



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: April 25, 2022

BUENA VISTA CAFE

Application No.: LBR-2020-21-045
Business Name: Buena Vista Cafe
Business Address: 2765 Hyde St.
District: District 2
Applicant: Lea Hausherr, Social Media Coordinator
Nomination Letter Date: June 24, 2021
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

The Buena Vista Cafe is an iconic café located in the Russian Hill neighborhood on Hyde Street at the corner of Beach street. The Buena Vista originally opened in 1891 on the northeast corner of Hyde and North Point streets by the Brickwedel Brothers under the name "Buena Vista Saloon." In the late 1890s, the business was acquired by William Nieman and moved one block north to present day 685 Beach Street. Although it has had multiple owners since the late 1890s, it is presently located in a building still owned by the Nieman family on 2765 Hyde Street.

Though there may have been brief lapses in service, the Buena Vista has stood the test of time surviving major events such the 1906 Earthquake and Fire and even Prohibition. Originally a boarding house, it was converted into a saloon and restaurant, then into a soda fountain during the Prohibition era. The Buena Vista eventually became a café – though the exact year has been lost to the passages of time – and began making waves with its introduction of the Irish Coffee. The introduction of the Irish Coffee drew the likes of sports stars, artists, and writers to the café. Since this introduction, the Buena Vista has been featured in a number of artistic media, such as films and paintings. Widely known as the business that introduced and popularized the Irish Coffee in the United States, the Buena Vista has been serving the popular beverage to San Franciscans, visiting laborers, and tourists alike for over half a century.

CRITERION 1

Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes, Buena Vista Cafe has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

Northeast corner of Hyde and North Point Streets from 1891 to Late 1890s (est. 7-9 Years)
685 Beach Street from Late 1890s to Early 1900s (est. 10-20 Years)
2765 Hyde Street from Early 1900s to Present (est. 100+ Years)

CRITERION 2

Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, Buena Vista Cafe has contributed to the history and identity of the Russian Hill neighborhood and San Francisco.

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City Hall Room 140
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San Francisco, CA 94102
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The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The Buena Vista Cafe appears to have been the first institution to introduce Irish Coffee to the United States. Therefore, it is significant for its contributions to the city's culture as a café.
- In addition to the Buena Vista Cafe appearing to have been the first institution to introduce Irish Coffee to the United States, it has consistently offered meals and drinks to locals and tourists at an iconic location in the city (often depicted in art by the likes of significant artists such as Guy Buffet, Michael Flohr, and LeRoy Neiman).
- The 1911 property has not been previously evaluated by the Planning Department for potential historical significance. The property is considered a "Category B Property" that requires further review per the Planning Department's CEQA review procedures for historical resources. 2765 Hyde was included in the DCP 1976 Survey, where it received a survey rating of "2".
- The Buena Vista Cafe has been featured in many local publications, such as the San Francisco Examiner, SFGATE, and Hoodline.

CRITERION 3

Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, The Buena Vista Cafe is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Buena Vista Cafe qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- The interior.
- The exterior Buena Vista neon sign.
- The bartenders putting on a show behind a row of Irish Coffees.
- Stained glass transoms with the Buena Vista name and street number.
- Tiled walls behind the bar.
- Several historical pieces hung behind the bar.

CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Bar.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Buena Vista Cafe currently located at 2765 Hyde St. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

April 25, 2022

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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Buena Vista Cafe, currently located at 2765 Hyde St.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on April 25, 2022, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Buena Vista Cafe in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Buena Vista Cafe.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- The interior.
- The exterior Buena Vista neon sign.
- The bartenders putting on a show behind a row of Irish Coffees.
- Stained glass transoms with the Buena Vista name and street number.
- Tiled walls behind the bar.
- Several historical pieces hung behind the bar.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Buena Vista Cafe on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Bar.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on April 25, 2022.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

Legacy Business Program

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2020-21-045
Business Name: Buena Vista Cafe
Business Address: 2765 Hyde St.
District: District 2
Applicant: Lea Hausherr, Social Media Coordinator
Nomination Letter Date: June 24, 2021
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?
☒ Yes ☐ No

Northeast corner of Hyde and North Point Streets from 1891 to Late 1890s (est. 7-9 Years)
685 Beach Street from Late 1890s to Early 1900s (est. 10-20 Years)
2765 Hyde Street from Early 1900s to Present (est. 100+ Years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?
☒ Yes ☐ No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?
☒ Yes ☐ No

NOTES: N/A

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: March 9, 2022

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors
District 2



City and County of San Francisco

CATHERINE STEFANI

June 24, 2021
Richard Kurylo
Office of Small Business
Attn: Legacy Business Registration Application
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mr. Kurylo,

It is my pleasure to nominate the Buena Vista Café, owned and operated by Robert Freeman, for the Legacy Business Registry. The Buena Vista Café is a distinguished small business serving locals and visitors to the Fisherman's Wharf and Russian Hill neighborhoods.

The Buena Vista Café has operated in San Francisco for 105 years and has maintained a strong and consistent identity. While Robert was not the first operator of this business, he has helped it flourish and maintain its status as an outstanding small business since he took ownership in 2001. Through its history, the Buena Vista Café has built a name for itself in the community and become known for its famous Irish Coffee that dates back to 1952.

Given its ongoing success, the Buena Vista Café has gained public recognition, including features on CBS News and Food Network, and was recognized by Guinness World Records for having the World's Largest Irish Coffee. As a historic small business, the Buena Vista Café has become an important community resource and contributor to the well-being of its surrounding neighborhood. It is my absolute pleasure to nominate the Buena Vista Café for the Legacy Business Registry.

The nominee can be contacted here: Robert Freeman; 2765 Hyde Street, San Francisco, CA 94109; (415) 474-5044; thebuenavista@comcast.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Catherine Stefani", written over a horizontal line.

Catherine Stefani
Supervisor, District 2

Section One:

Business / Applicant Information.

