

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Elks Athletic Club (Additional Documentation)
other names/site number JF- Henry Clay Hotel, Beaux Arts Cocktail Lounge
Related Multiple Property NA

2. Location

street & number 604 South Third Street

NA

 not for publication
city or town Louisville

NA

 vicinity
state Kentucky code KY county Jefferson code 111 zip code 40202

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 Craig Potts/SHPO Date _____

Kentucky Heritage Council/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 _____

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This documentation amends the National Register listing for the Elks Athletic Club at 604 South Third Street in Louisville, Kentucky. It updates the property description and demonstrates the property's significance in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) history. The Elks Athletic Club was listed in the National Register on July 16, 1979. In 2005, City Properties Group, a Louisville-based real estate development firm, purchased the building and carried out an extensive renovation. Recent research has determined that the Beaux Arts Cocktail Lounge, which occupied two storefronts on the north side of the building from 1947-55, catered to gay men during an era when same-sex relationships generally remained closeted yet new activism promoted acceptance of gays and lesbians nationwide. The property is thus significant for its role in a transitional era bounded by, on the one hand, social networks created by World War II and, on the other, the birth of the modern gay rights movement with the Stonewall uprising of June-July 1969.

This documentation was prepared under contract with the Fairness Campaign of Louisville, a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to equality for LGBTQ people, using funds awarded by the Kentucky Heritage Council. It is part of the Kentucky LGBTQ Historic Context Study carried out by Dr. Catherine Fosl of the University of Louisville.

Gays and Lesbians in Louisville, Kentucky, 1945-1970

The Beaux Arts Cocktail Lounge opened for business on April 16, 1947, in two storefronts on the north side of the Henry Clay Hotel, one of several large hotels in downtown Louisville. Situated in the middle of the central business district, the lounge catered to residents of nearby apartment buildings, office workers, and hotel guests. The establishment served cocktails, offered food service, and hosted live musical performances some evenings. Guests of the Henry Clay likely provided the bar with many of its patrons, but it also attracted other customers. Located near theaters, restaurants, and retail stores, the Beaux Arts occupied a prime location in a busy urban center.¹

In a July 1948 advertisement, the Beaux Arts touted itself as the “rendezvous of the smart, sophisticated crowd who demand glamorous surroundings and exceptional drinks.” This billing suggests a predominantly white-collar clientele and a combination of male and female patrons. Cocktail lounges developed after Prohibition as distillers sought to revive liquor consumption and craft images of socially responsible drinking. Before Prohibition, distilled spirits conjured images of bawdy, all-male saloons, working-class patrons, inebriation, and social decay. Afterward, advertisers used images of glamor, sophistication, and wealth to appeal to middle-class consumers. Women, a largely untapped market for distilled spirits, became a primary target of such efforts. Cocktail lounges became central to new forms of middle-class consumption. As venues where educated, status-

¹ Information about the surrounding area derived from *Caron's Louisville City Directory, 1949* (Cincinnati: Caron Directory Co., 1949), 1098. Musical entertainers included an organist René Hoffman, the Odell Baker Trio, and the Billy Rudolph Trio. See David Williams, “A Quick Study of the Beaux Arts Cocktail Lounge, Louisville, Kentucky, 1947-1955,” copy in possession of Daniel Vivian, Louisville, Kentucky. Other hotels in the immediate vicinity included the Brown Hotel at the intersection of Fourth Street and Broadway Avenue; the Waterson Hotel at 415 West Chestnut Street; and the Kentucky Hotel at Fifth and Walnut streets. See John E. Kleber, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Louisville* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 405.

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conscious consumers gathered to enjoy drinks after work or as part of evening entertainments, they heralded the growing influence of white-collar workers and professionals in American life.²

Advertising offers strong indications of the Beaux Arts' acceptance of gay men. Beginning in 1948, advertisements published in the Louisville *Courier-Journal* daily newspaper employed the word "gay" in a manner that would have been well understood in LGTBQ subcultures but not among heterosexuals. On July 1, 1948, for example, the lounge billed itself as "the gay Beaux Arts." On July 22, an advertisement touted the Beaux Arts as offering "music [and] gayety." Although such statements might seem innocuous on the surface, historians of the gay and lesbian rights movement have demonstrated their significance in the context of same-sex subcultures. As a term signifying homosexuality, "gay" made its way from England to America and became common in pornographic literature after World War I. By the 1930s, gay men embraced its use as a self-descriptor. After World War II, gay assumed the status of "a magic by-word [used] in practically every corner of the United States where homosexuals might gather." Despite its ubiquity in such settings, "gay" remained "practically unknown outside of homosexual circles," save for a few select groups who had frequent contact with gay men such as police officers and theater workers, for example. The Beaux Arts' advertisements thus would have captured the attention of gays without prompting unwanted scrutiny.³

