

2013 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Twin Peaks Tavern Landmark Designation



Twin Peaks Tavern, featuring its large, and pioneering, clear glass windows

The designation of Twin Peaks Tavern originated as a community-suggested site as part of the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission's Work Program in June 2011. The groundbreaking report, *Twin Peaks Tavern Article 10 Landmark Designation* resulted in the successful designation of Twin Peaks Tavern (401 Castro Street) as an officially recognized San Francisco Landmark significant for its contribution to modern lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) society and culture. It is also noteworthy for having been in continual operation in the same location since 1972, making it one of the oldest gay bars in San Francisco. Located in the heart of the city's Castro District, Twin Peaks is housed in a turn-of-the-century building with an intact 1923 Mediterranean Revival-style façade.

The tavern was purchased in 1972 by a lesbian couple, MaryEllen Cunha and Margaret Ann (Peggy) Forster, who refurbished the property as a bar for gay clientele. The two women replaced the existing painted over windows with large, clear plate glass, thus revealing their patrons' identities to passersby at a time when gay bars typically operated in concealed locations.

The San Francisco Planning Department was responsible for carrying out the research, documentation, and public outreach related to the proposed *Twin Peaks Tavern Article 10 Landmark Designation*. Planning Department staff member, Moses Corrette, prepared the draft landmark designation report and conducted significant community outreach as part of the research and public engagement process. Staff reached out to past and present property owners, patrons, and members of the larger LGBT community and held three "History Happy Hours" at the bar to create an opportunity where long-time patrons could come and share their stories about the tavern. Additionally, Department staff conducted

several in-depth oral history interviews with key people involved in the development of the bar including tavern owner, MaryEllen Cunha. This formed the basis for research and documentation of the history and significance of the resource.

The Twin Peaks project engaged individuals in the practice of historic preservation who may not otherwise have been involved or interested in preservation, and also served to increase appreciation for the LGBT community's place in the larger historic narrative of San Francisco.

Learn more about the history of the Twin Peaks Tavern:

<http://www.sfgayhistory.com/neighborhoods/castro/castro-gay-bars/twin-peaks-tavern/>