Please provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

NAME OF BUSINESS:	
Buena Vista Cafe (SFBVC LLC)	
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business):	
Robert Freeman	
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE NUMBER:
2765 Hyde St. San Francisco, CA 94109	415 474-5044
	EMAIL ADDRESS:
	thebuenavista@comcast.net
MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS:	MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address	
	MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE:
WEBSITE ADDRESS:	
www.thebuenavista.com/	
FACEBOOK PAGE:	
www.facebook.com/TheBuenaVistaSF	
TWITTER NAME:	
www.twitter.com/TheBuenaVista	
APPLICANT'S NAME:	APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:
Lea Hausherr	
APPLICANT'S TITLE:	APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:
Social Media Coordinator	
SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	
0342284	
SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable):	

Section Two:

Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS	ZIP CODE	START DATE OF BUSINESS
Northeast corner of Hyde and North Point streets	94109	1891
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION
		1891 to Late 1890s

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
685 Beach Street	94109	Start: Late 1890s
		End: Early 1900s

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
2765 Hyde Street	94109	Start: Early 1900s
		End: Present

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

Section Three:

Disclosure Statement.

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Lea Hausherr

6/21/2021

Lea Hausherr
Digitally signed by Lea Hausherr
Date: 2021.06.23 07:25:38 -07'00'

Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:

BUENA VISTA CAFE

Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

CRITERION 1

a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.

The Buena Vista Cafe (the “Buena Vista” or the “BV”) was founded on Saturday, April 11, 1891, as Buena Vista Saloon at the corner of Hyde and North Point streets. This information was found on an invitation by the Brickwedel Brothers to the Grand Opening of their bar, which was found in Buena Vista’s safe several years ago. The invitation did not include the bar’s address, but it is believed Buena Vista Saloon was located on the northeast corner of the intersection.

In the late 1890s, and no later than 1898, Buena Vista Cafe moved one block north to the corner of Hyde and Beach streets. A photograph of the outside of the bar is believed to be from 1898 or 1899 based on political banners on the building for Edward C. Kalben (Supervisor, 2nd Ward) and Chas. S. Tilton (Surveyor) and James N. Block (Tax Collector).¹ Based on architectural analysis, the slope of the road, and stories passed on, this image places the Buena Vista Cafe on the southeast corner of Hyde and Beach streets (present day 685 Beach Street) across Hyde Street from its current location. The name “WM. NEIMANS” is written across the transom window. The Nieman family is still affiliated with the Buena Vista Cafe.

In the early 1900s, Buena Vista Cafe moved across the street to its current location (present day 2765 Hyde Street) on the southwest corner of Hyde and Beach streets. This is based on a photograph of the bar with “Buena Vista Cafe” written across the upper sidewalk window. The location was determined through architectural analysis and the slope of the road.

Buena Vista Cafe may have closed for a period of time after the 1906 earthquake and fire as the business does not appear in that year’s San Francisco telephone directory as in prior and subsequent years.

It has been said that the BV, as it is affectionately known, operated as an ice cream parlor during Prohibition. There does not appear to be any information pertaining to the Prohibition period beyond a room in the basement with the finished floor and stairs leading to the back-alley door. The entrance to the stairs has been long covered over. No official records remain.

Buena Vista Cafe has had a number of owners since it was founded in 1891, including the Brickwedel Brothers; William Nieman; Jack Koeppler; George Freeberg; Vera Freeberg; Gilbert-Robinson, Houlihans, and W.R. Grace; and Robert Freeman.

¹ SF Municipal Reports for Fiscal Year 1898-1899, Google Books pgs 73-75 (Supervisor Klaben, 2nd Ward; Surveyor Tilton; Tax Collector Block)

Jack Koeppler, a native of Spokane, Washington, was hired as a Buena Vista waiter in 1934. He later served food on Bay Area ferries before returning to the cafe he later bought into with co-owner George Freeberg. Jack first learned of Irish Coffee in 1952 from Stan Delaplane, a San Francisco journalist and Buena Vista Cafe patron, who had written about his encounter with the cocktail at the Shannon Airport in Ireland in his nationally syndicated column, Postcards. Jack's dogged pursuit of the recipe played an integral role in introducing the Irish Coffee to the U.S. His communications from that time are housed at the California Historical Society.²

Over the years The Buena Vista Cafe has played host to movie stars and sports stars, has inspired artists and writers, and has been featured in films and television. It still serves bountiful meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as well as their famous Irish Coffee. The Buena Vista Cafe is as rich in history as the city itself.

b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?

The cafe may have closed for a period of time after the 1906 earthquake and fire, as the Buena Vista does not appear in that year's San Francisco telephone directory. During Prohibition, the business operated as a soda fountain, but may have had a speakeasy in the basement. During the coronavirus pandemic in 2020-2022, the cafe complied with all city and state requirements, which included some temporary closures.

c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.

Buena Vista Cafe is not a family-owned business, defined here as any business in which two or more family members are involved and the majority of ownership or control lies within a family.

d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.

The ownership history of Buena Vista Cafe is as follows:

1891 to 18??	Brickwedel Brothers
18?? to 1940	William Nieman
1940 to 1970	Jack Koeppler; Josephine Koeppler; George Freeberg; Vera Freeberg
1970 to 1973	Josephine Koeppler; George Freeberg; Vera Freeberg
1973 to 1974	George Freeberg; Vera Freeberg
1974 to 1979	Vera Freeberg
1979 to 2001:	Gilbert-Robinson; Houlihans; W.R. Grace
2001 to Present:	Robert Freeman

In the 1890s, it is uncertain when ownership of Buena Vista Cafe changed from the Brickwedel Brothers to William Nieman. The Nieman family still own the building at 2761-2765 Hyde Street.

² Courtesy, California Historical Society, MS 4132

Between 1940 and 1979, Jack & Josephine Koeppler and George & Vera Freeberg were co-owners until Jack's death in 1970. In 1973, Josephine sold her half to the Freebergs (for \$330,000.)³ After George passed in 1974, Vera Freeberg ran the cafe until 1979.

e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Documentation of the existence of the business verifying it has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application.

f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The historic resource status of the building at 2765 Hyde Street is classified by the Planning Department as Category B, Unknown / Age Eligible, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act. It was evaluated in 1976 and rated 2 (in a range of 0-5) with 5 as the highest rating for architecture.

