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

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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.

SAN FRANCISCO: PLACING LGBTQ HISTORIES IN THE CITY BY THE BAY

Donna J. Graves and
Shayne E. Watson

Introduction

San Francisco is internationally recognized as a magnet and place of pilgrimage for LGBTQ people and a critical proving ground for advancements in queer culture, politics, and civil rights. The city has also pioneered efforts to identify, document, and preserve LGBTQ historic sites, and San Francisco was the site of foundational efforts to bring LGBTQ concerns into the preservation agenda. Those efforts are the focus of this chapter, as we outline our experience of preparing a citywide historic context statement for LGBTQ history in San Francisco, which was carried out from 2013 to 2016. We conclude with a summary of some of the key themes in San Francisco's LGBTQ history and examples of historic properties associated with those themes. It is our hope that this chapter may inspire other towns and cities throughout the country to develop LGBTQ heritage preservation programs, as well as serve as an example of

how the documentation of sites associated with LGBTQ heritage can be organized from conceptualization to implementation.

San Francisco's first LGBTQ landmark, Harvey Milk's residence and Castro Camera store, was designated in 2000.¹ The following year, the first national conference on LGBTQ historic preservation was organized in San Francisco by the grassroots LGBTQ preservation group Friends of 1800, the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Historical Society, and the James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center of the San Francisco Public Library.² In 2004, the Friends of 1800 sponsored the nation's first historic context statement for LGBTQ history, titled *Sexing the City: The Development of Sexual Identity Based Subcultures in San Francisco, 1933-1979*, authored by Damon Scott.³ *Sexing the City* was groundbreaking as the first LGBTQ heritage documentation report in the country. It was, however, intended to be a framework for future research, not a broad and inclusive study.

In 2013, we secured funding to develop a more comprehensive historic context statement for San Francisco's LGBTQ history, spanning the Native American period through the AIDS epidemic in the 1990s. The *Citywide Historic Context Statement for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer History in San Francisco* presents historical background on nine historic themes and pays particular attention to incorporating the place-based histories of underdocumented groups within

¹ Harvey Milk's residence and Castro Camera were located at 573-575 Castro Street, San Francisco, California. Since 2000, two more San Francisco buildings have received local recognition for their LGBTQ significance: the Jose Theatre/Names Project Building at 2362 Market Street and the Twin Peaks Tavern at 401 Castro Street. In 1996, the National AIDS Memorial Grove in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park was designated a National Memorial.

² The conference, *Looking Back and Forward: Significant Places of the GLBT Community*, was held June 21-22, 2001 at the Hotel Bijou (111 Mason Street, extant) and the San Francisco Public Library (100 Larkin Street, extant).

³ Damon Scott with Friends of 1800, *Sexing the City: The Development of Sexual Identity Based Subcultures in San Francisco, 1933-1979* (San Francisco: Friends of 1800, 2004). The study can be accessed online at http://www.friendsof1800.org/context_statement.pdf. The Friends of 1800 is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the architectural heritage of San Francisco with a special interest in the identification and recognition of issues and sites important to LGBTQ history and culture. The Friends of 1800 was founded to prevent the demolition of the Fallon Building at 1800 Market Street, an 1894 Victorian that embodies many layers of San Francisco history. The group was successful in preventing the demolition, and the Fallon Building was incorporated into the construction of the LGBT Center (1800 Market Street).

the LGBTQ communities, including lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people, and LGBTQ people of color.⁴ In 2015, San Francisco's Historic Preservation Commission formally adopted the context statement; the final version of the report, including revisions responding to public comments, was accepted by the San Francisco Planning Department in March 2016 and is available online.⁵

Crafting a Citywide LGBTQ Historic Context Statement

Context statements are place-based research documents that identify historic resources within a specific theme, geographic area, and/or time period, providing a foundation for future planning and development decisions that affect cultural heritage. Until recently, context statements and historic designations in San Francisco have generally focused on architectural characteristics such as building type or style, or a geographic target such as a neighborhood, rather than a thematic focus on aspects of social or cultural history. To date, three citywide historic context statements have focused on some of the social and cultural aspects of

⁴ Donna J. Graves and Shayne E. Watson, *Citywide Historic Context Statement for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer History in San Francisco*, (San Francisco: San Francisco Planning Department, March 2016). The report can be accessed online at <http://sf-planning.org/lgbt-historic-context-statement>. The LGBTQ Historic Context Statement was funded by a grant from the City's Historic Preservation Fund Committee, with fiscal sponsorship from the GLBT Historical Society, which also provided enthusiastic support as a partner and resource. Since 2005, the San Francisco Historic Preservation Fund Committee has provided grants to preservation-related projects. These grants are drawn from a fund established as a result of civil action pursuant to an unlawful demolition of a landmark building. See <http://oewd.org/index.aspx?page=176>. Los Angeles' Office of Historic Resources commissioned a similar document, "Survey LA: LGBT Historic Context Statement," completed by GPA Consulting in September 2014 and accessible online at <http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/LGBT%20Historic%20Context%209-14.pdf>.

⁵ The GLBT History Museum (4127 Eighteenth Street) in the Castro neighborhood has been curating and exhibiting LGBTQ history in San Francisco since its opening in 2010. San Francisco has a long history of interpretive projects honoring significant LGBTQ individuals and events including: interpretive plaques at the Black Cat Café (710 Montgomery Street), Compton's Cafeteria (101 Taylor Street), the home of gay veteran and activist Leonard Matlovich (along Eighteenth Street in the Castro neighborhood); renaming of streets and parks to honor gay-rights pioneer José Sarria (José Sarria Court), founder of the Gay Games Dr. Tom Waddell (Dr. Tom Waddell Place), transgender performer and activist Vicki Marlane (Vicki Mar Lane), lesbian businesswoman and activist Rikki Streicher (Rikki Streicher Field), and the Pink Triangle Park in the Castro neighborhood, a memorial to honor LGBTQ people who were persecuted, imprisoned, and/or killed during and after the Nazi regime; and the creation of the Rainbow Honor Walk in the Castro neighborhood, a series of sidewalk plaques honoring LGBTQ individuals.



San Francisco's diverse past, including African American, LGBTQ, and Latina/o histories.

The preparation of the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement was supported by an extraordinarily talented and diverse advisory committee made up of academics, preservation professionals, independent scholars, and community activists.⁶ These individuals reviewed document drafts and shared specific areas of expertise. They also offered advice on strategies to tap community-based knowledge in order to create a document that recognizes the diverse and intersectional experiences of LGBTQ people in San Francisco. Even with the richness of San Francisco's LGBTQ archives, the majority of primary sources reflect the experiences of white, gay, and middle-class men. Connecting with people who had important knowledge of underrepresented communities was an essential task and included numerous individual interviews.⁷ This research into otherwise underrepresented members of San Francisco's LGBTQ communities must be ongoing.

Creating a framework for the plethora of potential themes in San Francisco's LGBTQ Historic Context Statement was the first task and prompted discussions with archivists and key advisors on organizing important topics, events, sites, and periods into a cohesive and comprehensive document. The overarching theme of the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement is the development of LGBTQ communities in San Francisco. The structure of the historical narrative is roughly chronological and is organized around the following nine subthemes:

- Early Influences on LGBTQ Identities and Communities (Nineteenth Century to 1950s)

⁶ See Graves and Watson for the list of advisory committee members.

⁷ Toward the end of the project, Graves and Watson established a partnership with the national oral history collecting project, StoryCorps, which has a recording station at the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library at 100 Larkin Street. A workshop called "Our Stories" gathered video interviews with elders and youth. One of the challenges presented was how to utilize and share these recorded interviews. Digital technologies have reduced barriers to gathering people's memories in audio and video format—but without expertise and funding to edit the recollections and a platform to share them, the potential of these resources is yet to be tapped.

- Development of LGBTQ Communities in San Francisco (Early Twentieth Century to 1960s)
- Policing and Harassment of LGBTQ Communities (1933 to 1960s)
- Homophile Movements (1950s to 1965)
- Evolution of LGBTQ Enclaves and Development of New Neighborhoods (1960s to 1980s)
- Gay Liberation, Pride, and Politics (1960s to 1990s)
- Building LGBTQ Communities (1960s to 1990s)
- LGBTQ Medicine (1940s to 1970s)
- San Francisco and the AIDS Epidemic (1981 to 1990s)

In addition to a growing library of secondary sources, historians of LGBTQ San Francisco have two invaluable local archives from which to draw: the GLBT Historical Society (established in 1985) and the James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center at the San Francisco Public Library (established in 1996).⁸ These archives provided crucial information for tracing the social and physical history of LGBTQ communities in San Francisco. Material at these repositories includes hundreds of oral history interviews, a database of over thirteen hundred sites associated with LGBTQ history, historic photographs and documents, collections related to individuals and organizations, and ephemera associated with sites throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.⁹

Establishing a public presence and lines of communication between the project team and the LGBTQ communities was essential in launching the endeavor. We created a project email address, an informational page on the City's Planning Department website, and used a Facebook page, "Preserving LGBT Historic Sites in California," to create a space for people

⁸ The GLBT Historical Society is located at 989 Market Street. The James C. Hormel Center is located at 100 Larkin Street. Other important LGBTQ archives in California include the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the University of Southern California and the June Mazer Lesbian Archives at UCLA and in West Hollywood.

