



A Detailed History

1028-1056 Market Street, 47 Golden Gate Avenue



Caption:
1028-1056 Market Street, 1925.
(Source: Online Archive of California.)

Originally known as the Golden Gate Building, the two-story commercial structure at 1028-1056 Market Street was erected in 1907, following the earthquake and fire of 1906.¹

Commissioned by Russian real-estate investor Morris Siminoff and designed by prominent local architecture firm Shea & Shea, the building housed an evolving mix of businesses, including converted second-run movie theater spaces, throughout the 20th century. It originally functioned as retail stores with a warehouse on the upper level. It housed seven stores in its early years; four fronted onto Market Street and three fronted on Golden Gate Avenue. In 1907, the Golden Gate Cloak & Suit House, a men’s clothing retailer, owned in part by Siminoff, was among the first tenants and the reason for the building’s historic name.

¹ This section is summarized from Anne Bloomfield, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Market Street Theatre and Loft District, prepared November 19, 1985, approved April 10, 1986. Cited in GPA Consulting, “1028-1056 Market Street, San Francisco; Case No. 2014.0241E; Historic Resource Evaluation Parts 1 and 2,” January 2016.

Not simply a retail shopping destination, Market Street, in the early 20th century, became known as the Great White Way. A brilliant stream of lights flooded the thoroughfare from dusk to midnight, many of them provided by the array of movie theaters concentrated within six blocks.² For over 50 years, a dozen-and-a-half theater venues of every size and disposition drew patrons to a total of over 25,000 seats.³ Every first-run, American-made film opened on Market Street and nowhere else in the City.⁴

The early 1920s development of large-scale, single-screen theaters in the area immediately surrounding the Golden Gate Building included: the Warfield Theatre with 2,657 seats (982 Market Street, constructed 1921-1922), the Golden Gate Theatre with 2,844 seats (1 Taylor Street, constructed 1921-1922), and the Paramount Theatre with 2,656 seats (1066 Market Street, constructed 1921, demolished 1965). These grand historic theaters typically have, or had, large and ornate auditoriums for presenting live shows and first-run films on the ground level with 6-8 floors of offices above. The Paramount, initially known as the Granada Theatre when it opened in 1921, was demolished in 1965. Both the Warfield and the Golden Gate have had multiple renovations, including in recent years, and retain entertainment uses. This concentration of theaters made the Mid-Market neighborhood an important center of entertainment and commerce in San Francisco in the 1920s.

² Tillmany, Jack. *Theatres of San Francisco*. Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid*





Caption:
Market Street between Jones and Taylor, 1927. (Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, AAA-8885.)

⁵ Bloomfield, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Market Street Theatre and Loft District, 1986.

Because of the development of large-scale theaters in the early 1920s in the immediate vicinity, portions of the Golden Gate Building at 1028 Market were converted into second-run movie houses initially called the Pompeii (1923-1933), and later the Regal Theater (1940-c.1990), and Bijoux Theater (1953-c.1990).⁵

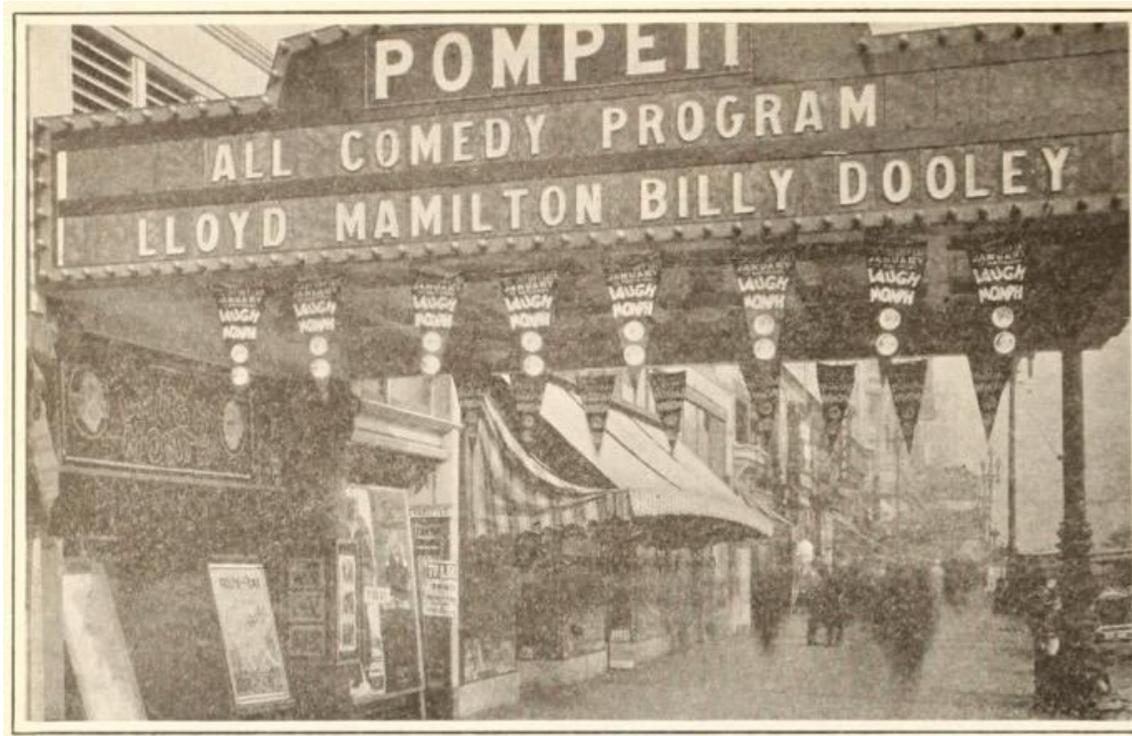
Though the Golden Gate Building was low-rise, its mix of small shops, converted theater spaces and upper floor offices, made it consistent with the overall commercial and entertainment.