The San Francisco Planning Department's Property Information Map (<https://sfplanninggis.org/PIM/>?) notes the historical importance of the building due to the Buena Vista Cafe and its architectural features:

William H. And Justine Nieman were the recorded owners of this lot as far back as 1906, but the present structure was not built until 1911. Niemann sold liquors at this site according to the 1914 directory, and by 1915 the building housed a saloon on the first floor. The upper floors served as residential facilities. The establishment was first formally advertised in 1941 as the Buena Vista but it is commonly believed that residents of the waterfront knew the cafe by this name before that date. The cafe's most significant event occurred in 1952, when "Irish Coffee" was first served on these premises. It has continued to be a popular attraction to tourists and locals alike. The building contains many features of architectural significance. The rusticated ground floor, possibly a later remodel, consists of wide columns with large window areas between. The modified capitals of the columns consist of panels containing garlands. The paired, angled bays of the upper two stories feature central spandrel panels with ornate scrolled decoration. The projecting boxed cornice is ornamented with dentils beneath and rosettes at intervals on its face. The interior remains in vintage condition, and the stately simplicity of the Buena Vista Cafe continues to maintain a strong presence in the area of Hyde and Beach streets.

³ SF Examiner, 13 Feb 1974, p 53

CRITERION 2

a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.

The Buena Vista is known as a place where people gather to enjoy a sense of community and conviviality. The bar is also credited with introducing Irish Coffee to the United States in 1952.

Stanton Delaplane, who was a travel writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, drank an Irish Coffee at the Shannon Airport while on a trip to Ireland. Sometime later, Delaplane along with Buena Vista Cafe owner Jack Koeppler, tried to recreate the drink. Delaplane and Koeppler worked for hours mixing and sampling different versions of the drink until they achieved the results that they were looking for and almost passed out in the process. The two men solicited the advice of the mayor of San Francisco at that time, Mayor George Christopher, since he was also a prominent dairy owner. The method for floating the cream on top of the coffee was suggested to them by the mayor, who told them that the cream should be aged at least 48 hours in order that it would be more apt to float atop the coffee. The Buena Vista Cafe began serving their Irish Coffee drink on November 10, 1952. Also, Stanton Delaplane helped to popularize the drink by mentioning it frequently in his travel column. The Buena Vista Cafe has served, by its count, more than 30 million drinks of their signature Irish Coffee.⁴

A plaque by the door on Hyde Street reads, *"America's first Irish Coffee was made here in 1952. It was inspirationally invented at Shannon Airport by Joe Sheridan. It was fortuitously introduced here by Stan Delaplane. It was nurtured to a national institution by Jack Koeppler."*

b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?

Everything changed for The Buena Vista Cafe in 1952. The introduction of the Irish Coffee attracted a worldwide audience, turning the venerable San Francisco neighborhood bar into a cosmopolitan hotspot.

Over the years, The Buena Vista Cafe has played host to movie stars and sports stars, has inspired artists and writers, and has been featured in films and television.

The Buena Vista Cafe has witnessed the Hyde Street Pier turn from a working pier to a ferry pier to a cherished museum complete with working pier. It welcomed the Powell-Hyde Cable Car terminus in the mid-1950s and maintained business operations during the cable car line rebuilds in 1979 and 1984. Since the very beginning, the BV has played host to bay swimmers from the Dolphin Club (established 1877) and South End Rowing Club (established 1873).

c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buena_Vista_Cafe

The story of Joe Sheridan, Stanton Delaplane, and Jack Koeppler is perhaps one of the most shared cocktail origin stories in the bar business and is not without its share of controversy. Stan Delaplane wrote about the doubt that was raised in Ireland, “*I don’t know why some of the Dublin people said it was somebody else who invented Irish Coffee.*”⁵

Despite the controversy over its origin, it is agreed that The Buena Vista made Irish Coffee famous. Since its introduction on November 10, 1952, countless magazine articles, book references, and news reports have featured The Buena Vista Cafe, from Time Magazine to the CBS Sunday Morning program (link to full episode: <https://bit.ly/3BPBWaD>)

The Buena Vista appears in classic film and TV episodes including *Streets of San Francisco*, *When a Man Loves a Woman* and the BBC’s *Tales of the City*. The bar has hosted Emeril Lagasse, Tyler Florence, and Clinton Kelly, among others, who have all come to the bar to try their hand at blending the perfect Irish Coffee, looking to Buena Vista’s long-time bartenders for guidance.

d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?

Thanks to his part in introducing the Irish Coffee to America through his syndicated travel column, *Postcards*, Pulitzer Prize-winning *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Stanton Delaplane will be forever linked to the Buena Vista Cafe.

In addition, over the years, the Buena Vista has been immortalized in oil, watercolor, and other mediums by acclaimed artists such as Guy Buffet, LeRoy Neiman, Robert Kent, James Konzen, and Michael Flohr, among others. Guy Buffet and Michael Flohr, in particular, have repeatedly featured the Buena Vista in their works, spending many hours on the premises.

e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

Buena Vista Cafe’s relationship with cable car gripmen and conductors, seamen and fishermen, local business owners and fellow restaurant workers, swim club members, and senior citizens from the San Francisco Senior Center in the Aquatic Park Bathhouse Building is long established and valued. The coronavirus pandemic in 2020-2022 has proven the strength of the BV as an anchor business, despite the loss of the Hyde Street Cable Car and area office workers.

The Buena Vista supports and hosts a number of local charitable organizations and events with their pop-up bar and through their biannual sponsorship of Cops & Coffee to benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.

The Buena Vista has long been a neighborhood hub for local residents. “Meet me at the BV” is a phrase so often uttered by San Franciscans over the years that it became a Buena Vista trademark slogan. To this day, generations of Bay Area residents regularly visit the BV to meet with friends, to

⁵ *Postcards: The Foxiest Pocket*, 1965

celebrate special events, or just to grab a quick bite before a Giants game. And when San Franciscans entertain out-of-town friends and relatives, the BV is always a must-visit location.

The Buena Vista's community extends well beyond its immediate geographic sphere. Many out-of-town customers report that the Buena Vista is one of their first "ports of call" when they visit the city. Long-time BV staff members recognize and take great pride in their role as ambassadors to San Francisco, often acting as ad hoc concierges.

g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?

