



NHL Executive Summary



Name of Property: The Furies Collective

City, State: Washington, DC

Period of Significance: 1971-1973

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme: II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
2. Reform Movements

Previous Recognition: National Register of Historic Places, Individual Listing (NRIS 16000211)

National Historic Context: *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*

NHL Significance:

- As the headquarters of the short-lived, but consequential Furies Collective, the rowhouse at 219 11th Street SE, Washington, DC is nationally significant for the important role it played in the articulation of lesbian feminist separatism, an influential school of thought that upholds heterosexuality as a key element in perpetuating women's oppression.



- Lesbian feminist separatism had a dramatic impact on lesbian culture for the next two decades, inspiring the creation of a women’s culture and a national network of woman-owned businesses, women artists, and feminist thinkers.
- Within the LGBTQ civil rights movement, lesbian feminism constituted a “parallel revolution” to gay liberation, with both tracks eventually joining to inform the late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century LGBTQ movement.
- Lesbian feminism, like that espoused by the group of women that lived and worked in this rowhouse and others nearby, left a legacy within the larger women’s movement, by offering a critique of the ways that heterosexuality helps uphold male supremacy. Many feminists—straight, bisexual, and lesbian—embraced the idea of centering their lives around other women, and a women’s subculture flourished in the U.S. during the 1970s and 1980s.
- The Furies Collective played a key role in the articulation of lesbian feminist separatism through its nationally circulated newspaper *The Furies*, which they produced at this location.
- According to historian Lillian Faderman, “the Furies newspaper, which was sold at the women’s bookstores that were mushrooming across America, inspired thousands of lesbian feminists to form their own collectives in cities, farms, forests, and mountains all over America and in Europe, too.”¹
- The twelve members of the collective went on to play influential roles nationally and locally in gay commercial media, art, literature, feminism, and gay civil rights.

Integrity:

- The rowhouse at 219 11th Street SE retains its footprint, exterior materials and detailing, and basic room layout from the period of significance (1971-1973). Interior finishes on the main and upper floors reflect what would have been present in the 1970s, including the wood floors, stained wood trim, high ceilings, and paneled and stained wood doors with operable glass transoms.
- Although minor changes have occurred in the layout, the exterior and its interior spaces are still recognizable as the modest rowhouse rental that the Furies Collective rented in 1971-1973.
- The biggest change is the basement’s conversion to a separate apartment. During the period of significance, this space was used for production and layout of the Furies newspaper and so is an important part of the Furies’ association with this building. While the space has been reorganized and access to the main floor via an interior stair removed, the exposed brick walls and the historic front windows and front and rear doors still recall the utilitarian space as it existed in the 1970s.
- Despite these changes, the overall integrity of the property remains high with strong integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship lending to the house’s robust sense of historical feeling and association with the period of significance. The house still reflects the Furies’ use as a site of collective living and political and editorial meetings, which mostly took place in the main living areas of the first floor.

¹ Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 240.



Owners of Property: Robert Pohl and Antonia Herzog

Acreage of Property: 0.04 acre

Origins of Nomination: National Park Service, National Capital Region (NPS, NCR). In 2017, NCR concluded a limited NHL site identification study for potential properties to be designated in the region. This was one of the first sites identified for NHL designation.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: The owners are supportive of the designation. The city is pursuing recognition of other LGBTQ-related sites and this designation will help highlight the importance of that history.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as December 21, 2023):

- David Maloney, State Historic Preservation Officer, District of Columbia Office of Planning
- Joan E. Biren, original member of the Furies Collective
- Lee Schwing, original member of the Furies Collective (via email)
- Robert Pohl and Antonia Herzog, property owners (via email)

Landmarks Committee Comments:

- In the comparative analysis, consider places in Boston, Massachusetts and in the San Francisco, California area that are associated with lesbian feminist collectives of the same era.
- Expand discussion of the intersections between lesbian feminist separatism and other social justice movements, including the different ways that the movement took shape for women of color.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the designation of the Furies Collective in Washington, District of Columbia, as a National Historic Landmark, with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

Advisory Board Recommendation: