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# National Park Service Press Release

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## Secretary Jewell Announces New National Park Service Theme Study to Interpret, Commemorate Sites Related to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender History

### *Theme Study Part of Broader Initiative to Ensure National Park Service Tells More Complete Story of Nation's Diverse Heritage*

**NEW YORK** – Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced a new theme study, as part of the National Park Service Heritage Initiative that will identify places and events associated with the story of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Americans for inclusion in the parks and programs of the agency.

The theme study is part of a broader initiative under the Obama Administration to ensure that the National Park Service reflects and tells a more complete story of the people and events responsible for building this nation. The National Park Service has ongoing [heritage initiatives](#) to commemorate minorities and women who have made significant contributions to our nation's history and culture, including studies related to the history of Latinos, women, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Secretary Jewell made the announcement outside the Stonewall Inn in New York City, the site of a riot in 1969 that is widely recognized as a catalyst for the modern civil rights movement in the LGBT community. It is currently the only LGBT-associated site that has been designated a national historic landmark by the National Park Service as a property having extraordinary significance in American history.

"We know that there are other sites, like Stonewall Inn, that have played important roles in our nation's ongoing struggle for civil rights," said Jewell. "The contributions of women, minorities and members of the LGBT community have been historically underrepresented in the National Park Service, and the LGBT theme study will help ensure that we understand, commemorate and share these key chapters in our nation's complex and diverse history."

"The National Park Service is America's storyteller and protector of the places where America's history can be found," National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis said. "As we prepare to celebrate the National Park Service's Centennial in 2016, we have rededicated ourselves to sharing more diverse stories of our nation's history, particularly the struggles for civil rights. By telling these stories, we are inviting new audiences to visit their national parks and historic sites and to discover a personal connection in these special places."

The study will be a public-private partnership with funding provided by the Gill Foundation through the National Park Foundation.

"LGBT history is American history," said Gill Foundation founder Tim Gill. "The contributions of LGBT people are part of the great American journey toward full equality, freedom and liberty for all our citizens. While we take this important step to recognize the courageous contributions of LGBT Americans, we need to unite together in the days ahead to ensure we leave none of our fellow Americans behind."

Over the next 12 to 18 months, the National Park Service will work with scholars to explore ways to celebrate and interpret LGBT heritage. The scholars will hold their first meeting in Washington, D.C., on June 10. The public will be invited to take part in this meeting to learn more about the initiative and share comments on its initial phases.

The goals of the heritage initiative include: engaging scholars, preservationists and community members to identify, research, and tell the stories of LGBT associated properties; encouraging national parks, national heritage areas, and other affiliated areas to interpret LGBT stories associated with them; identifying, documenting, and nominating LGBT-associated sites as national historic landmarks; and increasing the number of listings of LGBT-associated properties in the National Register of Historic Places. For more information on the LGBT Heritage Initiative and theme study, [click here](#).

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's inventory of properties deemed to be central to its history and worthy of recognition and preservation. It includes more than 89,000 entries, incorporating more than 1.7 million individual buildings and sites representing local, state or nationally significant people, places and events. Just over 2,500 of these properties are national historic landmarks, designated by the Secretary as representing the highest level of national significance. Relatively few of these properties can be identified as representing the stories associated with African Americans, American Latinos, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Native Alaskans and Native Hawaiians, or women. Currently, only four LGBT history-related properties are included in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2010, the National Historic Landmark (NHL) Program began actively looking for sites associated with LGBT history that may have the potential to be designated as NHLs or listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The LGBT theme study will expand upon this work, and provide a framework for future site nominations for both the NHL's and National Register of Historic Places. Owner approval for these sites is necessary before nominations can be prepared and the NHL Program has begun working with the LGBT community to encourage both outreach to owners and the completion of nominations for these properties.

The National Park Service is already making great strides in encouraging the nomination of properties that are associated with groups who have been historically underrepresented in parks and programs. Over the past four years approximately 70 percent of nominated national historic landmarks represent stories of diversity. To find out more, [click here](#).

[National Park Service LGBT Heritage Initiative](#)

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