⁹ Some of the materials in these archives were compiled and donated by scholars and historians such as Allan Bérubé, Nan Alamilla Boyd, Martin Meeker, Susan Stryker, and Don Romesburg, whose articles, books, and exhibitions were also critical resources for development of San Francisco's LGBTQ Historic Context Statement.



to offer their knowledge, share research findings, and ask questions of community members.¹⁰ Social media and press helped us inform the community about the project and invite questions and information about LGBTQ sites. We also conducted in-person outreach at events, meetings, and conferences of neighborhood associations, LGBTQ groups, preservation organizations, and historical societies.¹¹

San Francisco's LGBTQ Historic Context Statement was written and organized to be as reader-friendly as possible, guide nonpreservationists through the process of nominating properties for designation as local, state, and federal landmarks, and support future place-based educational and interpretive projects. The report begins with an illustrated narrative history, and concludes with a "Step-by-step Guide to Evaluating LGBTQ Properties in San Francisco," which presents directions for evaluating, documenting, and designating historic LGBTQ properties.

One of the challenges the San Francisco LGBTQ Historic Context Statement addresses is that local, state, and national registers of historic places have historically privileged well-maintained buildings or high-style architecture, commonly associated to middle and upper-class individuals, usually white and male, who could afford to live, work, and socialize within them. Buildings with rich histories but poor integrity have often been overlooked or rejected for landmarking. The importance placed on integrity—requiring that the structure retain a substantial amount of original physical fabric related to its historical significance—can present major obstacles when trying to designate sites associated with marginalized communities such as LGBTQ. Many aspects of LGBTQ history unfolded in San Francisco's less privileged neighborhoods, or in areas that

¹⁰ Preserving LGBT Historic Sites in California can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/PreservingLGBTHistory>.

¹¹ The project team organized two community workshops to introduce the project and gather information. The first workshop drew approximately sixty community members who enthusiastically shared their memories in small working groups, facilitated by note-taking volunteers. A subsequent workshop, called "Our Stories," had two purposes: to capture information about sites important to elders in underdocumented communities, including people of color and people who identify as bisexual or transgender; and to foster intergenerational dialogue with youth from the Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC) summer internship program.

were in flux or slated for redevelopment. In many cases, the physical spaces are no longer extant or have undergone major changes. Important events or organizational meetings were often held in restaurants, bars, or storefronts that continually changed over time due to shifting economic and cultural realities in a dynamic city. All of these factors have led to diminished integrity of physical spaces, which historically has left properties vulnerable to substantive change or demolition and therefore ineligible for formal recognition or for historic preservation tax credits.

We assert that loss of integrity should not affect determination of a property's historical significance if that significance is rooted in cultural or social, rather than architectural, histories. The San Francisco LGBTQ Historic Context Statement presents a strong argument and suggestions for recognizing properties that have poor integrity but significant histories.¹² Properties no longer extant or that have undergone physical change can still retain powerful meaning for communities and remain important cultural sites.

In addition to suggesting designation of more individual landmarks and historic districts associated with LGBTQ histories, the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement acknowledges that preservation of buildings alone is not sufficient in conveying this important aspect of San Francisco's history. The report's recommendations discuss the importance of interpretation and education at LGBTQ historic sites, and supporting critical aspects of San Francisco's existing LGBTQ communities, such as historic LGBTQ businesses that are still in operation, and ongoing community events such as the annual San Francisco Pride Celebration & Parade, the Dyke and Trans Marches, and the Pink Triangle memorial on Twin Peaks. San Francisco is pioneering strategies to protect such manifestations of what is known as "intangible cultural heritage," including exploring the creation

¹² Work by historian Raymond W. Rast and architectural historian Elaine Brown Stiles was especially helpful in framing arguments about integrity and significance. Raymond W. Rast, "A Matter of Alignment: Methods to Match the Goals of the Preservation Movement," *Forum Journal* 28, no. 3 (Spring 2014): 13-22; Elaine Brown Stiles, "Integrity Considerations in Evaluating LGBTQ Historic Sites," (unpublished paper, Arcus Internship, College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley, 2014).



of a “Legacy Business Program” intended to preserve longstanding neighborhood-defining commercial and nonprofit establishments, and a new historic preservation element of the city’s general plan that incorporates “cultural heritage assets.”¹³

By creating a broader and more inclusive picture of the development and establishment of the LGBTQ communities in San Francisco, the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement will help community members, city planners, and elected officials make better-informed decisions regarding the protection and stewardship of physical and intangible LGBTQ cultural resources. Furthermore, the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement was adopted in the midst of a period of rapid redevelopment in San Francisco and a seemingly constant stream of proposals to demolish socially and culturally significant places. The more than three hundred properties documented in the context statement now stand a chance of being protected under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) laws related to historic preservation, which mandate municipalities to consider the impacts of redevelopment on historic properties. And perhaps most importantly, state historic preservation laws afford tremendous power to public opinion during environmental review processes, providing LGBTQ communities an opportunity to use their collective voice to oppose projects that would destroy the historic fabric of San Francisco’s LGBTQ enclaves.

¹³ See San Francisco Heritage website, “Sustaining San Francisco’s Living History: Strategies for Conserving Cultural Heritage Assets,” <http://www.sfheritage.org/cultural-heritage>, 2014, accessed January 31, 2015; San Francisco Planning Department memo: “Draft Preservation Element: Cultural Heritage Discussion,” June 24, 2015.

Sampling of Historic Themes in the San Francisco LGBTQ Historic Context Statement and Associated Properties

The sections that follow illustrate several of the key themes covered in San Francisco's LGBTQ Historic Context Statement and a sampling of the types of historic properties associated with them.

Early Influences on LGBTQ Identities and Communities (Nineteenth Century to the 1950s)

Recognizing early expressions of what we now term LGBTQ identities was an important part of the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement, even though documentary sources are scarce and our insights into previous lives is limited by our current understanding of sexual identity. The narrative history begins in the Native American period when two-spirit people lived among the San Francisco Bay Area indigenous groups, the *Ohlone*.¹⁴ When Europeans arrived in California in the 1700s to establish *presidios* (military garrisons), Catholic missions, and *pueblos* (secular townships), their contact with two-spirit people was often cruel and punishing.¹⁵ At Mission Santa Clara, a former Ohlone settlement, Spanish soldiers imprisoned two-spirit people, stripped their clothes, and humiliated them by forcing them to sweep the plaza (traditionally women's work).¹⁶

¹⁴ Malcolm Margolin, *The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1978), 84. For more about two-spirit peoples, see Roscoe (this volume).

¹⁵ San Francisco's mission (Mission San Francisco de Asís, also known as Mission Dolores) and presidio were constructed in 1776. An important remnant of the Spanish period in California is the extensive manuscripts left by the early explorers and later the Franciscan missionaries and military governors. Firsthand accounts by soldiers and missionaries make it clear that the Spanish wanted to eradicate two-spirits among the indigenous people. The Mission San Francisco de Asís, listed on the NRHP on March 16, 1972, is located at 320 Dolores Street. The presidio, listed on the NRHP on October 15, 1966, designated an NHL on June 13, 1962, and incorporated into the NPS—part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area—on October 1, 1994, is at the northern tip of the San Francisco peninsula.

¹⁶ Francisco Palóu, *Palóu's Life of Fray Junípero Serra*, trans. and ed. Maynard J. Geiger O.F.M. (Washington, DC: American Academy of Franciscan History, 1945), 198-199.



When gold was discovered in California's mountains in 1848, the state's nonindigenous population exploded and San Francisco grew from a tiny village into an "instant city."¹⁷ *Californios* (the Spanish-speaking descendants of the Spanish and Mexican colonizers, now American citizens), Sonoran Mexicans, Chileans, Peruvians, French, Chinese, Americans, and others flooded into San Francisco before heading to the goldfields. The disparity of men to women (12.2 to 1 in 1850) was extraordinary and opened a space for men to form homosocial and (likely) homosexual relationships.¹⁸ Early forms of non-Native LGBTQ expression in California were born in this period, including cross-dressing and cross-gender entertainment.¹⁹ During the Gold Rush and subsequent decades when women continued to be scarce, men wore traditionally female clothing to play the role of women at all-male parties known as stag dances.²⁰ During the same period, men performed in cross-gender roles in San Francisco's minstrel and vaudeville theaters.²¹ One of the city's famous early female impersonators was Ah Ming, who in the 1890s had a contract at a Chinatown theater and was making \$6,000 a year (the

¹⁷ Roger Lotchkin, *San Francisco, 1846-1856: From Hamlet to City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), xxxvii.

¹⁸ Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 174.

¹⁹ Historians generally describe three primary motivations for cross-dressing during this period: cross-gender identification (before the concepts of transgender and transsexual existed); cross-dressing for comfort or for access to gender-restricted work; and cross-dressing as a form of entertainment. When discussing cross-gender identities in the nineteenth century, historians caution against applying labels such as gay, lesbian, and transgender because it is difficult to know if the men and women identified in these ways, especially in a period before the terminology existed and before the social roles in question were clearly distinguished from one another. See Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

²⁰ A stag dance held on July 4, 1849, on the *Panama*, a ship bound for San Francisco, featured a "fancy dress ball" for which some of the young men dressed in calico gowns. See Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past*, 64.

²¹ Male-to-female cross-dressers were more common than their female-to-male counterparts, but women performing as men also appeared in minstrel troupes. In August 1863, famous American stage performer Adah Isaacs Menken played a Tartar prince in *Mazeppa* at Maguire's Opera House, Washington and Montgomery Streets (now demolished). The show drew a huge audience that waited outside for hours on opening day and filled the theater every night of the series. Newspapers described Menken's performances as venturing "out of the common run" and creating an "idealized duality of sex," see Ben Tarnoff, *The Bohemians: Mark Twain and the San Francisco Writers Who Reinvented American Literature* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2014), 57. In the 1860s, Salle Hinckley of the Buislay Troupe performed as "Don Guzman" at San Francisco's Metropolitan Theatre, Montgomery and Washington Streets (now demolished). Grace Leonard, billed as "Stageland's Most Artistic Male Impersonator" and "The Ideal American Boy," performed at the Empress, 965 Market Street (now demolished) in 1912. Information on Hinckley and Leonard from various advertisements and articles in the *San Francisco Call*.

equivalent of \$159,000 in 2016). Ming's obituary notes, "As a female impersonator... Ming led all of his countrymen" and was rumored to have performed for the "crowned head of China."²² In the bawdy saloons and dance halls of entertainment districts such as the Barbary Coast on Pacific Avenue, female impersonators performed on stage but also engaged in the sex trade.²³ One of the most documented early cases of cross-gender performers engaging in homosexual sex occurred at the Dash, one of the largest dance halls built after the 1906 earthquake.²⁴ In 1908, the Dash became notorious when it was reported that male patrons could purchase sex from cross-gender performers for a dollar.²⁵ These early cases of cross-dressing and cross-gender entertainment formed what theater historian Laurence Senelick calls a "queer and transgender demi-monde," an early underground LGBTQ community that was able to thrive because of its connection to mainstream cross-gender entertainment.²⁶ In the Barbary Coast and later the Tenderloin, explains historian Nan Alamilla Boyd, "female impersonators transported the language and gestures of a

²² *San Francisco Call*, November 27, 1892.

²³ For more on LGBTQ history in the Barbary Coast, see Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). The Barbary Coast was San Francisco's principal entertainment district from the Gold Rush through the 1910s, stretching west along Pacific Avenue from the waterfront to Montgomery Avenue (now Columbus) with branches down Kearny Street and Broadway. The streets were lined with saloons, concert and dance halls, gaming houses, and brothels. The Barbary Coast was home to a mix of races with American, Irish, German, and African American saloonkeepers and patrons of many nationalities. The area also was a draw for soldiers stationed at the Presidio and merchant marines arriving at the port of San Francisco. As San Francisco neighborhoods continued to develop to the south and west through the end of the nineteenth century, the Barbary Coast and other northern environs were neglected and cut off from the major street-car lines leading to the Market Street hub, adding to the district's reputation as a desolate wasteland.

²⁴ The Dash was located at 574 Pacific Avenue, San Francisco, California. The building is extant and is a contributor to the Jackson Square Historic District, listed on the NRHP on November 18, 1971, and the San Francisco Article 10 Jackson Square Historic District.

²⁵ The Dash was short-lived and closed soon after opening. The Dash is often called San Francisco's "first gay bar," but likely it was one of many early examples of a typical entertainment-district saloon featuring female impersonators engaging in homosocial or homosexual activity—either with the intention to deceive or to meet a demand for nonnormative sex. "Dive Men Officials for Cook," *San Francisco Call*, Vol. CIV, no. 142, October 20, 1908; cited in Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 25.

²⁶ Laurence Senelick, "Boys and Girls Together: Subcultural Origins of Glamour Drag and Male Impersonation on the Nineteenth-Century Stage," in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing*, ed. Lesley Ferris (London: Routledge, 1993), 85. Senelick is quoted in Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 34.



nascent queer culture to the popular stage,” and “enabled audiences to negotiate the boundaries of a changing sexual landscape.”²⁷

Other subthemes presented in the first chapter of the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement are: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Sex Laws and Policing; Progressive Era Women’s Reform Movements; and Bohemianism. Some of the highlights from these early histories include a highly publicized police sting in 1918 known as the Baker Street Scandal, which uncovered an underground gay community in San Francisco involving dozens of servicemen and civilian men;²⁸ pioneering female architect Emily Williams and metal artist Lillian Palmer, who shared a life together in the home that Williams designed for them in 1913;²⁹ Charles Warren Stoddard, one of the first writers in the United States to speak relatively openly about his homosexuality, who in 1903 published an autobiographical novel with homosexual themes set in San Francisco;³⁰ and lesbian poet and San Francisco resident Elsa Gidlow, who in 1923 published *On a Grey Thread*, a book of lesbian-centric poems that literary historians recognize as the first book of openly lesbian poetry published in North America.³¹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ The Baker Street Scandal was centered on a residence along Baker Street near the Presidio (the building is partially extant at the rear).

²⁹ The residence in the Nob Hill neighborhood of San Francisco is extant. Williams and Palmer met in 1898 and lived together at various residences until Williams’ death in 1942. They are buried together in Los Gatos Memorial Park Cemetery in San Jose, California. For more on Emily Williams, see Inge S. Horton, *Early Women Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area: The Lives and Careers of Fifty Professionals, 1890-1951* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Publishers, 2010).

³⁰ Stoddard formed an intimate relationship with Japanese poet Yone Noguchi in the late 1890s. See Amy Sueyoshi, “Intimate Inequalities: Interracial Affection and Same-sex Love in the ‘Heterosexual’ Life of Yone Noguchi, 1897–1909,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 29 (Summer 2010): 26. See also Sueyoshi (this volume).

³¹ Elsa Gidlow lived at 150 Joice Street (now demolished) near Chinatown in San Francisco for thirteen years (c. 1924-1937). After that, she moved to the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, first to 1158 Page Street (now demolished) and later a few blocks away, also on Page Street (extant). Gidlow lived for thirteen years in a former summer cottage in Fairfax, Marin County, before moving to Druid Heights in Muir Woods. Druid Heights is now part of the Muir Woods National Monument, added to the NPS on January 9, 1908 and listed on the NRHP on January 9, 2008. Gidlow died at Druid Heights in 1986.

Early Development of LGBTQ Communities in San Francisco (Early Twentieth Century to the 1960s)

The central place of bars and sex-commerce establishments to LGBTQ history in both public memory and scholarship is well established.³² This important aspect of LGBTQ history was included in San Francisco's LGBTQ Historic Context Statement, particularly for more recent decades when people could share their memories of places in which they gathered for social life, community organizing, and intimacy.

The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 was a watershed in LGBTQ history, and LGBTQ bars and nightclubs subsequently opened all over the country.³³ Queer spaces thrived in San Francisco in large part because of the highly lucrative tourism industry based on sexualized and racialized nightclub performances.³⁴ The post-Prohibition nightclub provided a space in which San Francisco's historic cross-gender entertainment model was revived, and the city's tourism industry, which thrived on exoticized entertainments, encouraged the renaissance.³⁵

From 1933 through 1965, the North Beach neighborhood was one of San Francisco's most popular tourist destinations, with over twenty venues catering to LGBTQ communities opening during this period.³⁶ The sexually charged cross-gender performances at nightclubs such as Finocchio's, Mona's 440 Club, and the Black Cat Café drew huge crowds and allowed San Francisco's nascent LGBTQ communities to blend easily with tourists and develop seemingly under the radar.³⁷

³² See chapters by Gieseeking, Baim, Hanhardt, and Johnson (all this volume) for a broader discussion.

³³ Little documentation exists about queer spaces in San Francisco during and prior to Prohibition, but certainly there were spaces frequented by the nascent LGBTQ communities. Finocchio's, discussed later in this section, started out as a speakeasy and after Prohibition became famous for its cross-gender performances.

³⁴ For a detailed explanation of how and why queer spaces thrived in San Francisco as part of a tourist economy after Prohibition, see Nan Alamilla Boyd's *Wide Open Town*.

³⁵ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 15.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 245. A substantial number of LGBTQ spaces opened in the Tenderloin during the same period, including the Old Crow at 962 Market Street (extant), opened c. 1935, and the Silver Rail at 974 Market Street (partially extant), opened c. 1942.

³⁷ *Ibid.*



One of the earliest known LGBTQ spaces in San Francisco was Finocchio's nightclub in the North Beach neighborhood.³⁸ Finocchio's female-impersonation shows began during Prohibition and later featured some of the country's most famous female impersonators, such as Walter Hart, billed as the "Male Sophie Tucker," and Lucian Phelps, the "Last of the Red Hot Papas."³⁹ Finocchio's was popular with both tourists and members of the city's LGBTQ communities. Since many of the Finocchio's performers were LGBTQ, gay men, especially, were drawn to the nightclub and viewed the drag queens as heroines because of their overt and unabashed queerness.⁴⁰

San Francisco's first lesbian nightclub was Mona's 440 Club in North Beach (Figure 1).⁴¹ Open from 1938 through 1952, Mona's was known for its cross-gender entertainment featuring tuxedoed male-impersonating performers. As the only lesbian-centric space in San Francisco through World War II, Mona's became famous throughout the country as a fun, safe, and welcoming space where women could find love and friendship.⁴²

³⁸ Finocchio's was originally a restaurant owned by heterosexual couple Marjorie and Joseph Finocchio. It opened in the late 1920s or early 1930s at 441 Stockton Street (extant) near Union Square. Sometime in the mid-1930s, Finocchio's moved to the second floor of a two-story building at 406 Stockton Street near Sutter Street (now demolished). In the late 1930s, Finocchio's moved to 506 Broadway Street near Kearny (extant). Finocchio's closed at this location in 1999. For more on the history of Finocchio's, see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 52.

