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 Darcelle XV

other names/site number Demas Tavern; Darcelle XV Showplace

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

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

2. Location

street & number 208 NW Third Avenue

city or town Portland

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97209

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

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
Darcelle XV
Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR
County and State

5. Classification

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

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Hotel

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: SYNTHETICS

other: ________________________________
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

Darcelle XV (often called Darcelle XV Showplace), at 208 NW Third Avenue, Portland OR, is a drag performance venue located in a larger three-story brick building completed in 1910.¹ Under its original name, the Foster Hotel, the 20th Century Commercial style building is a contributing resource to the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, a National Historic Landmark.² This nomination is of the building, but focuses on the west-facing commercial storefront spaces (about a third of the building’s west-facing storefront) at the ground floor level, plus the “back of house” spaces in the basement, where the venue Darcelle XV has been owned and operated by Walter Cole since 1967.³ As a nightclub and drag venue, the aesthetic of Darcelle XV Showplace reflects the improvised, low-budget, and self-reliant illusion of glamour that resulted from its development during the late 1960s and early 1970s when drag was celebrated mostly behind closed doors due to gay discrimination and the threat of harassment. The nightclub interior has changed over time, but retains its essential components illustrating its use as a performance venue and strongly reflects the same character as the space had by the mid-1970s. These include features such as the location and configuration of the stage, the open floor plan, and the original central interior columns and beam, marking where a wall between two narrow storefront spaces was removed in a “do-it-yourself” project to expand the performance and seating areas. The storefront was largely rebuilt to its historic appearance in a 2007 seismic retrofit of the building, but still retains its layout, composition, and some of the original materials present from the period 1967-1975. Like the interior finishes, the exterior storefront finishes changed several times during this period as part of the rebranding and promotion efforts of the nightclub. Significant and character-defining exterior features of the nightclub include its original exterior blade sign, the distinctive “x”-patterned transom, the configuration of openings at the two storefront bays, and the presence of an entry canopy at the south bay. Its storefront windows continue to block direct views in, an important part of the “protected” space offered by the nightclub. Despite the exterior and interior changes, Darcelle XV still retains the aspects of location, design, setting, feeling, and association and is therefore able to convey a sense of the historic character as it had in the early to mid-1970s. Its physical presence still conveys the significance of the drag venue to LGBTQ history.

Narrative Description

The general location of the Lyndon Musolf Manor building (historically the Foster Hotel), with street address of 216 NW Third Avenue, is a few blocks north of West Burnside in one of the oldest parts of downtown Portland, several blocks west of the Willamette River. The area is developed in a grid street pattern with mixed-use low-rise buildings and occasional taller contemporary examples.⁴ The general area has been known variously as the “North End,” “Japantown,” “Chinatown” or “New Chinatown,” and “Old Town.” The overall building footprint, 100’ by 190’ total, takes up a half-block, bounded by NW Third Avenue, NW Davis Street, and NW Second Avenue. The northern boundary of the Skidmore/Old Town

¹ The “XV” in Darcelle XV is pronounced “fifteen” as in the Roman numeral. Date: [advertisement], The Oregonian, June 19, 1910, 15.
² National Register Information System (NRIS) # 75001597. The district is listed as a Landmark under criteria A and C for its exceptional collection of cast iron commercial buildings. The District was initially designated on December 6, 1975. In 1977, the Skidmore/Old Town District was designated to its current status as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). In 2008, the documentation was amended and updated.
³ Throughout the document, Walter Willard Cole is referred to as “Walter Cole.” His son, also named Walter Cole, is referred to as “Walter Cole, Jr.”
⁴ The Period of Significance for the NHL Skidmore/Old Town Historic District is 1857 to 1929. Most existing low-rise buildings date from 1880s to 1920s.
Historic District is also the mid-block northern wall of the building. Immediately to the west of Lyndon Musolf Manor, across Third Avenue, is the ten-block New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. The area is highly urban, with paved asphalt streets and wide sidewalks with tree wells.

Sharing the block with Lyndon Musolf Manor is the Chamber of Commerce building, constructed in 1985 on the northeast corner of the block (see Figure 4, site plan). A surface parking lot with a low brick wall surrounding it takes up the northwestern corner of the block. Across Davis Street to the south is the half-block four-story Merchant Hotel, attributed to Warren Williams and constructed in 1880-1884 in a high Victorian Italianate style. Across Second Avenue to the east is a 13-story full-block contemporary structure. Other one- to four-story historic buildings surround the site, contributing either to the Skidmore/Old Town NHL or to the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.

**Exterior**

*Building Description*

Lyndon Musolf Manor (historically, the Foster Hotel building) is a simple three-story masonry “block” building with minimal decorative features, 20th Century Commercial in style with off-white brick facing above the ground level. It was designed by the highly regarded Portland architectural firm of Bennes, Hendricks, & Thompson. The building originally was a hotel at upper floors with ground floor commercial uses until 1975 when the building was converted to low-income “efficiency” apartments, and named the Lyndon Musolf Manor. It is constructed of reinforced concrete and has a full basement. The parapeted roof is generally flat, and has four long, narrow lightwell openings so that rooms have natural light from either lightwells or the street-side windows, with double-loaded corridors. Storefront windows are wood-framed and sit on a paneled base wall. Typical storefront entries are centered on each bay and feature 90-degree walls extending back to the inset plane of each doorway, with a tiled walking surface between sidewalk and door. Most entries have a sidelight with a single generously scaled door. A distinctive, full-bay transom band extending around most of the building features x-shaped dividers for a series of triangular glass shapes. Street-facing facades above the storefronts have double-hung wood windows with exposed original concrete sills. Windows on the two upper levels are vertically linked by insets in the wall plane. “Ornamentation includes overlapping bands of raised brick detailing at the corners and pediment.”

A red-brick lot-line wall (now painted) is the building’s north façade (photo 0001).

The longest façade of the building faces south towards Davis Street (photos 0003 and 0004). A small pediment at the parapet marks the center of the façade, with a slightly projecting three-window bay. Modest decorative brackets punctuate the cornice and upper coping line between every other window, creating a subtle mid-scale pattern of two windows per “bay” along the façade. The Davis Street center bay is defined by a slightly raised and plaster-finished framed surface, which overlaps the brick body of the building. A flat metal canopy is suspended at the dividing line between the storefront and transom band. Storefront bays are interspersed with segments of solid brick wall with small square window openings or doorways at the rest of the south façade. Both east and west corners end in a freestanding column beneath the transom band, with angled storefront entries inset behind the column. At east and west walls of the building, storefront bays are regular in size and rhythm. Upper windows are grouped into four pairs starting from the south, with a single window at the far north (photos 0002, 0003). Both the

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5 The New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District was designated in 1989 under criteria A and C for its significance in the areas of Asian Ethnic Heritage, Industry, Commerce, and Architecture.

6 National Register Classifications (see NR Bulletin 16A, How to Complete the National Register Form, Architectural Classification). Also see (Portland) Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines, 23.


hotel lobby entry and the entry to Darcelle XV on the west side of the building feature projecting canopies; no canopies occur on the east side (photo 0004).

Significant features of the building overall include its simple volume with regular pattern of fenestration linked at upper stories by brick insets; the stylized broken “brackets” at coping line and at the cornice; the x-patterned transom; panelized bulkhead; inset storefront with columns at corners; and the central bay at the south, marked by modest pediment at the parapet and a ground-level stucco wall area.

Darcelle XV Showplace Description
As further described below, the character-defining features of the nightclub exterior are:

- Exterior blade sign,
- “X”-patterned transom windows,
- Location and general configuration of the two storefront entries, and
- Presence of a projecting entry canopy at the southern storefront bay.

The two Darcelle XV storefront bays occur in the center of the west façade (Figure 10). The commercial storefront bays are each about 16’ wide column-to-column and 14’-6” high to the second floor. These two bays have full-width glazed wood transom windows, constructed in 2007 to replace the original x-patterned transoms. The nightclub’s existing transoms visually match in profile and pattern to the hotel lobby bays to the north as well as the two bays to the south, both of which have refurbished original metal transom windows with non-original ribbed glass (photos 004 and 005). Below the storefront windows, the bulkhead is painted concrete, cast with inset panels and projecting “trim” at the top surface. The entry canopy at the southern storefront bay is coffered at the underside and has metal tie rod supports extending up to the face of the building. Each storefront bay is configured with 90-degree walls creating a central inset entry alcove with a black and white tiled walking surface. Swinging metal picket-style gates allow each alcove to be closed off along the sidewalk line at night. The primary entry (the southern bay) has a single wood door; the other has a pair of wood doors of unequal widths. Though each door has a glazed panel, the curtains inside prevent views in. The storefront windows also do not offer a glimpse into the nightclub past the heavy draperies, but directly inside the glass are various photos, signs, and posters. The original Darcelle XV sign was retained and dates from 1974, replacing a similar blade sign in the same location for Demas Tavern. The sign is a metal cabinet sign with cut-out corners, white plastic faces, and three lines of text. Two lines of changeable black letters follow “Darcelle XV” at the top of the sign face (photo 0004).

Building and Storefront Alterations
In 1940, the four-story International Hotel, occupying most of the northern half of the block, was demolished and the sign “Foster Hotel” was painted on the wall at the west end (see Figure 16 for a 1968 photo). Ground floor alterations on all sides of the building were ongoing throughout the 1960s and 1970s. A 1974 photograph of the Foster Hotel lobby exterior and Darcelle XV next to it shows the lobby with horizontal siding over the base and transom level windows, and the club with unpainted wood shingle siding (Figure 17). Walter Cole, the owner, installed the first awning over the entry, a steep shed-style awning, which was later replaced by a barrel-vault awning (Figure 18). By 1976, part of the storefront at Johnny’s (in corner space at Third and Davis, immediately south of Darcelle XV) had been replaced with solid wall. A range of alterations took place at the rest of the ground floor commercial spaces both on Davis and on NW Second Avenue. in 1987, an exterior door was added at the most

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9 [Advertisement], The Oregonian, August 11, 1940, 33.
10 The diamond-pane colored-glass windows that were installed at the club in approximately 1973 were acquired from the Hoyt Hotel. The barrel-vault awning frame was repurposed from Baloney Joe’s, a men's shelter located on the east side of the Burnside Bridge and installed at the club c. 1988. Personal recollections of Walter Cole, 2019.
Darcelle XV  
Name of Property                   Multnomah Co., OR  
County and State

northerly end of the hotel lobby facing NW Third Avenue. 11 1990 exterior work included the replacement of existing sashes with new insulating glass wood sashes at all exterior windows. 12

A major seismic upgrade of the building was undertaken in 2007. Steel braces were installed at the basement and ground level, which were connected to the existing upper floors and roof framing. The storefronts were also almost entirely rebuilt, using historic photographs and drawings as the model. 13 A new concrete bulkhead was poured, and new bases for the corner columns. Both the beltcourse above the transoms windows and the lower band beneath the transoms were recreated using sheet metal to match the profile of the existing wood bands. New flat decorative canopies with tie rods were installed at the hotel entry, at the center of Davis Street, and at Darcelle XV Showplace. Exterior brick almost everywhere was re-pointed, and the building was also fully sprinklered for fire protection, so its original fire escapes on the exterior of the building (two on the Davis Street façade and one each on east and west) were removed. 14

Interior

Building (Upper Floors) Description
The current floor layout of the two upper levels is as shown in Figure 5b. Small apartments, each with a kitchenette and bathroom, are configured either around the exterior walls or with frontage on one of the four lightwells. The exterior windows are large and provide a good deal of natural light. Finishes are simple, modest, and contemporary. Significant features include the layout of rooms along lightwells or exterior walls, with connected shared corridors.

Darcelle XV Showplace Description
The character-defining interior features are:
- Interior two columns and beam marking what used to be two separate storefront spaces, and
- General location and presence of a raised area (the stage) at the east end of the space.

Darcelle XV’s primary door, beneath the projecting canopy, leads directly into the nightclub space. To the right (south) of the doorway is an alcove with a desk and stool where Walter Cole himself typically greets customers, an ATM, and a large chandelier hanging above the desk. Walls and ceiling in the nightclub space are painted black and doorways are hung with heavy, ornate draperies; walls are almost entirely covered with photos, memorabilia, and framed articles. The division between what was once two similarly-sized commercial spaces is marked by a beam spanning between two square columns, one landing on the stage at the east end of the space, and the other near the back of the room (see photos 0006 and 0007). The columns are painted wood, 10 to 12 inches square, and the beam is exposed rolled steel I-beams, with a few feet more of solid wall above. The exposed ceiling is hung with various tracks for lighting, black-painted ductwork, mirrored “disco” balls, and sprinkler pipes. The floor is carpeted and the room is full of chairs and small circular bar tables, set in rows facing the stage, seated along the stage edge, and along the side walls. There are two large upholstered booths behind the chairs on either side of a central aisle (photo 0009). With the height of the ceiling, the room feels large despite the overall dark color scheme and lack of daylight.

The stage extends across most of the east end of the space, stopping at the walls of the two small bathrooms on either side (photo 0006). The men’s room is at the south; the women’s at the north side of the nightclub space. The stage has several levels and also a significant extension out into the room at

11 Drawing dated (revised) June 1987 by John Kyle Architect (Microfiched at City of Portland)
12 Drawings dated March 1990 by William Wilson AIA (Microfiched at City of Portland)
13 Innovative Housing Inc. website project description, accessed at http://www.innovativehousinginc.com/housing/musolf_how.html
14 Drawings dated August 2007 by Carleton Hart Architecture PC (Microfiched at City of Portland)
the south side. There is no constructed proscenium or defined curtain zone between audience and stage; rather, the stage has a series of zones including a higher area with several steps up at the back of the stage, which is separated from the “main” stage by a beaded curtain. Near the front of the stage, there are two separate fabric curtains, one on either side of the beam and column. There is also an added lightweight painted panel decorated with a series of stars hanging on either side of the beam, which helps to define the stage opening. Patrons can sit right at the edge of the stage, enabling performers to interact with the audience not only at the stage extension, but along the full edge of the stage.

At the northwest corner of the nightclub space is the bar, a simple red-painted wood structure (photo 0009). Above it there is a lighting and music platform, accessed by a metal ladder/stair along the north wall, with its own equipment panels and a good view over the stage.

Along the west edge of the main room, the floor is raised at the center area between the two storefront doorways, with several steps up at the center and a metal and steel handrail creating a “VIP” enclosure. The storefront glass is fully covered over, and an upholstered booth seat and several tables are located in this raised area.

A partial-height bumped-out enclosure along the south wall of Darcelle XV contains a stair leading to the basement (photo 0008). The doorway and top of the stair are at the east end. The bottom of the stair opens up to the commercial kitchen, which includes commercial metal sinks and dishwasher, a commercial refrigerator and freezers, and various other stations for preparing and heating food (photo 0010). The kitchen has a black and white vinyl floor and finished ceiling with fluorescent light fixtures. Walking north through the kitchen, a hallway opens up on the right hand side (east) which leads to a large basement room with original wood joists and cross bridging above. Sprinkler pipes, conduit, and other pipes are woven through the underside of structure. The floor is painted concrete with some thin carpet in various areas. A series of "rooms" have been created using cabinets and wardrobe enclosures, and there are many stored costumes and wigs hanging (photos 011 and 0012). Along the north wall of this larger room is a vanity table with mirrors and multiple seats (photo 0013). At the northeast corner of the room, a steep, narrow wood stair leads up to the stage (photo 0014). Along the back wall (east) which is plastered cement or concrete block, there are several sewing machine stations.15

Building Alterations
The interior conversion of the building at upper floors took place in 1974. The dividing wall between each pair of hotel rooms was removed to create one small apartment unit with its own bathroom and kitchenette (see third level plan, Figure 5b). There were 96 apartments total created on the upper floors, compared to 95 rooms per floor in its earlier layout as a hotel with shared bathrooms. Windows were generally repaired and retained, but transoms throughout the building interior were nailed shut and covered over. Original paneled wood doors were also retained, but an added sheet of wood was added to each door to increase its fire protection level. An elevator was added near the northwest corner of the building.16 No penthouse or elevator over-run is or was present above the roof level (see Figure 2). The wood stair with decorative handrail in the hotel lobby was also reconfigured and enclosed. Additionally, in 1974, the ground floor and most of the basement level received sprinklers for fire protection. The attic was insulated with blown-in insulation, and new systems were installed for electric and telephone service.

