

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: THE SHOT HEARD ROUND THE WORLD

The 1969 Stonewall Uprising was a key turning point in the history of the LGBT civil rights movement in the U.S. The uprising dramatically changed the nearly two-decade-old movement by inspiring LGBT people throughout the country to assertively organize on a broader scale. In the years that followed, hundreds of new organizations were formed on campuses and in cities across the country as a younger generation of activists came out of the closet and demanded full and equal rights. 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 rebellion 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. STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries), an early transgender group, was founded in 1970 by Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. 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 historically 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*

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. NYC AIDS MEMORIAL AT ST. VINCENT'S TRIANGLE AND ENVIRONS, 1920S TO PRESENT

Since the early 20th century, this neighborhood has been home to many LGBT people, establishments, and organizations, and is closely associated with the AIDS epidemic. By the 1980s, Greenwich Village was the epicenter of the disease in the city. 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. The New York City AIDS Memorial, at the intersection of 7th and Greenwich Avenues and 12th Street, honors the more than 100,000 New Yorkers who have died of AIDS and recognizes the contributions of caregivers and activists.

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 Larsen, 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" sculpture by George Segal, Greenwich Village, New York City. Photo Credit: dlmimages / 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: anajic / Shutterstock.com.



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**www.nycglsites.org**  
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.



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Since its founding in 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the independent, nonpartisan voice working to strengthen and protect America's favorite places.



LGBT HISTORY TOUR  
GREENWICH VILLAGE, NYC



# 45 MINUTE WALKING TOUR

## 1. CHRISTOPHER PARK

The park, designated the Stonewall National Monument by President Obama in 2016, played a key role during the Stonewall Uprising and remains an important site for the LGBT community. During the 1960s it was a popular hangout for LGBT youth. In the 1980s, landscape architect Philip Winslow, who later died of AIDS, created the park design. George Segal’s sculpture “Gay Liberation” (1980), placed here in 1992, is a focal point of the park. Activist Bruce Voeller (1944-1994) proposed the idea to place a statue in the park commemorating LGBT liberation.

## 2. CHRISTOPHER STREET

For decades, gay men had gone to the west end of Christopher Street at the Hudson River. Christopher Street became one of the best-identified LGBT streets in the world after 1969. Its popularity was sustained into the 1980s by many LGBT-owned and -friendly bars and businesses. Today, the Christopher Street pier and waterfront has become an important area for LGBT and queer youth of color.

## 3. STONEWALL

(51-53 Christopher Street, currently a nail salon at No. 51, and Stonewall Inn at No. 53)

The Stonewall Inn, at the time of the 1969 uprising, consisted of two former horse stable buildings that were combined in 1930 with one façade, now mostly intact from its 1969 appearance. The bar closed immediately after the Stonewall Uprising and was replaced by a number of eating establishments. In 1987-89, a bar named Stonewall operated out of No. 51. The current Stonewall bar opened in 1993 and has operated under the current management since 2006. It is open to the public.

Stonewall Inn, 1969. Photo credit: Diana Davies, 1969. Manuscript and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

## 4. MATTACHINE SOCIETY

(59 Christopher Street, currently Kettle of Fish)

Founded in Los Angeles in 1950, with a New York chapter in 1955, the Mattachine Society was a leading American “homophile” (gay and lesbian) group. At the time it was considered radical. Mattachine challenged the State Liquor Authority’s ban on serving gay people at the famous “Sip-In” at Julius’ Bar in 1966, and worked to stop police entrapment of gay men. This was Mattachine’s last offices, from 1972 until it dissolved in 1976. This location is poignant, as Mattachine was replaced in influence by younger and more radical activist LGBT groups after Stonewall.

Mattachine Society button, c. 1960s.

## 5. THE DUCHESS

(101 7th Avenue South, corner building to the right of Starbucks)

The Duchess was a popular late 1970s/early 80s lesbian bar, closed when the city revoked its liquor license under Mayor Edward Koch.

## 6. RIDICULOUS THEATRICAL CO.

(1 Sheridan Square, currently the Axis Theatre Company)

The basement Café Society (1938-50) was downtown’s first racially integrated club, with bookings by legendary jazz producer John Hammond. It opened with a relatively unknown singer named Billie Holiday, who debuted the song *Strange Fruit* here. Charles Ludlam’s Ridiculous Theatrical Co. was founded in 1967 and moved here in 1978. It was one of New York’s most innovative and influential Off-Broadway theater troupes. Ludlam died of AIDS in 1987.

Charles Ludlum, founder of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, with the cast of his play “The Ventriloquist’s Wife” in 1977. Photo credit: Jack Mitchell, Archive Photos Collection, Getty Images.

## 7. SITE OF THE START OF NEW YORK’S FIRST PRIDE MARCH

At the one-year anniversary of Stonewall, in June 1970, a group that included Craig Rodwell, owner of the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, led what became the first annual Pride March (then known as the Christopher Street Liberation Day March). To the organizers’ surprise, this incredibly brave public march attracted thousands of participants. The marchers first gathered on Washington Place between Sheridan Square and Sixth Avenue. From Greenwich Village they followed a route up Sixth Avenue to Central Park.

Official poster from New York’s first Pride March, June 28, 1970. Photo credit: Craig Rodwell Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

## ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The sites on this map are located within and outside the Stonewall National Monument boundary. The numbering of the sites follows a suggested route that roughly follows a loop. After visiting site 17 you can circle back to your starting point at Christopher Park. Many of the sites featured in this brochure are privately owned and not open to the public. Please respect people’s privacy and do not trespass.



## 8. MARIE’S CRISIS

(59 Grove Street)

First opened in the 1920s as a speakeasy, and as café Marie’s Crisis in 1935, it became a piano bar with a primarily gay clientele in 1972. The lesbian novelist Patricia Highsmith was a regular here. It is open to the public.

## 9. STEWART’S CAFETERIA

(7th Avenue South & Christopher Street, currently Bank of America)

Opened in 1933, Stewart’s Cafeteria became a popular bohemian and gay and lesbian haunt. The large windows put gay life on full display to the late-night crowds who frequented this busy intersection at the Christopher Street subway stop. In 1935 the manager was convicted of “openly outraging public decency” here. Stewart’s was raucously depicted by famous gay artist Paul Cadmus in his painting *Greenwich Village Cafeteria* (1934).

*Greenwich Village Cafeteria*, Paul Cadmus, 1934. The Museum of Modern Art.

## 10. FEDORA

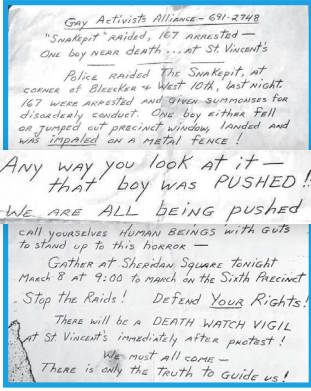
(239 West 4th Street, currently Fedora operated by new owners)

Henry and Fedora Dorato opened the restaurant Fedora in 1952, where his father had opened a speakeasy in 1919 and then a restaurant in 1933. A well-known male model sent hundreds of postcards to friends praising Fedora, leading to its popularity. It was considered the oldest continually operating restaurant with a large gay clientele until it closed in 2010.

## 11. SNAKE PIT

(213-215 West 10th Street)

In March 1970, less than a year after Stonewall, police raided the after-hours basement bar the Snake Pit. Fearing another crowd confrontation, they detained over 160 people at the local police station at 135 Charles Street, west of the bar. Immigrant Diego Vinales, apparently fearing deportation, attempted to escape by jumping out of a window. He was impaled on an iron fence below. Appalled at his possible death (he actually survived), the



recently formed Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance quickly assembled a protest march from Christopher Park to the police station, as well as a candlelight vigil at St. Vincent’s Hospital where he was taken. Flyers read “Any way you look at it - that boy was PUSHED. We are ALL being pushed.” This protest, which received positive media coverage, demonstrated the strength of the two organizations. It inspired many more people to become politically active.

Photo: Gay Activists Alliance Flyer for the Snake Pit raid protest, March 1970. Private collection.

## 12. JULIUS’ BAR

(159 West 10th Street)

A bar has continuously operated here since the mid-19th century, known as Julius’ by around 1930. It started to attract a gay clientele by the 1960s. On April 21, 1966, an event later known as the “Sip-In” was organized by members of the Mattachine Society. Inspired by civil rights sit-ins in the South, they set out to challenge the State Liquor Authority’s discriminatory policy of revoking the licenses of bars that served gay men and lesbians. The refusal of service to those who intentionally revealed they were “homosexuals” was publicized and photographed. It was one of the earliest pre-Stonewall public actions for LGBT rights, and a big step forward in legitimizing LGBT bars in New York.

Mattachine Society members (left to right) John Timmons, Dick Leitsch, Craig Rodwell, and Randy Wicker being refused service by the bartender at Julius’, April 21, 1966. Photo credit: Fred W.McDarragh, Premium Archive Collection, Getty Images.

## 13. ELMER EPHRAIM ELLSWORTH FLAGPOLE

At the eastern tip of Christopher Park is a flagpole dedicated in 1936 to Union Army Col. Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth (1837-1861). Born in New York State, he was the leader of the first American Zouave unit when he met and went to work for Abraham Lincoln 1860. C.A. Tripp, in *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln* (2005), posited that Lincoln became personally attached to the young man. Ellsworth accompanied him to Washington and was the first officer killed in the Civil War, while removing a Confederate flag from atop a Virginia hotel that Lincoln could see from the White House. The plaque on the flagpole base has the incorrect order of his name.

Col. Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth, c. 1861. Photo credit: Mathew B. Brady & Studio, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Imaging Department, Fellows of Harvard College.



## 14. OSCAR WILDE MEMORIAL BOOKSHOP

(15 Christopher Street, currently the Greenwich Letterpress)

Gay rights activist Craig Rodwell established America’s first gay and lesbian bookstore in an apartment building storefront at 291 Mercer Street in 1967. He named it after the most prominent gay person he could think of, Oscar Wilde, the playwright. Rodwell had been a participant in the Julius’ “Sip-In” in 1966. In 1973, Rodwell moved the bookshop, which also operated as a vital community center, to this location. He sold it in 1993, just before his death, and the store remained in business until 2009.

Craig Rodwell, n.d. Photo credit: Kay Tobin Lahusen Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

## 15. GREENWICH AVENUE

In the 1960s, pre-dating the Stonewall Rebellion, the stretch of Greenwich Avenue from Christopher Street to Seventh Avenue, was called “the cruisiest street in the Village.” Anything farther west of here was what novelist Felice Picano called “homosexual no-man’s-land.”

## 16. WOMEN’S HOUSE OF DETENTION

(Sixth and Greenwich Avenues)

From 1931 to 1974, the large prison on this site housed countless poor, working-class, and lesbian women. It became infamous in the Village for shouted exchanges between women inside and on the street, many of them lovers. This was one factor that resulted in a campaign to demolish the building and replace it with the scenic garden that is there now.

Women’s House of Detention, 1945. Photo credit: Museum of the City of New York.

## 17. MURRAY HALL APARTMENT

(457 Sixth Avenue)

This was the last residence of Murray Hall (c. 1840-1901), a local politician, who today would be considered gender non-conforming. Hall lived as a man for decades without his gender being questioned. Married twice to women, Hall remained close to the Jefferson Market Courthouse as a bail bondsman. Following Hall’s death, the *New York Times* reported that Hall’s “true sex” was revealed by the doctor. This attracted worldwide attention, including that of pioneering sexual psychologist Havelock Ellis.



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## DIRECTIONS TO CHRISTOPHER PARK

Christopher Park is located in Greenwich Village at 7th Avenue South and Christopher Street. By subway: **1** train to *Christopher Street – Sheridan Square* or the **A B C D E F** or **M** train to *West 4th Street – Washington Square*. By bus, take the M8 or M20 via 7th Avenue South to Christopher Street.

## LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

Language and terminology for sexual orientation and gender identification have continually evolved since the late 19th century. For example, “lesbian” and “gay” became more commonly used in the post-World War II era, whereas “bisexual” and “transgender” were not as frequent until the 1980s. The text uses “LGBT” although that usage did not exist in earlier time periods.

## MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the National Parks Conservation Association’s website at [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org) and the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project’s website at [www.nyclgbtsites.org](http://www.nyclgbtsites.org).