³⁹ Clyde Evans, interview by Allan Bérubé and Eric Garber, April 12, 1983, GLBT Historical Society Oral History Collection, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society; Eric Garber, "Finocchio's: A Gay Community Landmark," *Newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Area Gay & Lesbian Historical Society* 3, no. 4 (June 1988): 1.

⁴⁰ Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), cited in Garber "Finocchio's: A Gay Community Landmark."

⁴¹ A heterosexual, self-described bohemian named Mona Sargent is credited for operating San Francisco's first lesbian bar, Mona's 440 Club at 440 Broadway in the North Beach neighborhood. Sargent opened her first bar in 1933 in a small storefront at 451 Union Street (now demolished) on Telegraph Hill above North Beach. The bar was short-lived and closed after two years. In 1936, Sargent opened her second bar in the basement space at 140 Columbus Avenue (extant). Known as Mona's Barrel House, the space became a draw for lesbians when Sargent featured male-impersonating waitresses as entertainment. For more on the history of Mona Sargent's lesbian bars, see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 68.

⁴² Mona (Sargent) Hood, interview by Nan Alamilla Boyd, July 25, 1992, GLBT Historical Society Oral History Collection, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.



Figure 1: Performers at Mona's 440 Club in the 1940s or 1950s. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

One of the most well-known performers at Mona's was African American singer Gladys Bentley, billed as the "Brown Bomber of Sophisticated Songs."⁴³

The Black Cat Café opened in 1933 in Jackson Square near the former Barbary Coast.⁴⁴ Early patrons were a broad mix of bohemians, intellectuals, dockworkers, and North Beach residents. The bar always attracted a clientele described as a cross-section of class, race, and sexuality, but the Black Cat became a popular gay hotspot in the 1950s when it began hosting politically infused drag operas starring gay rights pioneer José Julio Sarria.⁴⁵ The Black Cat was at the center of an

⁴³ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 76. For more on Gladys Bentley, see Boyd.

⁴⁴ The Black Cat Café building at 710 Montgomery Street remains extant. It is a contributor to the Jackson Square Historic District, listed on the NRHP on November 18, 1971. Austrian holocaust survivor and libertarian heterosexual Solomon "Sol" Stoumen purchased the Black Cat in 1945 and operated the bar until it closed in 1963. For more on the history of the Black Cat Café, see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 56.

⁴⁵ Gerald Fabian, interviewed by Willie Walker, November 30, 1989 and January 23, 1990, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. José Sarria was born in San Francisco to a Colombian mother and a Nicaraguan father. Sarria also co-founded several homophile organizations,

important court case in 1951 when owner Sol Stoumen, after having his liquor license repeatedly revoked for catering to homosexuals, appealed to the Supreme Court of California and won. The decision in *Stoumen v. Reilly* essentially legalized gay and lesbian bars in California—the first state in the country to do so, and at the peak of McCarthyism and antihomosexual policy making.⁴⁶ In 1961, the Black Cat served as headquarters for José Sarria’s campaign for city supervisor, the first time an openly gay candidate anywhere in the world ran for public office.⁴⁷

Highlights of other important LGBTQ bars, nightclubs, and restaurants documented in San Francisco’s LGBTQ Historic Context Statement include the Old Crow in the Tenderloin, one of the first gay-friendly bars to open after Prohibition and one of the longest-running LGBTQ bars in the city (open c. 1935-1980).⁴⁸ The Paper Doll in North Beach (open 1947-1961) was one of the first restaurants catering to the queer community in San Francisco and provided a public alternative to nightclubs and bars.⁴⁹ Popular with both gay men and lesbians (and presumably bisexual and transgender people), the Paper Doll was one of the earliest spaces in San Francisco that functioned as an informal community center where “gay, lesbian, and transgendered people could make friends, find lovers, get information, or plan activities.”⁵⁰ The Beige Room in North Beach (open 1951-1958) was a lower-budget, but decidedly queerer version of Finocchio’s, famous for its female-impersonation shows by performers such as Lynne Carter, a white man known for impersonating African

including the League for Civil Education, the Tavern Guild, and the Society for Individual Rights. In 1964, he founded the Imperial Court System, which became an international association of charitable organizations and the second largest LGBTQ organization in the world.

⁴⁶ Christopher Lowen Agee, *The Streets of San Francisco: Policing and the Creation of a Cosmopolitan Liberal Politics, 1950-1972* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 85.

⁴⁷ Had he won, Sarria also would have been the first Latino to win a supervisor’s seat in San Francisco, see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 60.

⁴⁸ The Old Crow at 962 Market Street (extant) and another gay bar, the Silver Rail at 974 Market Street (extant at front, demolished at rear), were located in the same building at the corner of Market, Turk, and Mason Streets, an area known as the Meat Market, a hot spot for gay hustling and prostitution. Turk Street from Jones to Mason was one of the main drags for cruising and hustling from the 1940s to the 1980s. The Old Crow and the Silver Rail were known gay hustler pick-up spots.

⁴⁹ The Paper Doll was located at 524 Union Street (extant).

⁵⁰ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 61.

American singers Pearl Bailey and Josephine Baker.⁵¹ Unlike Finocchio's, which followed a stringent hiring process, the Beige Room was more of an "underworld operation...with a lot more freedom in [whom] they hired."⁵² Many of the performers were openly queer, giving the Beige Room an "insider's appeal," according to Nan Alamilla Boyd.⁵³ "[F]emale impersonators at the Beige Room both legitimized queer culture and set the standard for flamboyant drag performance ... the Beige Room was the place where San Francisco's drag culture flourished."⁵⁴

Bathhouses, streets, parks, restrooms, beaches, and other public spaces where cruising and hustling took place allowed vast, but discreet, sex-based communities to develop in San Francisco.⁵⁵ "Because *all* sex acts between men were ... illegal," writes historian Allan Bérubé, "gay men were forced to become sexual outlaws ... experts at stealing moments of privacy and at finding the cracks in society where they could meet and not get caught."⁵⁶

One of San Francisco's longest-running gay bathhouses was Jack's Turkish Baths, open from the mid-1930s through the 1980s in the Tenderloin.⁵⁷ Jack's was popular with gay servicemen during World War II and was known to be more upscale than other gay bathhouses.⁵⁸ Another important sex and community space in San Francisco was the Sutro Bath House, open from 1974 through the 1980s in the Mission-Valencia and

⁵¹ The Beige Room was located at 831 Broadway (extant).

⁵² Gerald Fabian, interviewed by Willie Walker, 1989 and 1990.

⁵³ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 130

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 130, 132.

⁵⁵ The experiences of gay men and transgender women are the focus of this section; for a variety of reasons, those populations were more inclined to seek sex in public and to form communities around sexual activity.

⁵⁶ Allan Bérubé, "The History of the Baths," *Coming Up!* (San Francisco), December 1984. Historian George Chauncey, in his groundbreaking *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), argues that cruising and hustling on city streets and sex in public spaces mirrored, or blended with, the sexualized street culture of urban working-class heterosexual neighborhoods in the first half of the twentieth century.

⁵⁷ Jack's Baths opened at 1052 Geary Boulevard near Van Ness Avenue in the mid-1930s, according to San Francisco city directories; the building is extant. In 1941, Jack's Turkish Baths moved one block away to 1143 Post Street, where it remained until it closed in the 1980s (extant).

⁵⁸ Bérubé, "The History of the Baths"; and Gerald Fabian, interviewed by Willie Walker, 1989 and 1990.



South of Market neighborhoods.⁵⁹ Sutro was one of the only sex clubs that welcomed lesbians and bisexuals. Equally significant was Oseito, opened in Mission-Valencia in 1980, the only bathhouse in San Francisco that catered exclusively to women.⁶⁰

Beginning in 1984, as the number of San Franciscans with AIDS grew to unprecedented numbers, bathhouses began to close, primarily a result of loss of business as patrons began to fear contracting AIDS.⁶¹ The City of San Francisco ordered bathhouses to close later that year. Oseito survived the bathhouse closures and operated until 2008, presumably because it prohibited sex of any kind: “Unlike the men’s bathhouses, [Oseito] really was a place for bathing.... [T]he rules were no sex (not even with yourself), and privacy was respected. But if you couldn’t touch, you could look: it was a place to experience the myriad beauty of real women.”⁶²

Two of the earliest gay cruising and hustling areas in San Francisco were lower Market Street, as early as the 1920s, and the Tenderloin, a center for gay and transgender sex beginning in at least the 1930s.⁶³ The Tenderloin intersection of Mason, Turk, and Market Streets became known as the “Meat Market” for the amount of gay hustling that took place there. Other popular public sex spaces throughout the twentieth century were Union Square;⁶⁴ the northeast waterfront, especially at the Embarcadero YMCA;⁶⁵ the Presidio of San Francisco, with ties to a gay sex

⁵⁹ Sutro Bath House opened at 312 Valencia Street in 1974 and moved to 1015 Folsom Street c. 1977. Both buildings are extant.

⁶⁰ The building that housed Oseito is extant in the Mission District, and is now a private residence. Oseito was reportedly very strict about not allowing sexual activity among its patrons.

⁶¹ John-Manuel Andriote, *Victory Deferred: How AIDS Changed Gay Life in America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 78.

⁶² Stephanie J. Rosenbaum, “Oseito, 1980-2008,” *The Adventures of Pie Queen* (blog), August 20, 2008, <http://piequeen.blogspot.com/2008/08/oseito-1980-2008.html>.

⁶³ The portion of Lower Market that was popular for gay hustling and cruising stretched from the Embarcadero to Fifth and Mason Streets. One reason for the popularity of this strip was that it served as a connection between the waterfront and the Tenderloin, and it was an entertainment corridor dotted with movie theaters, restaurants, bars, and all-night cafeterias. See Susan Stryker and Jim Van Buskirk, *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996), 24.

⁶⁴ Union Square in downtown San Francisco is bordered by Geary, Powell, Post, and Stockton Streets.

⁶⁵ The Embarcadero YMCA was built in 1926 at 169 Steuart Street between Mission and Howard and is still extant and in operation. By World War II, the Embarcadero YMCA had become a favorite spot for

scene as early as the 1910s;⁶⁶ and all of the city's parks, especially Golden Gate Park, Buena Vista Park in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and Dolores Park in the Mission District.⁶⁷

Policing and Harassment of LGBTQ Communities (1933 to the 1960s)

The history of antihomosexual and antitransgender hostility, including manifestations in policing and harassment, is crucial to understanding LGBTQ history and essential to documenting the rise of places of queer resistance. While new queer spaces continued to appear in San Francisco in the 1940s and 1950s and communities coalesced around them, governmental agencies became intent on reversing the progress. Policing of queer people intensified during this period for a confluence of reasons. World War II brought hundreds of thousands of young men and women to the Bay Area, prompting the military to set boundaries as a form of social control. McCarthyism and the federal antigay witch-hunt known as the Lavender Scare cast a pall on all things related to “sexual deviancy.” New state legislation in the 1950s and homophobic politicians radically changed the way queer people and places were policed in California. Consequently, increased negative media coverage of queer people led to growing public pressure to crack down on queer communities.

Throughout World War II, the armed forces went to great lengths to control the enormous population of military personnel in San Francisco.⁶⁸ Military and local police joined forces to monitor queer spaces and people

gay sexual activity. Alfred Kinsey called it the “most notorious Y in the states.” Kinsey cited in Justin Spring, *Secret Historian: The Life and Times of Samuel Steward, Professor, Tattoo Artist, and Sexual Renegade* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 180.

⁶⁶ Stryker and Van Buskirk, *Gay by the Bay*. In the 1930s, gay rights pioneer Harry Hay was involved in a gay sex network associated with the Presidio. Hay describes a guardhouse off of one of the Geary-side gates (likely the Presidio Gate) that was headquarters for the network. See Harry Hay, “Gay Sex before Zippers,” interview with Chris Carlsson (San Francisco: Shaping San Francisco, 1995), <https://archive.org/details/ssfHAYBVDCT>. Part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (as of October 1, 1994), the Presidio of San Francisco was listed on the NRHP on October 15, 1966 and designated an NHL on June 13, 1962.

⁶⁷ Golden Gate Park, located on the west side of the city, was listed on the NRHP on October 15, 2004.

⁶⁸ Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 113.



in the city. Policing intensified after World War II when Governor Earl Warren oversaw sweeping changes to California's sodomy laws and punishments for sex crimes, essentially allowing for a conviction for homosexual acts to result in life in prison.⁶⁹ This led to an uptick of homosexual-related arrests in San Francisco in the mid-1950s.⁷⁰ Dozens of bars were permanently shuttered or had their liquor licenses repeatedly revoked. Countless LGBTQ people were harassed, arrested, imprisoned, institutionalized, and had their lives permanently altered or destroyed by harassment and oppression.

One of the most publicized police raids in San Francisco history occurred on September 8, 1954, when officers raided Tommy's Place/12 Adler Place in North Beach—at that time the only queer space in the city owned and operated by lesbians.⁷¹ The bars and restaurant were run by entrepreneur Eleanor “Tommy” Vasu, along with her girlfriend, Jeanne Sullivan, and bartenders Grace Miller and Joyce Van de Veer. Police arrested Miller and Van de Veer on suspicion of supplying narcotics to minors. The next morning, photographs of the two women leaving jail appeared in the newspaper under the headline “Arrested.”⁷² Their ages and home addresses were included in nearly every article reporting on the case. After a long and very public legal battle, the jury found Grace Miller guilty of selling alcohol to minors and sentenced her to serve six months in the county jail. Media attention and public pressure in the wake of the Tommy's/12 Adler raid forced the two bars to close.⁷³

⁶⁹ William N. Eskridge Jr., *Dishonorable Passions: Sodomy Laws in America, 1861-2003* (New York: Viking, 2008), 88-91. Warren was governor of California from 1943 to 1953.

⁷⁰ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 92.

⁷¹ Tommy's Place and 12 Adler Place were located in the same building with addresses at 529 Broadway Street and downstairs at the rear at 12 Adler Place (both extant). For detailed discussion of the raid on Tommy's Place/12 Adler Place, see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 91.

⁷² “Arrested,” *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, September 1954, Grace Miller Papers, San Francisco Public Library. See also Boyd, *Wide Open Town*.

⁷³ “2 Girls Tell Visits to Tommy's Place,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 2, 1954, Grace Miller Papers, San Francisco Public Library. See also Boyd, *Wide Open Town*.

The largest raid of an LGBTQ establishment in San Francisco occurred in August 1961 at a late-night coffee house called the Tay-Bush Inn.⁷⁴ Over one hundred people, mostly lesbians, were arrested for disorderly conduct and taken to jail.⁷⁵ The Tay-Bush Inn raid is significant not only for the number of patrons arrested, but also because the media coverage of the Tay-Bush raid, unlike previous raids, was somewhat sympathetic toward the men and women arrested. The resulting spirited public dialogue about the rights of gay men and lesbians to congregate in bars marked a turning point in San Francisco citizens' perception of gay and lesbian spaces.⁷⁶

Homophile Movements (1950s to the 1960s)

San Francisco is a site of national and international significance for its role in the rise of mid-twentieth-century homophile movements. The homophile groups that organized in the United States in the 1950s were the radical first phase of the gay and lesbian rights movement.⁷⁷ By publishing newsletters and organizing national conferences, homophile organizations educated LGBTQ communities and the public about what it meant to be gay or lesbian in mid-twentieth-century America—and by doing so made significant steps toward LGBTQ people achieving fundamental rights as citizens.⁷⁸ Some of the country's most influential and enduring homophile organizations were founded in San Francisco in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁷⁴ The Tay-Bush Inn (now demolished) was located at 900 Bush Street at the corner of Bush and Taylor Streets between Union Square and Nob Hill.

⁷⁵ Eskridge, *Dishonorable Passions*, 97.

⁷⁶ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 213-215.

⁷⁷ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 3. For a detailed history of homophile movements in San Francisco, see D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* and Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁷⁸ San Francisco's first homophile organizations were generally focused on lesbians and gay men. Bisexual and transgender organizing was largely separate and started in the 1960s.



The country's first nationwide homophile group, the Mattachine Society, was founded in 1950 by Harry Hay and others in Los Angeles.⁷⁹ The founding premise of the Mattachine Society was to instill a positive "group consciousness" in homosexuals, urging members to take pride in their minority status and "forge a unified movement of homosexuals ready to fight against their oppression."⁸⁰ The organization educated members



Figure 2: Williams Building, national headquarters of the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis. Photographer unknown. Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS CAL,38-SANFRA,212).

through meetings, conferences, and a newsletter, the *Mattachine Review*. Within a few years, the organization had expanded to include chapters throughout California, almost exclusively consisting of white, middle-class gay men. While women were welcome in name, their participation was limited, with the group focusing predominantly on men's issues. The first Mattachine Convention was held in San Francisco's

⁷⁹ The group was originally called the Mattachine Foundation and had their first meetings in the homes of Harry Hay and his mother in the Silver Lake and Hollywood Hills neighborhoods of Los Angeles. The first homophile group in the United States was the Society for Human Rights, founded by Henry Gerber and others in Chicago, Illinois in 1924.

⁸⁰ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, *Sexual Communities*, 58, 65-66.

Japantown in 1954.⁸¹ After a series of schisms and shifts, the Mattachine Society reorganized and by 1957 had established its national headquarters in San Francisco's Williams Building in the South of Market area (Figure 2).⁸²

The Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), the nation's first lesbian-rights organization, was founded in San Francisco in 1955. Similar to the Mattachine Society, DOB membership was comprised predominantly of white and middle-class women. The first meetings were attended by a group of lesbian couples at the home of Filipina Rose Bamberger and Rosemary Sliepan in the Bayview neighborhood. Two of the co-founders were gay rights pioneers Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. The DOB was initially a lesbian social organization, but the group's focus soon shifted to LGBTQ advocacy and education with a focus on women's issues. The DOB's first national headquarters was established in 1956 in a space shared with the Mattachine Society in the Williams Building.⁸³ That same year, the organization began publishing the first national lesbian newsletter, *The Ladder*. The DOB hosted the first of many biennial conventions in San Francisco in 1960 at the Hotel Whitcomb.⁸⁴ It was the largest public gathering of lesbians in the country up to that point. The DOB expanded to include local chapters in cities throughout the country. By the mid-1970s, there were twenty chapters throughout the United States. The San Francisco chapter of the DOB closed in 1978.

The Society for Individual Rights (SIR), which eventually became the largest homophile organization in the country, was formed in San

⁸¹ The first Mattachine Convention was held at 1830 Sutter Street, San Francisco, built originally as the Japanese YWCA in 1932. By 1954, it had been removed from Japanese American control and was being leased by the Quaker organization, American Friends Service Committee.

⁸² The Williams Building, located at 693 Mission Street in the South of Market neighborhood is extant. The Mattachine Society stayed at the Williams Building through c. 1967 when the organization moved to Adonis Books at 348 Jones Street. Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 53. The Williams Building was also the location of offices of the Daughters of Bilitis and Pan Graphic Press, one of the first small gay presses in the US, responsible for publishing issues of both the *Mattachine Review* and *The Ladder*.

⁸³ Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman* (San Francisco: Glide Publications, 1972), 11.

⁸⁴ The Hotel Whitcomb is extant at 1231 Market Street. See "1st National Convention (1960) - San Francisco," Box 7, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, 93-13, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.



Francisco in September 1964.⁸⁵ SIR was started during the period when gay and lesbian activism was becoming more militant and more inclusive of all members of queer communities.⁸⁶ In April 1966, SIR opened the first LGBTQ community center in the country in the South of Market area.⁸⁷ Services offered by SIR included job referrals, legal aid, financial advice, and health and wellness. The organization ceased operations in the late 1970s.

The Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH), the first homophile organization in the United States with religious affiliation, was founded in San Francisco in 1964. In 1962, Glide Memorial Methodist Church in the Tenderloin hired clergymen to staff and operate the Glide Urban Center, a pioneering community organizing center that operated out of the church.⁸⁸ Glide hired Reverend Ted McIlvenna to oversee a young-adult program focused on the Tenderloin neighborhood's growing population of homeless youth.⁸⁹ Soon after arriving at Glide, McIlvenna discovered that many of the program's youth were young gay men "driven to street hustling by the hostility and ostracism of their parents and peers."⁹⁰ Because McIlvenna was heterosexual and unfamiliar with LGBTQ issues, he turned to local homophile organizations for help. In late May 1964, McIlvenna, with sponsorship from the Glide Urban Center, organized a three-day conference attended by twenty Protestant clergymen and over a dozen members of the homophile movement, including representatives from the DOB, Mattachine Society, SIR, and the Tavern Guild.⁹¹ For many of the ministers in attendance, the "face-to-face confrontation" with the homophile activists was "the first time they had ever knowingly talked with

⁸⁵ SIR was founded in the basement of a residential building in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco. "Society for Individual Rights," José Sarria papers, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

⁸⁶ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 190.

⁸⁷ The building is extant at 83 Sixth Street and, although no longer a queer space, continues to operate as a community center.

⁸⁸ Glide Memorial Methodist Church is extant at 330 Ellis Street.

⁸⁹ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 192.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 191-192.

⁹¹ The retreat was held at the extant Ralston L. White Memorial Retreat at 2 El Capitan in Mill Valley, California. The retreat center is a residence designed by Bay Area architect Willis Polk. See Agee, *The Streets of San Francisco*, 103; and Marcia Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers), 105.

a homosexual or a lesbian.”⁹² Del Martin wrote of the retreat: “San Francisco was the setting for the historic birth of the United Nations in 1945. And again, in 1964, San Francisco provided the setting for the re-birth of Christian fellowship ... to include all human beings regardless of sexual proclivity.”⁹³ The CRH was founded as an outgrowth of the conference. It was the first organization in the country to have “homosexual” in its name.

The CRH sponsored one of the most significant events in LGBTQ history in San Francisco: the Mardi Gras Ball on January 1, 1965, at California Hall.⁹⁴ Organized as a fundraiser for the newly founded CRH, over five hundred guests purchased tickets for the event. CRH leaders anticipated some form of police harassment and negotiated with city officials to obtain the proper permits. In spite of this, the police turned out in full force, illuminating Polk Street with klieg lights and photographing everyone who entered the event (Figure 3). After a scuffle with police, six attendees were arrested, including two attorneys retained to prevent harassment. The following morning at a press conference, CRH



Figure 3: San Francisco Police Department officers harassing patrons entering the Council on Religion and the Homosexual's New Year's Mardi Gras Ball on January 1, 1965. Photograph by San Francisco Examiner photographer, Ray "Scotty" Morris. Courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

⁹² D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 193.

⁹³ Gallo, *Different Daughters*, 106.

⁹⁴ California Hall is extant at 625 Polk Street and is a San Francisco Article 10 Landmark.

clergymen called to end police harassment of gay and lesbian communities in San Francisco, marking one of the first times in US history that religious leaders spoke publicly for LGBTQ rights.⁹⁵ The ministers' outrage provoked unprecedented public support and homophile groups mobilized to combat police oppression.

While the New Year's Mardi Gras Ball incident later came to be known as San Francisco's "Stonewall," a much closer parallel event to the 1969 New York rebellion occurred in 1966, in what became known as the Compton's Cafeteria Riot. For several days in August 1966, transgender women, drag queens, and young male hustlers demonstrated militant resistance in the face of police harassment at a favorite late-night Tenderloin establishment, Gene Compton's Cafeteria.⁹⁶ Part of a local chain, Compton's Cafeteria at the corner of Turk and Taylor Streets was considered a relatively safe space for transgender women, who often scraped together a living by working as street prostitutes. Cheap residential hotels in the Tenderloin were among the very few places that would rent rooms to them. Protests in San Francisco such as the Compton's Riot, as well as others by CRH and Vanguard, the first queer youth group founded in 1966, illustrated a new era of gay radicalism that preceded the now far better-known events at New York's Stonewall Inn of June 1969.

LGBTQ Medicine (1940 to the 1990s)

San Francisco became an important center for the study of gender and sexuality in the 1940s and 1950s through the work of the Langley Porter Clinic at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF).⁹⁷ Opened in

⁹⁵ Gallo, *Different Daughters*, 108.

⁹⁶ Gene Compton's Cafeteria was located at 101 Taylor Street (extant). A smaller, but similar "riot" occurred in 1959 at Cooper's Doughnuts in Los Angeles. See Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 1. Neither event received wide press coverage, which has contributed to the erasure of these events from popular understanding of LGBTQ history. See Stryker (this volume).

⁹⁷ The UCSF Medical School and the California Department of Institutions, which oversaw the state's psychiatric hospitals, founded the clinic in 1941 as a joint venture creating California's first "psychiatric institute where several specialties in medicine, especially neurology and neurosurgery, would collaborate in a true multi-discipline approach to mental illness." Mariana Robinson, *The*

March 1943, the clinic's founding director, Dr. Karl Bowman, had taught and practiced psychiatry in New York City. During World War II, Bowman conducted research on gay men held in the psychiatric ward of the US Naval Hospital on Treasure Island in the San Francisco Bay after their sexuality had been discovered while in uniform.⁹⁸

One of Bowman's key collaborators was Louise Lawrence, who had been living full-time as a transgender woman since 1942. Lawrence lectured on transgender topics at UCSF and created an expansive international network of transgender people, some of whom stayed with her at her home in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, a residence Susan Stryker describes as a "waystation for transgender people from across the country who sought access to medical procedures in California."⁹⁹ Lawrence's carefully compiled data supported medical research and treatment by the most prominent doctors dealing with transgender issues, including Alfred Kinsey, Karl Bowman, and Harry Benjamin.¹⁰⁰ Benjamin was a German-born endocrinologist who popularized the term transsexual and publicly defended homosexual rights and the rights of such individuals to medical support rather than psychiatric "cures."¹⁰¹ New York-based Benjamin kept a medical office in San Francisco during summers from the 1930s to the 1970s.¹⁰²

Later, San Francisco's international reputation as a place that challenged gender norms made it the birthplace of the first intersex rights organization. Cheryl Chase, who had been designated male at birth, was later raised as a girl after doctors changed their decision and performed

Coming of Age of the Langley Porter Clinic: The Reorganization of a Mental Health Institute, ICP case series (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962), 2-3. Bowman's tenure ended in 1956, 8. The Clinic, later the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute, was located at 401 Parnassus Avenue (extant).

⁹⁸ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, Seal Studies (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 41-42.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁰⁰ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 44.

¹⁰¹ Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 144. Susan Stryker, "Dr. Harry Benjamin," GLBTQ Encyclopedia.com, 2015, http://www.glbtqarchive.com/ssh/benjamin_h_S.pdf

¹⁰² Benjamin organized Magnus Hirschfeld's tour of the United States in 1930, see Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 44. His office was located at 450 Sutter Street, extant. The building was added to the NRHP on December 22, 2009.



surgery on her at the age of eight.¹⁰³ Her discovery as an adult of these childhood manipulations of her gender identity led Chase to move to San Francisco and form the Intersex Society of North America in 1993.¹⁰⁴ In its early years, the Society operated out of Chase's home in the Twin Peaks neighborhood, and early meetings were held at the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, where Chase was a student.¹⁰⁵ Within a few years, the organization was providing peer support to approximately four hundred people around the world, educating medical providers about treating people with ambiguous genitalia, and providing education about intersexuality to the general public.¹⁰⁶

Gay Liberation, Pride, and Politics (1960s to the 1990s)

New York's Stonewall Inn is often cited as the "birthplace" of the gay rights movement in the United States, yet San Francisco and other cities such as Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Boston played major roles in advancing civil rights for LGBTQ people. Scholars Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna Crague argue that the focus on the Stonewall rebellion in 1969 as the starting point of LGBTQ liberation has obscured earlier key moments in LGBTQ history, including the Mardi Gras Ball.¹⁰⁷ The San Francisco LGBTQ Historic Context Statement used archival materials and interviews of participants active in San Francisco during the 1960-1980s to identify sites associated with the myriad organizations and events that shaped queer politics, culture, and identity in those pivotal decades (Figure 4).