15 Walter Cole has created hundreds of costumes for Darcelle and other company performers starting in 1969, when he started drag performance at the club. However, the costumes have typically only been repaired or altered as needed in the basement of Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV. The primary area where Walter has designed and made costumes is the basement of his own house, which is listed on the National Register (“Elmer and Linnie Miller House”).
16 Drawings dated December 1974 by Colburn Sheldon Kaji Architects and Planners (Microfiched at City of Portland)
Alterations at Interior of Darcelle XV
The two storefront spaces at the time Walter Cole leased them in 1967 were entirely separated by a solid wall. The southern space, Demas Tavern at that time, was one storefront window “bay” wide and the northern space (vacant at that time) was also only one bay width. By the end of 1967, a door was installed between the two volumes, but by the end of 1969 or very early 1970, the dividing wall was fully removed except for two remaining columns, and a supporting beam was added (see Figures 7 and 8 for layout diagrams).

In 1969 when Walter began doing drag performances at Demas Tavern with Tina Sandell, the bar space had to be converted to a cabaret. The first stage was two 4’ x 8’ tables pushed together and stabilized on top of a big metal safe, next to the men’s room in the southeast corner of the Tavern space. A changing room was rigged up behind a curtain hung on a wire. The first stage lighting was a slide projector set on top of the popcorn machine. On the other side of the wall, the space was used for pool tables and dancing. A small storage space had been constructed above the women’s restroom sometime prior to 1967, with a “hide-a-bed” in it. The ladder leading down from this area was actually used by performers- in high heels!- until it was removed in 1981 or 1982.

The bar itself has been moved and rebuilt several times as well. The bar as existing in Demas Tavern in 1967 was along the northern wall dividing 208 and 212. When the wall was removed in late 1969 to 1970, a new bar was constructed at the west end of the room, between the two entry doors (Figure 8). The current location of the bar (though not its materials) dates from about 1971.

The initial access to the basement in 1967 was a trap door. The trap door was located in the 212 storefront space, and had to be lifted up to access a ladder extending almost straight down into the basement (see diagrams, Figure 7). The stage was expanded further into the room as well as to the north into the other half of the room by 1971, and a steep stair built from the basement leading up onto the stage (Figure 8 as well as Photo 0014). The stair enabled the performers’ dressing area as well as costumes to be moved to the basement. The nightclub space was given over to seating and tables, with no more pool table or dance floor by 1970 or 1971.

In 1981-82, a commercial kitchen was installed in the basement. In order to serve hard liquor at the nightclub, the venue was required also serve full-course meals, so Walter installed an enclosed access stair extending down along the south wall of the club with the full kitchen below.

Conclusion: Integrity and Significant, Character-Defining Features
It is important to note that the nightclub’s period of significance is from 1967 to 1975, a time period during which the venue itself was adapting and changing. The exterior of Darcelle XV Showplace has continued to change since 1975, though the overall design and primary features remain the same. The 2007 alterations to the storefront did bring the storefront’s appearance, materials, and design back towards the building’s original 1910 design, but these changes were simply one additional change in a series of alterations that took place at the nightclub’s exterior since the beginning of the defined period of significance. All of these changes, including the 2007 alterations, were relatively superficial and did not alter the underlying layout or configuration of the storefront or its openings. Photos of Darcelle XV Showplace in the years after 1975 illustrate this, with painted “zebra” stripes for a time, various awning shapes and covers, and various changes to storefront window surrounds and materials.

18 Don Horn, 185.
19 Don Horn, 339.
20 Don Horn, 157.
The nightclub exterior still possesses full integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association. The blade sign is one character-defining feature that also has excellent integrity of materials and workmanship from 1967 to 1975. The remainder of the exterior character-defining features (the size, location, and configuration of openings; the presence of a projecting canopy at the entry, though the canopy itself has changed multiple times; and the “x”-patterned transom), have been materially changed over time, though all were present during the period of significance. The transoms were partially covered over by a wood-shingle cladding during part of the period of significance, but this feature remained in place and can be seen in a 1976 photograph, Figure 18. Similarly, the storefront windows were sometimes obscured by different additive elements, sometimes arched openings or stained-glass windows, sometimes from the inside with different advertisements, lighting, or photographs. The identity that Demas Tavern/ Darcelle XV showed to the street was neither designed nor fixed in time and continued to change regularly.

From the period of significance, the interior of Darcelle XV retains its essential components as a drag venue and strongly reflects the same character as the space had by the early- to mid-1970s. Specifically, the stage along the east end of the room is the most important character-defining feature in the space, though the stage has been reconfigured and rebuilt several times. The structural wood columns, original to the building, and added beam at the center of the room are also important features illustrating Walter Cole’s resourceful removal of the wall between two separate commercial spaces. Other components illustrate the use of the space, but have been altered or moved location so much over the years that they lack physical integrity. Still, these are important elements of a drag venue and all are still present: dramatic spot/stage lighting; a sound system with speakers; a full bar; a wardrobe storage area and dressing room; various types of seating (moveable café chairs as well as upholstered booths) with tables for drinks and food; and a front counter just inside the front entry for payment and admission. Darcelle XV Showplace also continues to obscure any direct views into the nightclub, and retains the “glamorous” feeling that is typical of a drag venue, as provided by the rich, heavy fabric hangings at doorways and on stage (these were either made by Walter Cole or repurposed by him from other theaters or from Gracie Hansen’s Roaring 20’s Room at the Hoyt Hotel), as well as by the multitude of celebrity photographs covering the walls.

Indeed, part of what makes the interior of the nightclub feel like what it was during the period of significance is the very quality of intransience and “make do” that characterize the finishes and elements within the space. It would not be in character for the nightclub to be highly finished, designed, or even consistent over time. Today, the form, massing, and spatial divisions all play a role in conveying the interior’s integrity as related to Darcelle XV Showplace’s significance.

“The standards of significance and integrity that guided the designation of NHLs were set at a time when the activities and accomplishments of elite white men of a propertied class were at the center of historical scholarship. Now that history includes not only those who were significantly disadvantaged, but also dispossessed, or considered property themselves, notions about the integrity of the places associated with them merit reexamination.”

The nightclub as a whole demonstrates its continued use, configuration, character, and form as it was from the end of the period of significance when Walter Cole had transformed it from a run-down skid row tavern to a renowned drag performance venue. The integrity of Darcelle XV Showplace is good, and the character of the space retains its essential “illusion of glamour” with low-budget finishes, homemade accommodations, and repurposed elements.

21 Gail Dubrow, ed. by Megan E. Springate. “The Preservation of LGBTQ Heritage,” LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History. Published online by the National Park Service, 2016. 05-68.
By 1975, Darcelle XV had all of the important features in place defining it as a drag venue. While many of these elements have materially changed over the decades, the nightclub still possesses full integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association, as while there have been changes, the composition of elements that constitute the form, plan, space, and style of the property remain. As the significance of the venue lies in its connection to social history and not its architecture, the aspects of materials and workmanship are less important. The character-defining features that have good to excellent integrity overall, despite changes to materials and workmanship, are the size, location, and configuration of storefront openings; the presence of a projecting canopy at the entry (though the canopy itself has changed multiple times); the “x”-patterned transom, and the exterior blade sign installed by Walter Cole which is unchanged from the period of significance. At the interior, the stage along the east end of the room is the most important character-defining feature in the space (though the stage has been materially reconfigured and rebuilt). The columns and beam at the center of the space are also original to the period of significance and are character-defining features illustrating Walter’s “do-it-yourself” expansion.
**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.)

- **X** 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.
- **X** 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**
1967-1975

**Significant Dates**
1967 - Commercial spaces leased by Walter Cole

**Significant Person**
(COMPLETE ONLY IF CRITERION B IS MARKED ABOVE.)
N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (if applicable)
N/A

**Architect/Builder**
Bennes, Hendricks, & Thompson, Architect
Friberg Bros., Contractors

**Period of Significance (justification)**
The period of significance is from 1967 to 1975. The period starts when Walter Cole leased the commercial storefront spaces 212 (which was vacant) and 208 NW Third Avenue (operating initially under the name of the previous owner’s bar, Demas Tavern), and encompasses the period of time when Walter began doing drag performance as “Darcelle” and “came out” as a gay man. Darcelle was crowned 15th Rose Empress of the

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22 Drag performance in this document is referring primarily to men dressing up as women, typically in a theatrical way, and performing comedy, singing, and/or dancing on stage for an audience. The term “gay” is used in its modern sense to mean a person...
Imperial Rose Court of the Inland Empire in November 1972. To commemorate the end of Darcelle’s reign in November 1973, Demas Tavern was officially changed to Darcelle XV over the New Year’s weekend 1973-1974. The existing Darcelle XV sign was installed later in 1974. The period of significance extends to 1975, which was the year that several mainstream newspapers wrote about the club, cementing its reputation as a drag venue that was open and welcoming to all patrons and the community at large. The publicity created by these articles prompted Walter to increase the size and number of performances. Although the nightclub continues under Walter Cole/ Darcelle’s ownership and Darcelle continues to perform at the age of 89, it is during this period 1967 to 1975 that the property achieved the character for which it is deemed significant.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Darcelle XV Showplace has exceptional importance for its open acknowledgment that drag was part of gay culture and that most of the female impersonators on stage were gay. This public acknowledgement was unprecedented during a time across the U.S. when being a homosexual was illegal and considered a mental illness, and drag was stigmatized even within the gay subculture. Darcelle XV may have been one of the only places in the United States where a gay owner could be seen taking tickets at the door and then getting up on stage in drag. The vast majority of other drag clubs of the pre-Stonewall era were “straight”-owned, and downplayed the link to gay culture whether from fear of reprisal from law enforcement or from fear of social stigma. The location of the venue outside the center of downtown gay life in Portland, as well as its location in a comparatively permissive city, may have helped it thrive. Darcelle XV strongly contributed to the ongoing popularity of drag on the west coast, and ultimately to the societal acceptance of gay culture, especially drag, in the United States. Darcelle XV Showplace also was one of two pre-Stonewall-era Portland establishments (the other, a gay bar called Dahl & Penne, is long-since demolished) that helped to sponsor and develop the LGBTQ Imperial Court System. The Imperial Court System, under which each chapter elects an Empress to reign for a year, has grown into one of the oldest and largest LGBTQ organizations in the world from its beginnings in San Francisco and Portland. Walter Cole, as the proprietor and star drag performer of his nightclub, staked his livelihood on his ability to gain straight allies. He did more than that- he grew into his role as a community leader even as he stood up for and mentored people many disavowed at the time, including transsexuals, performers of color, lesbians, and always, drag performers. These people were often targets of violence, harassment, economic harm, and rejection by their own families, and desperately needed a place to belong. Under the fragile shield of public goodwill built at Darcelle XV Showplace by Walter and his partner Roxy, the nightclub represented safe haven. The nightclub has always provided a welcoming space for all, but in its incredibly long tenure it has had a cross-generational impact.

Darcelle XV Showplace is one of only two known drag clubs open prior to 1970 in the United States with an owner who also performed (and is still performing!) as part of the company, and the only one still in the same location today. Through its fundraising, drag sponsorship and events, philanthropy, and its nightly entertainment, the nightclub “has a long history of standing up for LGBTQ rights. The venue…has been a local legend for more than 50 years.” The club is also deeply associated with and inseparable from its owner, Walter Cole/Darcelle, who, at 89 years old, holds the Guinness World Record as the World’s Oldest Performing Drag Queen. Darcelle XV Showplace falls under the National Park Service’s LGBTQ nomination themes of “peopling places” by supporting and demonstrating different concepts of gender (as a venue that consistently featured gay and trans performers), developing the American economy (as a long-running...
business), creating social institutions and movements (as a nightclub accessible to and beloved by a community), expressing cultural values (as the home of Darcelle and Roxy’s drag show and many other drag performance competitions or events), and shaping the political landscape (as the “public home” of community leaders and openly gay men, Darcelle and Roxy).²⁸

²⁸ Megan E. Springate and Caridad de la Vega, ed. by Megan E. Springate. “Nominating LGBTQ Places to the National Register of Historic Places and as National Historic Landmarks: An Introduction,” LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History. Published online by the National Park Service, 2016. 30-17, 30-18.
Darcelle XV, the Portland performance venue operated by Walter Cole/Darcelle, is nationally significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History: LGBTQ History. Under this theme, the nightclub’s period of significance spans the period 1967 to 1975. This period brackets the pre-Stonewall date when the business came under Walter Cole’s ownership as a tavern, soon becoming a lesbian bar, until 1975, by which time the nightclub was well established as a drag venue with its own company performing full-time. Though the early 1970s were less than 50 years ago, Darcelle XV meets Criteria Consideration “G” for exceptional importance due to its unprecedented public alignment with gay culture, earning support and admiration from the mainstream. Darcelle XV Showplace was well-known on the west coast starting as early as 1968 for its unwavering support of all facets of the LGBTQ community, especially drag performers. The venue was also able to consistently pull in a mixed gay and straight audience starting in about 1970, because it was demonstrably both gay-owned and community-supporting. Darcelle XV was one of the early drag clubs to participate in, sponsor, and initiate drag competitions and performances, especially those related to the now-international Imperial Court system. The nightclub held drag pageants and competitions which drew participants from all over the United States. By the early 1970s, Darcelle XV was a well-known powerhouse of drag support and sponsorship on the west coast. The nightclub, with its glam-on-a-budget aesthetic, serves the theatrical illusion of drag and still conveys its original character. Due to its ability to welcome, educate, and rally straight allies combined with its uniquely authentic celebration and promotion of drag culture, led by a gay owner, Darcelle XV Showplace contributed to a cultural shift in the acceptance of gay rights and drag performance. The nightclub is one of perhaps only two long-running establishments in the United States to open before 1970 in which a publicly gay owner was a regular part of the on-stage drag performance, a brave and vulnerable role in the pre-Stonewall era.

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

Darcelle XV is historically significant at the National level under Criterion A, in the area of LGBTQ social history, for its role in gaining acceptance for drag and gay rights. Because Walter is gay and has been publicly known as a gay man since the early days of Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV, the nightclub has therefore authentically represented drag queen culture, and has provided a safe space for every walk of life, especially LGBTQ individuals. Unlike many gay bars which have a more “niche” clientele, Darcelle XV Showplace became a place in which a wide variety of people felt comfortable together, building allies and anchoring the LGBTQ community far beyond the reach of any LGBTQ bar. Darcelle XV Showplace was able to operate and thrive under openly gay ownership, which also was rare during the period of significance. Many publications and other media, including mainstream radio and TV, have touted the nightclub as “one of Portland’s must see establishments,” but perhaps more importantly Darcelle XV Showplace has made a deep impact on many patrons over the years. It served and still serves as a social service, a meeting space, and a place where gay culture could be celebrated, demonstrated, and shared. Walter Cole/Darcelle is truly a cultural ambassador, offering not only an opportunity for an evening’s lighthearted fun, but underpinning that entertainment value to become known as a tireless supporter, “therapist,” drag promoter, and philanthropist for the LGBTQ community in Oregon and the west coast. The nomination focuses in on the impact of the nightclub, the oldest continuously operated, same-locale drag performance venue in the United States, representing an era when drag was a slightly subversive celebration of gay culture and its differentiation from

29 Gay bars especially can often develop a more specific clientele over time. One example cited by Walter Cole in Don Horn’s *Darcelle: Looking from my Mirror* was the Dirty Duck Tavern “where the ‘bears’ went – if you don’t know what a bear is – let’s say they are gay men who are furry and big – a bear.” (458 of the proof copy). Demas Tavern in the early years of Walter Cole’s ownership was a lesbian bar, but it shifted to become a drag venue after several years.