The Buena Vista Cafe and its present-day building were covered in a San Francisco Examiner article in 2002:

The Buena Vista Cafe (2765 Hyde Street) was first put into operation in 1889 as a boarding house. The owner, William Nieman, converted the ground floor as a saloon and restaurant, which was converted to a soda fountain during the Prohibition era.

In 1940, the building was leased out to Jack and Josephine Koeppler. Josephine ran the business while Jack went off to fight in WWII. Between 1945 and 1952 a business was developed around a selection of foreign beers and short order meals.

On November 10, 1952 Jack Koeppler and Stanton Delaplane, international travel writer for the San Francisco Chronicle, set out to recreate the "Irish Coffee" that Stanton had wrote (sic) about as served at the Shannon Airport in Ireland.

The first was a muddy looking affair, the cream just would not float. This was promptly sent to a local music critic sitting at the far end of the bar. Reportedly, he'd drink anything. All night Jack and Stan concocted "Irish Coffees" sending the results to the now-drunk music critic. The night ended with the cream still sinking and a more determined Jack Koeppler.

A pilgrimage was made to Shannon Airport to discover first-hand the true formula for "Irish Coffee" from its originator, Joe Sheridan. The problem with the sinking cream was taken to then-mayor, George Christopher, who also owned a large dairy. George discovered that if you age the cream for 48 hours, then froth it to a precise consistency it would float as delicately as a swan.

Over the years the "Irish Coffee" ...has not changed and continues to be a staple of the Buena Vista Cafe and San Francisco.⁶

The Buena Vista neon sign that hangs above the corner of Hyde and Beach may be as famous as the bar itself. There have been several signs through the years.

Stained glass cut with The Buena Vista name and street number adorn the transoms above the Beach Street and Hyde Street windows and doors. The tiled porticos behind the bar appear in

⁶ <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/462420649/>, San Francisco Examiner, October 16, 2002, Dining Destinations Listing, p 29

archival images as far back as the 1940s. Several historical pieces hang behind the bar. The most interesting is a membership plaque from the Mount Kenya Safari Club with a gold elephant protruding from the frame which was sent to Stan Delaplane. It was etched with his name and William Holden's signature. According to Stan Delaplane's article, Last Safari, "It was so gaudy I didn't know where to hang it. I took it down to the Buena Vista ... and they hung it on the wall behind the bar."⁷ Stan Delaplane's hat is respectfully placed above the plaque.

The glass used for the Buena Vista Cafe's famous Irish Coffee is a standard Libby-designed six-ounce Georgian stemmed glass.

h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

As the Buena Vista's community is considerable in size, both local patrons and fans from around the world would mourn the loss of this beloved and venerable institution. The BV maintains a uniquely San Francisco spirit that represents the best of the city's dauntless and trailblazing character, past and present. For many visitors from outside the immediate Bay Area, the Buena Vista is San Francisco.

CRITERION 3

a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.

The Buena Vista is a beloved San Francisco landmark. A must-stop for locals and tourists alike, the shared seating creates a congenial and conversational atmosphere. The long-time waitstaff move through the room with efficient grace. The bartenders put on a show behind a steaming row of Irish Coffees. And the patrons toast to long-held traditions and new friendships. The Buena Vista Cafe is located across from the Powell-Hyde Street cable car line at Beach Street. The cafe serves its world-famous Irish Coffees and bountiful meals seven days a week throughout the year.

"So off today to The Buena Vista Cafe on the waterfront. It made Irish Coffee famous. And, by it became famous itself all over the world." – Stanton Delaplane from *Postcards: The Foxiest Pocket*.

b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)

The Irish Coffee recipe remains the same since its fabled introduction in 1952. Consistency is key across all operations, due in part to a commitment to employee equity, which enriches the establishment with experienced staff members of long standing who maintain the highest product and service standards. The Buena Vista brand represents and depends on this consistency, and patrons count on it. Even minor changes to the menu or the whiskey poured at the bar has been met with an almost proprietary concern by devoted BV customers.

⁷ Postcards: Last Safari, circa 1968

Continuity in its character, cuisine, and service means that when patrons return to the Buena Vista, they enjoy a sense of comfort similar to meeting an old friend. Over the years, many of those customers have shared stories of meeting their life partners or receiving a marriage proposal at the BV, and they make regular return pilgrimages to celebrate the anniversaries of those momentous events.

c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).

The interior of The Buena Vista remains true to its historical elements with little structural change. Continued maintenance and modernization for health and safety remain a priority.

The Buena Vista neon sign might be just as famous as The BV itself. It unfortunately has several issues which the business would like to rectify. Plans to reach out to Neon Speaks and other neon advocates to set a strategy were put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic.

d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Documentation that demonstrates the business has been a bar for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.

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Documentation that demonstrates the business has been a bar for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.

Mr.

You are Cordially Invited to attend the

- Grand Opening -

OF THE

Buena Vista Saloon

COR. NORTH POINT AND HYDE STREET

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 11TH, 1891

AT ALL HOURS AFTER EIGHT

BRICKWEDEL BROS., Proprietors

AMERICA'S FIRST IRISH COFFEE

WAS MADE HERE IN 1952

IT WAS INSTANTANEOUSLY INVENTED

AT SHANNON AIRPORT BY

JOE SHERIDAN

IT WAS FORTUITOUSLY INTRODUCED HERE BY

STAN DELAPLANE

IT WAS NURTURED TO A NATIONAL INSTITUTION BY

JACK KOEPLER





2765 Hyde St
San Francisco, CA



BOILED HAM	15	SWISS CHEESE	15
LIVERWURST	15	AMERICAN CHEESE	15
SALAMI	15	TUNA	15
HAMBURGER & BUN	15	LIMBURGER CHEESE	15
COLD ROAST PORK	15	COLD ROAST BEEF	15
FRIED EGG	15	FRIED HAM	20
HAM & EGG	25	HAM & CHEESE	20
HOT SANDWICH WITH POTATOES & GRavy	25		
HOME MADE ENCHILADAS WITH CHEESE	25		
FRANKFURTERS WITH POTATO SALAD	30		
HOME MADE CHILI CON CARNE	20		
ORANGE, GRAPEFRUIT	15	TOMATO JUICE	10



Beach

the
Buena
Vista











HOT

on the menu

Dining Destinations



the
BUENA
VISTA
san francisco

the
BUENA
VISTA
san francisco



2765 Hyde Street (at Beach)
San Francisco, CA 94109
415.474.5044

The Buena Vista Café was first put into operation in 1889 as a boarding house. The owner, William Nieman, opened the ground floor as a saloon & restaurant, which was converted to a soda fountain during the prohibition era. After the Repeal Act of 1933 we were back to our salooning ways.

