

GREENWICH VILLAGE AND PRE-STONEWALL LGBT LIFE

As early as the 1850s, gay men congregated in Greenwich Village. Pfaff's, 647 Broadway at Bleecker Street, was a hangout for "bohemians" such as Walt Whitman and for men seeking men. Bleecker Street in the 1890s had a number of "fairy" bars, often subject to raids, where cross-dressing young men solicited male customers. The picturesque Village prior to World War I became popular for the artistic and socially and politically progressive. Middle-class gay men and lesbians appropriated their own spaces despite some opposition from fellow Villagers.

The Village emerged as the first neighborhood with a significant LGBT population in New York City and one of the first nationally. Through the 1960s, the area south of Washington Square was the location of many bars and clubs that welcomed or merely tolerated LGBT patrons. Gay bars were crucial to creating a sense of community and cultivating political action in an era of discrimination.

Washington Square Arch c. 1900. Photo Credit: Milstein Division, New York Public Library.



STONEWALL UPRISING

Stonewall is regarded by many as the single most important event that led to the modern LGBT civil rights movement. While a number of groups in cities like New York, Philadelphia, Washington, San Francisco, and Los Angeles had been organizing and demonstrating for equal rights in the 1950s and 60s, Stonewall inspired LGBT people throughout the country to assertively organize on a broader scale. As historian Lillian Faderman wrote, "Stonewall was the shot heard round the world...crucial because it sounded the rally for the movement."

In the early hours of Saturday, June 28, 1969, police raided the "private" Mafia-run Stonewall Inn.

The bar, one of the few that allowed dancing, was popular with a younger, diverse crowd. Instead of dispersing, the expected result of a routine raid, a crowd consisting of bar patrons, street youth, and neighborhood residents became increasingly angry and began chanting, throwing objects as the police made arrests. Police called in reinforcements but were barricaded inside the bar. For hours the police tried to clear the neighboring streets while the crowd fought back. The uprising lasted over the course of six days — to July 3.

In the immediate aftermath of Stonewall, the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance were formed in NYC in 1969. Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera founded STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries), an early transgender group, in 1970. Within two years, LGBT rights groups had been started in nearly every major city in the U.S.

Participants of the Stonewall Uprising in front of the bar, June 29, 1969. Photo credit: Fred W. McDarrah, Premium Archive Collection, Getty Images



LGBT DISCRIMINATION AND ACTIVISM

The LGBT community suffered harassment, discrimination, and oppression from their families, organized religion, psychiatric professionals, and government. After Prohibition the New York State Liquor Authority (SLA) in 1934 was granted the power to revoke the license of bar owners who "permit [their] premises to become disorderly" and the mere presence of gay people was considered disorderly. LGBT people could not touch, dance together, make direct eye contact, or wear clothes of the opposite gender without fearing arrest. For women, people of color,

youth, and those who were gender nonconforming it was even more challenging. The Mafia opened bars as members-only "bottle clubs." No license was needed and a vicious cycle began of Mafia-police payoffs. Police harassment of gay bars and entrapment were top concerns of the LGBT community in the 1960s. The Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis were two of the nation's first gay rights groups whose early political activism help lead to the Stonewall Uprising and changes immediately after.

STONEWALL
"CRUCIAL BECAUSE IT SOUNDED THE RALLY FOR THE MOVEMENT."
—Lillian Faderman, historian, *The Gay Revolution*

DIVERSITY OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY

The LGBT community broadly encompasses all ages, races, ethnicities, nationalities, class levels, and gender identifications in the five boroughs of New York City. The events leading to Stonewall, the uprising itself, and the political organizing afterward were due to a diverse range of participants and activists. This tour represents a selection of sites associated with LGBT history that are located within a very small geographic area surrounding the Stonewall Inn. As such, it does not represent the entire long LGBT history of Greenwich Village, nor does it entirely reflect the diversity of today's LGBT community.

RELEVANCE OF STONEWALL TODAY

Stonewall has taken on shifting meanings. When it was in operation in 1967-69, it was a Mafia-run bar, and representative of the societal harassment against the LGBT community. It has evolved into a National Historic Landmark and National Monument with worldwide symbolic resonance. It is a shrine, symbol, rallying place for civil rights and solidarity. It is a place for mourning and remembrance. It was the site for the rally after the Snake Pit arrests and the first Pride March in 1970, the Anita Bryant protests in 1977, and demonstrations for LGBT civil rights in the 1980s. More recently, people celebrated here for the legalization of same-sex marriage in New York State in 2011, the overturning of the federal Defense of Marriage Act by the U.S. Supreme

Court in 2013, and after the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationally in 2015. People commemorated here the victims of the 2016 mass shooting at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

Pulse nightclub shooting memorial in front of the Stonewall Inn, a day after Stonewall's National Monument designation. Photo credit: Wikimedia Foundation



THREE LGBT HISTORIC AREAS OF INTEREST



1. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK AND ENVIRONS, 1890s TO 1960s

By the 1890s, Bleecker Street was known for its various "dives" attracting men. The block of MacDougal Street just south of Washington Square emerged as the cultural and social center of Greenwich Village's bohemian set, with an openly gay and lesbian presence in the 1910s. Through the 1960s, the South Village was the location of many LGBT bars and commercial establishments. Numerous LGBT writers and artists made the Village their home. Meetings at several area churches in the 1960s fostered LGBT rights activism.

129 MacDougal Street, c. 1939. Photo credit: NYC Dept. of Taxes, Municipal Archives.



2. HUDSON RIVER WATERFRONT AND PIERS, 1890s TO PRESENT

For over a century, the Greenwich Village waterfront along the Hudson River, including the Christopher Street Pier at West 10th and West Streets, has been a destination for the LGBT community. It evolved from a place of maritime commerce and waterfront saloons, to a popular locale for cruising and sex for gay men by the 1960s, to an important refuge for marginalized queer youth of color today.

The Grace Line pier located at Christopher Street in an undated photo. Photo credit: Milstein Division, New York Public Library.

3. ST. VINCENT'S TRIANGLE AND ENVIRONS, 1920s TO PRESENT

Since the early 20th century, this neighborhood has been the home of many LGBT people, establishments, and organizations. By the 1980s, Greenwich Village was the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic. Since 1983, New York's LGBT Community Center (208 West 13th Street) has served hundreds of thousands of people – this is where ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and other groups were organized and met. The former St. Vincent's Hospital had the first and largest AIDS ward on the East Coast. In 2017, this history and loss was recognized in the New York City AIDS Memorial at St. Vincent's Triangle.

The NYC AIDS Memorial. Photo credit: Erik McGregor/Pacific Press/Alamy Live News.



Front Cover: (top) GAA members in the first NYC Pride March at 6th Ave. at West 12th St., 1970. Photo credit: Kay Tobin Larusen, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library. (middle left) The Stonewall Inn, circa 2016. Photo credit: Glynnis Jones/Shutterstock.com. (middle right) "Gay Liberation" Monument, sculpture by George Segal, Greenwich Village, New York City. Photo Credit: obimages / Alamy Stock Photo (bottom left) Marsha P. Johnson (left) and Sylvia Rivera (right) participating at the Pride March, June 1973. Photo credit: Leonard Fink. Courtesy LGBT Community Center National History Archive. (bottom right) Empire State Building. Photo credit: anapic/Shutterstock.com.

Founded in 2015, the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project is making an invisible history visible by documenting historic and cultural sites associated with the LGBT community throughout New York City.

www.nyclgbtsites.org



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www.npsca.org



LGBT HISTORY TOUR GREENWICH VILLAGE, NYC