*Caption:
Golden Gate Building in 1918 (source:
OpenSFHistory.org / Western Neigh-
borhoods Project, wnp36.01871).*

context that eventually led to the creation of the Market Street Theatre and Loft Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

The Market Street Theatre and Loft District was nominated for the National Register of Historic Places in 1985 by architectural historian Anne Bloomfield. The District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C (architecture) and A (events). It is one of the eight potential National Register Districts identified in the San Francisco Downtown Survey prepared by Charles Hall Page & Associates for The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage (now San Francisco Heritage) in 1979. One can find more about the Market Street Theatre and Loft District's significance to San Francisco at Anne Bloomfield's National Register form here: <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/d3865953-a64a-42a7-b857-2646e87b352>



Caption:
Pompeii theater entrance in 1926
(source: Motion Picture News).

PIG'N WHISTLE

Beginning in 1930, the storefront at 1032 Market Street was the home of Pig'n Whistle, a tavern-style restaurant chain with locations throughout the West Coast. The Pig'n Whistle on Market Street was intentionally located adjacent to the Paramount Theatre (consistent with the Pig'n Whistle in downtown Los Angeles, which was located across the street from the Paramount on West Sixth Street).⁶

The Pig'n Whistle on Market Street opened on September 12, 1930.⁷ It was the twenty-sixth store in the chain, the fourth in San Francisco, and "Pig'n Whistle's first step into the upper Market Street theater district."⁸ The San Francisco Chronicle described the space on opening day:

⁶ Veronica Gelakoska, *Pig'n Whistle* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Pub, 2010), 55-56.

⁷ "Pig'n Whistle Opens New Unit," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 12, 1930.

⁸ "Pig'n Whistle Opens Newest S.F. Store," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 13, 1930.

⁹ "Pig'n Whistle Opens New Unit," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 12, 1930.



The decorative scheme is modern in treatment, green and silver with many mirrors and glass chandeliers, woodwork in Pompeian red and a mosaic floor and sidewalk. Two hundred and fifty patrons can be accommodated on the two floors.⁹

The article also noted that the property had entrances on both Market Street and Golden Gate Avenue. A historic photograph of the restaurant's interior shows the same terrazzo mosaic flooring that still existed in parts of the building when it was demolished. The Pig'n Whistle remained in operation through c. 1941.

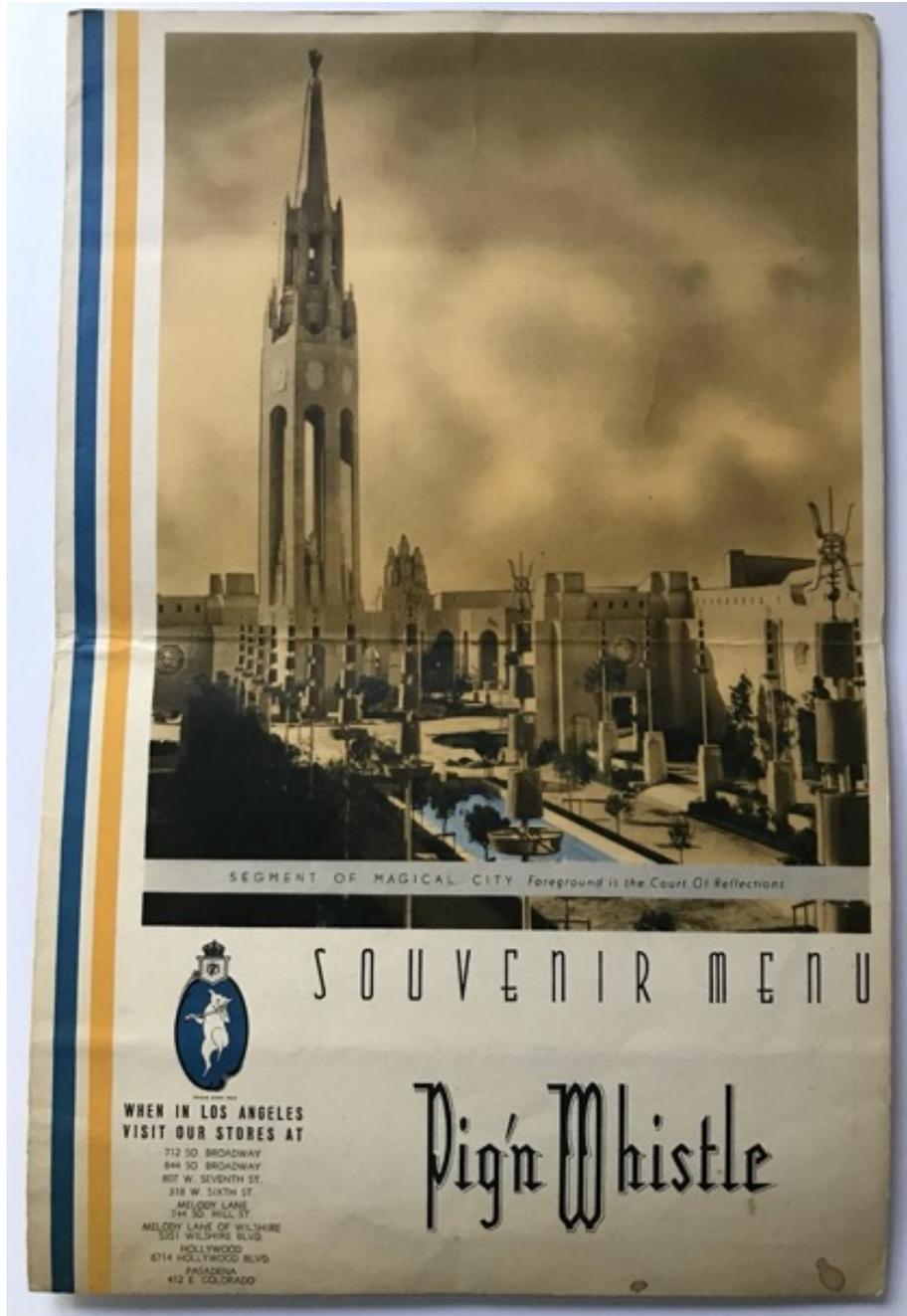
Caption:

*Pig'n Whistle interior at 1032 Market Street, undated (source: Veronica Gelakoska, *Pig'n Whistle (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Pub, 2010)*).*

⁹ "Pig'n Whistle Opens New Unit," San Francisco Chronicle, September 12, 1930.