The recollections of Howard Richard Angel, a native of New Albany, Indiana, offer the clearest portrait of the Beaux Arts' clientele. Angel graduated from New Albany High School in the mid-1940s and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force a short while later. During his service he had "a kind of brief affair" with another man, which led to an Air Force investigation and, eventually, a dishonorable discharge. Although the inquiry never found hard evidence of wrongdoing on Angel's part, he eventually succumbed to the pressure. As Angel recalled years later, "they never come up with anything, but they just harassed me, bullied me . . . until I finally said, 'Well, . . . give me the papers and I'll say what you want to say.'" Angel moved to Louisville in 1954. Increasingly aware of his sexual preference for men, he began searching for opportunities to socialize with like-minded men. He soon found the Beaux Arts. As one of several downtown bars that deviated from prevailing social conventions, the Beaux Arts allowed gay men to socialize freely and openly, without the need for self-censure and denial.⁴

Angel recalled the Beaux Arts' patrons as mostly gay. "People hugged and kissed," he recounted. He also recalled the bar operated as a restaurant but observed "at night nobody was eating!" With its proximity to the city's theater district and other bars and restaurants that served gay patrons, the Beaux Arts formed part of a small number of venues that anchored a thriving social scene. Nolan's, another bar frequented by gays, opened several doors down at 320 West Chestnut Street in 1955. It became "The Downtowner" two years later. Meanwhile, "Gordon's Golden Horse," a bar and restaurant in the 600 block of South Fourth Street, also served

² *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), July 22, 1948, p. 10; Jack S. Blocker, Jr., "Kaleidoscope in Motion: Drinking in the United States, 1400-2000," in *Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History*, ed. Mack P. Holt (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 233. Further confirmation of the bar's target audience is provided by a July 1947 advertisement featuring a handsome man wearing a double-breasted suit and tie and holding a phone. White-collar professionals working in nearby offices doubtless saw the advertisement as beckoning their social set. See *Courier-Journal*, July 8, 1947, p. 2.

³ *Courier-Journal*, July 1, 1948, p. 8, and July 22, 1948, p. 10; Daniel Webster Cory, *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (New York: Greenberg, 1951), pp. 107-110.

⁴ N. David Williams, interview with Howard Richard Angel, Apr. 2011, transcript, Williams-Nichols Collection, Ekstrom Library, Louisville, KY.

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gay men. Describing the nexus of activity surrounding these establishments, Angel recounted, “Everyone would make the trip down to Gordon’s, up to Nolan’s and Beaux Arts, and trips back and forth.”⁵

Angel’s recollections provide rare insight into Louisville’s gay subculture at midcentury. As scholars such as Allan Bérubé, John D’Emilio, and Francis M. Mondimore have shown, World War II had profoundly affected the lives of millions of gays and lesbians. Military service, migration to cities for wartime employment, and the foregrounding of human rights as an international concern led LGBTQ people to think about themselves in new ways. Recognition of belonging to a particular social group alleviated feelings of shame and isolation while also creating opportunities for friendships, love, sexual exploration, affirmation, and organizing. Relationships forged during and after the war proved crucial in creating and sustaining gay communities. They also created a basis for social activism. Once informal social networks of gay men and women developed, campaigns aimed at securing improved social and political status lay only a short step beyond.⁶

At the same time, social networks forged during and immediately after the war not only created visibility; they brought new scrutiny. Although World War II, in the words of historian John D’Emilio, “created something of a nationwide coming out experience,” it also contributed to identification of homosexuality as a social problem. The U.S. armed forces, for examples, classified homosexuality as a mental illness, a view rooted in Western medical practices. The same perspective extended into mainstream culture. Many Americans viewed gays and lesbians as perverts, deviants, and sick—a social problem demanding attention and scorn. The visibility that developed during the war years thus represented something of a double-edged sword.⁷

