

SITE NAME	(former) Women's Culture Collective Coffeehouse location
LOCATION	119 Hawthorne Rd.
BUILT/ALTERED	1917
LGBTQIA+ ASSOCIATED YEARS	Ca. 1978-1984
EVALUATION DATE & EVALUATOR	November 4, 2024 Cynthia de Miranda, MdM Historical Consultants, Durham



Location of (former) Women's Collective Coffeehouse,

LGBTQIA+ Historic Significance: This bungalow in the Forest Park neighborhood was the location of meetings of the Women's Collective Coffeehouse, an early lesbian-focused organization in the first years of the gay liberation movement. Few places associated with lesbians have been identified in Raleigh. In the period, the house was owned by the Unitarian Universal Fellowship of Raleigh, which made the space available to the collective. The UUF campus on Wade Ave. was also evaluated under this project for association with other LGBTQIA+ focused groups.



(former) Women's Collective Coffeehouse meeting place., view SW to façade and N. elevation.

Physical Description: This one-and-a-half-story, Craftsman-style bungalow has wood-shake siding, brick porch piers, a full-width inset porch, side-gabled roof with bracketed eaves, and a gabled dormer in the front roof slope. Original 12/1 wood windows remain, as does the original partially glazed door over two vertical panels, flanked with sidelight windows. The house stands on a continuous brick foundation. There is also a brick retaining wall at the front yard.

Brief Historical Sketch: A group of lesbians who were not allowed to join a local feminist women's group because of their sexual preference instead formed a group they called the Women's Culture Collective. They met here, in a bungalow owned by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They called their social gatherings "coffeehouses." The collective posted short notices in the *News & Observer* announcing coffeehouses and events in the Forest Park bungalow and later on Wade Avenue, often finishing with "All women welcome." Events included music concerts, picnics, potluck suppers, lectures, and socializing. An advertisement in a 1984 issue of *Lambda*, the newsletter of the Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association at UNC-Chapel Hill, announced the reorganization of the Coffeehouse, to meet monthly rather than twice-monthly and to move toward a social gathering rather than a programmed meeting, as had apparently been the case. By that point, "a dwindling group of devoted women" had been doing much of the volunteer work of keeping the group going, and the reorganization was meant to ease the workload on the volunteers. A member involved with the group noted decades later in

an interview with Brandie Cline that the Coffeehouse ironically did not allow transgender women to join, and that the regular membership was not particularly racially diverse. The Raleigh Women's Coffeehouse was active at least about 1978 through 1984.

The UUF also allowed St. John's MCC to meet here and may have opened the house to meetings of other LGBTQIA+-allied groups. The congregation is associated with Raleigh's PFLAG chapter and with Gay Club of Raleigh. Gay Club reportedly met at the UUF campus at 3313 Wade Avenue, where the oldest building is recorded as having been built in 1980.

Historic Integrity Evaluation: The bungalow at 119 Hawthorne Ave. retains all seven aspects of historic integrity in connection with its association with Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ history, as indicated by the check marks and explanations below.

- ✓ **Location:** The bungalow remains in its original location.
- ✓ **Design:** The Craftsman architectural character and the overall massing of the house remain, preserving integrity of design.
- ✓ **Setting:** The setting of the house at the edge of a residential neighborhood that abuts a commercial corridor remains intact from the period of the 1980s; the parking lot to the south was already in place, and the residential character of the street to the north is basically unchanged as well.
- ✓ **Materials:** Materials are intact, including brick, shake siding, wood, and glass.
- ✓ **Workmanship:** Workmanship is expressed in the brickwork and wood Craftsman details, including brackets, shakes, windows, and door.
- ✓ **Feeling:** The bungalow was originally a dwelling and retained that appearance when the collective met here. It is once again a dwelling, and the integrity of feeling is therefore intact.
- ✓ **Association:** This is the building that served as a meeting place for the Women's Culture Collective in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

RHL Eligibility Evaluation: The bungalow is associated with a lesbian-focused feminist organization in the early years of gay liberation. Few other places associated with lesbian history in Raleigh have been identified, and this bungalow is impressively intact and associated with an organization active early in the gay liberation movement. It appears to be an excellent candidate for designation as a Raleigh Historic Landmark for its association with LGBTQIA+ history in Raleigh.

Other LGBTQIA+ groups were hosted by UUF for meetings, including St. John's MCC, Gay Club, and PFLAG. St. John's is known to have met in this bungalow, but the building more closely associated with St. John's is Community United Church of Christ at 814 Dixie Trl., also evaluated in this report. Gay Club and PFLAG are more closely associated with the Wade Avenue campus of UUF. It is possible for both 119 Hawthorne and the Wade Avenue campus to be eligible for RHL designation for association with different groups.

Sources:

"Women's Coffeehouse Reorganizes," *Lambda*, March 1, 1984; "Around the city," *News & Observer*, June 3, 1983. "Calendar of Events," *News & Observer*, May 14, 1978; "Calendar of Events," *News & Observer*, October 1, 1978; "Around the city," *News & Observer*, November 24, 1978; "This Week," *News & Observer*, February 3, 1980.

Brandie Cline. "LGBT Raleigh: A Brief Overview." City of Raleigh Museum, Raleigh Historic Resources and Museum Program, 2013.