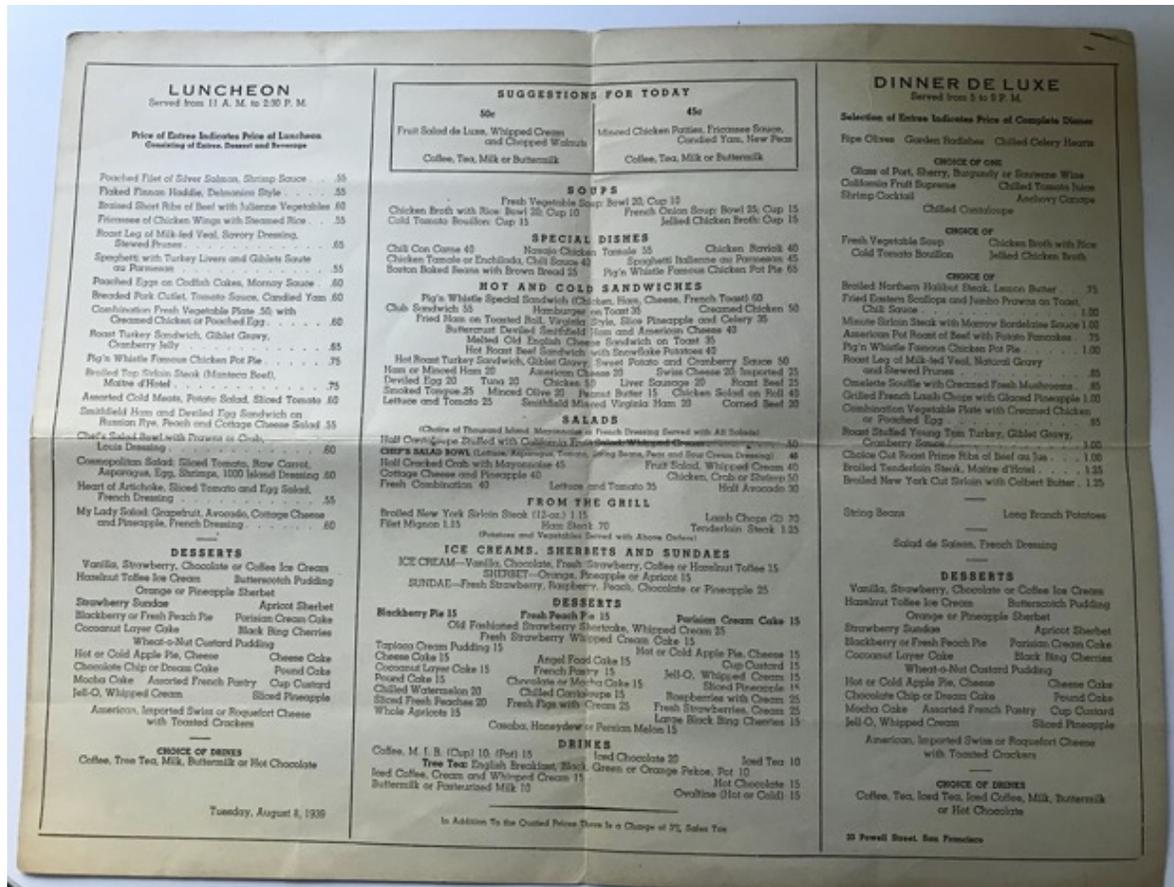
Caption:
Advertisement for Pig'n Whistle at 1032
Market Street, 1937 (source: Olympic
Residential Group).



Caption:
*Pig'n Whistle Souvenir Menu
(front cover), 1939 (source:
Olympic Residential Group).*



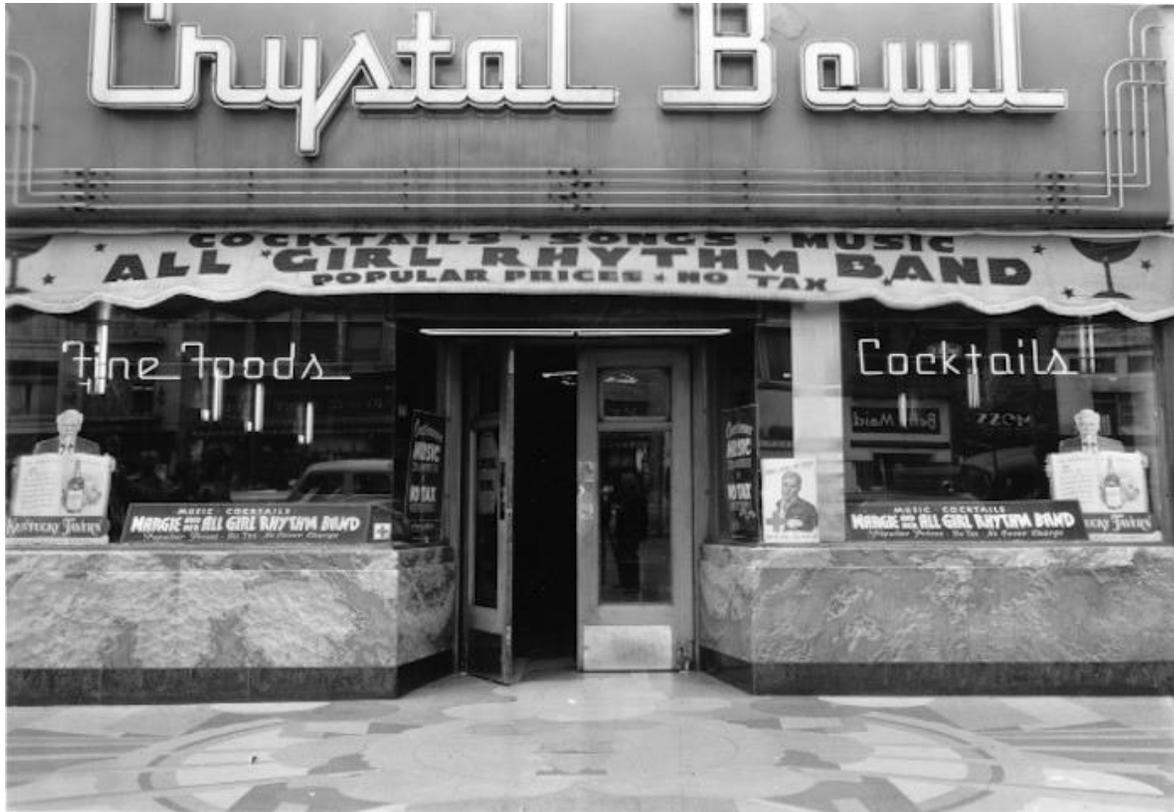
Caption:
Pig'n Whistle Souvenir Menu (back cover), 1939 (source: Olympic Residential Group).



