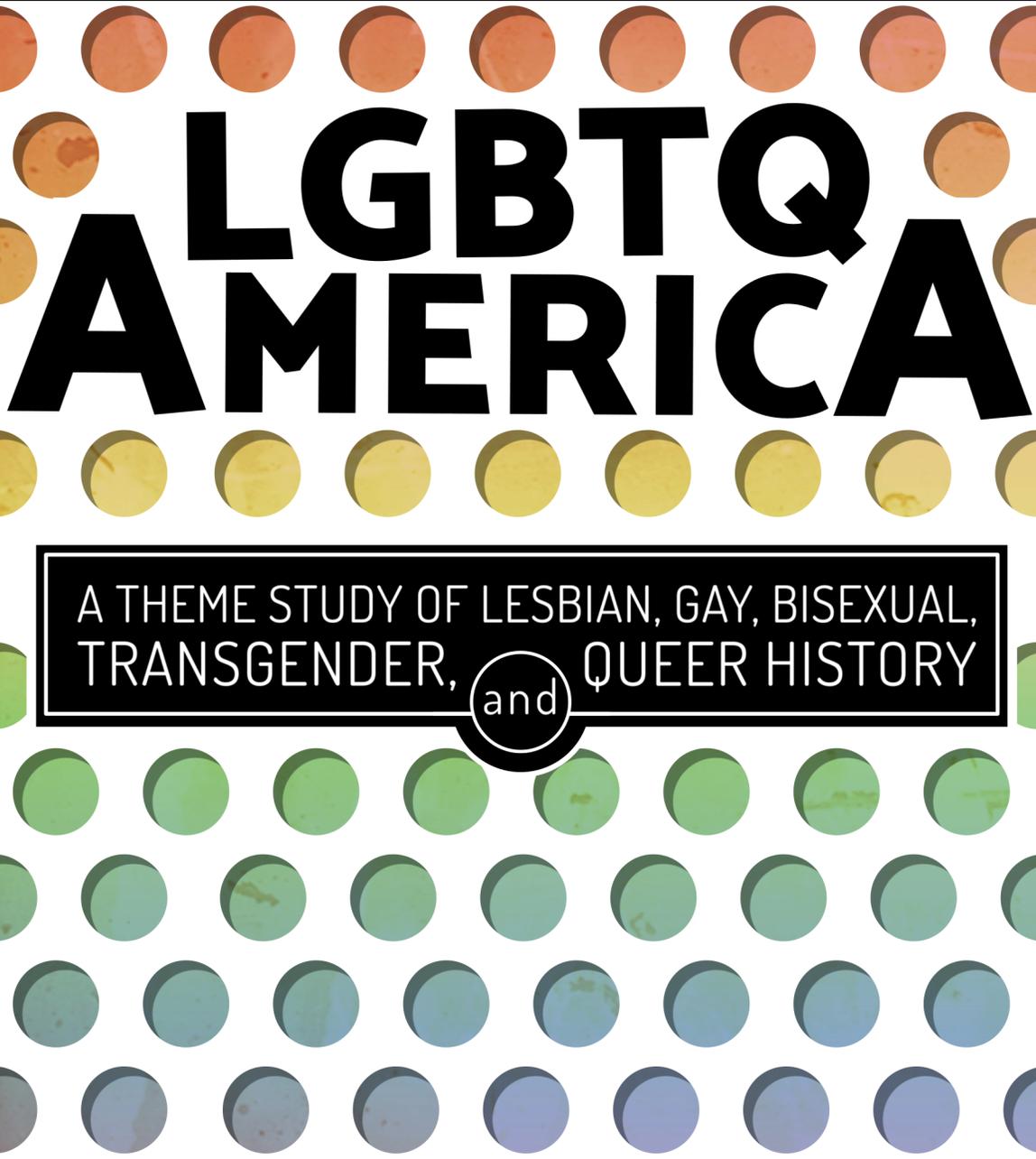


National Park Service
Department of the Interior

Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science

2016

National Park Service
CENTENNIAL



LGBTQ AMERICA

A THEME STUDY OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
TRANSGENDER, and QUEER HISTORY

Edited by Megan E. Springate



Published online 2016

www.nps.gov/subjects/tellingallamericansstories/lgbtqthemestudy.htm

LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History is a publication of the [National Park Foundation](#) and the [National Park Service](#).

We are very grateful for the generous support of the [Gill Foundation](#), which has made this publication possible.

The views and conclusions contained in the essays are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government.

© 2016 National Park Foundation
Washington, DC

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or reproduced without permission from the publishers.

Links (URLs) to websites referenced in this document were accurate at the time of publication.



PLACES

Unlike the Themes section of the theme study, this Places section looks at LGBTQ history and heritage at specific locations across the United States. While a broad LGBTQ American history is presented in the Introduction section, these chapters document the regional, and often quite different, histories across the country. In addition to New York City and San Francisco, often considered the epicenters of LGBTQ experience, the queer histories of Chicago, Miami, and Reno are also presented.

CHICAGO: QUEER HISTORIES AT THE CROSSROADS OF AMERICA

Jessica Herczeg-Konecny

Chicagoans live at the crossroads of America. As an urban center, the city has drawn people from all over the Midwest, the country, and the world. It is a city of many firsts in national LGBTQ history.¹ The city has a long history of people who experienced same-sex desire and gender transgression who lived—and live—all over the city, from Bronzeville to Boystown, and in neighborhoods within what grew to 234 square miles. This is a story of everyday people making their lives: fighting discrimination

¹ Chicago was the site of the first group advocating for homosexual rights in America. Henry Gerber founded the Society for Human Rights in 1924. His home was designated a National Historic Landmark on June 19, 2015. Jonathan Farr, et al., Draft National Historic Landmark Nomination: Henry Gerber House. University of Michigan Public History Initiative, 2014. On file, National Park Service, Washington, DC. In addition, Dr. James Kiernan delivered the first-ever lecture on homosexuality in the United States (titled “Perverted Sexual Instinct”) on January 7, 1884, at a meeting of the Chicago Medical Society. *Minute book of the Chicago Medical Society, 1884*, Gift of the Chicago Medical Society, Chicago History Museum, 1913.0091. Also, Margaret Anderson started the famous literary periodical *Little Review* in Chicago in 1914. In 1915, she wrote, “Mrs. Ellis’s Failure,” which is considered the first essay arguing for homosexual rights in the United States. Margaret Anderson, “Mrs. Ellis’s Failure,” *Little Review* 2:1 (1915), 16-19.

and homophobia, coming together for pleasure and protest, and creating communities. These are sites of resistance, pain, celebration, community building, or all of the above. This chapter is not encyclopedic, but offers assistance in the issues involved when thinking about completing a nomination for a Chicago-based historic site, as well as highlighting places important in the LGBTQ history of the Windy City.

Queer History is Chicago History

Since the nineteenth century, people have immigrated from all over the world and migrated from all over the country (especially from the South and Midwest) into Chicago. Cities like Chicago provided space for people to explore different expressions of sexuality and gender identity, freer from familial and/or religious oversight. The city allowed for increased anonymity, but also enabled people to find each other, come together, and develop communities of people like themselves.² In 1851, the city's Common Council enacted a number of laws to police behavior, especially "offenses against public morals and decency."³ Ordinances included rules prohibiting swimming in the river, gambling, and public nudity.⁴ One of the ordinances criminalized people who "appear[ed] in a dress not belonging to his or her sex, or in an indecent or lewd dress."⁵ Laws such as these were part of morality campaigns across the country; Chicago was one of the first cities with a ban on cross-dressing, but not the only. The fine was to be "not less than twenty dollars nor exceeding one hundred dollars." Twenty dollars is approximately equivalent to \$600 and \$100 is

² See Jill Austin and Jennifer Brier, "Out in Chicago: Exhibiting LGBT History at the Crossroads," in *Out in Chicago: LGBT History at the Crossroads*, ed. Jill Austin and Jennifer Brier (Chicago: Chicago History Museum, 2011), 1-22. See also John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," *Making Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 5. Reprinted from Ann Snitow, et al., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 100-113.

³ City Council of Chicago, Records of Ordinances vol. 2 7/0030/01, Illinois Regional Archives Depository, Northeastern Illinois University, 51.

⁴ *Ibid.* 51-53.

⁵ 1851 ordinance, City of Chicago book of ordinances, 1856. Chicago History Museum F38.FA 1856.

approximately equal to \$2,300 in 2014 dollars.⁶ This punitive fine well exceeded the average for the time which was five dollars.⁷

Between 1850 and 1920, the *Chicago Tribune* reported hundreds of sensationalized stories of gender crossers and people whose experiences might be understood through a transgender lens had they been alive today: male-bodied people who dressed and/or lived as women, female-bodied people who dressed and/or lived as men, and others who violated normative gender categories.⁸ People expressed their gender identity differently from their sex for a variety of reasons, and according to historians Jennifer Brier and Anne Parsons, the newspaper articles provided “a sense that the actions taken by transgender people were deliberate and often strategic.”⁹ The actual sites of these so-called “transgressions” may not ever be known, and the people who were arrested were taken to different jails and different courts throughout the city. Without knowing the locations, can we situate the people and events on a map? One way to remember these histories might be to talk about them at City Hall at 121 North LaSalle Street (completed in 1911). Since 1853, this location has marked the boundaries of the sites of all city halls and a courthouse.¹⁰ At this place, we can talk about a history of policing

⁶ *Ibid.* As for an inflation calculator, see Samuel H. Williamson, “Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to present,” *Measuring Worth*, 2015, <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php>.

⁷ Jennifer Brier and Anne Parsons, “Gender Crossroads: Representations of Gender Transgressions in Chicago’s Press, 1850-1920,” in *Out in Chicago: LGBT History at the Crossroads*, ed. Jill Austin and Jennifer Brier (Chicago: Chicago History Museum, 2011), 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 23-40.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰ David Garrard Lowe, “Public Buildings in the Loop,” in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. Jannice L. Reiff, et al. (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1019.html>. See also *AIA Guide to Chicago*, third edition, eds. Alice Sinkevitch and Laurie McGovern Petersen, (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 74. Many other important events in Chicago’s queer history have taken place at City Hall, especially ones involving political activists. For example, on December 21, 1988, the City Council passed the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in areas such as employment and housing. It was amended in 2002 to include the phrase “gender identity.” The 2012 ordinance reads, in part, “that behavior which denies equal treatment to any individual because of his or her race, color, sex, gender identity, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, military discharge status, source of income, or credit history (as to employment only) undermines civil order and deprives persons of the benefits of a free and open society.” City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations, “Chicago Human Rights Ordinance,” in *Ordinances Administered by the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations*, 2012, PDF at 7.

and the state in Chicago, as well as the importance of bodies, compartment, and clothing in LGBTQ history.

The police and court system continued to play a large role in regulating gender and social norms throughout the twentieth century. In January 1943, Evelyn “Jackie” Bross and Catherine Barscz were arrested and brought to the Racine Avenue police station (Figure 1).¹¹ Nineteen-year-old Bross (of Cherokee descent) worked as a machinist at a World War II defense plant. On her way home from work, police arrested Bross for dressing as a man. At the Women’s Court, Bross informed the judge that she wore men’s clothing because it was “more comfortable than women’s clothes and handy for work.” The judge ordered Bross to see a court psychiatrist for six months. As a result of the case, the Chicago City Council amended the 1851 ordinance to exclude those people who did not intend to use clothing to conceal their sex. According to the *Tribune*, Alderman William J. Cowhey proposed an amendment to the city ordinance as a direct result of this case.¹² Police practice of arresting gender crossers persisted through the rest of the post-World War II period, and the ordinance against cross-dressing was finally repealed in 1973.¹³

<https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/cchr/AdjSupportingInfo/AdjFORMS/Ordinanc eBooklet2012>. City Hall has also been the site of protests such as the one in November 1989. One hundred demonstrators led by ACT UP/Chicago leader Danny Sotomayor marched from the Daley Center to City Hall. They staged a sit-in to protest Mayor Richard M. Daley’s slow response to the AIDS crisis and fifteen activists - including Sotomayor - were arrested. “15 arrested at City Hall during gay rights sit-in,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Nov. 22, 1989, D2.

¹¹ 731 North Racine Avenue; site only.

¹² “Council Group Urges an O.K. on Women’s Slacks,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Jan. 21, 1943, at 3. Rita Fitzpatrick, “Parity in Pants Issue Stirs Up Feminine Ire,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Jan. 8, 1943. Fitzpatrick described Bross as “A petite, dark-haired miss, whose placidity was inherited from a full-blooded Cherokee father” and also described her “mannish haircut.” The Women’s Court was located at 1121 South State Street.

¹³ Marie J. Kuda, “Cross-Dressing Law Struck Down,” in *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City’s Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 91. See also John D’Emilio, “Chicago Gay History: Who Wears the Pants?” Online edition of *Windy City Times* (Chicago, IL), Sept. 9, 2009 <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=22829>.



Figure 1: Evelyn "Jackie" Bros (left) and Catherine Barscz (right), Racine Avenue Police Station, January 1943. Courtesy of The Chicago History Museum (*Chicago Daily News* negatives collection, ICHI-63143).

Building Communities

At first glance, places of entertainment such as bars and clubs may appear only to be about recreation. However, these gathering spaces had profoundly political impacts that shaped the course of LGBTQ struggles against homophobia and for equality. In the first half of the twentieth century, queer residential and commercial life thrived in the working-class neighborhoods that ringed Chicago's central business district known as the Loop: the neighborhood known as Bronzeville on the South Side, the West Side, and the Near North Side. During the 1920s and 1930s, the neighborhood around Rush and Clark Streets on the Near North Side was called Towertown, named for the nearby city Water Tower. It was an area full of rooming houses: single units for workers living and sometimes loving together. In this district was Washington Square Park, also known as "Bughouse Square"; "bughouse" was slang referring to mental health facilities.¹⁴ The park was a popular spot for people to give radical speeches and also for cruising. During the Prohibition era Towertown emerged as a bohemian as well as a lesbian and gay enclave where politics and entertainment intermingled. Nearby was the Dill Pickle Club, in Tooker Alley off of Dearborn Street. The doorway had a sign: "Step High, Stoop Low, Leave Your Dignity Outside." The club was founded in 1914, and by the 1920s, it had become a nightclub popular with writers, intellectuals, socialists, anarchists, poets, artists, gay men, and lesbians where lecturers spoke about diverse and taboo topics such as homosexuality and sexual freedom.¹⁵ The hotspot also held popular masked balls and anti-war dances. Crowds included hobos, gangsters,

¹⁴ Washington Square Park was listed on the NRHP on May 20, 1991. For historical information about Bughouse Square see Franklin Rosemont, "Bughouse Square," in *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. Janice L. Reiff, et al., (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/178.html>.

¹⁵ Speakers included radicals such as Ben Reitman and Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld (who spoke specifically on homosexuality in 1931). Other lectures during the 1920s included "Is Monogamy a Failure," "Nymphomaniacs in Modern Literature," and Elizabeth Davis's lecture, "Will Amazonic Women Usurp Man's Sphere." Information from the Newberry Library, Dill Pickle Collection, Box 1, Folder 71; Box 2, Folder 154; and Box 3, Folder 228.

prostitutes, and college students.¹⁶ Towertown held other attractions as well, including clubs catering to lesbians such as the Roselle Inn and Twelve-Thirty Club; both clubs were closed by the police in 1935.¹⁷ There were many more speakeasies and cabarets, such as the Ballyhoo Café, catering to gay men known as “pansy parlors” featuring effeminate men or female impersonators as entertainment.¹⁸

Towertown drew the attention of social scientists including Ernest Burgess, a founder of the “Chicago School” of Sociology at the University of Chicago, and Alfred Kinsey from Indiana University. Burgess’s work on Towertown began in the 1920s. He charged his students to investigate social and sexual underworlds. The research provides invaluable glimpses into the intimate lives of Chicagoans.¹⁹ In June 1939, Kinsey met a gay man who introduced him to Chicago’s queer community in Towertown. During that and subsequent trips, Kinsey stayed at the Harrison Hotel and conducted sex-history interviews out of his room. The research in Chicago helped inform the research that led to Kinsey’s groundbreaking book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948).²⁰ The work of Burgess, Kinsey, and their research assistants documented stories about Chicago’s nightlife that otherwise might have been lost. They reported on citywide sexual subcultures whose members often crossed racial and class lines at

¹⁶ “The World of the Dill Pickle Club,” Newberry Library,

<http://publications.newberry.org/frontiertoheartland/exhibits/show/perspectives/dillpickle>. 1916 Masked Ball handbill, Newberry Library Dill Pickle Club collection, Box 2, Folder 88. 1920s Halloween Masque Ball handbill, Newberry Library Dill Pickle Club collection, Box 2, Folder 199. 1920s Anti-War Dance handbill, Newberry Library Dill Pickle Club collection, Box 1, Folder 33.

¹⁷ The Roselle Inn was at 1251 North Clark Street; The Twelve-Thirty Club at 1230 Clybourn Avenue. See Lucinda Fleeson, “The Gay ‘30s,” in *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City’s Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 45.

¹⁸ The Ballyhoo Café was located at 1942 North Halsted Street. Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 87-88. See also Fleeson, “The Gay ‘30s,” 42 and Schwanda Schweik, “Chicago World’s Fairies,” *Brevities* 3-6, December 7, 1931, 1.

¹⁹ Chad Heap, *Homosexuality in the City: A Century of Research at the University of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2000); Chad Heap, “The City as a Sexual Laboratory: The Queer Heritage of the Chicago School,” *Qualitative Sociology* 26:4 (Winter 2003), 457-487.

²⁰ Letter from Alfred C. Kinsey to Ralph Voris, October 1939, Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction. See James H. Jones, *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 371. See also John D’Emilio, “Chicago Gay History: Kinsey in Chicago,” *Windy City Times* (Chicago, IL), Aug. 26, 2009,

<http://windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=22651>. The Harrison Hotel was on Harrison Street at Michigan Avenue.

clubs, bars, and at parties. Their findings documented that Chicago was a significant haven for same-sex sexuality and revealed LGBTQ people as an underacknowledged American population, paving the way for other research that followed.

After World War II and into the 1960s, many queer people lived and socialized in the area further north of Towertown, centered at Dearborn and Division (dubbed “Quearborn and Perversion”).²¹ In the 1950s, a number of gay-friendly male spaces sprung up in the area including the Haig and the Hollywood Bowl, and the Lincoln Street Bath continued in popularity.²² In 1958, Chuck Renslow opened the country’s first known gay leather bar, the Gold Coast (Figure 2).²³ The Gold Coast began holding the Mr. Gold Coast leather competition in the 1970s. In 1979, the competition was moved to a larger venue and renamed International Mr. Leather (IML). IML continues to draw thousands of people from around the world to Chicago each May.

City officials targeted this neighborhood on the Near North Side as part of the federal urban renewal programs. After World War II, federal policies (such as the development of the Interstate Highway System as well as the federal government providing favorable housing loans for white male heads-of-household), prompted the movement of many white, middle-class families out of American cities.²⁴

²¹ See, for example, Ron Pajak’s documentary *Quearborn & Perversion* (2009).

<http://www.quearbornandperversion.com/>

²² The Haig was located at 800 North Dearborn Street; the Hollywood Bowl at 1300 North Clark Street (See “2 Captains Face Quiz Today” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Jan. 30, 1953, 1. Police testified in front of members of the City Council that the Hollywood Bowl “was full of male degenerates. They were sitting close and holding hands.”) The Lincoln Street Bath was built in 1918 at 1019 North Wolcott Street. There are too many notable bars and nightclubs to name in this essay, but two notable ones include Tiny and Ruby’s Gay Spot at 2711 South Wentworth Avenue during the 1950s. See the documentary *Tiny and Ruby: Hell Divin’ Women* (1989) by filmmakers Greta Schiller and Andre Weiss. Another South Side hot spot is the Jeffery Pub at 7041 South Jeffery Boulevard. See Kathie Bergquist and Robert McDonald, *A Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago* (Chicago: Lake Claremont Press, 2006), 6 and 155.

²³ The bar was located at 501 North Clark Street at Rush Street. The Gold Coast closed in 1988 and the building was demolished in 2011. Owen Keehnen, “Renslow: Leather Man,” in *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City’s Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 72.

²⁴ White families increasingly lived in the suburbs that sprouted up alongside the government-funded interstate highway system. Federal housing policies further powered the explosive growth of suburbs.

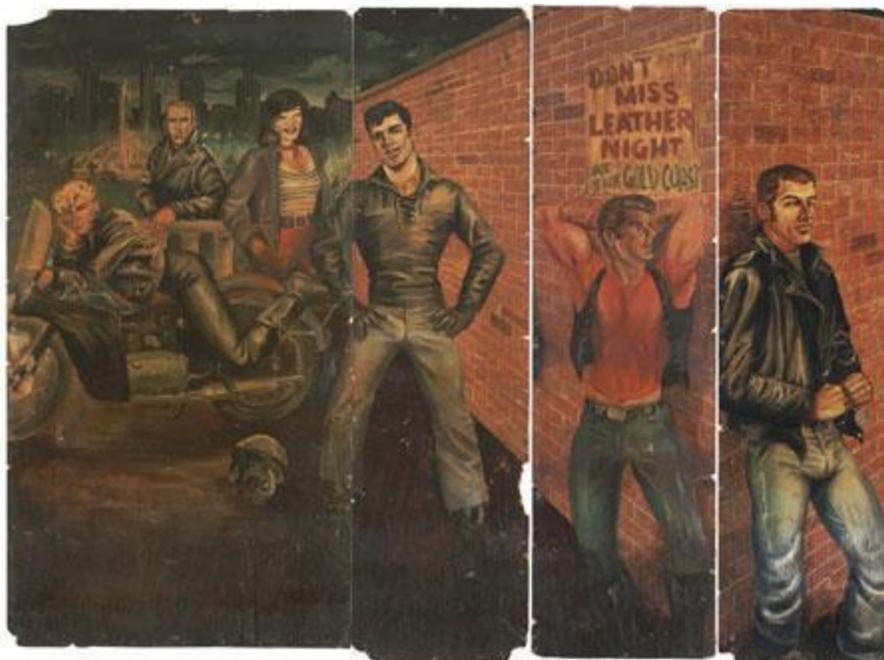


Figure 2: This painting is one of a series that hung in the Gold Coast bar. The artist, Dom Orejudos (artist name Etienne), was owner Chuck Renslow's lover of forty-three years, beginning in 1955 when the two met at Oak Street Beach. This painting is courtesy of the Chicago History Museum (Gift of Mr. Allen Schuh, 2007.80.1.a-d); the other paintings in the series hang in the Leather Archives and Museum.²⁵

Federal mortgage assistance through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration (VA) loaned money for new suburban construction that favored white, single-family homes for male-headed households. Buying oftentimes became less expensive than renting. Furthermore, during the 1950s and 1960s, FHA or VA financing helped in some way with almost half of all housing in the United States. Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Other 'Subsidized Housing': Federal Aid to Suburbanization, 1940s-1960s," in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century American*, ed. John F. Bauman, et al. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 163-79. See also Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 205 and 215. The federal government also provided subsidies for the construction of freeways through the Interstate Highway Acts of 1944 and 1956. The 1956 Act in particular provided that the federal government would pay 90 percent of the construction. In part President Eisenhower was keen to have the Federal Highway System in order to evacuate cities during an atomic attack. The federal government also subsidized suburban sewer construction and provided tax incentives for suburban homeowners and commercial development. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 249. See also Hanchett, "The Other 'Subsidized Housing,'" 163-79.

²⁵ For more information about the Leather Archives and Museum at 6418 North Greenview Avenue, see their website at <http://www.leatherarchives.org/>. For more information about Chuck Renslow, see Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen, *Leatherman: The Legend of Chuck Renslow* (Chicago: Prairie Avenue Productions, 2011).

Cities such as Chicago decided against rehabilitating some existing neighborhoods and housing in favor of clearing them out and starting over.²⁶ Officials hoped developments would protect business in the Loop, fight decentralization, and transform the city center into a safe and “family-oriented” area for white middle and upper classes. In partnership with private developers, city officials cleared spaces for public housing, but also middle-class housing such as Carl Sandburg Village (buildings date to 1960-1975).²⁷ In a proposal for the Village, developer Arthur Rubloff and Company clearly spelled out the types of people they were building for: “If Chicago wants to attract middle income families with children back to the city, we must... create a beautiful environment of residential ‘neighborhood’ character.”²⁸ John Cordwell, one of the chief architects of the Village project and the director of planning for the Chicago Plan Commission (1952-1956), said “Sandburg Village was like a military operation...to go in there and push the enemy back. Coldly, like D-Day.”²⁹ Once again, LGBTQ people of all races were caught in the crosshairs of this sweeping urban reorganization.

²⁶ The federal government used a 1949 urban redevelopment bill and 1954 urban renewal bill to clear the neighborhoods, but more often than not, did not provide for low-income housing for the people displaced. Roger Biles, “Public Housing and the Postwar Urban Renaissance, 1949-1973,” in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. John F. Bauman, et al. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 143-44. It should be noted, however, that many grassroots community groups were part of urban renewal programs such as those in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. These projects renovated and revitalized housing stock in the name of historic preservation. As historian Amanda Seligman stated, after urban renewal, Lincoln Park had a “status as one of the city’s most appealing residential neighborhoods for young white professionals.” Amanda Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago’s West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 78.

²⁷ The development area is bounded by North Avenue, LaSalle Street, Division Street, and the half-block east of Clark Street. Carl Sandburg Village entry in *AIA Guide to Chicago*, 3rd edition, ed. Alice Sinkevitch and Laurie McGovern Peterson (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 185. See Seligman, *Block by Block*, 77-78. An example of an Urban Renewal project for public housing was the Cabrini Green high rises. Cabrini Green was bounded by Clybourn Avenue, Larrabee Street, Chicago Avenue, and Halsted Street. Both the Cabrini Extension (built 1958, now demolished) and William Green Homes (built 1962, now demolished) were part of this development. Amanda Seligman, “Cabrini-Green,” in *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. Janice L. Reiff, et al. (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/199.html>.

²⁸ Arthur Rubloff and Company, *Proposal for the Redevelopment of the Chicago Land Clearance Commission North-La Salle Project: Carl Sandburg Center, A Joint Venture*, 1962. Gift of Arthur Rubloff and Company, Chicago History Museum, F38.HH.R9 FOLIO.

²⁹ Steve Kerch, “Sandburg Village: Winning a Battle in Urban Renewal,” *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 14, 1986, O1. The article stated that Cordwell’s vision was to separate the tony Gold Coast neighborhood from the Cabrini Green public housing development.

As the city's urban renewal programs altered existing neighborhoods, such as the one demolished for Carl Sandburg Village, it pushed many LGBTQ people north into "New Town" in the 1970s and then further north into the Lakeview neighborhood, transforming part of it into what many Chicagoans call Boystown.³⁰ As historian Curtis Winkle points out, "Urban planners shaped the Near North in ways that, probably incidentally, helped create opportunities for a thriving gay commercial area."³¹ In November 1998, the city designated North Halsted Street as an official gay neighborhood; most likely the first district designated as such in the world. This was a controversial act. Many felt that it would be alienating or harm property values. Others believed it to be exclusionary because LGBTQ people lived all over the city, not just in one neighborhood. Regardless, the yearly Pride Parade and Northalsted Market Days events still draw crowds to the district.³²

Queers Mobilize Chicago

Struggles with the law continued to be a fact of life in LGBTQ communities throughout the mid-twentieth century. At bars and clubs, police targeted same-sex dancing and women who wore front-fly pants. When they could not arrest patrons for cross-dressing, officers twisted the slightest gestures of friendliness into charges of solicitation of prostitution. Raiding queer bars galvanized people in LGBTQ communities to start protesting for justice. For example, after a raid on a lesbian bar in February 1961, during which police arrested 52 people, Del Shearer started the Chicago chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis.³³ In another

³⁰ Boystown is officially marked as an area bounded by Lake Michigan, Diversey, Clark Street, and Irving Park Road.

³¹ Curtis Winkle, "Gay Commercial Districts in Chicago and the Role of Planning," in *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*, ed. Petra L. Doan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 31.

³² Tracy Baim, "Halsted Gets Official," in *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 201. Another major enclave is the neighborhood of Andersonville, even further north. It features the Women and Children First bookstore. This women-owned, queer-friendly feminist bookstore opened in 1979 and is now located at 5233 North Clark Street.

³³ Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2007), 70-71. See also St. Sukie de la Croix,

incident, on April 25, 1964, Cook County sheriff's deputies raided a bar just outside the city limits popular among gay men called the Fun Lounge and arrested 109 people. The following day the *Chicago Tribune* included the names (and in most instances addresses) of eight teachers and four municipal employees, among others.³⁴ Many in the gay and lesbian community responded by organizing as part of the homophile and gay-rights group the Mattachine Society; the Chicago chapter was called Mattachine Midwest.³⁵

Gay and lesbian Chicagoans started many different community centers for themselves throughout the second-half of the twentieth century. These functioned as gathering spaces for educational programs, lending libraries, helplines, and entertainment. One of these organizations was Gay Horizons. In 1973, Gay Horizons opened to provide mental health and social services to LGBTQ communities.³⁶ The organization was renamed the Horizons Community Services in 1985. Horizons partnered with the Howard Brown Memorial Clinic (founded as the Gay VD Clinic in 1974; it later became the Howard Brown Health Center) to respond to the AIDS epidemic through the AIDS Action Project. This work included support groups and an AIDS hotline.³⁷ In 2003 the organization became the Center on Halsted, and in 2007, it moved to its current location.³⁸ Today, the center continues to offer community resources in a safe environment

Chicago Whispers: A History of LGBT Chicago before Stonewall (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 269.

³⁴ "Teacher, 1 of 8 Seized in Vice Raid," Quits," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Apr. 26, 1964, 1.

³⁵ John D. Poling, "Mattachine Midwest: Standing up for Gay Rights," in *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 62-63. The Fun Lounge was located at 2340 North Mannheim Road. Poling, "Mattachine Midwest," 62. One of the instrumental leaders in Mattachine Midwest was attorney Pearl Hart. Hart devoted her life to defending civil rights and to social justice. Her home was on North Pine Grove Avenue. Marie J. Kuda, "Legal Pioneer: Pearl M. Hart, 1890-1975," in *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 26-27. Raids on bars continued through the twentieth century across the city.