30 While Walter’s significant association with the club does contribute to the overall significance of the property, Darcelle XV is not currently being nominated under Criterion B because Walter is still performing as Darcelle and still serving in many of the political and cultural outreach roles that he has over many decades. In terms of the impact overall Walter/Darcelle has had on American culture, the historic record therefore needs more time and distance to be evaluated.
the hetero-normative culture. Darcell XV illustrates an era when drag helped the gay community make gay discrimination bearable.

Darcell XV Showplace advanced the cause of gay acceptance to a mainstream population by way of ongoing demonstration and education through humor as opposed to being the site of localized protest or violent dissent. This is not to diminish the role that protests had in galvanizing civil rights activism, but Darcell XV illustrates another way in which a single venue helped to profoundly shift society’s acceptance of LGBTQ people. While it is difficult to prove numbers of “minds opened” as a direct result of the nightclub’s operation, numerous examples of Walter Cole and/or Darcell being accepted and invited into the mainstream realm, at least within Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, do suggest that the venue played a part in expanding gay rights by representing authentic gay culture and by consistently supporting the wider community. In contrast, most other drag clubs of the era did not publicly support or identify with gay culture and as a result did not have an impact in lessening gay discrimination. Darcell XV Showplace helped convince people that homosexuality was not to be feared or shunned. No similar venue on the west coast or even in the United States has been able to pull in both a “straight” and gay clientele to a gay-owned nightclub so successfully for so long.

“It’s because of Darcell’s growing popularity in the late 1970s that there was finally a positive beacon for gay representation in the city. The tavern provided a large amount of the publicity needed to make any sort of change, and also facilitated a haven for LGBT representation and activism unlike any other in the city. New York had the Stonewall riots, gaining the publicity of the entire nation, San Francisco had Harvey Milk gaining a place in office, Portland was fortunate enough to have Darcell’s. The tavern not only helped familiarize Portland with the concept of homosexuality in a positive light, and allowed a gathering place for gay rights activists, but further was allowed to thrive as a legitimate business while doing so…”

The physical characteristics that illustrate the use and era of the property’s significance by 1975 are its “cabaret” components such as its stage, lighting, dressing room, costume storage area, club tables and chairs, and bar; its location in what is still considered a disreputable part of town; its interior associations with “glamour” and luxury; its central column and beam marking the scrappy, do-it-yourself expansion of the nightclub from two narrow spaces into one larger one; and its exterior sign, entry marquee, entry configuration and location; and its semi-concealed windows. While all of these components are important to help tell the overall story, only the stage, columns and beam are character-defining features of the interior, while the exterior sign, the presence of a projecting canopy at the entry (though the canopy itself has changed multiple times), the “x”-patterned transom, and the size and location of openings at the storefront are exterior character-defining elements. Changes have taken place since the end of the period of significance, but all of the critical elements of the nightclub as a drag venue were in place by then and are still in place today.

**Drag Entertainment Venues**

As one type of commercial enterprise creating a space for the gay community to gather, drag entertainment venues are bars with an additional focus on entertainment, with a stage upon which a live performer or performers can sing (or, sometimes, “lip-synch” to recorded music) and dance. While a stage can be improvised, as the very early years at Demas’ Tavern/ Darcell XV Showplace illustrated by having performers on nothing more than tables pushed together and bolted to the floor, having a well-constructed permanent stage is a necessary feature. The extension of the stage into the seating area or the proximity of the stage to the audience is important, because performers often interact with the audience or take tips directly. The clientele or audience might be primarily LGBTQ, but there are many examples of drag venues with an audience that was (or is) mostly “straight.”

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In addition to a stage, drag entertainment venues require some type of stage lighting, so that a spotlight can highlight a performer and create dramatic effect. Initially, Walter Cole used a slide projector as the spotlight during shows at Demas Tavern. Other features that all drag entertainment venues have in common is a “back stage” or “green room” area where costumes can be changed and makeup applied in a more private setting where customers are not ordinarily permitted; a costume and wig storage area; flexible seating for customers to be able to face the stage; and a bar serving alcohol. Like other gay-friendly establishments or gay bars, drag clubs almost always prevent people outside the venue from seeing in. This might mean that the outside wall is relatively solid, or if there is a storefront, it might be covered with a curtain or papered over. The result is an interior space which is safe from casual view, important for the comfort and security of performers and audience alike.

Drag entertainment clubs are historically just one type of commercial venture in which members of the LGBTQ community, whether publicly gay or “closeted,” could congregate for mutual support, social life, and for organizing for political or philanthropic causes. Examples of other types are bars or taverns, movie houses or theaters, restaurants, and bath houses or saunas. Non-commercial locations important to the gay or lesbian community could include private houses, gay-friendly churches, gyms such as the YMCA, public sports fields or facilities, and rendezvous locations such as parks, beaches, or train stations. Susan Ferentinos, in her article “Beyond the Bar: Types of Properties Related to LGBTQ History,” posits the following categories: sites of support and social life; sites of protest and political organizing; LGBTQ businesses and organizations; sites of spirituality; sites of persecution and violence; health-related sites; sites of separatism; and sites of art and architecture.32 Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV Showplace functioned as a site of support and social life for the LGBTQ community, and was also an LGBTQ-owned business. Yet it also served a quasi-political purpose simply by inviting the mainstream community to come and be educated and entertained. Darcelle XV Showplace in this way advanced the cause of gay acceptance, education, and assimilation.

As a property type, drag clubs have undergone changes in perception as public attitudes towards homosexuality have changed. While this shift has not been embraced by all Americans, and has been uneven in its geographic spread, the phenomenon of “female impersonation” seems to now be a category of public entertainment in which it does not necessarily matter to most consumers whether or not the entertainer is gay, or whether those in the audience are gay.

This attitude is markedly different from that experienced by female impersonators of the pre-Stonewall era. Drag as a subculture during the 1960s was seen as something of an embarrassment to the homophile and political gay rights groups. Drag queens represented the lowest, most perversive, and most embarrassing subgroup of gay culture.33 As Darcelle said in 1981, “There are more prejudices in the gay community than the straight community about drag performers.”34 At a time when civil rights for LGBTQ individuals were under threat, many who were publicly taking a stance for gay rights felt that gay people should externally conform to cultural norms, and only in private or safe spaces give rein to a display of gay culture or sexuality. Only in 1970 did gay activists first coin the slogan, “Out of the closets and into the streets.”35

Male entertainers dressing as women during the 1960s often tried to align themselves squarely away from “the drag queens” by claiming (occasionally rightly so) that they were heterosexual. A 1968 publication called Female Mimics is quoted in an article by Mara Dauphin as denying the idea that female impersonators were gay:

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33 Carsten Balzer, "The Great Drag Queen Hype: Thoughts on Cultural Globalisation and Anachrony." Paideuma: Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde (Frankfurt am Main, 51, 2005), 113-114.
35 Steven V. Roberts, "Homosexuals in Revolt," The New York Times, August 24, 1970, 1. The article explained that the slogan was “an allusion to the ‘closet queen’ who passes for ‘straight’ and conceals his homosexuality.”
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900                 OMB No. 1024-0018                    (Expires 5/31/2025)

Darcelle XV
Name of Property                   Multnomah Co., OR
County and State

“these are a small percentage of the world of female mimics but their exaggerated behavior, their often outlandish gestures make them stand out and overshadow the normal percentage of female mimics who can be as masculine as prize fighters or wrestlers when out of costume.”36

This quote seems to our modern ears to be quaintly “protesting too much,” yet this was not uncommon in the late 1960s. As an example, one of the best-known long-lived drag clubs, Finocchio’s in San Francisco, was not gay-owned and was surprisingly not willing to offer support to the gay community or to embrace a “gay-friendly” message. Many drag clubs had to play down their gay-friendliness in order to avoid police harassment.37 Walter/Darcelle, in contrast, publicly lived and performed with his partner Roxy for decades and, as an “outsider” to mainstream acceptance or culture especially early on, had so much more to lose. Darcelle and Roxy, on the stage at Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV, were working to normalize gayness and seeking acceptance for gay rights through entertainment.38

While the drag performance venue is certainly one type of commercial bar or club, it also has some notable differences to the quintessential gay bar. While both are commercial venues that serve primarily an LGBTQ clientele, drag entertainment venues often draw a more varied clientele than gay bars. At least in urban areas, gay bars were often defined by a more specific gay subculture that gathered there (such as “the leather crowd,”) whereas drag venues tended to attract a mix of hetero- and homosexuals, and perhaps a less specific gay subculture. Drag venues also, unlike gay bars, offered a celebratory and affirming environment for LGBTQ culture and sexual expression, which for the most part was shared only in “safe” spaces decades ago.39

Contextual History: Drag as Performance and Community Event in the United States

In the 1890s in major cities such as Chicago, New York, and New Orleans, gay men began to organize their own masquerade balls in which participants dressed as women and danced together.40 These were known as drag balls and were attended by “thousands of onlookers” and celebrities, in addition to gay men.41 Predominantly, these drag balls at least in the New York region were hosted and initiated by African American men, but upper and middle class white men and women attended as well.42 Masquerades offered a model in which “inversions of race, class, and gender status were central to the conceit of the balls, where participants wore masks and clothing inappropriate to their status” in a tradition dating back centuries.43 The drag balls, pulling from the conventions and practices of the dominant culture, were a way to establish solidarity in the gay world and to mock the artificiality of social roles in the normative culture. Drag balls, “more than any place else,” enabled the gay community to see, celebrate, and affirm itself.44

In the 1900s and 1910s, vaudeville, burlesque, and many more “respectable” forms of theater in the U.S. often featured cross-dressing women and men.45 A performer known as Julian Eltinge was the first well-known drag

36 Mara Dauphin, “‘A Bit of Woman in Every Man:’ Creating Queer Community in Female Impersonation,” Valley Humanities Review, Lebanon Valley College, Spring 2012, 7. The citation for the quote is “At Home with a Female Mimic,” Female Mimics, Spring 1968, 48.
38 One example is given in a blog, Scuff Productions, posting titled “Portland Gay History Revealed and Reviewed At Portlands Q Center” by Mark: “I won’t forget Frank Schreckenberger saying that while sitting at an Old Town Bar that later became Darcelle’s… hearing a drag queen calling herself “Darcelle” yelling “We’re equal to anyone. We’re not asking for more rights or equal rights. We demand the SAME rights”. Frank’s life changed from then as he became an activist.” January 14, 2008. http://scuffproductions.com/scuff/?p=1475
39 Ferentinos, 150.
40 George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940. 293.
41 Ibid, 270.
43 Chauncey, 292.
44 Ibid, 297-299.
45 Susan Stryker, ed. by Megan E. Springate. “Transgender History in the United States and the Places That Matter,” LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History. Published online by the National Park Service,
performer in America and by some accounts was more popular than Charlie Chaplin. Rather than play to the burlesque, Eltinge’s female impersonations both on stage and later in films were subtle, witty and satirical.46

Prohibition, from 1919 to 1933, had an effect on the homosexual community because the growth of speakeasies and other illegal clubs resulted in encouraging middle-class Americans to shrug at a range of social boundaries, not just the consumption of alcohol. After Repeal, those social conventions again became more strongly delineated between what was deemed acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.47

By the mid-1930s and into the ‘40s, the relatively permissive attitudes towards homosexuality began to change. Laws in many areas of the United States were either adopted or newly enforced prohibiting restaurants and bars from hiring or even serving homosexuals.48 Many large cities began to crack down on drag as the most visible manifestation of what was thought of as predatory homosexuality.49 Even as this was happening, though, transvestite and/or possibly gay characters continued to be relatively common and visible in popular culture. Popular American films beginning in the 1930s sometimes featured male characters impersonating females, typically in a humorous routine. Laurel and Hardy skits, Bugs Bunny cartoons with Elmer Fudd (starting 1940), and mainstream actors such as Mickey Rooney in Babes on Broadway and William Powell in Love Crazy (both films 1941) offered drag as a comedic caricature.50

During the pre-war period, there were a number of clubs across the United States that were known for having drag performers. The Cabin Inn, opened by Nat "Big" Ivy in Chicago’s South Side Bronzeville neighborhood, put on regular drag shows featuring a chorus line of black men starting in 1933. It was closed by about 1940. The Spinning Wheel cabaret, in Seattle, featured female impersonators starting in the mid-1930s. The club operated for about 10 years until the mid-1940s. The Music Hall was a popular Portland hangout for lesbians and gay men, and was known for its vaudeville and drag shows starting in 1937.51 The nightclub was closed down by Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee in 1950.52 Finnochio’s, in San Francisco, was perhaps the best known drag bar in the United States. It started as a basement speakeasy called 201 Club in 1929, and moved upstairs in 1933 introducing shows featuring female impersonators. Finnochio’s was named after Joe Finnochio (which, in Italian, is slang for homosexual) who owned and operated the club until his death in 1986. Finnochio’s closed its doors in 1999. Club My-O-My, a famous female impersonation club in New Orleans, existed from the 1930s to 1960s. New Orleans also has had a long tradition of Mardi Gras culture as a venue for drag celebrations, both in the parades and in the Mardi Gras balls. Jewel Box Revue was a highly important early touring drag show. Founded in Miami in 1939, the Jewel Box Revue toured for 30 years and was the best known drag show of its kind in the U.S. and the first integrated drag show.53

World War II created opportunities for same-sex experiences for many young men as well as women. The sexual awakenings of some young people as homosexuals created a new gay subculture in the years just after the war.54 During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Americans reacted to the societal loss of structure and familial bonds brought about by the war. A cultural movement to reclaim traditional gender roles and morality

46 The Julian Eltinge Residence (also known at the Villa Capistrano), information and website by the Los Angeles Conservancy. Accessed at https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/julian-eltinge-residence
47 Chauncey, 327-337.
48 Chauncey, 8. Specifically in New York City, Mayor La Guardia ordered a citywide 'cleanup" of gay and lesbian gathering places in preparation for the 1939 World's Fair.
49 William N. Eskridge, Jr., Gaylaw: Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet. (Harvard University Press, 1999), 45.
50 Chauncey, 325; Kohl, 35.
54 Meyer and Sikk, 03-23, -24.
and to push domesticity and child-rearing took hold.\(^{55}\) The cold war era, as well, forced many gay men and lesbians into hiding, or “into the closet.” Through the 1950s, “homosexuality and communism became linked in the American consciousness” as the McCarthy hearings pointed a finger at “gays and lesbians as threats to the nation’s security, morale, and morals.”\(^{56}\) It was also during the 1950s that the first homophile organizations were formed in the United States, providing newsletters, support, and early political activism to counter the political anti-gay rhetoric and suppression of the times.\(^{57}\) It was primarily the homophile organizations who pushed for common usage of the term “gay,” which was, beginning in the 1920s, a code word only understood by a small group. “Gay” was not used (as a term meaning homosexual) in the popular lexicon until approximately 1960.\(^{58}\) In a 1986 article in *The Advocate*, author and journalist George De Stephano excoriated the New York Times for its continued insistence on the term “homosexual” as opposed to “gay.” De Stephano explained that “[a]ctivists argue that ‘homosexual,’ the paper’s preferred appellation, signifies only sexual behavior, while ‘gay’ designates a social and political identity based upon sexuality.”\(^{59}\)

A few of the best-known drag venues that started as such during the 1940s or 1950s across the United States include The Black Cat, on Montgomery Street in San Francisco, which moved from an earlier location in 1933 and became affiliated with a gay clientele in the mid-1940s. Drag performer Jose Sarria started as a waiter, and ultimately became the star (and typically the only performer) of the house, singing opera and performing comic impersonations and parodies as well as political speeches supporting gay rights. The Black Cat was closed down in 1963 when it lost its liquor license after multiple instances of police harassment.\(^{60}\) In Seattle, The Garden of Allah featured female impersonators from 1946 until 1956. The site had been a speakeasy, a hotel, and then a tavern in the 20 years previous, but vaudeville and female impersonation became the main attractions there. Openly gay owners Frank Reid and Fred Coleman created a center of social life for both gay men and lesbians, which was one of the first (known) gay-owned venues in the United States.\(^{61}\) The Moroccan Village in New York City was a major drag scene, with elaborate floorshows and a straight clientele, from the late 1940s to the late 1960s.\(^{62}\) Weathering Heights, in Provincetown Massachusetts, opened in 1949 and featured female impersonators led by Phil Baione and his “Weathering Knights.” The club was shut down in 1960 by the city, even as Provincetown became known as a “gay destination,” and other bars, discos, and restaurants catering to an LGBTQ clientele proliferated there.

**Legal Climate for Homosexuality and Cross-Dressing**

Early laws against homosexual behavior and practices across the U.S. were often unspecific, broadly interpreted, and extended to private acts between consensual adults. New York State’s Penal Law included an offence if “any person, with intent to provoke a breach of the peace… frequents or loiters about any public place soliciting men for the purpose of committing a crime against nature or other lewdness.”\(^{63}\) Dating from 1863, a law in San Francisco criminalized appearing in public “in a dress not belonging to his or her sex.” Adopted as part of a broader anti-indecency campaign, the cross-dressing law became a flexible tool for policing multiple gender transgressions, facilitating over one hundred arrests before the century’s end. Multiple cities and states enacted laws against cross-dressing before World War I. These laws were often kept on the books and were sometimes used at the broad discretion of local officials. New York City police regularly used a law known as the three-article rule, or the three-piece rule, in the period from the 1940s into the 1960s, leading up to the events at Stonewall Inn in 1969. The rule, referenced regularly in the press and in eyewitness

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55 Boag, 14.
56 Boag, 14.
57 Meyer and Sikk, 03-26.
58 Chauncey, 20.
60 Boyd, (section about The Black Cat).
61 Dauphin, 9.
62 Senelick, 382.
reports, held that a person was required to wear at least three gender-appropriate articles of clothing to avoid arrest for cross-dressing. However, the “rule” was later found to have never even been a law.64

Only some states enacted laws against cross-dressing (Oregon did not); however, laws against sodomy were common, and became strict and heavily enforced throughout the U.S. In the early 1960s, every state in the Union had some form of antisodomy law on the books.65 These were repealed on a state-by-state basis, until finally in 2003, in a case called Lawrence v. Texas, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that sodomy laws were unconstitutional. Many who were arrested under these and other discriminatory laws over the decades lost jobs, housing; some even served time in prison.

Discrimination because of sexual orientation in Oregon has been legislated since 1853 when the Territorial legislature passed a new criminal code that contained a sodomy provision, with a penalty of 1-5 years imprisonment.66 A scandal in Portland in 1912 involving 68 men, some of prominence, who were charged with crimes due to private, consensual sexual activity, came to be known as the “Vice Clique Scandal.” Only three men were convicted, but even these three were freed on appeal by the Oregon Supreme Court.67 Due to this perceived laxity, in 1913, the sodomy law was greatly expanded to include almost any sexual position other than the missionary position, whether heterosexual or homosexual, and the penalty was increased to 15 years in prison. Sterilization also became a possible penalty for sodomy, though this was later repealed by voters by a 56% majority. Nonetheless, a similar law was passed in 1917, but was declared unconstitutional in 1921.68 Oregon accounted for about 92% of the total castrations performed in the United States between 1907 and 1921. The state enacted another sterilization law in 1923, and in 1925 broadened its reach to anyone convicted of sodomy.69 Having these laws reach into the private sphere and the draconian penalties or even fear of the repercussions caused many to lose their jobs, families, housing, and worse; placing them in grave danger from suicide, imprisonment, or violence.

The oppression of the American LGBTQ community started changing in the 1960s. National newspapers started looking at this part of society with a more focused lens, and writing about being lesbian or gay for a mainstream audience. A 1964 issue of Life featured the headline “The Secret World of THE HOMOSEXUAL”.70 In its 14-page article it stated clearly what the gay, lesbian, and transgender world looked like during that time, as well as the common fear or disdain felt towards homosexuals. On page 48, for instance, a photo of Santa Monica bartender Barney Anthony has a sign behind him, “Fagots Stay Out” [sic] and is quoted as saying “I don’t like ‘em…I say shoot (them) him. Who cares?” The article warned that times were changing and that Americans were going to have to try to understand “the sordid world” of homosexuality. Though the article illustrated just how far gay rights had to go, it also was part of a growing public awareness of LGBTQ issues.

Without legal protection, LGBTQ people have been routinely discriminated against by coworkers, bosses, and prospective employers and landlords. The movement for gay rights dovetailed with similar movements for civil rights for women and African Americans during the 1960s and 1970s. In a major victory for gay rights in Oregon, the state repealed its law against sodomy in 1971, effective January 1972.

During the 1980s, the movement for LGBT civil rights was complicated by the emergence of HIV/AIDS, an anti-immune disease that was particularly prevalent in the gay community. People working against homophobia had to then work also against "AIDSphobia." While HIV/AIDS brought on a resurgence of

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
discrimination, it also brought new power to the advocacy movement, which fought for both civil rights and lives.

**Gay Activism and Community on the West Coast**

On the West Coast, most of the major urban centers- Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle- were also the places where political organizing for gay rights in the U.S. began. Harry Hay founded the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles in 1950, ONE organization was started in 1952 by W. Dorr Legg in Los Angeles, and two Seattle lesbians who had moved to San Francisco, Phyllis Lyons and Del Martin, began Daughters of Bilitis in 1955. In 1964, the Society for Individual Rights (SIR) was founded in San Francisco, with the publication *Vector*. The homophile group called PRIDE (personal rights in defense and education) in Los Angeles started a newsletter in early 1967, which they had renamed *The Advocate* by September 1967. By 1969, *The Advocate* had become the major voice of the homophile community in the United States. The Dorian Society, Seattle's first gay rights organization, was founded in 1967 by UW Professor Nicholas Heer and others. Curiously, this nascent activism was comparatively not present in Portland, Oregon before 1970.

Randy Shilts, a young journalist fresh out of the University of Oregon in 1975, discussed Oregon's tepid political climate for activism around gay rights in his debut article in *The Advocate*. For a state known as a trendsetter and a liberal outpost, he argued, “[t]he defeats of gay rights bills represent an ignoble chapter in the widely heralded ‘Oregon Story’.” Portland may have still been too “small town” in size and attitude, at well under half a million people in the early 1970s, to sustain a large enough gay constituency. Sally Cohn, who had worked with Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco in 1961, explained that for lesbians, “there wasn’t anything organizational going in Portland yet. Everything was closeted and it was either the bars or softball. And that was about it.”

Pacific Northwest historian Peter Boag published an article titled “Does Portland Need a Homophile Society?” in 2004 in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. He noted that a civil rights movement did begin to emerge for gay rights locally in Portland by about 1970, but this was during a period of time just after the 1969 Stonewall Inn riots had galvanized gay rights and organizing almost everywhere across the United States. Seattle, in contrast to Portland, had formed the homophile Dorian Society by about 1967, which “had successfully politicized many gays and lesbians in the region prior to Stonewall. In doing so, it laid the foundation for the demand for and acquisition of civil rights in the 1970s, [and] catapulted Seattle into the role ofpacesetter in the region”. There was a huge difference, however, in the political environment and anti-homosexual laws and law enforcement in cities such as Seattle and San Francisco to that in Portland. With a few exceptions, Portland’s gay and lesbian communities never felt the intense crackdowns on LGBTQ-friendly establishments or gathering places. Portland was therefore in a somewhat unique position to allow a nightclub with an “out” gay owner such as Darcelle XV Showplace to grow and even thrive. Harassment and discrimination certainly occurred in Portland, but comparatively the political climate was less harsh.

While the events at the Stonewall Inn in New York City, 1969 are widely considered to have galvanized gay rights across the U.S., there were earlier lesser-known protests such as the one in Los Angeles that took

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71 Kohl, 21-23.
72 Kohl, 23.
75 Sally Cohn, 17. In her interview, she noted that by 1972 when she returned to Portland, there were numerous organizations and places to volunteer.
76 Boag, 26.
77 Ibid.
78 Psotitical climate must be differentiated from social attitudes, which shift slowly, especially among rigidly traditional communities. One example of a performer at Darcelle XV Showplace who was killed for his sexual orientation/ drag affiliation in 1989 is Todd Alexander Asay (stage name Lindsey Alexander). See Gwendolyn Ann Smith, “Transgender Day of Remembrance,” TDOR website, 1998-2018: https://tdor.translivesmatter.info/reports/1989/05/31/lindseytodd-alexander-asay_portland-oregon-usa_b042fe09
place in 1959 at Cooper Do-Nut, a late-night hangout for marginalized street kids, hustlers, and gays. Philadelphia held annual Fourth of July "Reminder Days" starting in 1965. A 1966 riot at Compton’s Cafeteria in San Francisco protested a police raid on the transgender clientele there. These and other earlier episodes of gay and lesbian growing resistance to arrest and oppression set the stage for the famous Stonewall uprising. As important as these events were, though, LGBTQ-affiliated people came together in other ways to create solidarity, celebrate their culture under oppression, and- as Walter Cole/ Darcelle demonstrated in Darcelle XV- to actually gain “straight” allies. This nonconfrontational approach in its way may ultimately have been just as important overall to the push for societal acceptance than the physical resistance and protest necessitated in many more oppressive cities.

Despite anti-homosexual crusades (and against other vices including gambling and prostitution) in Portland by Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee in the early 1950s, Portland police had for the most part remained quite tolerant of known gay bars and gathering places until a scandal in 1963 prompted Mayor Terry Schrunk to launch a crackdown via the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC). “[S]mut…and nudist magazines” which “were employed…to encourage homosexual acts” were seized in gay and lesbian bars. In 1964, Schrunk started a morality campaign to prevent ‘perverts, deviates, and congenital invert’s from turning Portland into a "small San Francisco." The City asked the OLCC to deny liquor licenses to six taverns which were known “hangouts for male and female sex deviates,” including Derek’s Tavern, Model Inn, Tel and Tel, Half Moon, and the Harbor. The OLCC refused, saying they had no reasonable ground to do so. The bars hired attorneys who argued that the Civil Rights Act was being violated, and, even as Oregon’s major newspaper argued that “[i]t is no credit to a city to provide such a haven and places of enticement. The OLCC attitude requires reexamination,” Oregon Governor Mark Hatfield declined to intervene, so the bars kept their liquor permits. Perhaps the relative "air of openness" in Portland had created a disincentive to political organization, but it also allowed for gay-affiliated businesses such as Demas Tavern to operate without the level of harassment and discrimination such businesses faced in most places. In 1970, Portland’s first gay rights organization, the Gay Liberation Front, was formed. The Portland Forum was also formed in 1970, a nonprofit LGBTQ fundraising organization.

Portland’s Triangle District

Portland in 1970 was still relatively small compared to the other cities of the west coast and did not feature prominently as a gay tourism destination. At this time, the area of Portland that was most identified with gay life and culture was the area of downtown known as the “dirty triangle” or “gay triangle.” Dahl and Penne’s, a bar at 604 SW Second Avenue, was the anchor of Portland’s gay triangle starting in approximately 1962 (it was open long before that, but did not attract a gay clientele until the early 1960s). Roman’s Riptide, which opened in 1969 on SW Stark Street, was the first bar to openly advertise for a gay clientele. The Other Inn, at 242 S.W. Alder, was Portland’s first leather bar, 1964-1982. Across the street was the Grand Oasis Tavern (also known as The Last Resort). Other early nightlife locations in the gay triangle included the Family Zoo (1971) on SW Oak, The Alley (c.1971) on SW Washington, and the Ritz Disco (mid 1970s) also on SW Washington. SW Stark Street, one of the major streets for LGBTQ-friendly establishments in Portland, was renamed Harvey Milk Street in 2018 in honor of the openly gay San Francisco politician, assassinated in 1978.
Significance of Demas Tavern
There are two reasons why Darcelle XV was the most important drag venue on the west coast in terms of improving societal acceptance for the LGBTQ community. One was the sheer volume of philanthropy and support provided by the club to the larger community, undertaken by two gay men (Walter and his partner Roxy) who demonstrated their long-term, authentic relationship and their support for the entire spectrum of non-heteronormative people, both on and off-stage. Roxy, Walter’s “significant other” and life partner, had joined the company at Demas Tavern by 1970, choreographing and also performing full-time. The other reason was the importance that Darcelle XV had within the west coast drag community, one of two long-running Portland drag clubs (the other was Dahl and Penne, which was a bar with an occasional back-room drag show) and a number of San Francisco clubs that sponsored or hosted early drag competitions including the “Imperial Court.” The Imperial Court system still in place in most cities across the United States is by far the largest and most codified LGBTQ organization in terms of membership and duties.

Imperial Rose Court in Portland and on the West Coast
The International Imperial Court System (IICS) is one of the oldest and largest LGBTQ organizations in the world. It is rooted in the history of drag balls and the informal celebratory crowning of a “queen” of the ball to become the nonprofit organization it is today, representing communities in 86 different locations across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The IICS was founded in San Francisco in 1965 by José Sarria, also known as Absolute Empress I, The Widow Norton; but Portland’s part as “second city” is significant.

Portland traces the roots of its court system to about 1958, when a group meeting at the Half Moon Tavern initiated the tongue-in-cheek "Court of Transylvania". The idea of a “court” played off the Portland Rose Festival and its chosen annual Princess and her court- a tradition in Portland (the Rose City) from 1906. The “Transylvanian” court disbanded some five years later, but was soon replaced by a group calling themselves the Pruitts of Portland. The Portland drag community began having themed drag balls, one in Spring and another at Halloween. Each ball would crown a “Queen” (or, in spring, "Princess Royal") which was essentially a beauty contest, a tradition that was similar to that in the gay or drag community in San Francisco at the time. The Pruitts of Portland were then replaced by the Portland Forum by about 1969, who changed the title of “Queen” to “Empress.” Some in Portland believe that the City has a legitimate claim to being the first established ‘court system’. By 1971, The Portland Imperial Rose Court had joined with San Francisco to establish an annual elected succession of rulers, rather than the previous 6-month reigns recognized in Portland. San Francisco and Portland agreed on a higher bar for their elected “rulers,” giving Empresses performance requirements, election rules, and responsibilities during their year-long reign. After San Francisco and Portland, the “Court system” was joined by Seattle and (making the court “international,”) Vancouver BC. The west coast drag community of the late 1960s and early 1970s was primarily centered in San Francisco,

https://www.wweek.com/news/2018/06/14/goodbye-southwest-stark-street-its-harvey-milk-street-now/ The article illustrates a debate in Portland about why a San Francisco gay rights icon was honored vs a more local figure, but Darcelle was supportive of the renaming.

89 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Court_System#Chapters
90 Don Horn interview with Portland drag performer David Hamilton (“Mame”), who was crowned “Rose Queen VI” on Halloween, 1967. Some of the drag ball themes during this period included “The Road to Ruin” in October 1966; “Pot Pourri” in October 1967 [held at Gracie Hansen’s Hoyt Hotel’s Roaring 20’s Room]; “Wine and Roses” [held at the Masonic Temple Ballroom], and “Anything Goes” on Halloween 1968 [again at the Hoyt Hotel’s Roaring 20’s Room].
91 Don Horn, 241-244.
93 Kohl, 31. See also Randy Shilts, “Fantasy Kingdoms of Rhinestone and Royalty,” Eugene Register-Guard [Emerald Empire section], February 9,1975.
94 This timeline is the most frequently cited, including on the Imperial Court websites in San Francisco, Portland, Spokane, Toronto, Seattle, and many others. See also Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Court_System#cite_ref-gor_2-2. There are, however, some alternate versions to this order in various publications and websites, which include Los Angeles and San Jose as early adopters of the Imperial Court System.
Los Angeles, Vancouver BC, Reno, and Portland. Portland coronations in particular were legendary for their pomp, staging, and costuming. It was after attending a Portland coronation that a Canadian citizen, Ted northe (lower-case “n” deliberate) was inspired to start an Imperial Court in his own city in Vancouver, British Columbia. Tracy St. James won Portland’s first official Imperial Rose Court election of 1971 as Rose Empress XIV, but as runner-up, Darcelle asked to serve in Tracy’s court as “Czarina” during the year of Tracy’s reign, 1972. Darcelle was, near the end of 1972, elected Rose Empress XV.

Walter Cole was a part of the Portland Forum since inception, and involved with the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court since 1971 when the Forum became separate from the Imperial Court. Demas Tavern is listed as the contact for the Imperial Court in Portland in a list of phone numbers published in late 1973. Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV Showplace was one of a handful of Portland establishments in which Imperial Rose Court candidates for Empress would go to solicit votes in the annual elections. This practice has remained the process for “campaigning.” However, the major balls or coronation events of the Court were held at larger venues. The Imperial Sovereign Rose Court used to hold annual (or twice-yearly, before 1971) drag balls at the Hoyt Hotel. They also rented out lavish and high-end hotel and theater spaces such as the Hilton, Paramount (now the Arlene Schnitzer), the Pythian Building, and even the Portland Art Museum ball rooms. Darcelle XV Showplace did host the very first coronation for Vancouver Washington (a small city just north of the Columbia River) in 1974.

One of the charter purposes of the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court was to be a charitable organization, and Court coronation events were also fundraisers. The Portland Forum registered as a non-profit organization in January 1970, reportedly with 50 charter members, and was also notably the first LGBT organization to register in Oregon. Vanessa (Van Richards), who put on drag shows in the back room at Dahl and Penne, was its first President. According to Jerry Weller, a prominent national and local gay and civil rights activist, money raised for The Portland Town Council and other political gay rights advocacy organizations he was involved with came mostly from the gay bars. In “the 70’s our basis of support- financial support- came out of the gay bars. And a lot of our money came from the drag queens.”

Before the AIDS era of the 1980s and before there were other established LGBTQ organizations in Portland, the drag community and often specifically the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court would raise money for charities and give the money to, for instance, a boy’s orphanage in Beaverton, Oregon, called the St. Mary’s Home for Boys. Later, the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court founded several charitable organizations such as Esther’s Pantry and the Brinker Fund, both of which served people with HIV or AIDS. Educational scholarship funds for

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95 Roxanne, “A View from the Bottom,” Bay Area Reporter Vol 3 No. 16, August 8 1973, 6-7. The first coronation in Seattle to be reported on by the Bay Area Reporter was in 1973: Bay Area Reporter Vol 3 No. 5, March 7 1973, 23. The article encouraged the Seattle Court, saying “Watch out, Portland!” and “Seattle has really come into the fold of the great courts of the West Coast. Keep turning on, kids, it was wonderful.”

96 There are also some alternate histories in the case of fixing a date to Canada’s “legitimacy.” The website for Connecticut’s Imperial Court diplomatically notes that some groups remained for a time outside of the recognition of Sarria and the Imperial Court Council, “particularly groups in Canada loyal to Ted Northe,” but that eventually these groups reconciled. (see http://ctimperialcourt.org/imperial-court-system-history/). It was Portland’s first official elected Empress, Tracy St. James, who had bestowed Ted northe with his title, but this was viewed as illegitimate by Jose Sarria (see https://dmsvancouver.com/about/).

97 Earlier Portland “Queens” were assigned the numbers previous to 14. A gossipy column in the Oregon Journal in the spring of 1971 noted that “Sunday night the oddly-attired convention, many in “drag,” cavorted 600 strong in the Roaring 20s Room at a ball presided over by ‘Her Royal Majesty, the Empress Talani.’” [Doug Baker, “Portland Boasts One-Way Street Without Entrance,” Oregon Journal, May 4, 1971, 3.]


99 Don Horn, 266.

100 Holman, 7. The weekend drag shows at Dahl & Penne were generally free and open to those “in the know.” See also Dupree, 17, interview with Don Stevens: At Darcelle XV “...they have the costuming and the light cues, the whole thing, totally set.” At Dahl and Penne, it’s “an open show, where anybody with a record, good, bad, or indifferent- can come down and perform.”


102 Sorensen, 21.
gay and lesbian people or their children were also founded. Later, in 1992, the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court moved from being primarily a social organization to a political action group, in order to fight Oregon's Measure 9.

**Additional Events at Darcelle XV Showplace**

There were a number of other ongoing contests that were frequently held or at least started at Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV Showplace. Most of these were annual drag contests, such as the Miss Gay Oregon contest (the winner of the fall 1975 contest was awarded at the nightclub) and the “La Femme Magnifique” pageant, which was founded by Darcelle in 1982. Now known as La Femme Magnifique International, the annual contest seeks to find the most glamorous female impersonator in the world. Contestants are judged in categories including “Talent” and “Showgirl.” The pageant expanded over at least 39 years to include numerous west coast states, but continued to be held at the nightclub until it got too big. More recent venues for the contest include the Oregon Convention Center. For many of these drag-promoting events and contests, Walter’s role was as a mentor and community builder. It did not necessarily benefit him economically to increase his own “competition,” but he viewed the stage at his nightclub as a communal and nontthreatening place where people could practice, have fun together, and celebrate drag culture.

There were a multitude of contests and events held during the period 1967-1975 at Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV such as auctions to send the Portland “Mr. Groovy Guy” candidate to the 1973 New York City “Mr. David” contest, fundraisers for the Metropolitan Community church (the church for the LGBTQ community), and a consistent stage upon which out-of-town visitors to Portland’s drag events or coronations could perform. Walter Cole was a part of the Portland Forum since inception, and served as President for many years. Through this group, Walter along with his fundraising co-chair David (“Mame”) Hamilton organized a “Mr. Hunky” contest which was held at Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV twice a year from the early 1970s into the early 1980s. The “Foxy Lady” competitions began in 1975 to complement the “Mr. Hunky.” The Portland Forum also participated in putting on several theater productions such as *The Boyfriend* at Darcelle XV Showplace, with an all-male theater troupe called The Imperial Inland Empire Repertory Co. Undoubtedly, Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV had become the heart of the drag community in Oregon- and indeed, one of a handful of venues important to the entire west coast drag community- by about 1971.

Darcelle and Roxy and their home base nightclub in Portland became known to the drag community in the larger cities of the east coast and mid-west mostly starting in the year Darcelle was Empress. One example is that Darcelle and Roxy were mentioned in *David* magazine as “the glittering Darcelle and her consort Crown Prince, Rock” in a list of “gay community businessmen and luminaries” in attendance at the 1973 David competition in New York. The same year, Darcelle was mentioned with a photo captioned “Most Beautiful Costume” in *Drag* magazine, published in New York.

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103 Ibid, 21.
104 Walter Cole and Sharon Knorr. *Just Call Me Darcelle*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010, 100. Measure 9 would have altered the Oregon State Constitution recognizing homosexuality as abnormal, unnatural, and perverse. The measure was defeated, but not by a large margin.
106 La Femme Magnifique International website: https://www.glclubs.com/US/Portland/13553836494661/LaFemme-
Magnifique-International-Plus-International-Pageant
108 Don Horn, 330-333.
109 Don Horn, 336.
110 “Convention,” *David*, Vol 3 No.9, September 1973 (Jacksonville, FL), 84. Darcelle is also shown in the June 1973 issue of the same magazine in a spread about the “Princess Royal Coronation” hosted at Demas Tavern.
The Portland-based gay publication NW Fountain declared in a 1981 article called “Drag City, U.S.A.” that “our own home town of Portland, Oregon, not only has the best drag scene on the West Coast, but also the best drag performers anywhere else in the nation.”

Social Importance of Darcelle XV
Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV featured prominently in Portland’s LGBTQ community as part of its coping mechanism for the ongoing discrimination and outright hatred directed at homosexuals throughout the 1970s and well into the 1990s. It was a safe place, and a place where everyone felt welcome. Gay bars, in contrast, were generally quite exclusionary in feel; most developed certain cliques of gay men or lesbians and one would not bring a parent or a heterosexual friend to one of these spaces. Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV served as a public ally of even more marginalized subgroups such as transgendered persons, African-American gays, and (during the 1980s and early 1990s) HIV-positive or AIDS-diagnosed people. Darcelle XV Showplace continued to both welcome anyone and everyone, and also serve as an enduring social institution celebrating and normalizing authentic gay culture, a balancing feat very few other drag venues in the United States could manage. Other drag clubs with a full-time show were almost invariably geared towards a “straight” crowd. Darcelle XV Showplace is also a rarity among drag venues in producing a continuous weekly schedule of professional shows performed by the in-house “company” with coordinated costumes (primarily made by Walter Cole) and choreography. Most, though not all, other drag venues had a ‘drag night’ or a ‘drag bingo brunch’ once a week.

Drag performance developed as an expression of gay and lesbian culture. The social importance of having a place like Darcelle XV Showplace in which drag could be consistently performed and celebrated is directly tied to the need for this expression. Again, the LGBTQ community suffered comparatively less in Portland than in most other U.S. cities, but there was plenty of oppression, fear, discrimination, and even violence directed at the men and women identifying as lesbian, gay, transsexual, or bisexual during this era in Portland. While there were more elaborate and more touristy drag venues across the United States, Darcelle XV Showplace was in a unique position of openly embracing the gay cultural underpinnings of drag, because Walter and Roxy were openly living as gay men. Arguably, the nightclub therefore expressed the cultural values of the LGBTQ community more authentically, and certainly provided a safer space for such expression, than a place such as Finocchio’s in San Francisco.

Darcelle XV has a history of having a racially integrated show since the very beginning of Walter’s foray into drag performance with Tina Sandell, a Klamath Falls Native American. The nightclub has consistently been an ally and a promotor of the LGBTQ African-American community. One of the earliest African-American performers to perform at Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV was Bobbie Callicoatte, who went on to an acclaimed career all over the United States and Canada as a female impersonator. As recalled by Irving Lambert (aka Irvina I, Imperial Queen Grand Mama to the Ebony Promise of the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court of Oregon), the three drag clubs in the 1970s and 1980s in Portland were Magic Gardens (aka Club Northwest), Demas Tavern, and Dahl & Penne. “In those days I was on all three stages at one time or another.” Demas Tavern was the location where the United Ebony Kingdom, a part of the Imperial Court System specifically started by and for LGBTQ African Americans, was founded. “Some of our members went on to become Emperors and Empresses. There was Candi Wrapper, Melody Starr, and many more. The Kingdom had two homes- Demas and D&P’s. Demas was to soon become Darcelle XV…” The United Ebony Kingdom gave charity dinners at Dahl and Penne or at Demas/Darcelle’s every New Years’ Day. The group also put on shows benefitting a nursing home and an orphanage, according to Willie Tucker, Ebony’s first King.

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112 DuPree, 16.
113 Don Horn, 312.
115 Ibid.
Soon after Walter Cole leased the Demas Tavern, he hired Papa Scott as bartender and it became known as a lesbian bar. The relationship between lesbians and gays was sometimes combative in these times. Drag performers especially, who were almost entirely men, were sometimes accused of being misogynist for their female impersonations.\textsuperscript{117} Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV appears to have maintained the trust and support of the lesbian community, even after it transitioned to being a drag venue with its own house performing “company” in 1969. A local lesbian group, for example, held a large fundraiser at the Tavern in 1970.\textsuperscript{118} Demas Tavern was mentioned in a 1972 Gay Travel Guide; “Now we stop at Demas to see the new decor and catch a glimpse of the drag show. The reason this packed place looks like the Isle of Lesbos is that our sisters have taken over tonight.”\textsuperscript{119} Clearly, the nightclub was welcoming to lesbians long after it started offering drag shows.

Among the most challenging times for the LGBTQ community across the United States (and possibly worldwide) was during the AIDS crisis, and during this time the needs of the gay community and their friends and families grew immense. Within the LGBTQ community and allies, the emotional toll of the death of so many friends was combined with terror; no one yet knew how the disease was transmitted. Walter/Darcelle and others stepped up to raise money, to demonstrate active empathy and societal acceptance, and to support the right to not be discriminated against. “We went through hell with the AIDS crisis of the ’80s and no government help at all,” Walter Cole told the \textit{Oregonian}. “It was like Russian roulette. Every week, there would be somebody gone. Way before their time.”\textsuperscript{120} During this period, Walter and Roxy opened up their own home, as well as the two cottages next door to their house in Northeast Portland for friends with AIDS.

Darcelle XV Showplace publicly supported and promoted transgendered individuals as well. Christine Jorgensen, celebrity transgender woman who had transitioned in 1952, was featured at Darcelle XV in 1979. This appearance was Christine Jorgensen’s return to the stage after many years of absence. Sister Paula Nielsen, who had transitioned from male in 1963, debuted onstage at Darcelle XV in 1980. Sister Paula went on to host her own TV gospel show.\textsuperscript{121} As a place where different concepts of gender were not just allowed, but supported and normalized for a diverse audience, the venue provided a haven for people outside of the generally accepted (at that time) gender roles.

Darcelle XV’s longevity is not only impressive as a commercial achievement, but it also has allowed the club’s name recognition to filter far out into places and populations that are less accepting of gay lifestyles. Darcelle XV illustrates the importance of simply being there, year after year, to welcome and help people who need to find community but don’t necessarily want to go to a “gay bar.” Darcelle XV Showplace has been, for many decades, a rite of passage for many young people in and around Portland. Maria Council in 2010 said, “[a]nd the first place I went was Darcelle’s. Everybody kind of, you know, that’s a right of passage, I think, when you’re gay. And when you’re gay or lesbian and you’re turning twenty-one, you’re going to go see other gay people. And so I went there and then The Embers.”\textsuperscript{122} In 2016, Darcelle told a reporter with HuffPost that the customers she most takes note of are “those who bring their parents. “They bring them here to show them who they are,” she says.”\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{117} Renee LaChance, Interview (transcript, p. 23-24)
\textsuperscript{118} Cindy Cumfer, Interview with Erik Funkhouser & Tim Aguirre. Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course with instructor Pat Young, Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN), 2009. (transcript p.6). Cindy Cumfer is an Oregon attorney who handled the first same-gender parent adoption in the United States in 1985.
\textsuperscript{119} John Francis Hunter, \textit{The Gay Insider USA} (Stonehill Publishing, 1972), 544.
\textsuperscript{120} “The Queen of Portland,” \textit{The Oregonian}, September 15, 2019, A&E 8.
\textsuperscript{121} LGBT Project Wiki, \url{https://lgbt.wikia.org/wiki/Sister_Paula_Nielsen}
\textsuperscript{122} Maria Council, Interview (transcript p.4). The interview identifies Maria as “a woman, a drag queen, an African-American, and co-founder/President of Peacock After Dark.”
\textsuperscript{123} Ann Brenoff, “Country’s Oldest Working Drag Queen Has Something to Get Off Her Chest,” HuffPost online, 08/04/2016, accessed at \url{https://www.huffpost.com/entry/countrys-oldest-working-drag-queen-has-something-to-get-off-her-chest_n_57a21314e4b04414d1f2da64}
Walter Cole and Roc Neuhardt made it a point to go to health & sexuality classes at colleges or universities out of drag, but at the nightclub, people seeking help or advice could-and did-find them. In a 2017 interview with Courtney Love, musician, she said that she grew up in Portland as a teenager “on her own,” and that “the city’s drag queens... often took her in, gave her advice on performance, and offered friendship and kindness.” Love named a few “queens from her Portland days- like Darcelle” and Lady Bunny.124

A 2008 documentary about the nightclub focused on Darcelle’s innate ability to hear and empathize with various people. The nightclub had become popular with young, predominantly conservative Christian women enjoying their bachelorette parties, and with this segment of the population, Darcelle was careful. She found that the young women sometimes needed to divulge personal, even painful information to her. But the impact of the nightclub extended to each audience. “There’s just no way you can walk away from this place and think exactly the same way you did before you entered… there’s just no way… you realize they’re just normal people,” exclaimed one young man in the film.125

The examples of philanthropy shown to the wider community by Demas Tavern/ Darcelle XV Showplace over its long existence are far too numerous to list individually. In addition to participating in the fundraising previously mentioned as part of the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court, the nightclub on its own donated and solicited funds for many, many causes such as the People’s Fund (established to lend money to people who fall into serious trouble such as accidents or sudden illness) and threw a big Christmas eve dinner every year for the residents of the Foster Hotel/ Lyndon Musolf Manor.