Caption:
Pig'n Whistle Souvenir Menu (inside),
1939 (source: Olympic Residential
Group).

CRYSTAL BOWL

After the closure of the Pig'n Whistle in 1941, the Crystal Bowl, a bustling, smorgasbord-type restaurant with hearty meals and reasonable prices, opened at 1032 Market Street around 1943.



Caption:
Crystal Bowl exterior at 1032 Market Street, undated (source: San Francisco Public Library).

A photograph of the façade of the Crystal Bowl dated May 20, 1946, showcases a Streamline Moderne storefront, with neon signage in sans-serif typeface, speed lines, angled recessed entry, high bulkhead, and decorative terrazzo paving which extended into the sidewalk.¹⁰

A mention by San Francisco Chronicle columnist Herb Caen provides an early critique of the Crystal Bowl: “The Crystal Bowl, whose banner [in 1946] proudly boasts of ‘Stars of Stage-Screen-Radio’—but when you get inside, all you find are three girls, dressed in white graduation dresses, playing trumpet, bass fiddle and piano.”¹¹ An advertisement from the fall of 1946 announces that “Three Belles and a Beau” would be performing at the beginning of the next month.¹²

¹⁰ Excerpted from San Francisco Planning Department, “Historic Resource Evaluation Response, 1028-1056 Market Street, Case No. 2014.0241E” (August 26, 2016).

¹¹ Herb Caen, San Francisco Chronicle, January 22, 1946.

¹² San Francisco Planning Department, “Historic Resource Evaluation Response, 1028-1056 Market Street, Case No. 2014.0241E” (August 26, 2016).

The owner of the Crystal Bowl was a notorious figure named Sidney E. Wolfe. Nicknamed the “Tavern King of San Francisco,”¹³ Wolfe got his start in the restaurant and nightclub business operating concession stands at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition’s entertainment village called the Gayway.¹⁴ In the early 1940s, Wolfe and business partner Louis E. Welcher, co-owned the Silver Rail at 974 Market Street, a well-known gay bar in the Tenderloin.¹⁵ Welcher was later charged with tax evasion while at the Silver Rail and spent three years in prison. Similarly, Sidney Wolfe was caught by policing agencies in 1945 when he was charged with refilling whiskey bottles—one of the many ways in which nefarious bar owners tried to dupe their customers and increase profits.¹⁶

At the peak of his career, Sydney Wolfe either owned or co-owned at least 18 restaurants and nightclubs in San Francisco ¹⁷, including the following:

- Seven Seas (534 Geary Boulevard)*
- Club Calvert (80 Market Street)
- Crystal Bowl (1032 Market Street)*
- Rickey’s Follies (1118 Market Street)
- Streets of Paris (54 Mason Street)*
- The Martinique (171 O’Farrell Street)*
- Barbary Coast (533 Pacific Avenue)
- Gold Coast (574 Pacific Avenue)
- Lupino’s (or Luppino’s) (221 Powell Street)
- Tin Pan Alley (118 Turk Street)*
- Chez Patee (150 Mason Street)*

(Asterisks denote bars that are listed in the GLBT Historical Society Historic Sites Database.)

His business ventures made Sidney Wolfe a wealthy man. Records show that he generated \$434,000 in profits in the years 1944-1946 (\$5,881,964 in 2017 dollars).¹⁸ However, Wolfe, it was later revealed, concealed those profits in banks and withheld taxes. The Internal Revenue Service caught up with him in 1951, and a Federal Grand Jury indicted Sidney Wolfe for evasion of \$223,000 in income taxes.¹⁹ His sentence was up to ten years in prison and more than \$1,000,000 in fines.

However, Sydney Wolfe was never incarcerated. By 1951, he had “systematically stripped his holdings” in San Francisco, selling off almost all of his taverns and nightclubs (the Crystal Bowl

¹³ “Five Bound In Night Club Owner’s Suite,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 30, 1948.