The most pronounced effects of World War II included the development of gay communities in cities nationwide. In the decade of the 1940s, gay bars began opening in many American cities. By the early 1950s, gay men in most large and mid-sized cities had little difficulty finding gay bars and thus making contact with other men. Gay bars became fundamental to development of gay communities and increased openness, albeit not in ways that directly challenged social norms. Gay bars provided an all-gay environment where gay men could “shed their heterosexual camouflage” and socialize freely on their own. “Mixed bars,” meaning those that catered to both heterosexual and gay patrons, served similar roles. The visibility of gay bars in turn fostered the growth of gay communities. In conjunction with other developments, particularly the publication of Alfred Kinsey’s pathbreaking *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948, the growing prevalence of gay and mixed bars served to encourage solidarity and new forms of activity. For many, such establishments meant the difference between lives of loneliness and isolation and feelings of acceptance and belonging.⁸

⁵ Williams, interview with Howard Richard Angel, Apr. 2011; *Caron’s Louisville City Directory, 1949* (Cincinnati: Caron Directory Co., 1949), pp. 1098, 1540-41.

⁶ John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), chaps. 1 and 2; Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: A History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Vicki L. Eaklor, *Queer America: A GLBT History of the 20th Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 67-72

⁷ D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, chaps. 1 and 2; Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*; Eaklor, *Queer America*, 67-72.

⁸ On the significance of gay bars, see especially Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 171-173; Mondimore, *Natural History of Homosexuality*, 235; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 32-33; the Kinsey reports of 1948 and subsequently are significant in U.S. LGBTQ history in several ways, offering—as D’Emilio writes in *Sexual Politics* (p. 33) “scientific evidence” on sexual behavior that prompted a “reevaluation of conventional moral attitudes.” Most notably, perhaps, half of Kinsey’s male respondents in 1948 reported erotic responses to their own sex (cited in D’Emilio, p. 35)

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The Beaux Arts thus operated during an era when Americans' awareness of same-sex relationships changed dramatically and gays and lesbians explored new possibilities. Although members of sexual minorities remained guarded, fearful of harassment and exposure, they also assumed new roles and moved more deliberately into the public realm. According to the historian James T. Sears, gay men in Louisville tended to gather at the several downtown bars that welcomed them and cruised Cherokee Park or along South Fourth Street in the vicinity of Central Park. Lesbians generally preferred private parties, meeting through softball leagues female-centered professions such as teaching, or the small number of bars that developed reputations as "lesbian watering holes." Gays and lesbians thus formed their own distinct communities, partially sheltered from public view but not as reserved as before.⁹

Louisville had a reputation for being more tolerant of gays and lesbians than other nearby cities. According to Sears, after anti-vice crusades in the 1910s, Louisville tolerated gays and lesbians so long as their activities did not challenge established norms. Harassment remained rare; most gays and lesbians, as Sears notes, "led comfortably closeted lives." Historian Catherine Fosl affirms Sears's findings. Her research has found that gays and lesbians in Louisville, like their counterparts in nearby cities such as Cincinnati and Lexington, "remained largely 'closeted,' living and loving among themselves in bars and more informal social settings, but keeping a low profile to remain largely hidden from the general public."¹⁰

During the 1950s, the establishment of "homophile" groups that promoted acceptance of gays and lesbians opened a new chapter in LGBTQ history. In 1951, activists in Los Angeles formed the Mattachine Society, an organization that advocated for the rights of gays and lesbians and challenged the image of them as sick and criminal. Within two years the group had as many as 2,000 members. The name derived from a French Renaissance secret society of unmarried men. The Mattachine Society adopted a decentralized organization, struggled to establish a focus, and soon found itself saddled with leadership battles. Its main activities included sponsoring socials, lectures, and discussion groups and, after 1953, publishing its pioneering *ONE* magazine. Later the same year, the group reorganized and settled some of the internecine battles that plagued its early operations. In 1957, the Mattachine Society moved its national offices to San Francisco. By that time, local chapters had taken root in cities such as Boston, Denver, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia, with subscribers in cities such as Louisville.¹¹

In 1955, eight women formed the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in San Francisco, a lesbian counterpart to the Mattachine Society. The name came from Pierre Louys's *Songs of Bilitis*, a collection of erotic poetry published in 1894. From the beginning, the DOB had strong social and political aims. It sponsored lectures and discussions and began publishing *The Ladder*, a magazine focused on lesbian concerns, in 1956. In some cases, the DOB worked cooperatively with the Mattachine Society. In other instances, the group charted its own course, committed to bringing respect to lesbians nationwide. Together, the DOB and Mattachine Society took significant strides toward fostering greater awareness of gays and lesbians and giving same-sex relationships a

⁹ James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 280.

¹⁰ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 60; Catherine Fosl, "'It Could be Dangerous!': Gay Liberation and Gay Marriage in Louisville, Kentucky, 1970," *Ohio Valley History* 12, no. 1 (spring 2012): 46.

¹¹ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, chaps. 4-7; Ealkor, *Queer America*, 96-97. The Mattachine Society and similar groups adopted the term "homophile" ("loving the same") to emphasize the humanity of gays and lesbians and to contest the imagery of sick and diseased homosexuals.

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more human, less clinical face. By challenging pervasive harassment and presenting gays and lesbians as loving, caring human beings, both groups took steps toward securing their acceptance.¹²

Despite the accomplishments of these organizations, it is important not to overstate their influence. Neither the Mattachine Society nor the DOB stirred popular consciousness in ways that fundamentally reshaped Americans' views of gays and lesbians. In general, American society remained intolerant and unaccepting. D'Emilio notes that "silence, invisibility, and isolation" remained dominant themes in gay culture. During the 1950s, McCarthyism, the conformity of Cold War culture, and tendencies to conflate communism with homosexuality militated against greater tolerance, let alone acceptance. The 1960s achieved little more. Despite the groundswell of countercultural activism and the social movements of the era, gays and lesbians remained besieged minorities, possessed of new self-awareness and solidarity but subjected to constant discrimination and harassment and burdened by a loathsome public image. The results of a poll published in *Time* magazine at the end of the decade captured the place of gays and lesbians in American society. Sixty-three percent of Americans viewed homosexuals as "harmful to American life" and saw their activities as repulsive and troubling.¹³

Scholars of LGBTQ history generally regard the protests that shook New York City in the summer of 1969 as the birth of the gay rights movement. In the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, sparked an outpouring of resentment, anger, and hostility that rapidly grew into the beginning of a mass crusade for self-empowerment. Police raids on gay bars remained routine in New York City, and a close mayoral campaign led incumbent John Lindsay to launch a crackdown on crime and vice. The Stonewall Inn offered an inviting target. The bar operated without a liquor license, reportedly had ties to organized crime, and attracted large numbers of young, nonwhite patrons. It also stood near a busy intersection, which made it highly visible.¹⁴

The raid began with eight plainclothes police officers making arrests. Soon, the crowd became unruly. A large crowd gathered on the street outside. People began jeering at the police and heaving beer cans, bottles, cobblestones, and other debris. As the police left the bar, scuffles between them and the crowd broke out. Sensing a volatile situation, the eight officers retreated back into the Stonewall Inn and locked the door to keep the crowd out. Within minutes, two angry participants charged the door with an uprooted parking meter. A melee ensued; a small fire broke out, partially engulfing the inn in flames. Fire trucks and members of the city's Tactical Patrol Force (TPF) arrived on the scene at about 3:00 a.m. Officers wearing riot-control gear and armed with billy clubs and other weapons confronted the crowd—estimated at between 400 and 1,000 people—and, after several additional scuffles, managed to calm the situation and encouraged people to disperse.¹⁵

¹² D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 101-125.

¹³ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, chap. 3; Fosl, "It Could be Dangerous!," 46-48.

¹⁴ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 231-232. The Stonewall Riots have attracted extensive scholarly attention. See especially Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993); David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004); Betsy Kuhn, *Gay Power!: The Stonewall Riots and the Gay Rights Movement, 1969* (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2011). The account presented here is drawn mainly from D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States*, 209-19; Eaklor, *Queer America*, 122-25; and Stonewall (New York, NY), National Historic Landmark nomination, <http://www.nps.gov/nhl/find/statelists/ny/Stonewall.pdf>.

¹⁵ Eaklor, *Queer America*, 122-23; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 232; Stonewall National Historic Landmark nomination.