Development of Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV
When Walter Cole took over Demas Tavern in 1967, his initial inherited clientele were hard-core drunks who would come in in the morning, and had a place within the Tavern they would hide their own bottles of cheap wine.126 It was not long before Walter hired Papa Scott, a bartender who often frequented Walter Cole’s earlier business enterprise, the Caffè Espresso. Walter described Papa Scott as “an old school dyke, dressed like a man, always in a suit and tie.”127 Papa Scott brought a new clientele with her- a devoted lesbian following. The women that came in were tough, militant types, but they did buy beer and play pool, as well as occasionally brawl. Walter’s new venue also benefitted from a change in entertainment at a nearby bar, the Club Northwest, which decided to move towards being a strip joint, shortly thereafter changed their name to the Magic Garden, and lost their lesbian clients to the Demas Tavern.128

By 1968, Demas Tavern was well known in local gay and lesbian circles. Walter added in drag shows on weekends by August or September 1969, and the nightclub transitioned to being a drag venue with its own house performing “company” by the fall of 1969, moving away from being a bar with occasional entertainment.

The club became better known first in the circles where drag was promoted and performed. This meant that the club in some ways enjoyed more publicity in the Bay Area of California than locally for a time, though that may have been simply due to the comparatively large numbers of media publications in the gay press in San Francisco as opposed to Portland. Vector, a homophile publication out of San Francisco, was recommending Demas Tavern by 1969 as a “Portland Greenwich Village” worth visiting on a tour north to Portland.129 A long Vector article about Portland in 1972 described a San Francisco group’s trip to attend the coronation of the Fourteenth “Rose Empress.” Darcelle herself is described as covered in rhinestones “from head to foot.”130 A

126 Don Horn, 132-133.
127 Ibid, 140.
128 Ibid.
fan letter written to Darcelle in 1972 by Elwood Hartman (a visitor from Pullman, Washington who had seen
the drag show at the nightclub) said,

“I’ve seen similar productions at Finocchio’s in San Francisco and at Madame Arthur’s in Amsterdam, but
I have never seen a production as clever and comic as yours. In particular, I thought your miming
of Kate Smith’s “God Bless America” in blue leather with bullwhip the most outrageously funny stunt
I’ve ever encountered. I could only wish that the Republican Convention could have seen you at work.”

By the time Darcelle was voted Empress XV of the Imperial Rose Court in November 1972, Demas Tavern
had become one of the three major locations in Portland for drag shows (including Magic Garden- the former
Club Northwest- which did not stay a drag bar for long but became a strip club instead; and gay bar Dahl and
Penne) and one of a handful of well-known and influential drag bars on the west coast. Demas Tavern had
already become the only drag venue in Oregon to offer a professionally produced weekly show. The company
included Darcelle (Walter Cole), Tina Sandell (Jerry Farris), and Roxy (Roc Neuhardt); they were performing
about three nights a week by this point. Darcelle sewed costumes for the three of them, and Roxy
choreographed the numbers.

The San Francisco gay press continued to feature trips to Portland, in which Demas Tavern was always one of
the hosts for the out-of-towners. The San Francisco contingent in those early years always attended the
Portland coronations, but also often went to Portland at other times of year. (Portland was also well
represented at San Francisco’s major events, as well as those in other major cities). The August 1973 Bay
Area Reporter complimented “…the always gracious, humorous and insane Darcelle and Rock of DEMAS
TAVERN,” noting “Now that is an Empress what really is.” Later that year, the same publication covered the
Portland Rose Court Coronation.

“It, without a doubt, is one of the most outstanding events of the year. This was my 7th trip up there
and I always look forward to the next one. San Francisco was well represented with about 100 people
attending.” “Some of the highlights were: The show at ‘Demas Tavern’ now called ‘Darcelle’s 15’ owned
by the Empress (who said a bar owner cannot be a good Empress?) Roxy was as wild as ever, and I
invited him to perform down here on his next trip.”

Though Oregon’s first gay newspaper, The Fountain, began publication in 1971, it was another thing entirely
to gain coverage in Oregon’s mainstream press. In 1974, Darcelle XV Showplace was mentioned in three
different mainstream publications. Two of the articles covered the work of a student doing a photography
internship with the Portland Art Museum. The student, Alice Berelson, took a series of photos at Darcelle XV,
as the nightclub was by then named. Not only did this result in some high-quality photos of Darcelle and
some of the clientele, but the museum included them in a show, which was covered in the Oregonian, the
major mainstream newspaper in Oregon. The Oregon Journal also published a 1974 story about the
Portland Art Museum show, with a photo of Darcelle. Interestingly, both articles gave a disproportionate
amount of attention to the Darcelle photos, despite the museum show’s main focus on several skilled Navajo
weavers. The third publication was a behind-the-scenes description of an Imperial Sovereign Rose Court

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131 Private collection of Walter Cole, correspondence received 1972.
132 Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV is mentioned or recommended in Vector and another California-based gay media publication
the Kalendar multiple times during the period of significance. The Bay Area Reporter, the oldest and most widely read gay publication
in the San Francisco region, has 74 instances of the term “Darcelle” between 1971 (the paper’s inception) and 1979, using the
135 Alice Berelson was part of the Portland Art Museum’s apprentice program, which took six months to complete.
136 “Photo Essay Crowd Picturesque; Judges Cross Bar,” The Oregonian, June 30, 1974, 70.
137 Andy Rocchia, “Exhibits by Young Portland Photographers Worth Visiting,” The Oregon Journal, July 5, 1974. This article
was how Walter’s wife and children found out that he had been performing in drag.
Coronation, written for the University of Oregon’s student newspaper by Randy Shilts.138 While not featuring Darcelle’s own coronation, Shilts interviewed Darcelle and mentioned the nightclub in the article.139 The story was lengthened and republished in the major newspaper in Eugene, Oregon, in 1975. What these articles had in common was the treatment of the idea of drag and of the character Darcelle as being non-threatening and fun, as typified by the beginning of the Oregonian article, “GAY PARTY: Art openings can be a drag.” In contrast, the same newspaper up until about 1975 had taken a strictly judgmental tone towards the topic of homosexuality.

Also in 1975, an article written by Susan Stanley Wolk for a new newspaper in Portland, the Willamette Week, called the club “a potpourri of human types, of human sexuality. It’s glitter and funny and educational. I plan to go again. You might want to try it.”140 This positive, mainstream coverage created a wider exposure for Walter Cole and for Darcelle XV Showplace. Walter was shocked- and thrilled- at the difference. “And people started coming… people crossing north of Burnside- those who probably had never crossed north before! They came from the gay community, the straight community – they just kept coming.”141 Walter increased the number of nights a week for performances, and the company grew to five and even occasionally more, with guest performers.142 Darcelle also began to be invited to attend various City events by the mid-1970s, such as heading the Old Town float in the Rose Parade. A letter complaining about this embarrassing spectacle was submitted to the Oregonian, and promptly answered by another reader, who said “the people at Darcelle XV have sponsored Vietnamese orphans, recruited for the blood bank and now are engaged in rounding up clothes and home furnishings for the elderly residents in their block.” “They are just as good citizens as anybody else, and maybe sometimes a little better.”143

By June 1979, the publicity was rolling in.

“The very next day, The Oregonian ran an article about how Darcelle’s was hosting live performances with Christine Jorgensen, American actress and first person to become widely known for having sex reassignment surgery. From then on, every couple of months, Darcelle’s hosted performances by actors, singers, and celebrities who were either gay, or known for being activists for gay rights, people like Michael Greer, Sharon McNight, Samantha Samuels among others. The popularity of Portland’s most famous gay bar seems to correlate with the mentions of gay rights in Oregon’s newspapers.”144

The reputation and fame of the nightclub continued to grow, and many of the performers and celebrities who came to Demas Tavern/ Darcelle XV are pictured on the walls. These include Christine Jorgensen; Joanne Worley, actress (of Rowan & Martin’s “Laugh In”); Michael Greer (from the movie The Rose starring Bette Midler) who performed in January and again in June & July 1980; Maxene Andrews (one of the Andrews Sisters) who performed in April 1981; singer Johnnie Ray who performed in April 1983; and Carol Channing (actress best known for Hello Dolly) who performed in August 1995 at the nightclub. The nightclub has become quite a well-known destination for LGBTQ travelers. Even today, Darcelle XV Showplace is still a destination nightclub known across the United States. It was recently listed as one of the U.S.’s best drag clubs on an LGBTQ Travel site.145

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138 Randy Shilts, The Daily Emerald [Ode section], November 22, 1974, and “Fantasy Kingdoms of Rhinestone and Royalty,” Eugene Register-Guard [Eugard Empire section], February 9,1975.
139 Walter Cole uses “he” and “his” when out of drag, but “she” and “hers” when in character as Darcelle.
140 Susan Stanley Wolk, “That’s No Lady- That’s Darcelle,” Willamette Week, September 22, 1975, 1
141 Don Horn, 306.
142 The sign in front when the 1976 photo was taken (Figure 18) reads “Roxy-Tina-Teddy-Merrie-Blaine-Terry K.- on stage Thur-Fri-Sat-Sun”
143 Georgia M. Weathers, Letters to the Editor, The Oregonian, July 2, 1976, 26.
It is important to highlight Darcelle XV Showplace as an incredibly long-running business. In this sense alone, the venue is quite unusual and must be recognized simply for its part in developing the American economy. The story of its development during the period 1967 to 1975 tells one story, but the importance of the venue simply continuing to exist for 53 years and counting, with shows week after week, gives it an additional gravity and an institutional, cross-generational value to people not only in Portland or Oregon, but across the United States.

**History and Context of the “North End”/”Old Town” District and the Foster Hotel Building**

The location of Darcelle XV Showplace within Portland is important to its success, as it was not only outside the “gay triangle” of LGBTQ-friendly bars in SW Portland, but was deliberately founded in the area of town that was historically claimed by people and ethnicities who were otherwise poor, disenfranchised, or operating outside of legal or social norms.

The building itself was constructed in 1910. The R. R. Thompson Company hired the Portland architectural firm of Bennes, Hendricks, and Thompson to design a half-block, three-story hotel and commercial building at Davis Street between Second and Third Avenues.146 The hotel (soon named the Foster Hotel) had shared bathrooms for hotel guests on the upper floors, and with a series of four lightwells running parallel to Second and Third Avenues, allowing each room to have a corridor side and an “exterior” side with windows. The building was constructed by the Friberg Brothers, Swedish immigrant carpenters.147 The center of the Davis Street frontage (south façade) was originally the hotel entrance and lobby, with an interconnected restaurant next to it.148 By 1918 and possibly as early as 1915, the hotel lobby was moved to the west side of the building, with the entry at the most northern bay.149

A 1915 *Oregonian* article speculating whether Prohibition would clean up the “North End” described the district as being “about Fourth Street, Third Street and Burnside, Couch, Davis and Everett Streets…”150 The NW Portland area was always a transit hub, with the train station and easy access to ships on the Willamette River, and many modest hotels were developed to cater to single working men. Immigrants from many origins found a home in the district, including African, Greek, Jewish, and Scandinavian groups throughout 1880-1943.151

The storefront spaces now occupied by Darcelle XV were previously occupied by a Jewish furniture dealer, a Russian tailor, a bootlegger named Zeko, and a secondhand clothing shop called the Togo Clothing Shop or Togo Suit Shop.152 Other commercial tenants of the building over time included a barbershop fronting Davis, with a Japanese bathhouse behind it, and a “Steamboat Men's Union” also facing Davis Street.153 Later, by the early 1930s, the Japanese Association of Portland (and Oregon) was the major commercial tenant along

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147 Litherland & Abrey were reported as having the contract in "Many Structures Begun," *The Oregonian*, October 17, 1909, 12, but the firm may have had the contract for excavation only. Architect and builder source: Michael Shellenbarger, “Index and Summary of Oregon Building Information in the Portland Daily Abstract (1906-1909),” 1992. [https://library.uoregon.edu/design/shellenbarger](https://library.uoregon.edu/design/shellenbarger), Index 3 (sorted by name of Architect), 10.

148 See Figure 6, ground floor plan by Bennes, Hendricks and Thompson, c.1909. There are slightly different versions of the plans and elevations at the University of Oregon library, though none of them appear to be exactly as constructed.

149 From 1910 until the mid-1930s, street addresses referred to “Third Street North” rather than the current “NW Third” addresses, and numbers also changed. 62 N. Third Street became 208 NW Third Avenue; 64 and 64 1/2 N. Third St became 212 NW Third Ave; and 66 N Third St, the Foster Hotel, was changed to 216 NW Third Ave. This nomination refers to commercial spaces by their current addresses.


151 Japantown/Chinatown Historic District Guidelines, 12.

152 Maurice Ostrow, furniture, 1911-1914; see [Advertisement], *The Oregon Journal*, April 1, 1911, 12. Also Polk’s Portland Oregon Directory, 1911, 1783. Joe Tanzer, tailor; to c.1920 with a restaurant listed as M. R. Mitrovich on the other side; Paul Zeko and an enterprise known as the Foster Cafe during at least part of the Prohibition years 1920-1933 as mentioned in a number of newspaper articles 1921-1923; see “Bootleggers Defy Police and Courts,” *The Oregonian*, May 3 1923, 18. The Togo Shop, 1932-1937; see Polk’s Portland Oregon Directory, 1932.

Davis Street, along with a Judo club and several other Japanese-owned businesses. By 1934, Peter C. Demas, who had come from Greece in 1931, opened Demas’ Tavern, which originally was at the corner of Third and Davis. By 1947, Demas’ Tavern was located at 208 NW Third. The more northerly shopfront bay of Darcelle XV Showplace was under the address 212 NW Third Avenue and was occupied by a restaurant under several different owners. Walter Cole leased these two spaces in 1967 and discontinued using the 212 number.

The Chinese and Japanese immigrant communities both developed a strong and enduring presence in the area, which is somewhat overlapping in chronology as well as in spatial location. The Japanese community in Portland took hold in the area just north of Burnside by 1890. While Chinese immigrants had arrived in Oregon even earlier, as early as the 1850s, most of the Chinese arrivals initially settled in other areas of Portland. Starting in about 1900, for various reasons, the Chinese population increasingly also moved into the area north of West Burnside. Chinese immigrants at this time were not allowed to bring wives or families, whereas the Japanese, at least until 1924, were not restricted by gender or age. The area became increasingly crowded, and one way that Japanese families found to ensure housing for their large families was to manage residential hotels. By 1920, an astonishing 90% of all small hotels and lodging houses in Portland were run and/or owned by Japanese immigrants.

The Foster Hotel was no exception. The building was sold in 1920 to Mr. Kajikawa and Mr. Sumida, who had been reportedly running the hotel for at least a year already. At some point before 1928, ownership was transferred from Mr. Kajikawa and Mr. Sumida to the Sumitomi Investment Co. Despite the ownership change, the hotel stayed within the local Japanese-American community control at this time and for at least two more decades. The Sumitomi Investment Company was housed in the Foster Hotel building itself, on NW Davis, and the President of the company was Senichi Tomihiro, a legal advisor to the Japanese immigrant community in Portland. By 1942, when the U.S. government sent west coast persons of Japanese ancestry to internment camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the hotel may have been taken over by a non-Japanese owner.