In 1940 the building was leased out to Jack & Josephine Koepler. Josephine ran the business while Jack went off to fight in W.W.II. Between 1945 & 1952 a business was developed around a selection of foreign beers & short order meals.

On November 10, 1952 Jack Koepler & Stanton Delaplane, international travel writer for the San Francisco Chronicle, set out to re-create the "Irish Coffee" that Stanton had wrote about as served at Shannon Airport in Ireland.

The first was a muddy looking affair, the cream just would not float. This was promptly sent to a local music critic sitting at the far end of the bar. Reportedly he'd drink anything. All night Jack & Stan concocted "Irish Coffees" sending the results to the now drunk music critic. The night ended with the cream still sinking & a more determined Jack Koepler.

A pilgrimage was made to Shannon Airport to discover first-hand the true formula for "Irish Coffee" from it's originator, Joe Sheridan. Experiments with several Irish Whiskeys were made which eventually led to the Buena Vista Café private label which is served today. The problem with the sinking cream was taken to then mayor, George Christopher, who also owned a large dairy. George discovered that if you age the cream for 48 hours, then froth it to a precise consistency it would float as delicately as a swan.

Over the years The "Irish Coffee" as created by Jack, Stan & George has not changed & continues to be a staple of The Buena Vista Café & San Francisco.

The Buena Vista has developed into a San Francisco tradition & as such has appeared in several movies such as "When A Man Loves A Woman" with Meg Ryan & Andy Garcia, and has been the subject of several artist's paintings. Leroy Nieman's, Robert Kent's & Guy Buffet's renditions continue to adorn the walls to this day.

Today we serve over 750,000 "Irish Coffees" a year and continue to be the largest single consumer of Irish Whiskey in the world. Adding to this is a rich tradition of serving bountiful breakfasts that help you start your day & a collection of burgers & entrees that will make you feel like your back at your mothers dinner table.

The atmosphere, as always is one of festive rhetoric and comfortable surroundings. The seating is open, so grab a chair where you can, marvelous friendships and delightful conversations have evolved from this arrangement, you never know who you might be seated next to at the table.

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Food

Meet the bartender who's served San Francisco 5 million Irish coffees

And it only took Paul Nolan 43 years behind the bar at Buena Vista Cafe to do it

Grant Marek
Aug. 3, 2019

Buena Vista Cafe has served more than 40 million Irish coffees since it introduced the drink to San Francisco (slash, the world) in 1952.

And Paul Nolan has made more than 5 million of them.

The 67-year-old has been a bartender at the Fisherman's Wharf institution for almost two-thirds of his life — 43 years and counting — and has spent nearly the entirety of his tenure there in the Irish coffee hot corner.

"I'm handling, on any given day, probably 80 percent of all the drinks that come in," says Nolan, who's comfortably seated at a break room table deep within the bowels of Buena Vista. "And that's because at the end of the bar I handle all the house and part of the bar, where I'm also doing service for four to seven people."



Paul Nolan, standing out front of the Buena Vista Cafe, where he has made and served over 5 million Irish Coffees.

Blair Heagerty, Blair Heagerty / SFGate

Nolan worked as a bouncer at Buena Vista the summer after graduating from UC Berkeley in 1973 (his brother Larry actually got a job there a month later — they still both work at Buena Vista to this day), then took shifts behind the bar off and on between picking up a Masters in business from Queens University in Ontario, Canada. He then worked in the Hyatt Corporation's headquarters in Burlingame before the hotel mega-chain picked up its HQ and moved it to Chicago.

Nolan stuck around and settled in full-time at Buena Vista in 1977, and five years later, he made a decision.

"It was sort of a temporary job until I found something more aligned with what I wanted to do. And that was 43 years ago. I realized I was no longer going to look for another job around 1982," he says. "I felt like, I don't want to quit this. We're an old school bar, you don't try to make it too fufu or too crazy. You don't try to say, 'oh, what's the hippest thing' and this is what we're going to do. What we do well is Irish coffee, we're world famous in that. We do it so well that we sell as much as we do."



"Nolan regularly makes Irish coffees 25 at a time, which is hard to really even fathom until you see him do it."

Blair Heagerty, Blair Heagerty / SFGate

A post shared by [The Buena Vista Cafe \(@thebuenavistasf\)](#) on Nov 15, 2018 at 11:25am PST

Nolan regularly makes Irish coffees 25 at a time, which is hard to really even fathom until you see him do it.

He rinses all 25 glasses with scalding hot water from a coffee pot, drops a pair of white sugar cubes into every glass, then comes scalding hot coffee, some extremely vigorous spoon swirling, and finally the healthiest of pours of Tullamore Dew Irish whiskey, plus a house-whipped heavy cream topper.

And the Berkeley-born bartender does it all in a pristine white tuxedo jacket that somehow stays pristine white despite all the coffee sloshing around.

In a city where the food and beverage industry is struggling to retain staff thanks to the insanely high cost of living, where bartenders make \$36,000 a year on average (before tips) according to the US Department of Labor's 2018 report,

and where some bars provide housing to their drink-makers as a retention tool, Buena Vista is an anomaly.

It's hard to find a bartender who hasn't been there for more than three or four decades, which means picking up a shift at Buena Vista if you aren't full time is incredibly hard to do.

Nik Plebger, who's a full-time photographer, serves as a vacation relief bartender at Buena Vista. He's now in his ninth year as a Buena Vista pinch hitter.

Looking for work that isn't behind the bar? Good luck. There are bus boys (bus boys!) who've been there for 30 years plus.

"Tourists are attracted by the amount of people in here and they say, 'oh, this must be a cool place.' Because it is a cool place," Nolan says. "We have so many people that come in, and you have the amount of tips where you can get by in San Francisco with a living wage. And that's maybe why I don't regret anything. I knew I wasn't going to get rich, but I figured I'd rather be happy, have fun. Do something that's keeps me active."