³⁶ The 1973 location was 2440 North Lincoln Avenue. The group moved around many times during its history including to 3225 North Sheffield Avenue in 1979. The group was also located at 3519 1/2 North Halsted Street (1974); 2745 North Clark Street (1975); 920 West Oakdale Avenue (1977). The group moved again to 961 West Montana Street in 1990. Information about Horizons from Tracy Baim, "The 'Center' of the Gay Community," *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 104.

³⁷ "History," *Center on Halsted*, <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/history.html>.

³⁸ 3656 North Halsted Street.

with a vision of “a thriving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community, living powerfully in supportive inclusive environments.”³⁹

Chicago hosted numerous sites of protest by the Chicago chapter of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) including a twenty-four hour candlelight vigil April 21-22, 1990, in a park across the street from Cook County Hospital (Figure 3).⁴¹ Two hundred and fifty national and local activists protested the Hospital’s Board and administration (in the words of demonstrator Debbie Gould) “for [their] inadequate response to the AIDS epidemic. We’re in a crisis.”⁴² On Monday, April 23, protesters marched through the streets of downtown Chicago. Demonstrators had the following demands: 1) expanded health care for people with AIDS at Cook County Hospital, including admittance of women to the AIDS ward, 2)



Figure 3: Cook County Hospital, site of ACT UP protests in 1990. Photo by Jeff Dahl, 2008.⁴⁰

³⁹ “About,” Center on Halsted, <http://www.centeronhalsted.org/cohoverview.html>.

⁴⁰ License: CC By-SA 4.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cook_County_Hospital.jpg

⁴¹ 1835 West Harrison Street. It was added to the NRHP on November 8, 2006. In 1983, the hospital was the site of the Sable-Sherer Clinic, the first AIDS clinic in Chicago.

⁴² John W. Fountain, “AIDS group protests at County Hospital,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Apr. 22, 1990, C2A.

national health insurance, and 3) for insurance companies to make health insurance more available to people with AIDS.⁴³ ACT UP announced that one thousand people participated in the march. Women threw mattresses into the intersection of Randolph and Clark Streets to protest the exclusion of women from the AIDS ward. Others threw red paint and stuck stickers onto buildings. They marched to the Prudential Building, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association offices, and police arrested protesters during a “die-in” outside the American Medical Association headquarters.⁴⁴ Demonstrators made it to the second floor of the Cook County Building and draped a banner over the balcony that said “We Demand Equal Healthcare Now!” The police arrested 129 activists in all.⁴⁵ Activists made formal complaints against the police for excessive force. Shortly after the protests, Cook County Hospital did open the AIDS ward to women.⁴⁶

Around two hundred national and local members of ACT UP also protested a meeting of the American Medical Association outside the Chicago Hilton and Towers Hotel on June 24, 1991. A woman interrupted a speech by Vice President Dan Quayle by calling for national health care for people with AIDS; other activists spray painted “Fight the AMA” on mailboxes and storefronts.⁴⁷ This protest faced police violence including excessive force and arrests.⁴⁸ The city “paid tens of thousands of dollars

⁴³ Jean Latz Griffin, “City braces for AIDS protests,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Apr. 20, 1990, S4.

⁴⁴ The Prudential Building was located at 130 East Randolph Street, the Blue Cross-Blue Shield Association offices at 676 North St. Clair Street, and the American Medical Association headquarters at the corner of Grand and State Streets.

⁴⁵ Jack Houston and Jack Kass, “129 arrested in AIDS protest,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Apr. 24, 1990, D1. Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP’s Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 406. The Cook County Building is at 118 North Clark Street.

⁴⁶ Regarding complaints against the police: “Metropolitan Report,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Apr. 25, 1990, S3. Charles Mount, “AIDS ward is opened to women,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Apr. 27, 1990, NA7.

⁴⁷ Michael L. Millenson and Keith L. Alexander, “AIDS group in clash with the police,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Jun. 25, 1991, 1.

⁴⁸ Brett C. Stockdill. *Activism Against AIDS: At the Intersection of Sexuality, Race, Gender, and Class* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2003), 138. Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP’s Fight Against AIDS*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 406.

to settle a lawsuit brought by members of ACT UP... against the Chicago Police Department for brutality during this demonstration.”⁴⁹

Bronzeville and the South Side

Critical stories in the history of Chicago come out of the Great Migration. This movement of African Americans from the South into places like Chicago during most of the twentieth century dramatically changed life in the urban center. The black population in Chicago rose from approximately forty thousand in 1915 to more than one million by the 1970s.⁵⁰ Specifically relegated to the West and South Sides, African Americans created neighborhoods such as the one that came to be known as Bronzeville.⁵¹ Bronzeville was the home to many Prohibition-era African-American jazz clubs, blues clubs, cabarets, and drag balls where the lines of sexuality and gender were blurred. This music and entertainment scene provided social space for LGBTQ people as patrons but also as performers including people such as blues musicians Tony Jackson and Bix Beiderbecke and cabaret singer Rudy Richardson. LGBTQ themes began to be represented artistically such as in Gertrude “Ma” Rainey’s, “Prove It on Me Blues” and Jackson’s “Pretty Baby.”⁵² Hotspots included the Plantation Café, the Pleasure Inn, the Cabin Inn, Club DeLisa, and Joe’s Deluxe.⁵³

Chicago’s African-American press, notably the *Chicago Defender* and Johnson Publishing’s *Ebony* and *Jet*, reported positive accounts of gender

⁴⁹ Deborah Gould, *Moving Politics*, 269.