¹⁰³ Vernon A. Rosario, "An Interview with Cheryl Chase." *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy* 10: 2 (2006).

¹⁰⁴ Natalie Angier, "Intersexual healing," *New York Times*, February 4, 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/04/weekinreview/ideas-trends-intersexual-healing-an-anomaly-finds-a-group.html>, accessed July 23, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Bo Laurent (formerly Cheryl Chase), electronic communication with Donna Graves, July 23, 2014. The Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, founded in 1976, is located at 1523 Franklin Street.

¹⁰⁶ Cheryl Chase, "Surgical Progress is Not the Answer to Intersexuality" in *Intersex in the Age of Ethics*, Alice Domurat Dreger ed. (Hagerstown, MD: University Publishing Group, 1999), 147. Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 138. The Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) closed in 2006 and turned its mission over to Accord Alliance, see <http://www.isna.org>.

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crague, "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 4 (October 2006): 724-751.

The radical youth movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s shaped gay liberation organizations that emerged after the homophile period. Bay Area activist Carl Wittman's "A Gay Manifesto" (1970) was an influential and widely distributed essay that linked the fate of gays and lesbians to other oppressed groups and viewed sexual liberation "as merely one aspect of a broader social transformation."¹⁰⁸ Wittman



Figure 4: San Francisco Pride Parade 1982, view east down Market Street to the Ferry Building. Photograph by Greg Day. Courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

described San Francisco as "a refugee camp for homosexuals. We have fled here from every part of the nation, and like refugees elsewhere, we came not because it is so great here, but because it was so bad where they are."¹⁰⁹ Historian John D'Emilio writes that within a few years of the Manifesto's publication "San Francisco had become, in comparison with

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth A. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950 to 1994* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 2.

¹⁰⁹ Carl Wittman, "A Gay Manifesto," in *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, eds. Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York: Douglas Book Corp, 1972), 332-342.

the rest of the country, a liberated zone for lesbians and gay men. It had the largest number and widest variety of organizations and institutions.”¹¹⁰

Younger people shifted the terms and tactics of the movement for gay rights; as Charles Thorpe, the keynote speaker at the 1970 National Gay Liberation Front Student Conference held at the SIR Community Center noted, “it is the young that are aware and aware is synonymous with

desperate. That means a new culture, a new society, and a new education. This has scared the don’t-rock-the-boat older gays.”¹¹¹ San Francisco’s Bay Area Gay Liberation (BAGL, 1975–1978) was among the groups who advocated a radical agenda for gay rights (Figure 5).¹¹² Organizational meetings and special events were held at the SIR Community Center and at the gay community centers that followed in San Francisco’s Civic Center neighborhood.¹¹³ BAGL activities included protests supporting the Gay Teachers Coalition; against



Figure 5: Poster for the Bay Area Gay Liberation’s “Revolutionary Drag” Costume Party, 1976. Courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

¹¹⁰ John D’Emilio, “Gay Politics, Gay Community,” in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 87.

¹¹¹ Charles Thorpe, “Identity, Leadership and Violence” in *Out of the Closets*, 352.

¹¹² Christina B. Hanhardt described BAGL’s platform as “based on a multi-issue critique of capitalism and the state,” see “Butterflies, Whistles and Fists: Gay Safe Streets Patrols and the New Gay Ghetto, 1976-1981,” *Radical History Review* (Winter 2008): 65.

¹¹³ San Francisco had a small succession of gay community centers in the 1970s and 1980s: 32 Page Street operated from ca. 1976-1978 (extant) and a larger center at 330 Grove Street operated ca. 1977-1981 (now demolished). In 1982, many of the organizations from 330 Grove moved to a former convent at 890 Hayes Street (extant). Groups Ephemera Collection GLBT Historical Society; Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 98.

police repression on Polk Street, an area that housed a concentration of gay-owned and oriented businesses; and against The Club Bath's practice of turning away customers who were effeminate, elderly, or African American.¹¹⁴

By the mid-1970s, the sheer numbers of LGBTQ people in San Francisco allowed for the emergence of groups organized along various axes of race, ethnicity, and sexual/gender identity. In 1967, transgender women activists formed Conversion Our Goal (COG), which has been described as “probably the first formal organization of self-defined transsexuals in the world.”¹¹⁵ COG met twice monthly at Glide Memorial Church to offer mutual support to its members and call publicly for freedom from police harassment, legal rights to medical care for transition, job opportunities, and fair housing.¹¹⁶ Bisexual rights pioneer Marguerite “Maggi” Rubenstein helped to found The Bisexual Center, the nation's first specifically bisexual organization in 1976. The Center offered counseling and support services to Bay Area bisexuals and published a newsletter, the *Bi Monthly*, from 1976 to 1984.¹¹⁷

Recognizing that their concerns were often not reflected in groups dominated by white gay men, LGBTQ people of color formed new organizations beginning in the mid-1970s. The Gay Latino Alliance was founded in 1975 with approximately fifty men and women attending its second meeting at the SIR Center. The same year, Randy Burns and Barbara Cameron founded Gay American Indians, the first reported organization for queer Native Americans. The Black Gay Caucus organized in 1976 and met every two weeks at the Gay Community Center on Page Street. Gay Asian Support Group, formed in 1977, which appears to be the first formal Asian Pacific Islander American organization for LGBTQ people, also held bimonthly meetings at the Page Street community center “to rap,

¹¹⁴ The Club Baths was located at 201 Eighth Street (extant).

¹¹⁵ Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 230.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Clare Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 156. The Bisexual Center operated first out of offices at 544 Market Street and later from the North Panhandle neighborhood home of co-founder David Lourea; initial Bisexual Center meetings were held at Rubenstein's home just south of Glen Park.



socialize, do outreach work, get into politics, develop ourselves more, make new friends and/or develop relationships.”¹¹⁸

Many lesbians also began to see the gay liberation movement as reproducing oppressive patterns that privileged men’s voices and issues. Del Martin voiced the objections of lesbians who had felt sidelined or condescended to by gay activists in an influential manifesto titled “If That’s All There Is” that appeared in the October 1970 issue of *Vector*. “I’ve been forced to the realization that I have no brothers in the homophile movement,” Martin wrote; “Fifteen years of masochism is enough.”¹¹⁹ Lesbians of color stood in complex relation to both the women’s movement and gay and lesbian rights organizations. Bay Area lesbian writers Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa helped shape discussion of these issues with their influential 1981 anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. The Latina, African American, Asian American, and Native American writers represented in the book—many of them from San Francisco—challenged claims of sisterhood made by white feminists and explored the links between race, class, feminism, and sexuality.¹²⁰

Although not an exclusively lesbian organization, The Women’s Building in the Mission District is one of the anchors of the history of women, feminists, lesbians, and queer and progressive groups more generally in San Francisco (Figure 6).¹²¹ In 1978, a core group of women from the San Francisco Women’s Centers, an incubator for women’s rights organizations, began looking into purchasing a building. A sympathetic realtor pointed them towards the Sons of Norway’s Dovre Hall, built in

¹¹⁸ Gay Asian Support Group (GASP) Newsletter, September 22, 1977, in GLBT Historical Society Newsletters. See Roscoe, Sueyoshi, and González and Hernandez (all this volume).

¹¹⁹ Josh Sides, *Erotic City: Sexual Revolutions and the Making of Modern San Francisco* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 114. She expanded on this observation in *Lesbian/Woman*, coauthored in 1972 with her partner Phyllis Lyon, and originally produced by the publications arm of Glide Memorial Church.

¹²⁰ Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981).

¹²¹ The Women’s Building is located at 3543 Eighteenth Street, San Francisco, California.



Figure 6: The Women's Building has served as an anchor for LGBTQ culture since it was founded in 1979. The MaestraPeace Mural, painted in 1994 by Juana Alicia, Miranda Bergman, Edythe Boone, Susan Kelk Cervantes, Meera Desai, Yvonne Littleton, Irene Perez, and many helpers, covers two exterior walls and four stories of the building. Photograph by Wally Gobetz, 2009.¹²²

1910, which was no longer active except for a ground-floor bar. Negotiations moved forward, and The Women's Building opened in the fall of 1979.¹²³ Within a year, the building held a memorial service for assassinated leader Harvey Milk, meetings of Lesbians Against Police Violence, a slide lecture by Allan Bérubé that benefited the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project, and "Becoming Visible" a conference of African American lesbians. Since then, a remarkable number and range of events and meetings important to LGBTQ history have been held at The Women's Building, which continues to function as a community space.¹²⁴

¹²² License: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wallyg/3922017349>

¹²³ Sushawn Robb, *Mothering the Movement: The Story of the San Francisco Women's Building* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2012), 47-48.

¹²⁴ Many organizations initially supported by The Women's Building went on to form their own nonprofits, such as Lesbian Visual Artists, the San Francisco Network for Battered Lesbian and Bisexual Women, Older Lesbian Organizing Committee, and the Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center.