Very, *very* active. As Buena Vista General Manager Kevin Jones explains, there's more to being a bartender at Buena Vista than simply churning through more Tullamore Dew Irish whiskey than any other bar in the world — Jones says Buena Vista goes through around 24,000 liters a year.

A post shared by The Buena Vista Cafe (@thebuenavistasf) on Jun 27, 2019 at 12:27pm PDT

"You've gotta have a personality," he says. "It's a show. Like going to Disneyland."

And like any good show, it attracts quite the crowd.

Alan Shepherd, the first American in space, was a regular for years. The Clintons have been in. As have the 49ers.

"(Former 49ers owner) Eddie DeBartolo and (former 49ers President) Carmen Policy were regulars here. Joe Montana has been here and Jim Plunkett. There were politicians within the democratic national committee. You get actors, which

I do not recognize, but I have my other people tell me, 'oh, that's so and so," Nolan says.

Count famed Cheers bartender Ted Danson as one of the actors Nolan didn't recognize.

"I served him and we talked for five minutes and he's asking me questions and when I go get some coffee around the corner, one of the servers says to me what are you talking about with Ted Danson? And I say who? Then I look out and I recognize him."

The really unique thing about the Buena Vista Cafe, though, is that despite crowds that rival Alcatraz, it never feels like a tourist attraction. It feels like a bar that's been frozen permanently in time, and it's patroned by people who understand and appreciate that. Nolan explains the phenomenon as well as anyone can: "Most tourists have been here so many times. It's like home."

Back at the bar, two such tourists visiting from Las Vegas — Bill and Renee Marion — are happy to tie Nolan's story in a neat little bow.

"The first time we came here we had the best Irish coffee we've ever had," says Bill in the middle of his second visit to Buena Vista with wife Renee. "This time we've had the second and third best Irish coffees we've ever had."

Grant Marek is SFGATE's Editorial Director. Email: grant.marek@sfgate.com / Twitter: @grant_marek

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MY FAVORITE CORNER OF SF

My Favorite Corner of San Francisco: Hyde and Beach, Home of the Buena Vista Café

A portal to the city's weird, wild, and literary past



Steve Kettmann Jun 10, 2020 · 4 min read ★





Photos: The Buena Vista Café

This article is part of My Favorite Corner of SF, a feature series that pays homage to a special place in the city.

You can walk all over San Francisco for hours in search of the perfect light, and I have, but you'll never do better than the cascading light that suffuses the Buena Vista Café, at the north end of the Hyde Street cable car line. That light and the view out over the bay feel timeless, of no era. For me, Hyde and Beach is my favorite corner of the city for the portal it provides to a time when San Francisco was weird and wild and literary enough to give us man-of-the-world newspaper columnists like Stan Delaplane and Herb Caen.

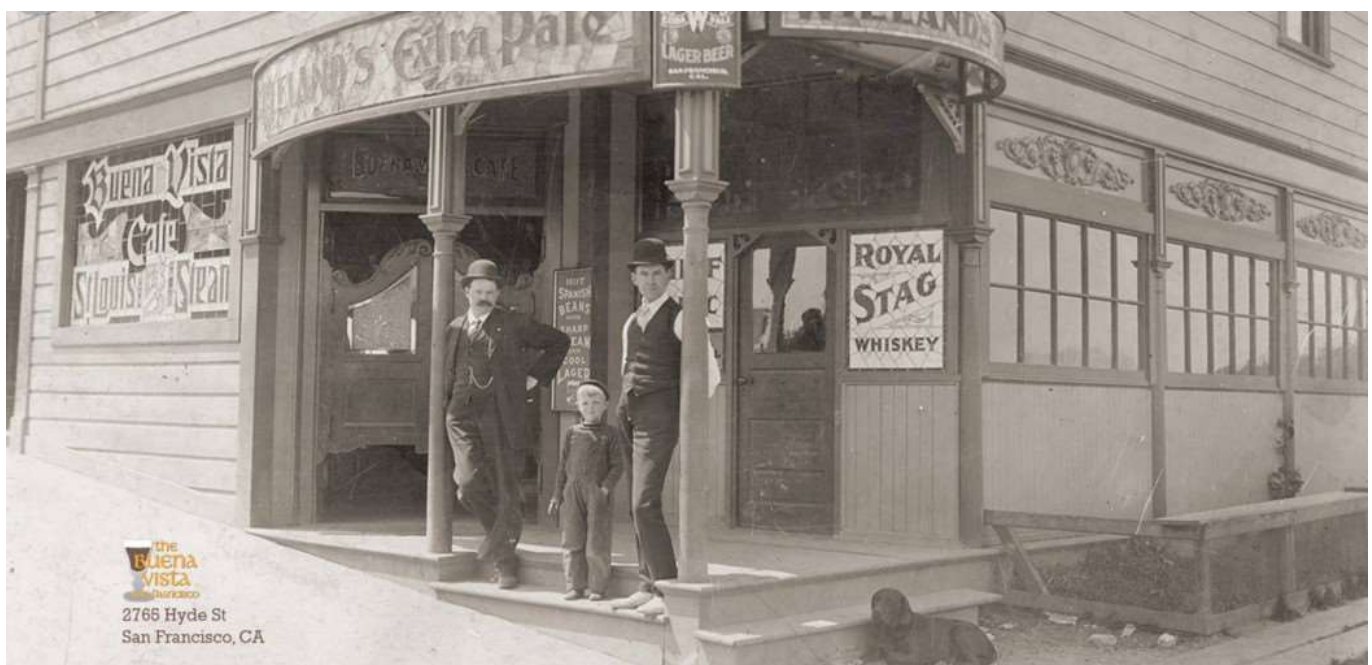
In April 1961, Caen sat in the Buena Vista with a “well-known artist” visiting from New York, watching the sunset glow over Alcatraz. “I’ve been to all the great cities of the world,” the artist told Caen, “and not one of them has what this one has — and I’m not talking about hills or water. I mean light — fantastic changes of light. I’ve never seen a city move so fast or so often from gray to white to blue to pink to gold, and then back again, and sometimes all at the same time.”