¹⁴ “Sid Wolfe Is Indicted,” San Francisco Chronicle, June 14, 1951.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Five Bound In Night Club Owner’s Suite,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 30, 1948.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Wolfe Loaded (\$600,000) When He Fled,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 21, 1951.

¹⁹ Ibid.

was an exception).²⁰ In May 1951, Wolfe fled to Mexico with \$600,000 in cash and was never apprehended.²¹ The United States Treasury seized the Crystal Bowl and sold it for \$14,500, along with the Gold Coast, Luppino's Barbary Coast, and the Easton Building in Oakland.²² The Crystal Bowl Corporation took over ownership of the Crystal Bowl. The new owners/managers were Jon Dunn, Nicholas (Nick) Pagonis, and Peter Pablos.

Legal difficulties and run-ins with the law, made the Crystal Bowl's last five years of operation (1951-1956) turbulent, as the space was under nearly constant threat of closure by policing agencies. However, the Crystal Bowl's legal troubles dated back to December 1946, when state liquor enforcement officers filed complaints against over 100 taverns in San Francisco for not serving food, including the Crystal Bowl.²³ These citations were in response to a California Supreme Court ruling declaring that taverns serving liquor must also serve food, and thus show evidence of having restaurant equipment. Shortly after that a violent crime occurred in 1947, when Hyme Chases, the manager of the Crystal Bowl, was beaten to death at 1032 Market Street by a bartender from another club.²⁴

Crystal Bowl's legal troubles continued apace when, on March 19, 1954, State Board of Equalization (SBE) officers conducted an undercover raid at Crystal Bowl while on the hunt for bars thought to hire B-girls, young women hired by bar owners to entice unsuspecting patrons into purchasing more alcoholic beverages.²⁵ During the raid, nearly a dozen young women escaped through the rear of the Crystal Bowl.²⁶ Owner Nick Pagonis was arrested for his role in the B-girl scheme. After several procedural hearings, SBE charged the Crystal Bowl in 1955 for allowing B-girls on the premises, charges that were later dismissed on June 2, 1955, for unknown reasons.²⁷ Another undercover SBE sting took place at the Crystal Bowl on June 1, 1955. Juanita Contreras, a 24-year-old mother of four, was arrested, along with the bartender, on charges of being a B-girl by an undercover officer who bought her a drink.²⁸

The Crystal Bowl finally lost its liquor license and closed in March 1956 after another round of B-girl charges.²⁹

The Crystal Bowl illustrates the overall atmosphere of lawlessness and rule-breaking in hard drinking establishments in the Market Street area in the post-WWII era.

²⁰ "Sid Wolfe Is Indicted," San Francisco Chronicle, June 14, 1951.

²¹ "Wolfe Loaded (\$600,000) When He Fled," San Francisco Chronicle, September 21, 1951.

²² Ibid.

²³ "S.F. Taverns In Food Law Complaints," San Francisco Chronicle, December 11, 1946.

²⁴ "Bartender Held In Fight Death of Tavern Manager," San Francisco Chronicle, July 23, 1947.

²⁵ "State Agents Round Up B-Girls In Raids," San Francisco Chronicle, March 20, 1954.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Liquor Permit Denied Wife Of Ex-Rum Runner Par-ente," San Francisco Chronicle, June 12, 1955.

²⁸ "Alleged B-Girl, Bartender Arrested Here," San Francisco Chronicle, June 2, 1955.

²⁹ "S.F. Police Crack Down on 'Breakfast Clubs,'" San Francisco Chronicle, November 5, 1955. Also: "3,000 New Bar Licenses Possible in State—None for S.F.," San Francisco Chronicle, March 23, 1956.

From c. 1957 through the early 1980s, the storefront at 1032 Market Street was occupied by steak restaurants and taverns (Mr. T's, Paul's and Sal's).³⁰

KENO'S 47 CLUB

It isn't clear when Keno's 47 (or the 47 Club) opened, but it first appeared in city directories in 1953. The nightclub was located at the rear of the Crystal Bowl at 1032 Market Street. Its entrance was at 47 Golden Gate Avenue. It is possible that the 47 Club took over the Pig'n Whistle's former cocktail lounge. It is likely that the 47 Club operated underground for several years before appearing in the city directories.