Some Japanese-owned businesses did manage to re-open in Portland, starting in 1945.

Working men such as railroad workers, sailors, and loggers often sought the district for its simple and inexpensive lodging, food, and sometimes, for its available prostitutes, liquor or drugs, and gambling. Many day labor offices or temporary work agencies were also located in the area starting in the Depression. "Mirroring a national trend in which hotel living became increasingly less "respectable," many of the district’s

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154 Kathleen Ryan and Mark Beach. *Burnside: A Community*, 25. Also, Kazuo Ito, map of the Japanese community, 1940.
155 City of Portland historic plumbing permit, April 1934 lists “200 Third.” *Polk’s Directory*, 1943-44 also lists both “Third Ave Café & Grocery” and “Demas Tavern” under 200 NW Third Avenue. 208 NW Third is listed as vacant in *Polk’s* from 1937 to 1944.
156 City of Portland historic plumbing permit, January 1947, lists Pete Demas as owner for 208 NW Third Ave.
157 A restaurant under several different owners, the last one under Terry Mishiro in 1953-1954, had occupied 212 NW 3rd Avenue, but it is not clear how long the space had been vacant when Walter Cole signed a lease for it.
158 Guidelines, 14.
159 Ho, 31.
162 The Foster Hotel building, already listed as contributing to the NHL Skidmore Old Town Historic District, in its entirety is likely also individually significant for its association with the early immigrant Japanese community in Portland, Oregon.
163 “Motorist Hurt in Collision,” *The Oregonian*, August 16, 1931, 13. The article also noted that Mr. Tomihiro was president of the Union Trading Company at 62 N Third. Though not a U.S. citizen and therefore unable to be a licensed attorney, Tomihiro was a law school graduate who became a legal adviser and translator for the Japanese living in Portland, according to Homer Yasui interview by Margaret Barton Ross, October 10, 2003. Portland: Oregon Nikkei Endowment Collection, Densho Digital Archive. Accessed online at [http://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-one-7/ddr-one-7-27-transcript-3744bcd9f7.htm](http://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-one-7/ddr-one-7-27-transcript-3744bcd9f7.htm), on 11-6-2019.
164 *The Oregonian* ran a number of ads selling Japanese Hotels. "Mr. Buyer, are you looking for a good buy...? If so see me for Jap hotels. Have many, all kinds, large and small," said one on April 12, 1942, 33.
older hotels lost prestige and served a more transient and working-class clientele.” The “North End” also became known as “skid row.”

Walter Cole’s choice of location for his bar/entertainment venue did prevent some of the clientele from his earlier coffeehouse ventures from coming to the “skid row” part of town. For him, the area had always reminded him of the special trips into Portland from his small hometown of Linnton with his mother, stopping for a meal at the Manila Café or another of the Chinese restaurants. The local district was certainly not, at the time, the major area where LGBTQ-friendly businesses proliferated. In locating the nightclub there, Walter was working against both gay discrimination as well as the perception of the area as the poorest, most run-down area of town. In many respects, though, the “Old Town” area, as it was beginning to be called, was a promising location for an establishment that allied itself with “sexual deviants” (in the words of Portland Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee) first as a lesbian bar and later as a drag venue. There were very few families in residence in the area, and building owners were simply not in a position to object to a new adult entertainment venue, so Walter/ Darcelle was relatively free from prying eyes. In the end, the nightclub’s location may have enabled it more freedom in an already relatively permissive City.

In 1968, the Foster Hotel building was purchased by the Skidmore Development Co. The hotel closed by the end of 1973, and the building was purchased by the Housing Authority of Portland along with brothers Bill and Sam Naito, with intent to renovate it into low-income apartments. Notably, the Naito brothers were from Portland, part of a Japanese-American family interned in Utah during WWII. Their father had immigrated to Portland from Japan in 1921 and opened a store at NW 6th and Davis.

The current owner of the property, now named Lyndon Musolf Manor, is Musolf Manor Limited Partnership, an entity which includes the nonprofit Innovative Housing Inc. (IHI). The owners acquired the building in 1991 and gave the building an extensive seismic upgrade, storefront restoration, new electrical and plumbing systems, a new elevator, and improvements to the units in 2007-2009. IHI continues to serve as the property manager serving a low-income population.

Walter Cole/ Darcelle

Walter Willard Cole was born on November 16, 1930 in Linnton, Oregon. He was an only child, primarily raised by an aunt after his mother died when he was just eleven. He attended Lincoln High School in Portland and married his high school girlfriend Jeanette Rossini on May 20, 1951, less than a year after graduation. During high school, Walter made his first forays into acting, a love he returned to from time to time in his adult life. He worked in various jobs in the Portland area, first at the library and Multnomah Athletic Club, and then at the grocery store Fred Meyer.

Walter was drafted and was sent to Italy during the Korean War where he served for two years. Though he did experience his first gay encounter on a train to Austria while he was in the army, this was by no means a life-changing realization at the time. Jeanette and Walter Cole were very close and happy together; they had two children, Walter Jr. in 1955 and Maridee in 1957.

By 1953, Walter had completed his military service and had returned to working at a Fred Meyer to support his family. In 1959 he happened across a coffeehouse for sale at SW 6th and Harrison Street, close to Portland

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167 Cole & Knorr, 84. Walter Cole had owned three different coffeehouses in Portland prior to Demas Tavern.
168 “Portland Block to get Jackson Square Look,” The Oregonian, January 17, 1968, 29.
169 “Mayor Looks at Renovated Hotel,” The Oregonian, June 3, 1975, 13.
172 Don Horn, 51.
State College, and bought it for $5000 using his savings from the military. The Caffè Espresso under Walter Cole (which relocated in 1963 to SW Clay and 2nd Avenue) became much more than an Italian-style coffee shop. It was “probably the longest-lived and the most influential” Portland coffeehouse booking young musicians, “serving as a transitional space between the beatnik and hippie eras.” In addition to the folk music, young rock bands, and jazz groups, Caffè Espresso displayed local art. At its second location, Caffè Espresso had a basement that Walter rented out to small theater companies. He later started his own theater company, started a floral shop and then sold it, and opened a jazz club called Studio A where many jazz greats played including Cab Calloway. These are just some of the ten businesses that were started by Walter Cole.

The City of Portland, during the 1950s and 1960s, “reclaimed and reused” many sites on the periphery of the downtown core as a strategy of forced demolition under the mantra of urban renewal, under which older buildings and neighborhoods were declared “blighted” and cleared. Many of these blocks were then provided as surface parking or at low cost to private developers. Both Caffè Espresso and a concurrent venture of Walter’s, an ice cream parlor Café Trieste, were closed due to urban renewal.

In the early to mid-1960s, Walter Cole began frequenting gay clubs and bars in Portland, unbeknownst to his family. The purchase of Demas Tavern was a way to be downtown near to the gay clubs, as he admitted, but of course was also a way to earn money. Walter knew he had to expand his customer base from the local derelicts at the Demas Tavern, and reached out to a friend who was a well-known lesbian bartender, Papa Scott. With her, came the much-needed paying patrons – at the time all lesbians.

Walter’s first foray into female impersonation occurred in 1968. A young performer named Tina Sandell (aka Jerry Farris) who worked at Club Northwest a block from Demas Tavern started coming into Walter’s bar, and the two struck up a friendship. Tina and Walter (in drag but not, initially, as the character Darcelle) began occasionally performing together at Demas Tavern, using records and lip-synching to the music. By August or September 1969, they were doing regular weekend drag shows at Demas Tavern. Tina/Jerry was a Klamath Falls tribal member, and was also a troubled street kid who by all accounts struggled with alcohol and drugs. There was general discrimination against Native Americans at that time, and not many people would have taken a chance in hiring a person with alcoholism/addiction issues, but Walter did.

Walter met Roc Neuhardt at Portland gay bar Dahl & Penne in 1969. Roc was a dancer who worked at the Hoyt Hotel, near the train station. The Hoyt Hotel had been lavishly redone in about 1962, and featured the Roaring ’20s Room with Seattle singer and entertainer Gracie Hansen performing, along with dancers such as Roc. The Roaring ’20s Room was the location of many early drag balls, both under the Pruitts and the Portland Forum (see discussion of the Imperial Court System in Portland). Soon Roc and Walter became a couple. Though he struggled initially to admit this to his wife, within a three-month period, Walter left his wife and moved in with Roc. Walter’s wife Jeannette told the Los Angeles Times in 2005 that she was angry and humiliated for years, but that they never divorced. Eventually they reconciled. “Walter is a class act,” Jeannette says. She use[d] words such as “wonderful” and “giving” to describe him.

In the early days of Demas Tavern under Walter Cole, he became an admirer of Gracie Hansen, a big personality with an over-the-top style. Gracie, originally from Washington state, had become a self-made

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174 Don Horn, 88-91.
176 Oregonian, June 16 1963, 57.
177 City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Portland Parks and Recreation, 55.
178 Don Horn, 119-121.
179 The Oregon Liquor Control Commission forbade singing so much as “Happy Birthday” in taverns that did not offer full meals at this time.
180 Kohl, 32-33.
181 Monaghan (The Los Angeles Times).
entrepreneur and performer who had run her own “showgirls” pavilion at the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair. She dabbled in a run for Seattle Mayor, ran a campaign in jest for Portland Mayor, and then perhaps a slightly more serious one for Oregon Governor in 1970, losing to Tom McCall. Walter and Gracie became great friends, and after she ceased performing at the Hoyt Hotel in 1970, she bequeathed him much of her stage jewelry, outfits, and material. Walter incorporated some of her jokes, her campy persona, and a few of her actual outfits into his own stage character, Darcelle.

As Demas Tavern was adapted for the needs of a cabaret performance, Walter was not only performing (initially with Tina, and soon also with Roc, who became Roxy onstage), but managing and operating Demas Tavern. This meant taking people’s admission money, cleaning the bathrooms, rehearsing and choreographing performances, adjusting the lighting, and designing and sewing most of the show’s outfits, in addition to the regulatory and financial pressures of the business. There is no evidence that was another club owner and drag performer who managed all of these roles, anywhere in the United States.

Walter Cole’s own house, an exuberantly painted Queen Anne with an octagonal tower, he purchased with Roxy in 1978, at a time when the surrounding Eliot neighborhood was in decline. The house is recently listed individually on the National Register (the Elmer and Linnie Miller House), primarily for its architectural distinction. Walter also owns two adjacent smaller Queen Anne cottages that are historically associated with the Elmer and Linnie Miller House, and these became guest houses for friends with AIDS during the 1980s. Much like the location of Darcelle XV Showplace in the “skid row” district, Walter and Roxy’s vote of confidence in what was then considered the poor, African-American area of town illustrates a commitment to places and associations others feared. It is fair to acknowledge gay men’s part in gentrification as the other side of this coin, however. While Walter and Roxy were only one of a number of gay men working to preserve neglected old buildings, they were making territorial “gains” at the expense of an even more marginalized population.

Walter and Roxy not only used their status as well-known gay figures in Portland to further philanthropy, caring, and support for various community causes, but also began speaking at local colleges including Pacific University in Forest Grove, Portland State University, and Reed College, in human sexuality classes. In these classrooms the men, not in drag, “would have an honest dialogue.” This type of outreach and modeling was similar to what Darcelle and Roxy were doing onstage; showing the larger community that LGBTQ people were human, and funny, and approachable.

His leadership has been felt at many other local civic organizations where Walter has been invited to speak or emcee events, including the Elk and Kiwanis Clubs, the American Heart Association, the Rotary, the Special Olympics, and many more. In 2003, Walter/Darcelle was given a Spirit of Portland award and lauded by the mayor as a “figurehead for supporting social causes for the gay, lesbian and transgender community . . . a popular performer at fundraisers [who] has raised thousands of dollars each year for charities.” Honoring Walter’s tireless work dealing with AIDS, the Darcelle XV AIDS Memorial, a granite sculpture honoring Oregonians who have died from HIV/AIDS, was erected at Lincoln Memorial Park (Mount Scott Park) Cemetery in Portland in 2017. Walter/Darcelle is the subject of several films, including, with Roxy, Queens of Heart: Community Therapists in Drag. Darcelle XV, an Oregon Public Broadcasting documentary, won a

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182 Peter Blecha, “Hansen, Gracie (1922-1985),” historylink.org, April 9, 2010: https://www.historylink.org/File/9365

183 A retrospective featuring many of Darcelle’s handmade outfits was recently displayed at the Oregon Historical Society. “Many Shades of Being Darcelle: 52 Years of Fashion, 1967–2019,” was extended through November 3, 2019. Walter Cole estimates that he owns about 1,500 dresses.


186 Don Horn, 303.

187 Haaken, Queens of Heart: Community Therapists in Drag.
Darcelle XV
Name of Property
Multnomah Co., OR
County and State

Northwest Regional Emmy Award in 2017 and is the subject of a three-time 2019 Portland Area Theatre Award musical, *Darcelle: That’s No Lady*.

In 2009, Walter Cole/ Darcelle was one of 40 individuals from across the United States chosen as “Stonewall 40 Trans Heroes.” Names were chosen by the International Court System in conjunction with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The plaque hangs at The Stonewall Inn Greenwich Village, New York City. The primary newspaper in Oregon, *the Oregonian*, included Walter Cole in a 2018 list of the most significant 100 Oregonians of all time.

Walter and his partner Roxy have served as role models, “connectors” to help others find community, and unofficial therapists to questioning, lesbian, or gay youths or those beginning to identify as LGBTQ in the Portland area since the late 1960s. In a metropolitan area that has not had as vocal or as strong a political presence for gay rights as other West coast cities, Portland’s LGBTQ community has depended on Walter Cole/ Darcelle to create meaningful and supportive connections to the general population, winning allies not just for Darcelle, but for all LGBTQ people. Walter, a hardworking entrepreneur who hand-sewed hundreds and hundreds of stage outfits and who started no less than ten different businesses, has consistently come through with a place to gather, fundraisers for whatever needed funding, and entertainment with a message of inclusivity. It is the power of positive publicity and empathy for the full LGBTQ community that Darcelle XV Showplace has been able to generate since the mid-1970s, providing tangible support for transgendered performers, racial minorities, lesbians, HIV-positive people, and many others.

Over the years, many of Walter’s friends and loved ones have died. Tina/Jerry died in 2003 and Roxy Neuhardt, Walter’s life partner, died in October 2017 at the age of 82.

**Comparative Properties**

The current COVID-19 pandemic may prove to be the end for many businesses across the United States. LGBTQ spaces are particularly vulnerable. Of the small remaining subset of venerable LGBTQ bars and nightclubs that managed to stay open for decades, many are now closing, some a victim of high rents and gentrification and some due to the process of assimilation, or the commodification of gay culture as cosmopolitan chic.

Businesses by and for the LGBTQ community, especially businesses such as bars and nightclubs, were generally underground out of necessity until the 1970s, and even then, most remained somewhat “under the radar” for a few decades more. While there were many successful venues open before 1970, these were often either under Mafia protection (in Chicago and the major east coast cities), or suffered numerous raids and shut-downs at the hands of local authorities. But there may no longer be a need for LGBTQ-specific spaces in the United States. Gay Portland journalist Jim Radosta explained in a 2010 interview that Portland’s drag community had “evolved.” He noted that “they stopped going to gay bars on Stark St. and we starting having “gay nights” at mainstream bars.” A “new style of drag queen” was performing, he said, starting to replace “the old-school Darcelle-type drag queen”. Gene Otto, a gay man from Spokane, Washington, also recognized that the culture has changed from what it used to be. “…[W]e’ve all kind of gone back into the woodwork, if you will- which is what we wanted, was to blend, not stand out. So when downtown [Spokane] wanted to have a “gay district,” it wasn’t going to work. …You don’t have the world we had.”