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Caen picked up the description in his own voice: “As we walked outside, the city, which, an instant before, had been the enchanted pink and white of fairy tales, softened into a dusty mauve, pierced at random by the first emerging lights of evening,” he wrote. “Innocence and wonderment, tinged with a slight disbelief — he was experiencing the heady intoxication we all felt once when our eyes were new and we felt the special kinship of the specially blessed.”

For me, I'll always associate the Buena Vista with the night in February 1997 when thousands took to the streets of San Francisco to mourn the death of Caen, a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist who loved and celebrated his city as few ever have, anywhere. Caen was a man about town in the best sense, a raconteur and a great listener, who coined the term “beatnik” as a good-natured putdown. He invented three-dot journalism, which makes him the forefather of the tweet, and his city mourned him with style — a long procession wending through town and, for many of us, winding up with toasts to Herb, my former neighbor in the *Chronicle* offices, at the Buena Vista.

Robin Williams, still around then, remembered his friend Caen with a gentle rip or two. “Being a famous journalist is like being the best-dressed woman on radio,” he’d said earlier. Closing, he rightly described Caen as “an amazing combination of elegance and funk,” and said, “I’m sorry you had to leave, man, but you’re still here.” That’s how it feels for me even now at the Buena Vista—Herb’s still there, Stan, Robin, and so many others who loved San Francisco style and made it their own.



The Buena Vista opened in 1916 when an enterprising boardinghouse owner decided to turn the first floor into a saloon. It was here in 1952 that Delaplane concocted an American version of the Irish coffee he’d first tasted as a World War II correspondent stopping off at Shannon Airport. He and then-owner Jack Koeppler kept mixing up drinks until they got it right.

Since then, the Buena Vista has reportedly served more than 30 million Irish coffees, including — takeout only — during the coronavirus shutdown. On weekends, the bar has sold as many as 500 to-go Irish coffees. I highly recommend stopping by, grabbing one or several, and then taking in the view with a bracing beverage.

“We’re still doing takeout, and our most popular item is the Irish coffee,” manager Larry Silva told me by phone. “Most of the customers are locals—our neighbors mostly, and our fans. They’ve been coming in just to keep us going. It feels good to get them some sustenance to help them get by and make them happy.”

Silva barely had time to talk to me. He’s working long hours without much help. “We’re like 90% down — I have 90% of my staff furloughed,” he said in a pained voice. “It’s kind of surreal: Everybody wearing a mask, and people waiting in line six feet apart, and being able to interact with them for 30 seconds instead of 30 minutes.”

For a bar famous for its Irish coffee, St. Patrick’s Day is the holiday around which the entire year pivots, but not this spring. This March, the pandemic on the move, the staff put up their decorations in vain.

“We look forward to eventually opening,” Silva told me. “We couldn’t do St. Paddy’s Day, so we left the decorations up and are going to leave them up until we can open again and celebrate together then.”

Read more

My Favorite Corner of SF: Java Beach Café on La Playa Street
Where the city meets the sea
thebolditalic.com

My Favorite Corner of SF: A Retro Slice of the City at Market and
Octavia

Buena Vista Cafe gets landmark plaque honoring its Irish coffee-soaked history



By [Joe Kukura](#) - Published on October 05, 2020.

[San Francisco](#) [Fisherman's Wharf](#)

There's probably no bar, saloon, or establishment in San Francisco more associated with one particular alcoholic beverage than the Fisherman's Wharf hangout [Buena Vista Cafe](#). The drink was not invented there (it is, after all, genuinely Irish in origin). But the 1950s-era tale of then-owner Jack Koepler and Chronicle writer Stanton Delaplane duplicating the Irish beverage, then recruiting its inventor Joe Sheridan to come sling them at the cafe, is retold in a historical plaque that was officially unveiled at the Buena Vista Cafe this past Saturday morning.



Image: Joe Kukura, Hoodline

This is not an official San Francisco city landmark designation, but instead a plaque bestowed by an alcohol-enthusiast historical society called [E Clampus Vitus](#), colloquially known as "Clampers."

"We put up plaques to historic sites, usually involving liquor," says the [well-known Emperor Norton impersonator](#) Joseph Amster.

"There's also the Comstock Saloon, the Old Ship Saloon, Hotaling Alley, all have Clamper plaques." The group is

Saloon, the Old Ship Saloon, Hotaling Alley, all have Clamper plaques." The group is

also responsible for the [restored Emperor Norton plaque](#) at the Salesforce Transit Center.



Image: Joe Kukura, Hoodline

The Buena Vista Cafe has been around since the early 1900s, but the Irish coffee thing didn't kick in for another 50 years. "We've been doing the Irish Coffee since 1952 here," the cafe's general manager Kevin Jones tells Hoodline. "On a busy weekend, we would do 2,000-2,500 Irish Coffees a day here. We're the biggest buyer of Tullamore Dew whiskey in the world. Prior to COVID, the prior year, we went through 48,000 gallons of Tullamore Dew whiskey. That's 13 gas trucks, out of this little location."

And they've been selling Irish coffees to-go long before the [COVID-19 to-go cocktail](#) era, thanks to the proper liquor licensing, and the magic of little airline bottles of whiskey. "We've been doing that for ten years," Jones says.



Image courtesy Buena Vista Cafe

The new landmark plaque details how the Buena Vista Cafe originally opened in the mid-1800s on the opposite side of the street of its current Hyde and Beach Street corner. It was initially a boarding house, then converted into a saloon in 1916 that quickly became popular among fishermen who enjoyed grabbing a drink in their downtime. It's been the Buena Vista Cafe for more than a century, though obviously, the place is having one its most difficult stretches ever as COVID-19 has rendered the place an outdoor-only establishment with barely any tourists to serve.



Image: Joe Kukura, Hoodline

"We decided not to do indoor, we're doing outdoor," Jones tells us, even though [limited indoor dining](#) is now permitted. "If we're going to indoor, we want to make sure we're smart. We don't want to just open up just because the city says we can open up. I want to make sure it's going to be safe for my employees."



“Because if someone gets sick, then we close,” he adds. “We’re going to wait and see what everyone else is doing, then we’re going to look at the results of people opening up indoors. Does it raise the COVID [infection rate]?”

