

Finding Aid to Finocchio's collection

(#1999-79)

Repository: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

Collection Title: Finocchio's collection

Collection Number: 1999-79

Physical Description: 65 linear feet (3 boxes, 5 cartons, 19 oversize boxes, 19 artifacts)

Creator: Eve Finocchio

Date (inclusive): circa 1940-1999

Language of Material: English

Abstract:

This collection contains materials relating to Finocchio's, one of the oldest and best-known female impersonation clubs in the world. The collection is arranged into four series: Production Material and Ephemera, Photographs, Garments, and Artifacts.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of item], Finocchio's collection (#1999-79), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Conditions Governing Access:

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights:

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Acquisition Information:

The collection was donated to the GLBT Historical Society by Eve Finocchio in 1999.

Processing Information:

Finding Aid created by Megan Needels in 2022 with funding provided by the National Historical Publications & Records Commission.

This finding aid uses terminology for LGBTQ people that was in current use at the time of its creation. Descriptive language for queer identities evolves quickly and some of these terms may now be dated or even offensive. Finding aids are themselves historical documents; they reflect the moment in which they were written and often reflect the terms that subjects used for themselves. Please contact the GLBT Historical Society Archivist with questions or comments.

Biographical/Organizational History Note:

Finocchio's was one of the oldest and best-known female impersonation clubs in the world. For over 60 years, performers sang, danced, and bantered with the audience. Finocchio's opened in the late 1920s or early 1930s in the bohemian neighborhood of North Beach in San Francisco. It was originally owned by Marjorie and Joseph Finocchio. During Prohibition the club began featuring female impersonation shows and became a popular space among both tourists and the queer community. Finocchio's performances featured some of the country's most famous female impersonators including Walter Hart, Ray Bourbon, and Lucian Phelps. It also attracted many Hollywood celebrities over the years ranging from Bob Hope to Tallulah Bankhead. The club moved locations several times before opening at 506 Broadway Street, where it remained from 1936-1999. A popular restaurant called Banducci's, was located below the nightclub and was owned by Enrico Banducci. Although over time Finocchio's reputation as a queer hangout spot faded, its popularity with tourists did not. The club was an official stop on the Gray Line Nightclub Tour for over 50 years. Marjorie Finocchio died in San Francisco in 1956 and Joseph Finocchio died in 1986. Joseph's second wife, Eve, operated Finocchio's until it closed in 1999.

Scope and Content:

This collection contains materials relating to Finocchio's, one of the oldest and best-known female impersonation clubs in the world. The records span from 1940-1999 and are arranged into four series: Production Material and Ephemera, Photographs, Garments, and Artifacts. Production Material and Ephemera includes materials related to the production of shows at Finocchio's including sheet music, lyrics, receipts, and show schedules. It also includes ephemera including correspondence, notes, business cards, flyers for local events, a food stamp card, and a menu for Enrico's cafe. Photographs include photographic prints primarily of performers backstage and with patrons. It also includes six large format photographs of Finocchio's performers. Garments include costumes, wigs, hats, shoes, and accessories worn by performers. It also includes Eve Finocchio's mink stole and a doorman's hat. Artifacts include wig heads, furniture, banners, jewelry, musical instruments, and artwork. It also includes Finocchio's projected neon sign, which is currently stored offsite. Photographs of the sign are available for researchers. Contact an archivist for more information.

Indexing Terms:

LGBTQ

San Francisco Bay Area (Calif.)

Drag

Nightlife

Container Listing

Series I: Production Material and Ephemera, circa 1940-1999

Physical Description: 3 boxes, 1 oversize box

Scope and Content: This series includes materials related to the production of shows at Finocchio's including sheet music, lyrics, receipts, and show schedules. It also includes ephemera including correspondence, notes, business cards, flyers for local events, a food stamp card, and a menu for Enrico's cafe.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged in alphabetical order within their containers.

Box 1, Folder 1	Admission signs, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Body of Myth folder, undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Cards and correspondence, 1994-1999
Box 1, Folder 4	Flyers and postcards, circa 1980-1999
Box 1, Folder 5	Miscellaneous ephemera, circa 1980-1999
Box 1, Folder 6	Notes, circa 1980-1999
Box 1, Folder 7	Production materials, circa 1990-1999
Box 1, Folder 8	Receipts and administrative records, 1996-1999
Box 1, Folder 9	TV Epic Issue, 1996
Box 2, Folder 1	Oversize ephemera, circa 1980-1999
Box 2, Folder 2	Sheet music – bass, 1 st show, undated
Box 2, Folder 3	Sheet music – bass, 2 nd show, undated
Box 2, Folder 4	Sheet music – bass, 3 rd show, undated
Box 2, Folder 5	Sheet music – drums, 1 st show, undated
Box 2, Folder 6	Sheet music – drums, 2 nd show, undated
Box 2, Folder 7	Sheet music – drums, 3 rd show, undated
Box 2, Folder 8	Sheet music – drums, extra, undated
Box 2, Folder 9	Sheet music – horn, undated
Box 2, Folder 10	Sheet music – miscellaneous, undated
Box 2, Folder 10	Sheet music – piano, undated [1]

Box 2, Folder 11	Sheet music – piano, undated [2]
Box 3, Folder 1	Sheet music – saxophone, 1 st show, undated
Box 3, Folder 2	Sheet music – saxophone, 2 nd show, undated
Box 3, Folder 3	Sheet music – saxophone, extra, undated
Oversize box 15, Folder 1	Enrico’s menu with illustration by Wendy Wheeler, 1968

Series II: Photographs, circa 1940-1999

Physical Description: 1 box, 6 artifacts

Scope and Content: This series contains photographic prints primarily of performers backstage and with patrons. It also includes six large format photographs of Finocchio’s performers.

Arrangement: Series is collected without further arrangement.

Box 1, Folder 10	Photographs, circa 1980-1999
Artifact 12	Framed large format photograph of Walter Hart, circa 1940-1955
Artifact 13	Framed large format photograph of Li Kar, circa 1940-1955
Artifact 14	Framed large format photograph of David d’Alba performing as Vivian Leigh from <i>Gone with the Wind</i> , circa 1940-1955
Artifact 15	Framed large format photograph of performer in polka dot dress, circa 1940-1955
Artifact 16	Large format photograph of performer, circa 1940-1955
Artifact 17	Framed large format photograph of two performers in feathered hats, circa 1940-1955

Series III: Garments, circa 1940-1999

Physical Description: 5 cartons, 16 oversize boxes

Scope and Content: This series contains garments such as costumes, wigs, hats, shoes, and accessories worn by performers. It also includes Eve Finocchio’s mink stole and a doorman’s hat.

Arrangement: Series is collected without further arrangement.

Carton 1	Hats (3), undated
Carton 2	Shoes (4 pairs), belts (3), crochet purse, circa 1940-1999
Carton 3	Pink feathered hat, undated
Carton 4	Green Finocchio’s doorman hat, tiara, pink lace headband, undated
Carton 5	Brunette wig, undated
Oversize box 1	Bodices, leotards, and vests, undated [1]
Oversize box 2	Bodices, leotards, and vests, undated [2]
Oversize box 3	White gowns (2), yellow shirts (6), multicolor vest, undated

Oversize box 4	Black/red jacket, green lace dress, red/gold shirt, white/black gown; white Pat Campno shirt, red lace skirt, red cotton shirt, red Pat Campano gown, orange scarf, undated
Oversize box 5	Multicolor vests(2), multicolor skirts (2), green dirndl dress, undated
Oversize box 6	Black jacket, red bodice, black lace teddy, black velvet skirt, yellow Pat Campano gown, undated
Oversize box 7	Green dirndl dresses (2), undated
Oversize box 8	Purple lace gown, undated
Oversize box 9	Multicolor floral skirts (2), pink leotard, red polka dot shirt, pink swimsuit, multicolor scarf, undated
Oversize box 10	Purple shirt and lace costume, undated
Oversize box 11	Blonde wig, undated
Oversize box 12	Eve Finocchio's mink stole, undated
Oversize box 13	Purple/pink Pat Campano dresses (2), multicolor floral skirts (2), undated
Oversize box 14	Large feathered/lace hats (4), undated
Oversize box 18	Bodices, leotards, and vests, undated [3]
Oversize box 19	Bodices, leotards, and vests, undated [4]

Series IV: Artifacts, circa 1940-1999

Physical Description: 3 cartons, 5 oversize boxes, 13 artifacts

Scope and Content: This series contains artifacts such as wig heads, furniture, banners, jewelry, musical instruments, and artwork. It also includes Finocchio's projected neon sign, which is currently stored offsite. Photographs of the sign are available for researchers, contact an archivist for more information. The furniture in this series was collected from the dressing room, bar, and dining room at the Finocchio's location on 506 Broadway Street in San Francisco.

Arrangement: Series is collected without further arrangement.

Carton 3	Wig head and check spindle, undated
Carton 4	Needlepoint pillow, undated
Carton 5	Wig heads (2), clothes hangers (2), undated
Oversize box 11	Pink/green "F" banner, undated
Oversize box 14	Red feathered hand fan, undated
Oversize box 15	Dressing room mirror and club hours signs, undated
Oversize box 16	Necklaces (2), fake eyelashes, castanet, hair pin, happy birthday banner, blush container, earrings, sequin adornment, undated
Oversize box 17	Ukuleles (2), blue adornment, green banner with pins, undated

Artifact 1	Red wooden stand, undated
Artifact 2	Small black table top, undated
Artifact 3	Brown wooden Thonet dining chair with back pad cover, undated
Artifact 4	Brown wooden Thonet chair, undated [1]
Artifact 5	Brown wooden Thonet chair, undated [2]
Artifact 6	Brown wooden Thonet dressing room chair with red leather seat and heart pillow, undated
Artifact 7	Standing metallic ashtray, undated
Artifact 8	Bar stool, undated [1]
Artifact 9	Bar stool, undated [2]
Artifact 10	Table, undated [1]
Artifact 11	Table, undated [2]
Artifact 18	Painting of performer with yellow flower, circa 1940-1955
Artifact 19	Finocchio's neon sign, circa 1940