men attended his memorial, remembering all those years later how he had stood up for them, providing them a safe place to enjoy a meal or share a drink.

My sister and I both chose working with youth in schools as a result of the influence and inspiration we received from watching and knowing our father had served the public and the community. My sister is a retired public school teacher and I am currently the Head of School at Julia Morgan School in Oakland, serving mostly girls coming from public schools, readying them to be strong young women, learning to advocate for themselves and others before they go to high school. I want these young girls and young women to do exactly as my father did, standing up and speaking out for what is right and for those who might not otherwise have a voice.

I applaud the consideration the Commission is affording 524 Union St. and urge you to grant it the landmark status it deserves.

Sincerely,
Sandra Luna

Sandra Luna
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858 291 8430
August 24, 2018

Andrew Wolfram, Commission President
Historic Preservation Committee
1650 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Commission President Wolfram,

I am writing in support of the nomination to have the site of the Paper Doll at 524 Union Street declared a San Francisco landmark. I lived in San Francisco from 1959 to 1962. Already in 1959, the Paper Doll was legendary and was recommended to me as a wonderful meeting place for “gay women” (as we called ourselves then).

I had several subsequent occasions to visit the Paper Doll. It was different from the lesbian bars I had frequented in that it was much more upscale—it even served dinners! It gave those of us who were its patrons a much-welcomed feeling (rare in gay and lesbian venues of that day) that here was a decent place in which to meet people and carry on a social life such as the external society wanted to deny us. That feeling was crucial to our well-being, and it would be difficult to exaggerate how rarely it was permitted to us elsewhere.

The Paper Doll has been recognized in recent years in the work of several LGBTQ historians. It surely deserves to be recognized as well by San Francisco’s Historic Preservation Committee as being a landmark of San Francisco’s LGBTQ history.

Sincerely,

Lillian Faderman, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita, California State University, Fresno

Author of *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, *Gay L.A.*, *The Gay Revolution*, and *Harvey Milk: His Lives and Death*

From: [Dennis Hong](#)
To: [Ferguson, Shannon \(CPC\)](#)
Cc: [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#); [Yan, Calvin \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: A Land MarkNorth Beach case Paper Doll
Date: Friday, September 28, 2018 4:16:49 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Good afternoon Shannon, Dennis Hong here, district 7. Retired, a native and still a resident of San Francisco for 70 plus years. In the past I have not submitted comments on Landmark cases, mostly DEIRs, 311's and that type. This notice just screamed and popped out at me and I had to chime in and in full support of it. I will try to track it and look forward to it's approval. So, I really need everyone's help!

With that said, I did not know who to write to in support of this Landmark Status - recommendation. Wow, it has been way to many years that I came across the word **Paper Doll**. You see I moved out of District 3 in the mid 70's. I grew up in that little alley, Bannan Place since 1952 +/- right across the street. At one time they even attempted to change it's name, thank god they did not. I may be weird, but I enjoyed the noise Paper Doll created, no problem sleeping either. Always thought of the Paper Doll as unique and a wonderful benefit to North Beach. Lively too.

Growing up in North Beach I missed the smell of the baking of the french bread, the roasting of the coffee, the baking of the pizza, the street fairs, even went to the very first one in the fifties and then some. Oh must not forget that big market Bon Gusto on Green Street, the Green Valley Restaurant, on and on....

Made that big mistake when I moved out of District 3. I

still visit North Beach - Chinatown weekly. This land mark status would be a big benefit to North Beach and district 3.

I trust this email works. Could you please share this with the Commission and others at the Oct 17, Meeting?

If anyone has any questions to my usual rambling email, please feel free to reach to me at this email.

Best regards,

Steven Wong
Ready State, LLC.
524 Union Street
San Francisco, CA 94133
Tel: 650.396.2557

August 27th, 2018

Andrew Wolfram, Commission President
Historic Preservation Commission
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Mr. Wolfram,

I am the cofounder of Ready State, the business that currently operates out of 524 Union Street. I am writing to endorse the application for landmark status of this building to the Historic Preservation Commission.

As a content marketing agency, we naturally thought it appropriate to tell the story of this building, and were delighted by what we uncovered. From its origin as The Paper Doll Club, to serving as the studio for Harlem Renaissance sculptor, Sargent Claude Johnson, and housing the editorial team for Ramparts magazine, which was incidentally where Jan Werner interned before founding Rolling Stone magazine, this building is steeped in history and serves as an inspiration for us.

I believe that recognizing this building as a landmark will help preserve the San Francisco history it has housed, especially in this time of rapid change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SW", written in a cursive, stylized font.

Steven Wong
Co-founder, Ready State

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San Francisco, CA 94133

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