So the place remains an outdoor cafe, jazzed up with hanging lights, umbrellas, and otherwise-unsightly bright-orange water barricades that are

now [decorated with lovely original paintings](#) by local muralists [Kurt Schwartzmann](#) and [Deirdre Weinberg](#).



Image: Joe Kukura, Hoodline

“We’ve got another four weeks of nice weather,” Jones thinks. “And then as soon as the weather starts getting cooler and the rain starts coming, then we have other options, putting a tent outside. But I want to minimize what we have inside.”

The seating area is often at capacity by social distancing rules, but that doesn’t mean business is booming. “It is difficult. We’re probably at 25% of what we used to do,” Jones says. “Before we had shared tables. You could have a table of four, and two pairs of people could sit at the table. None of the tables are shared anymore. And that was kind of the fun of the Buena Vista. You never knew who you were going to meet, who you were going to sit next to, what country they were from. It was a great conversation starter.”

The Buena Vista Cafe is pretty much the only place in Fisherman’s Wharf that has much cachet among locals. It’s a tourist attraction to be sure, but one with legitimate cultural street cred. And thanks to the new historical plaque from the Clampers, its rich and creamy history is now visible literally from the street.



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: April 6, 2022

Filing Date: March 9, 2022
Case No.: 2022-002234LBR
Business Name: Buena Vista Cafe
Business Address: 2765 HYDE ST
Zoning: C-2 (COMMUNITY BUSINESS) Zoning District
Waterfront Special Use District No. 2
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0025/019
Applicant: Lea Hausherr
2765 Hyde Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Located In: District 2
Staff Contact: Ryan Balba - 628-652-7331
Ryan.Balba@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

The Buena Vista Cafe is an iconic café located in the Russian Hill neighborhood on Hyde Street at the corner of Beach street. The Buena Vista originally opened in 1891 on the northeast corner of Hyde and North Point streets by the Brickwedel Brothers under the name “Buena Vista Saloon”. In the late 1890s, the business was acquired by William Nieman and moved one block north to present day 685 Beach Street. Although it has had multiple owners since the late 1890s, it is presently located in a building still owned by the Nieman family on 2765 Hyde Street.

Though there may have been brief lapses in service, the Buena Vista has stood the test of time surviving major events such as the Prohibition and even the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. Originally a boarding house, it was converted into a saloon and restaurant, then into a soda fountain during the Prohibition era. The Buena Vista eventually became a café – thought the exact year has been lost to the passages of time – and began making waves with its introduction of the Irish Coffee. The introduction of the Irish Coffee drew the likes of sports stars, artists, and writers to the café. Since this introduction, the Buena Vista has been featured in a number of artistic

media, such as films and paintings. Widely known as the business that introduced and popularized the Irish Coffee in the United States, the Buena Vista has been serving the popular beverage to San Franciscans, visiting laborers, and tourists alike for over half a century.

The business's location at 2765 Hyde is a Category B (Unknown / Age Eligible) structure on the west side of Hyde Street between Beach and North Point streets in the Russian Hill neighborhood. It is within the C-2 (Community Business) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. It is also within the Waterfront Special Use District No. 2. 2765 Hyde was included in the DCP 1976 Survey, where it received a survey rating of "2". However, despite this former evaluation, it has been inconclusive, and the property maintains a Planning Department status code of "B" (Unknown / Age Eligible).

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1891.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. The Buena Vista Cafe qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. The Buena Vista Cafe has operated continuously in San Francisco for 131 years.
- b. The Buena Vista Cafe has contributed to the history and identity of the Russian Hill neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. The Buena Vista Cafe is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The Buena Vista Cafe appears to have been the first institution to introduce Irish Coffee to the United States. Therefore, it is significant for its contributions to the city's culture as a café.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. In addition to the Buena Vista Cafe appearing to have been the first institution to introduce Irish Coffee to the United States, it has consistently offered meals and drinks to locals and tourists at an iconic location in the City (often depicted in art by the likes of significant artists such as Guy Buffet, Michael Flohr, and LeRoy Neiman).

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No. The 1911 property has not been previously evaluated by the Planning Department for potential historical significance. The property is considered a "Category B Property" that requires further review per the Planning

Department's CEQA review procedures for historical resources. 2765 Hyde was included in the DCP 1976 Survey, where it received a survey rating of "2".

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. The Buena Vista Cafe has been featured in many local publications, such as the San Francisco Examiner, SFGATE, and Hoodline.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 2765 Hyde Street (Early 1900s – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 685 Beach Street (Late 1890s – Early 1900s)
- Northeast corner of Hyde and North Point streets (1891 – Late 1890s)

Recommended by Applicant

- The interior
- The exterior Buena Vista neon sign

Additional Recommended by Staff

- The bartenders putting on a show behind a row of Irish Coffees
- Stained glass transoms with the Buena Vista name and street number
- Tiled walls behind the bar
- Several historical pieces hung behind the bar

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative

- Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
- Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
- Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 1237

HEARING DATE: APRIL 6, 2022

Case No.: 2022-002234LBR
Business Name: Buena Vista Cafe
Business Address: 2765 Hyde Street
Zoning: C-2 (COMMUNITY BUSINESS) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Waterfront Special Use District No. 2
Block/Lot: 0025/019
Applicant: Lea Hausherr
2765 Hyde Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Located In: District 2
Staff Contact: Ryan Balba - 628-652-7331
Ryan.Balba@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR 2765 HYDE ST CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2765 HYDE ST (PRIMARY ADDRESS), BLOCK/LOT 0025/019.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on April 6, 2022, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that the Buena Vista Cafe qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for the Buena Vista Cafe.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

- 2765 Hyde Street (Early 1900s – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 685 Beach Street (Late 1890s – Early 1900s)
- Northeast corner of Hyde and North Point streets (1891 – Late 1890s)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- The interior
- The exterior Buena Vista neon sign
- The bartenders putting on a show behind a row of Irish Coffees
- Stained glass transoms with the Buena Vista name and street number
- Tiled walls behind the bar
- Several historical pieces hung behind the bar

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2022-002234LBR to the Office of Small Business on April 6, 2022.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Wright, Black, Foley, Johns, So, Nageswaran, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: April 6, 2022