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188 Don Horn, 618.
By the early to mid-1990s, the drag performer RuPaul had become well-known across the United States. In the 2000s, a chain of drag dinner theater clubs called Lips (“The Ultimate in Drag Dining”) opened in various major cities from New York to Chicago to Atlanta. Drag is now, for the most part, mainstream.

Following are a comparison of long-running (open at least 10 years) female impersonation cabarets or drag clubs that operated in the United States during the period of significance (1967-1975) but that opened during the pre-Stonewall era (before 1970). This date is important because the events at Stonewall galvanized the gay community, enabling many clubs and gay-supportive organizations to flourish in a way they could not have before. For drag performers in particular, though, Stonewall was life-changing in terms of the change in status of drag within the larger gay community. Drag and trans performers were some of the heroes of the Stonewall protests. Though there had been earlier protests, the events at Stonewall in 1969 brought to light the lack of civil rights gay people contended with, and led to a new level of respect and acceptance for drag queens across the U.S.

The drag venues most comparable to Darcelle XV are below. Not included are some of the most iconic gay bars without a drag show, such as the Black Cat in Los Angeles, now a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument, Cafe-Lafitte-in-Exile in New Orleans (opened in 1933), or The Double Header in Seattle's Pioneer Square (opened in 1933-34, closed in 2015). No gay bars from 1970 or earlier have yet been identified in any of the smaller cities of Oregon, much less any gay bars with a drag show. Venues are not listed in order of importance, but those in Portland and then on the west coast are listed first.

1. **Dahl and Penne** was a Portland bar from 1914 that transitioned into a gay bar in the early 1960s, with a back room performance space called the Royal Flush Room. Located on SW 2nd and Alder, it was one of the anchors of the “dirty triangle” or “gay triangle” in 1960s to mid-1980s Portland. Its proprietors, Sami and Gene Landauer, were especially beloved in the Portland gay community, and the back room and weekend drag shows there were run by The Vanessa, a dancer, hair stylist, and decorator. Early drag shows were mostly lip-synch performances, but the gay community showed up in force on Sundays for brunch, and for “Sunday Mass,” where waiters on roller skates dressed as nuns. Dahl and Penne did provide as much support to early International Sovereign Rose Court functions as Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV Showplace. Vanessa (Van Richards) was crowned Regent Empress XIII in 1971, when coronation events were still twice-yearly. Unlike the Dahl & Penne, which provided back-room drag shows on an advertised basis, Demas Tavern/ Darcelle XV was doing drag shows full-time starting in 1969, with a “company” that expanded over time. Dahl and Penne served an almost exclusively gay clientele, unlike the “welcome to all” philosophy at Demas/ Darcelle XV. The final performance at Dahl and Penne was held on December 11, 1983. The building is now gone, replaced by a large bank tower on the site.

2. **Jack’s Nite (or Night) Hawk** was located in Spokane, Washington, owned by Jack Allen. The bar was operating from possibly the 1960s into the 1980s. It was in an area of Spokane referred to as the “Fruit Loop,” a known area of homosexual pick-ups at the bus station downtown. Jack’s Nite Hawk also hosted drag performances now and then, with ties to the Imperial Sovereign Court of Spokane. There is little information on the gay bars, much less drag venues of smaller cities such as Spokane, but this

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193 There are a number of well-known drag clubs across the U.S. that opened in the early 1970s, such as the 307 in Phoenix AZ, George’s in Memphis, and the Jacques Cabaret in Boston which had an LGBT clientele and became a drag bar in the 1970s.

194 Don Horn, 170.

195 The election of Tracey St. James as Empress XIV was the first popular election of the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court in 1971. See online history of the Rose Court: http://www.rosecourt.org/index.php/calendar-of-events/11-the-portland-party. Vanessa later died of AIDS, as did many gay men of this era.

196 Don Horn, 235.

club was mentioned as having drag performances. Like Dahl and Penne, the drag performances were occasional, and the place was first and foremost a bar.

3. **Finnochio’s** in San Francisco was perhaps the most famous drag club in the United States. It began producing shows featuring female impersonators in 1933. It moved in 1936 to the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco. Finnochio’s was named after Joe Finnochio (which, in Italian, is slang for homosexual), who owned and operated the club until his death in 1986. Joe’s wife continued to keep it open until 1999, when rent increases finally led her to close the place. Joe Finnochio was not gay, nor by some accounts did he encourage (or protect) gay patrons at the club. While it enjoyed the patronage of many famous celebrities, Finnochio’s did not primarily function as a center of gay culture or belonging, unlike Darcelle XV Showplace and most of the other venues listed here.

4. **Club 82** was a famous drag club in New York City during the 1950s and 1960s. The club was opened in 1953 and was reportedly operated by the mafia, as most gay clubs on the east coast were. Since gay clubs and drag performance were illegal during that era, venues could operate only through a system of bribes and pay-offs via the mob to authorities. Several of the female impersonators that performed at Club 82 held steady jobs for over a decade. Kitt Russell, who was dubbed “America’s top femme mimic” in 1951 by radio commentator Walter Winchell, was the director of the “Club 82 Revue.” The club enjoyed a reputation as a desired hangout for celebrities who were seeking a more outrageous crowd, and the performances were reportedly grueling, with complex choreography, sets, and live music. The club’s popularity ebbed with the dawn of Stonewall and the Gay Rights Movement as drag began to move out from the shadows and became viewed as less subversive. The club began catering to a glam rock crowd in about 1972, though the “showgirls” were still on staff. When the rock band The New York Dolls performed there in 1974, they performed in drag (except for one member of the group, who refused). After 1976, it continued as a disco bar until it closed in 1978. Club 82 is comparable to Finocchio’s in its commitment to an in-house, full-time drag show with a combined gay and straight audience, and seemed to have been more a celebrity hangout than a gay venue in its heyday.

5. In Chicago, the **Baton Show Lounge** began operating at 436 N. Clark in 1969 under the soon-to-change name **Smitty's Show Lounge**. It was at that location until February 21, 2019, when it moved to a new location on N. Broadway, just shy of being in the same space for 50 years. The name was changed to the Baton Show Lounge to recognize the baton-twirling drag show by owner Jim Flint. Jim “Felicia” Flint’s performance was featured on TV shows such as the Donahue show, the Oprah Winfrey Show in 1982, and then Sally Jessy Raphael. The resulting publicity brought celebrities to the Chicago club including Madonna, Grace Jones, Kirk Douglas, Carol Channing, Janet Jackson, Mariah Carey, Sammy Davis, Jr., and countless others. Jim Flint is still performing and still owns the club. This appears to be the only other club in the United States owned by its star performer, like Darcelle XV Showplace. It also appears to be one of only a few drag clubs opened before 1970 that are still open, though not in its original locale.

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Darcelle XV
Name of Property

6. Chicago’s longest-running drag performance venue was the Nite Life. It was open from the early 1940s until 1981, closing only once briefly during that period for repairs after a fire in 1973. Chicago experienced a real boom in drag clubs during the 1960s, fueled by their popularity with mobsters. The Nite Life, like so many of this period, was known as a “straight” bar with a drag show.

7. Smokey’s Den, in Springfield Illinois, was owned by famous lesbian club owner Mary Lou “Smokey” Schneider. The club opened in 1966 and featured drag shows by the Smokettes that drew fans from St. Louis on weekends. Like Darcelle XV Showplace, the club had a gay owner and openly catered to a mixed crowd. When Smokey’s closed in 2003, it was thought to be the oldest gay bar in Illinois, despite competition from much-larger Chicago. Another similarity to Darcelle XV was that Smokey’s also hosted drag queen events. Smokey’s Den was the instigator of the Miss Gay Illinois pageant.

8. The Jewel Box inspired several copy-cat drag touring shows, such as the Pearl Box Revue, featuring Dorian Corey and an all-Black drag show that ran for twenty-seven years from 1955 until 1982. This show is mentioned in the documentary film Paris is Burning. While neither the Pearl Box nor the Jewel Box performances remained in one place and therefore are not a fair comparison to any of the nightclubs mentioned so far, they served a very important function by exposing many cities across the United States to the concept of a high-quality, professionally produced drag show.

Darcelle XV is the home of the longest-running continuously operated drag show in the United States. While the end of the period of significance is less than 50 years in the past, the numbers of other LGBTQ-affiliated bars, restaurants, drag clubs, or other commercial spaces that opened in the pre-Stonewall era across the United States and that still operate under the same owner, much less in the same location, are incredibly rare.

Darcelle XV Showplace stands out from other drag clubs of the pre-Stonewall era for its public alignment with gay culture, illustrated by its gay owner performing onstage and the multiple drag events supported and sponsored there. No other drag club of the time managed to welcome and operate so openly in support of the LGBTQ community, including all manners of sexual orientation, gender, race or creed. The nightclub retains its continued use, configuration, character, and form as it was from 1975, when it had completed its transformation from a skid-row tavern to a lesbian bar to a renowned drag cabaret beloved by the LGBTQ community and straight allies alike.

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Darcelle XV
Name of Property
Multnomah Co., OR
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)


Darcell XV
Multnomah Co., OR


Haaken, Jan, Director; Jan Haaken and Wendy Kohn, Writers. *Queens of Heart: Community Therapists in Drag* [film], Kwamba Productions, Portland State University Foundation in association with Ostrow & Company, 2006


*Just Out*, various dates 1988-1999


*New York Times*, various dates 1966-1984

*Oregon Journal*, various dates 1911-1978

*Oregonian*, various dates 1909-2018


Name of Property: Darcelle XV
County and State: Multnomah Co., OR


R. L. Polk Co., Portland City Directories, various dates 1911-1958


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)

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

Darcelle XV is located within Lyndon Musolf Manor, which is constructed on lots 1-4, Block 17, Couch’s Addition, Portland Oregon. The building address is 216 NW 3rd Avenue. The entirety of the building footprint, constructed to the legal lot lines, and the property it sits on, 100' by 190', is the extent of the nominated property.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The justification for this boundary is that Darcelle XV has been at the same location in the building throughout the period of significance, 1967-1975, and continues to occupy the same area within the building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kristen Minor and Don (Donnie) Horn
date: April 6, 2020
organization: 
telephone: (503) 706-9618
street & number: 2146 NE 17th Avenue
e-mail: 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).
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: Darcelle XV  
City or Vicinity: Portland  
County: Multnomah  
State: Oregon  
Photographer: Kristen Minor  
Date Photographed: December 16, 2019

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

Photo 1 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0001
Looking southeast at the west façade of the building

Photo 2 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0002
Looking northeast at the west and south sides of the building

Photo 3 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0003
Looking northwest at the east and south sides of the building

Photo 4 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0004
Looking north along the Third Avenue sidewalk at Darcelle XV marquee and sign

Photo 5 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0005
Looking northeast at the Darcelle XV storefront and entry

Photo 6 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0006
Looking northeast towards the stage within the main club space.

Photo 7 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0007
Looking east towards the stage within the main club space.

Photo 8 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0008
Looking south within the main club space. Stair to basement bumps out into room.

Photo 9 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0009
Looking northwest within the main club space. The bar is in the back center.

Photo 10 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0010
Looking west within the basement kitchen space.

Photo 11 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0011
Looking south within the basement costume storage area
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Photo 12 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0012
Looking west within the basement costume storage area

Photo 13 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0013
Looking west along the north end of the basement dressing area

Photo 14 of 14: OR_Multnomah_DarcelleXV_0014
Looking east at the basement stair leading up to the stage

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.
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: Google Earth application, 2020
Figure 2: Local Location Map: PortlandMaps Aerial street view
Figure 3: Tax Lot Map
Figure 4: Site Plan/ Ground Floor Plan, 2007, Carleton Hart Architecture
Figure 5a: Basement Level Plan (partial), 2007, Carleton Hart Architecture
Figure 5b: Upper-level (Third) Floor Plan, 2007, Carleton Hart Architecture
Figure 6: Ground Floor Plan c.1909, Bennes, Hendricks, & Thompson
Figure 7: Demas Tavern Comparative layout, 1967-68 and 1969
Figure 8: Demas Tavern Comparative layout, 1969-70 and 1970-71
Figure 9: Darcelle XV Layout, 1972-82
Figure 10: Third Ave Elevation, 2007, Carleton Hart Architecture
Figure 11: Third [Street] Elevation, c.1909, Bennes, Hendricks & Thompson
Figure 12: Davis Street Elevation, c.1909, Bennes, Hendricks & Thompson
Figure 13: Historic exterior photo, circa late 1920s to early 1930s
Figure 14: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1924 corrected to 1950
Figure 15: Demas Tavern Exterior photo, 1967
Figure 16: Demas Tavern Exterior photo, 1968
Figure 17: Darcelle XV exterior photo, 1974
Figure 18: Darcelle XV exterior photo, 1976
Figure 19: Roxy and Darcelle, early 1970s
Figure 20: Darcelle on the bar, 1970
Figure 21: Darcelle Onstage, 1971
Figure 22: Patron at Darcelle XV, 1974
Figure 23: Darcelle at Darcelle XV, 1975
Figure 1: Regional Location map. Google Earth application, 2020
Figure 2: Local location map (PortlandMaps imagery, 2020, site is shaded)
**Darcelle XV**

**Name of Property**
Multnomah Co., OR

**County and State**
N/A

**Name of multiple listing (if applicable)**

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**National Register of Historic Places**

**Continuation Sheet**

**Section number**

**Additional Documentation**

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**Figure 3:** Tax Map (site shaded): Lots 1-4, Block 17

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![Tax Map](image-url)
Figure 4: Site Plan/ Ground Floor Plan, 2007, Carleton Hart Architecture. Darcelle XV shown in pink
Figure 5a: Basement Floor Plan (partial sheet A2.0, Darcelle XV area at west shown in pink), 2007, Carleton Hart Architecture PC
Figure 5b: Upper-level (Third) Floor Plan, 2007, Carleton Hart Architecture PC. Second Floor is similar
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 6: Ground Floor Plan (one of three undated versions, none of which appear to be exactly as built), c. 1909, Bennes, Hendricks, & Thompson (University of Oregon Library)
Figure 7: Demas Tavern Comparative layout, 1967-68 and 1969. Diagrams Don Horn with Walter Cole.
Figure 8: Demas Tavern Comparative layout, 1969-70 and 1970-71. Diagrams Don Horn with Walter Cole
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Figure 9: Demas Tavern/Darcelle XV layout, 1973-82. Diagram Don Horn with Walter Cole
Figure 10: Third Avenue Elevation Drawing, 2007, Carleton Hart Architecture PC

Figure 11: Third [Street] Elevation, c.1909, Bennes, Hendricks & Thompson (University of Oregon Library)
Figure 12: Davis Street Elevation, c.1909, Bennes, Hendricks & Thompson *(University of Oregon Library)*

Figure 13: Historic exterior photo, circa late 1920s to early 1930s (published in Kohl, p. 12 and attributed to Portland Archives, but not found at Portland Archives). “Suits” awning location is now Darcelle XV
Figure 14: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1924 corrected to 1950

Figure 15: Demas Tavern Exterior photo, 1967. Walter Cole personal collection
Darcelle XV
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 16: Exterior photo, 1968. City of Portland Archives and Records Center

Figure 17: Darcelle XV exterior photo, 1974. Walter Cole personal collection.
Figure 18: Darcelle XV exterior photo, 1976. *City of Portland Archives and Records Center A2011-018.162*

Figure 19: Roxy and Darcelle, early 1970s. *Photo courtesy Greg Pitts from OPB “Darcelle XV”*
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**Figure 20:** Darcelle on the bar, 1970. *Walter Cole personal collection.*
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Figure 21: Darcelle onstage (stage extension was 4 x 8 table), 1971. *Walter Cole personal collection.*
Figure 22: Patron at stage edge, interior of Darcelle XV, 1974. Photo by April Berelson, Portland Art Museum.

Figure 23: Darcelle at Darcelle XV, 1975. Walter Cole personal collection.
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Looking southeast at the west façade of the building

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