San Francisco and the AIDS Epidemic (1981 to the 1990s)

San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles were the first American cities to face the AIDS crisis; a pathologist at UCSF identified the first diagnosis of Kaposi's sarcoma in April 1981.¹²⁵ Two months later, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released a report describing an alarming new disease in a handful of gay and bisexual men. Within a few weeks of the CDC's announcement, clinicians, public health officials, and other medical professionals in San Francisco realized the potential tsunami. The San Francisco Department of Public Health quickly established a system for reporting and registering cases; the reporting network grew over the years to include major hospitals and private clinics.¹²⁶

In December 1981, the San Francisco *Sentinel* published an article in which Bobby Campbell became the first Kaposi's sarcoma patient to publicly announce his illness. Declaring himself the "KS Poster Boy," Campbell convinced Star Pharmacy, a drugstore in the heart of the Castro neighborhood, to allow him to put up posters in their storefront windows warning about the "gay cancer."¹²⁷ Campbell's physician, Dr. Marcus Conant, shared his alarm and in 1982 approached activist Cleve Jones about creating an organization to mobilize the gay community and pressure the government for additional funds. The resulting Kaposi's Sarcoma Research and Education Foundation (later renamed the San Francisco AIDS Foundation) initially operated from folding tables covered with flyers and leaflets at the corner of Eighteenth and Castro Streets. Within a few months, it opened the first agency specifically addressing the new disease.¹²⁸ In October 1983, the KS/AIDS Foundation offices

¹²⁵ Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: People, Politics and the AIDS Epidemic* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2007), 60.

¹²⁶ Sides, *Erotic City*, 177. The Department of Health was headquartered at 101 Grove Street (extant).
¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10-108. Star Pharmacy was located at 498 Castro Street (extant).

¹²⁸ Shilts, *And the Band Played On*, 161. For the initial address of 520 Castro Street, see San Francisco AIDS Foundation website, "The View from Here: Cleve Jones and Dr. Marcus Conant," <http://www.sfaf.org/hiv-info/hot-topics/from-the-experts/the-view-from-here-cleve-jones-marcus-conant-2011.html>, 2011, accessed June 1, 2014. The first offices of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation were at 520 Castro Street (extant).

received national attention when a Florida hospital flew a critically ill AIDS patient to San Francisco and had him dumped at the organization's front door.¹²⁹

By 1984, San Francisco's rate of infection was the highest per capita in the nation. Community members, doctors, public health workers, and others debated their concerns over public health and civil liberties for over a year; in the meantime, nearly a third of the city's twenty bathhouses had closed, primarily because business was down as a result of patrons' fear of contracting AIDS.¹³⁰ The City of San Francisco ordered bathhouses to close in October 1984. One bathhouse, the 21st Street Baths refused to comply but ultimately gave in and closed in 1987 when threatened with a lawsuit by the city. It was the last licensed gay bathhouse in the city.¹³¹

The first dedicated inpatient AIDS ward in the world, at San Francisco General Hospital's Ward 5B, opened in July 1983 with an innovative program of integrated treatment, care, and support services for patients, partners, friends, and family members.¹³² In addition to pioneering patient care, San Francisco was the location for a number of important studies of AIDS prevention and treatment. San Franciscans also established the field of organized end-of-life AIDS care. In 1987, the defunct convent of Most

¹²⁹ Mark Thompson, ed., *Long Road to Freedom: The Advocate History of The Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 240.

¹³⁰ John-Manuel Andriote, *Victory Deferred*, 78. By spring 1984, The Cauldron, Cornholes, Liberty Baths, Sutro Baths, and Bulldog Baths had all closed according to Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 257.

¹³¹ "14 San Francisco Sex Clubs Told to Close to Curb AIDS," *New York Times*, October 10, 1984. <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/10/us/14-san-francisco-sex-clubs-told-to-close-to-curb-aids.html>, accessed June 12, 2014; and Johnny Miller, "Last Gay Bathhouse in S.F. Shut Down Over AIDS," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 13, 1987, <http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Last-gay-bathhouse-in-S-F-shut-down-over-AIDS-3549850.php>, accessed June 12, 2014. The 21st Street Baths were located at 3244 Twenty-First Street (now demolished).

¹³² Andriote, *Victory Deferred*, 116; and Carol Pogash, *As Real As It Gets: The Life of a Hospital at the Center of the AIDS Epidemic* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1992), 21. San Francisco General Hospital is located at 1001 Potrero Avenue. Pogash describes AIDS treatment at SF General starting in the seven-story main building constructed in the 1970s and moving to an older brick structure late in 1982.



Holy Redeemer Church in the Castro became Coming Home Hospice, reportedly the first AIDS hospice in the nation.¹³³

Because public funds to combat AIDS were so scarce, the widely heralded “San Francisco model” of AIDS care developed based on volunteer labor and charitable giving.¹³⁴ A plethora of local community groups emerged, made up of individuals who cared for the sick, researched treatment options, raised funds, and pressured government agencies to do more. Because these organizations usually formed as small, grassroots efforts and evolved with the crisis, their space needs and locations shifted over time. Much of the focus of early AIDS organizations was on the Castro, a neighborhood that was predominately white and relatively wealthy. LGBTQ people of color argued that they needed to develop services within their communities that were not being met by the more mainstream organizations such as the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and Shanti Project. From the mid-1980s on, LGBTQ people of color formed numerous HIV/AIDS organizations to serve their communities and to advocate on their own behalf.

As the numbers of the dead grew with no cure on the horizon, many San Franciscans turned their anger and frustration into direct action protests and civil disobedience. In May 1983, thousands walked from the Castro to the Civic Center behind a banner “Fighting for Our Lives,” in the AIDS Candlelight March—the first major demonstration against AIDS.¹³⁵ Under Mobilization Against AIDS, this event grew to become an annual, international vigil of protest and commemoration.¹³⁶ In what has been described as the first use of civil disobedience against the AIDS epidemic

¹³³ Donal Godfrey, *Guys and Grays: The Story of the Gay Community at Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 89. The Hartford Street Zen Center purchased 61 Hartford Street in 1988. David Schneider, *Street Zen: The Life and Work of Issan Dorsey* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 174-175. Coming Home Hospice was located at 115 Diamond Street (extant).

¹³⁴ Stryker and Van Buskirk, *Gay by the Bay*, 93.

¹³⁵ The Civic Center Historic District was added to the NRHP on October 10, 1978 and designated an NHL on February 27, 1987.

¹³⁶ Mobilization Against AIDS brochure, 1986. Mobilization Against AIDS file, Groups Ephemera Collection, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. Other ephemera in this collection indicate that the first meeting of MOB was held at 647-A Castro Street, and by 1986 offices were located at 2120 Market Street, Suite 106.

anywhere in the world, several protestors chained themselves to the doors of the federal building housing the regional office of Health and Human Services on October 27, 1985.¹³⁷ The ARC/AIDS Vigil became an encampment that occupied a lawn in United Nations Plaza twenty-four hours a day for ten years.

San Francisco is the birthplace of two of the nation's most visible and enduring memorials to AIDS: the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and the National AIDS Memorial Grove. Conceived by longtime San Francisco gay rights activist Cleve Jones in November 1985, the project rallied volunteers to a storefront along Market Street.¹³⁸ First shown as forty panels at the 1987 Lesbian & Gay Freedom events in San Francisco, the project soon began accepting a growing flood of panels contributed from across the country. It became an international tool to illustrate the devastating impact of AIDS and to humanize its victims.¹³⁹ In 1988, another group of friends began discussing the creation of a public memorial garden in San Francisco to the victims of the AIDS epidemic. Beginning in 1991, monthly workdays brought together diverse Bay Area residents affected by the pandemic who reclaimed a former derelict site in Golden Gate Park. In 1994, the City of San Francisco signed a ninety-nine year lease with The AIDS Memorial Grove, and two years later it was designated the only national AIDS memorial authorized by Congress and the president.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Libby Ingalls, "AIDS/ARC Vigil 1985-1995," Found SF website, http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=AIDS/ARC_Vigil_1985-1995, accessed March 22, 2014. Health and Human Services was located in the Federal Building, 50 United Nations Plaza (extant), a contributing element to the Civic Center Historic District (see note 134).

¹³⁸ The NAMES Project first met, and had their first home at 2362 Market Street (extant, San Francisco Landmark No. 241).

¹³⁹ The quilt had grown to nearly two thousand panels when it was displayed four months later on the National Mall in Washington, DC, during the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. The NAMES Quilt was nominated by Representative Nancy Pelosi for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, the same year that San Francisco filmmakers Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman won an Academy Award for the documentary film, *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* (San Francisco: Telling Pictures Films, 1989). Cleve Jones with Jeff Dawson, *Stitching a Revolution: The Making of an Activist* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2000).

¹⁴⁰ By 1990 the Grove Steering Committee had received Recreation and Parks Department permission to use de Laveaga Dell in Golden Gate Park. Volunteers who reclaimed the formerly derelict site saw it as a metaphor for resilience and the power of community. See Bruner Foundation, *National AIDS*



Conclusion

The *Citywide Historic Context Statement for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History in San Francisco* is the most comprehensive research yet conducted on LGBTQ historic sites in an American city. Yet it is by no means complete. The project points to the need for intensive and detailed studies to fill in the gaps in queer histories, as well as the promise of creative approaches to documentation and interpretation. Our intention is that this information will not only provide a platform for better recognition of LGBTQ heritage in San Francisco, but serve as a guide and inspire similar efforts and nominations across the country.