⁵⁰ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, (New York: Random House, 2010), 11.

⁵¹ State Street to Cottage Grove Avenue, along 43rd and 47th Street.

⁵² Jonathan Ned Katz, “Ma Rainey’s ‘Prove It on Me Blues, 1928,” *OutHistory*, <http://www.outhistory.org/exhibits/show/rainey/rainey2>. Tim Samuelson, “Tony Jackson: Music Legend,” *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City’s Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 30-31.

⁵³ Plantation Café (35th Street and Calumet), *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, eds. Janice L. Reiff, et al. (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/3491.html>. Pleasure Inn (505 East 31st Street), Cabin Inn (3119 Cottage Grove), Club DeLisa (5516 South State Street), *OutHistory*, <http://www.outhistory.org/exhibits/show/queer-bronzeville/part-1/queer-nightlife>; Joe’s Deluxe (5524 South State Street), *OutHistory*, <http://www.outhistory.org/exhibits/show/queer-bronzeville/part-2/joe-hughes>.

crossing and same-sex desire. The *Defender* began its coverage as early as the 1910s, and features in *Ebony* and *Jet* started in the late 1940s. African-American female impersonators entertained integrated audiences on the South Side as early as the 1920s into the 1960s. The *Defender* published many articles documenting Chicago's long history of interracial drag performance at locations such as the Cabin Inn or Finnie's Halloween Ball. Alfred Finnie staged his first ball in 1935 in the basement of a tavern on the corner of Thirty-Eighth Street and Michigan Avenue, and it was held in various places over the years. *Ebony* documented the 1953 ball which was held at the Pershing Ballroom.⁵⁴ All of these places and sites can tell stories of people finding each other and coming together, but also reveal exclusions, especially in terms of race, class, and gender. After World War II, queer people of color continued to face discrimination on the North Side, such as demands to present many more pieces of identification than white revelers to gain entrance into a club.⁵⁵

Throughout the city's history, Chicagoans have experienced *de facto* and *de jure* segregation along racial and class lines. Legal and cultural norms regarding housing affected LGBTQ people in Chicago in different ways. Important sites exist such as the home of Lorraine Hansberry, author of the play *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), in the Woodlawn neighborhood on the South Side.⁵⁶ The home had a covenant on it restricting ownership based on race. When Hansberry's parents bought the home in 1938 and moved their family into the neighborhood, this action resulted in court cases that went all the way through to the United

⁵⁴ "Kicking at Cabin," *Chicago Defender* (Chicago, IL), Nov. 7, 1936; "'Imps' at Cabin Inn," *Chicago Defender* (Chicago, IL), May 28, 1938; "Prize Winning Hallowe'en Impersonators," *Chicago Defender* (Chicago, IL), Nov. 9, 1957. See also "Drag Balls and Tearooms," *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 29. Tristen Cabello, "Drag Balls," *Queer Bronzeville* exhibition, *OutHistory*, <http://www.outhistory.org/exhibits/show/queer-bronzeville/part-2/drag-balls>

⁵⁵ Chad Heap, "Gays and Lesbians in Chicago: An Overview," *Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Community*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago: Surrey Books, 2008), 9. Tristen Cabello, *OutHistory* exhibit.

States Supreme Court. The win in favor of the Hansberrys was important in changing segregation covenants toward open housing.⁵⁷

Chicago's urban history is queer history. It's a history of individuals and communities and their relationship to the state, to their fellow Chicagoans, and to each other. There are sites of individual resistance at police stations, court houses, City Hall, and in their own homes. People enjoying themselves in Towertown and Bronzeville in the Prohibition era and exploring the political possibilities at the same time. Activists fighting discrimination and homophobia facing the AIDS epidemic. They make communities, coming together for pleasure and protest. Chicago, a queer crossroads at the heart of America.

⁵⁷ The Supreme Court case was *Hansberry v. Lee* 311 U.S. 32 (1940). In 1950, after spending two years at the University of Wisconsin, Hansberry moved to New York City, where she married and worked as a writer. Hansberry drew on her family's experience fighting housing discrimination in her seminal play *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), set in Chicago. *A Raisin in the Sun* won the Drama Critic's Circle Award for best play; Hansberry was the youngest American, first woman, and first African-American to win this award. See Lorraine Hansberry House, Chicago Landmarks, <http://webapps1.cityofchicago.org/landmarksweb/web/landmarkdetails.htm?lanId=13024>. Steven R. Carter, "Hansberry, Lorraine Vivian," in *American National Biography Online*, Feb. 2000; <http://www.anb.org/articles/18/18-01856.html>. In 1957, after separating from her husband, Hansberry began exploring same-sex sexuality. This same year she wrote to *The Ladder*, a periodical published by the Daughters of Bilitis, a lesbian-led organization with chapters in cities across the country. Her letter to the editor stated: "I'm glad as heck that you exist... I feel that women, without wishing to foster any strict *separatist* notions, homo or hetero, indeed have a need for their own publications and organizations." See letters to the editor from "L.N.H." in *The Ladder* 1:8 (May 1957) and 1:11 (August 1957).