Little documentation exists of the 47 Club, but several references confirm that it was a gay space. The nightclub appears in the 1954 San Francisco convention guidebook of the Mattachine Society (a homophile organization) in a section highlighting gay public establishments. Bob Ross, now a well-known gay-rights pioneer and founder of the Bay Area Reporter, mentions the 47 Club in his 1998 oral history interview. According to Ross, when he arrived in San Francisco in 1953, all of the gay bars "were either along Market Street, the Tenderloin and North Beach."³¹ When discussing the necessity for gay bars in the Tenderloin to have entrances at the front and rear, he used the 47 Club as an example:

*Let's say the bar on Golden Gate Avenue would be the Forty-Seven Club and that's a gay bar. On the other side of it was Market Street and there's a straight bar there with B girls [Crystal Bowl]. And when the police would raid the front bar, which they did regularly, the girls would come screaming through the gay bar and run out the back door. And when they would raid the gay bar, the queens would run out the front door.*³²

The club was also mentioned in the popular gay magazine *Vector* in 1969:

*If you've been wondering whatever happened to that husky ex-navy body builder who used to be the "bouncer" at Keno's back in 1954, wonder no more. His name is Marty and he's again on the local scene as co-owner with Bob, of the Lonely Bull.*³³

³⁰ San Francisco Planning Department, "Historic Resource Evaluation Response, 1028-1056 Market Street, Case No. 2014.0241E" (August 26, 2016).

³¹ Bob Ross, interviewed by Paul Gabriel, March 13, 1998, *The GLBT HS*.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Julius, "Let's Eat: Culinary Experience," *Vector* (September 1969).

The 47 Club was owned (or operated) by Keno Clark from 1953 until it closed in 1956. (The Crystal Bowl also closed in 1956 after it lost its liquor license, indicating that the Crystal Bowl and 47 Club were indeed conjoined businesses.) After Keno's 47 Club closed, a book shop opened in the space in 1959. It was owned by Lester Roberts, veteran bookman, who specialized in Western Americana and rare used books.³⁴ The bookstore remained there for many years.

Keno Clark

Keno Clark (née Joaquin J. Trucchi) was born in Stockton, California on May 22, 1897, and grew up in nearby Fresno. After graduating from high school in 1914, Clark's entertainment career began with performances at Fresno's Barton Opera House.³⁵ He then moved to New York City and landed an acting spot on the vaudeville Orpheum-Keith Circuit.

Clark moved to Europe in 1923. It was there that he met the American singer Leo Deslys, described in a syndicated column in 1926:

*Everybody who goes to Paris has seen the Eiffel Tower and heard Leo Deslys sing. He holds forth in that intimate little downstairs room under Harry's New York Bar. He is a soft-spoken, silk-en-voiced young southerner who has been in Paris for a number of years. His voice has a plaintive, appealing note—like the quivering lost cry in the night. Many revue producers have tried to entice him to Broadway but have failed. He prefers to remain at Harry's and watch the world drift by. And few can blame him. New York rears its idols merely to observe and smile at their clay feet. In Paris an idol once is always an idol.*³⁶

Deslys and Clark started singing as a duo by at least 1927 and soon became an international vaudeville sensation known for their "syncopated harmonies and songs." A review in *Variety* applauded their performance at Victorian Hall in London in February 1927: "Leo Deslys and Keno Clark, two American boys who have been yodeling in London and Paris cabarets, were also on this bill and did nicely."³⁷



Caption:
Leo Deslys (left) and Keno Clark (right) in 1936 (source: San Francisco Public Library).

³⁴ "Between the Lines with William Hogan," *San Francisco Sunday Chronicle*, April 26, 1959.

³⁵ "Trucchi, Noted Vaudeville Star Of 1920s, Dies," *Fresno Bee*, 1964.

³⁶ O.O. McIntyre, "Unimportant Ulations!," syndicated column, August 28, 1926.

³⁷ "Presentation in Hall; Other Acts at Vic-Palace," *Variety*, February 1927.

After an extended booking in London through 1929, Deslys and Clark returned to the United States. They appeared on billings in New York City, Brooklyn, Palm Beach, and Los Angeles. The rave reviews continued in the United States. They were lauded for their “naughty nonsense” while at The Stork.³⁸ A columnist in Miami wrote: “Deslys and Clark...seem genuinely wise and ingenious, instead of just another pair of carbon copies of the ancient originals. And they can sing, which sets them somehow apart.”³⁹ The Los Angeles Times called them “one of the high lights of the fracas” when they performed at a private party in Beverly Hills. “The songs were original, very funny and apparently inexhaustible. The latter qualification may also be applied to the chatter-inducers.”⁴⁰

One of the most notable aspects of Deslys and Clark’s career together was that they were a favorite of the Duke of Windsor. The duo caught the Duke’s eye in 1930 while playing at the Café de Paris in London. (He was the Prince of Wales then.) Clark remembers:

We were singing “Exactly Like You” ... when the head waiter came to us and asked if we knew who it was in the rear of the club who was shouting “encore, encore.” The waiter was so excited he could hardly talk, but he finally managed to tell us it was his royal highness. Then we became excited.

The duke requested us to sing the number over again and we acquiesced. A few nights later he summoned us to St. James’ Palace, his own personal quarters, and there we went expecting to find a number of guests. Upon our arrival we were shown to the duke’s own quarters, where he was alone. He wanted to hear our entire repertoire and we finished our songs with the dawn. Champagne was served by the servants and he even sang with us. It was a great party and he made us feel at ease.

By that time we were sleepy and so was the duke. As we prepared to leave, he graciously thanked us for our efforts. A week later I received a gold cigarette case as a gift from the duke.⁴¹

In 1934, the Duke of Windsor, accompanied by the Duchess (née Wallis Simpson), watched Deslys and Clark nightly as they headlined the Casanova nightclub in Biarritz, France, and a golf resort and casino in Le Touquet. At the latter engagement, Clark recalls, “Imagine our surprise one night while in the midst of a song the duke came out on the floor and interrupted us. ‘Do you mind playing Exactly Like You?’ he said. We don’t mind at all, but we did make him join in with us and we were soon off to the races in song.”⁴² While at Le Touquet, Clark and Deslys attended a small private baccarat party hosted by the Duke and former kings of Spain and Greece.

³⁸ “Walter Winchell on Broadway,” syndicated column, August 12, 1935.

³⁹ “Staying up with the Stars, by Remi,” The Miami News, February 5, 1936.

⁴⁰ “Around the Town with Chatterbox,” The Los Angeles Times, June 18, 1936.

⁴¹ “Fresno Entertainer Sang For Duke of Windsor And Wally During French Tour,” Fresno Bee, The Republican, June 3, 1937.

⁴² “Fresno Entertainer Sang For Duke of Windsor And Wally During French Tour,” Fresno Bee, The Republican, June 3, 1937.

Following their summer with the Duke of Windsor, Deslys and Clark were invited by the Maharaja of Kapurthala to headline a benefit he hosted at the Hotel George V in Paris. It was broadcast to America over the National Broadcasting Company system.⁴³

Keno Clark returned to Fresno in 1936.⁴⁴ It was around this time that Leo Deslys and Keno Clark parted ways for unknown reasons. Leo Deslys continued to entertain. In 1938, he was headlining alone at the Chateau Moderne in New York. By December of that year, he was bandleader at Le Mirage in New York, directing a 14-piece orchestra.⁴⁵

After returning to California, Keno Clark opened and managed the El Morocco nightclub in Fresno until 1941.⁴⁶ He then moved to San Francisco and operated several known LGBTQ nightclubs and restaurants, including the 47 Club (47 Golden Gate Avenue), Le Boeuf (545 Washington Street), and the Nob Hill Club (2223 Polk Street), purportedly one of the first gay bars on Polk Street.

Keno Clark died on July 9, 1964. His obituary in the San Francisco Chronicle, listed under his birth name, calls him “beloved brother of Elizabeth Mazzel,” and notes that he was a member of Bartenders Union, Local 41.⁴⁷ His obituary in Town Talk, a gay newsletter published in San Francisco, was more personal:

His many San Francisco friends will regret to learn that Keno Clark, well-known San Francisco bar manager, passed away on July 9 after a long illness. Known affectionately to his friends simply as “Keno,” his professional background as an entertainer was far more extensive than most realized. For many years he was a partner in the internationally known vaudeville song and dance team of Deslys and Clark, which played theater circuits in the U.S. and filled command performances before ruling kings and queens. Later he was associated in the operation of bars at 47 Golden Gate, the Nob Hill, and On-the-Hill, and Le Boeuf restaurant, all in San Francisco.⁴⁸

When he died, Keno Clark lived in an apartment building at 766 Sutter Street. His friend, B.A.R. editor Bob Ross (who lived at 766 Sutter Street, Apt. 302), oversaw the funeral arrangements.⁴⁹

⁴³ “Fresno Entertainer Sang For Duke of Windsor And Wally During French Tour,” Fresno Bee, The Republican, June 3, 1937.

⁴⁴ “Trucchi, Noted Vaudeville Star Of 1920s, Dies,” Fresno Bee, 1964.

⁴⁵ “Going Places,” The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 9, 1938.

⁴⁶ “Trucchi, Noted Vaudeville Star Of 1920s, Dies,” Fresno Bee, 1964.

⁴⁷ Ancestry.com. California, San Francisco Area Funeral Home Records, 1895-1985 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

⁴⁸ Town Talk, July 1964.

⁴⁹ Ancestry.com. California, San Francisco Area Funeral Home Records, 1895-1985 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

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