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News of the raid quickly spread. The following evening, thousands of demonstrators gathered outside the Stonewall Inn to protest anti-gay policing. Gay men initially made up most of those present but heterosexuals soon joined in. Protesters inspired by other social movements shouted slogans such as “Gay Power!” and “Equality for Homosexuals!” In a then-revolutionary display of self-acceptance, gay men openly held hands, kissed, and exchanged other gestures of affection. As the crowd grew, it filled the street and spilled into Christopher Park. About 2:15 a.m., squad cars carrying about 100 officers converged on the scene, dramatically changing the tenor of the event. Protesters started hurling garbage cans and other debris. The police called for TPF officers as backup. The TPF arrived in busses and immediately rushed the crowd in an effort to clear the street. Protesters dispersed but quickly reassembled behind the police, sparking chaotic chases outside the Stonewall Inn and down neighboring streets. By about 4:00 a.m., the police managed to scatter most of the crowd and the protests subsided.¹⁶

People returned to the streets on the evening of June 29, albeit in smaller numbers than before. Inclement weather led to quiet on June 30 and July 1 but crowds returned on July 2 and 3. By the time New Yorkers gathered for traditional Forth of July celebrations later in the week, several nights of unrest in Greenwich Village had sparked new awareness of anti-gay hostility and galvanized gays, lesbians, and supporters throughout the city.¹⁷

The Stonewall protests inspired several pivotal developments. In the weeks that followed, activists founded the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), an organization that launched aggressive efforts to secure equality for gays and lesbians. On July 27, activists staged the first large-scale gay and lesbian march in New York City, parading the two blocks from Washington Square Park to the Stonewall Inn in a brazen display of self-empowerment. By the year’s end, the GLF spawned the Gay Activists Alliance, a group dedicated to securing gay rights. Meanwhile, as news of the Stonewall unrest spread, activists in communities nationwide formed gay liberation groups, all dedicated to increasing tolerance and awareness of same-sex relationships. By the first anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, at least 1,500 local groups had sprung up, and the number reached 2,500 a year later.¹⁸

The Louisville Gay Liberation Front (LGLF) figured among the organizations that developed. Although part of the wave of post-Stonewall activism, it owed its origins mainly to local discrimination. As Fosl has shown, the immediate catalyst for the organization’s founding occurred on June 8, 1970, when two lesbians, Tracy Knight and Marjorie Jones (pseudonyms), applied for a license to marry at the county clerk’s office in downtown Louisville. County Clerk James Hallahan promptly denied the application and later defended his action by citing procreation as the basic purpose of marriage and identifying a lesbian marriage as potentially “dangerous.” Knight and Jones filed a lawsuit in response, which Fosl and gay marriage historian George Chauncey locate as the second legal challenge for same-sex marriage in U.S. history and the first involving women protagonists. Moreover, on July 9, a group of thirteen women and seven men formed the LGLF. Like other post-Stonewall organizations, this group launched a series of efforts aimed at increasing gay visibility. Typical of the social experimentation and activism of the era, the LGLF made “consciousness-raising” a priority and strived to increase acceptance of gays and lesbians. Its main activities included speaking about gay life to regional universities and social groups in an effort to demystify gays and lesbians; establishing a telephone “hot

¹⁶ Eaklor, *Queer America*, 122-23; Stonewall National Historic Landmark nomination.

¹⁷ Stonewall National Historic Landmark nomination.

¹⁸ Eaklor, *Queer America*, 123-27; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 233-39.

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line” in Louisville for persons struggling with questions about their sexuality; and arranging for the University of Louisville to offer a “gay studies” class.¹⁹

The founding of the LGLF marked a turning point in Kentucky LGBTQ history. As the state’s first organization committed to advocating openly for gay and lesbian rights, it marked a shift in direction from the sheltered solidarity of the post-World War II era to new campaigns aimed at gay liberation and equality. Organized efforts at ending harassment, promoting acceptance, and securing basic rights for gays and lesbians became principal goals of sustained activism. Gays and lesbians assumed more open and public social roles, committed to self-liberation and eager to affirm their humanity, despite continuing hostility. The campaigns of the post-Stonewall era encountered widespread resistance and open hostility; Ronald Reagan’s new conservatism, the rise of the religious right, and the culture wars of the 1990s threatened a return to the harassment, discrimination, and stigmatization of earlier decades. Only with sustained legislative, judicial, and popular battles did gays and lesbians win decisive victories in a still-unfinished campaign for full equality.²⁰

Set against the broad contours of LGBTQ history, the Beaux Arts is significant as one of many bars that catered to gay patrons during the post-World War II era without declaring itself thoroughly “gay.” As an example of a venue that situated socially respectable drinking in close proximity to professional offices, theaters, and urban residences, it evidenced shifting cultural norms and, in particular, the rise of gay and lesbian cultures in mid-sized cities. Its location near several other bars with similar clienteles gave it a place amid an evolving social scene that presaged the explicitly gay and lesbian bars of the post-Stonewall era but played an instrumental role in the coalescence of gay and lesbian communities in Louisville. Moreover, the Beaux Arts’ status as a “hotel bar” offers important insights into gay culture during the 1940s and 1950s. In an era when the majority of gays remained closeted and many adopted heterosexual practices for the sake of social acceptance—including marrying women, in many cases—easy access to hotel rooms fulfilled an important need. Hotel bars made possible clandestine meetings with potential to lead to sexual liaisons that needed to be carried out discretely and without access to the residences of participants. In short, the Beaux Arts figured at the center of an emergent gay culture in Louisville during the late 1940s and 1950s. Its story is part and parcel of the opportunities created by the war years and the continuing challenges that faced gays and lesbians during the Cold War era and beyond.

Recent History and Integrity

The Elks Athletic Club has experienced relatively few changes since its listing in the National Register in 1979. The most extensive alterations occurred during a renovation carried out by City Properties Group (CPG) in 2005-08. As noted in the 1979 nomination, the Young Women’s Athletic Club (YWCA) purchased the building in 1963. It occupied the structure into the 1980s, when rising maintenance costs led the organization to seek a new home. The YWCA vacated the property in 1985. Thereafter, the building stood vacant and deteriorating for two decades.²¹

¹⁹ Fosl, “‘It Could be Dangerous!’,” 45-53. See also George Chauncey, *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today’s Debate over Gay Equality* (New York: Basic, 2004), 89-90.

²⁰ Fosl, “‘It Could be Dangerous!’,” 52-62; Eaklor, *Queer America*, chaps. 6-9; Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States*, chap. 10 and epilogue.

²¹ Chris Poynter, “Old YMCA Waits and Wanes,” *Courier-Journal*, May 20, 2003, p. A1.

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In October 2003, CPG announced plans to renovate the former YWCA building. CPG’s plans called for a mixed-use development that would combine residential apartments and condominiums, event facilities, and retail space. Work began in 2005 and continued into 2008. CPG ultimately spent \$18 million on the project, which received state and federal rehabilitation tax credits. The length of the rehabilitation reflected the extent of work needed to repair and refurbish interior features, remove lead paint and asbestos, and adapt the upper floors for residential use. The rehabilitated building features eleven penthouse condominiums on the top floor and thirty-three rental apartments on floors five through eight. Retail stores occupy the ground level (12,000 square feet total) and the second, third, and fourth floors feature 35,000 square feet of event and meeting space.²²

The lower-level interiors retain most of their original features and layout. An ornate two-story ballroom on the second floor has large ceiling beams, oak flooring, twelve chandeliers, and gold and white wall finishes. On the third floor, the former Elks Club Room, now called the Beaux Arts Room, has space to seat 500 people. CPG installed fifty-one lower-level parking spaces and reconfigured the fifth through eight stories for residential use. The exterior of the building retains its original form and fenestration and its most distinctive ornamental features, which include extensive cast stone panels and elaborate detailing. The panels frame the building facades, running horizontally at the second, third, seventh, and eight-story levels and vertically at the corners. The third story is especially ornate, with a central group of three windows with stone jambs and architraves separated by urns and rosettes flanked on each side by three windows with scrolled pediments and swag and fret decoration below. Medallions and carved panels are featured at the eight-story level. The pediment is formed of a plain entablature and balustrade.

The most extensive changes carried out during the 2005-08 renovation took place on floors five through eight, where interior spaces were reconfigured to accommodate residential occupancy. All of these modifications were carried out in consultation with Kentucky Heritage Council staff and meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Appendix: Gay and “Mixed” Bars in Louisville, 1950-1970

Name	Address	Years of Operation
Gordon’s Restaurant and Bar	637 S. 4 th St.	1951-54
Gordon’s Golden Horse	637 S. 4 th St., 1954-59; 635 S. 4 th St., ca. 1960-1966	1954-ca. 1966
Sam Meyer Downtowner	320 W. Chestnut St.	1957-1974
Falls City Businessmen’s Association	730 Logan St.	1965-ca. 1972
Nolan’s Cocktail Lounge	320 W. Chestnut St.	ca. 1950-56.

9. Major Bibliographical References

²² Sheldon S. Shafer, “Rescued From Ruin,” *Courier-Journal*, June 7, 2006, p. A1; “7 Downtown Projects Honored,” *Courier-Journal*, Nov. 8, 2008, p. B3.

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Elks Athletic Club (Additional Documentation)
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kentucky
County and State

Williams-Nichols Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, Ekstrom Library, University of
Louisville, Louisville, KY.