



Foundation Document Overview

Stonewall National Monument

New York



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of STONEWALL NATIONAL MONUMENT is to preserve and protect Christopher Park and the historic resources associated with it and to interpret the Stonewall National Historic Landmark's resources and values related to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights movement.



Significance

Significance statements express why Stonewall National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- **Stonewall Uprising.** Inspired by earlier LGBTQ civil-rights activists and protests, the 1969 Stonewall uprising was a spontaneous vocal and forceful resistance to institutional oppression, unjust laws, and government authority. The uprising catalyzed the LGBTQ rights movement moving forward, sparking national headlines that raised visibility and awareness of LGBTQ people and emboldened more individuals to “come out” and advocate for LGBTQ equality. The Stonewall uprising led to the proliferation of activist and social groups across the country and internationally, transforming the earlier LGBTQ homophile movement into a cross-class/cross-spectrum, public, mass, nationwide political movement.
- **Symbolism.** The Stonewall uprising is the most well-known and widely used icon of the pursuit for LGBTQ rights. Used as a national and international symbol of LGBTQ activism and equality, the Stonewall uprising remains forever relevant as a point of pride, an expression of resistance to and liberation from institutional oppression, and a turning point that sparked changes in cultural attitudes and national policy and laws.
- **Commemorating History.** Stonewall National Monument commemorates an event that symbolizes decades of personal sacrifice, protests, and political and legal advocacy by LGBTQ people that continue to inspire and bring attention to the ongoing pursuit for civil rights and equality on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The designation of Stonewall National Monument was the culmination of a grassroots movement led by LGBTQ individuals, activists, and preservationists to elevate the history of the Stonewall uprising and the unfair treatment, brutality, and discrimination against LGBTQ people to the international stage, ensuring that the legacy of the Stonewall uprising will not be forgotten.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Stonewall National Historic Landmark.** Christopher Park, the Stonewall Inn, and the nearby city streets were designated a national historic landmark in 2000. Designation as a national historic landmark acknowledges the national significance of all contributing resources with the landmark’s boundary. The 0.12-acre parcel of land known as Christopher Park is owned and managed by the National Park Service (see presidential proclamation map in appendix A). The streets and sidewalks are owned by the City of New York and the Stonewall Inn is privately owned. The entirety of the Stonewall National Historic Landmark also falls within New York City’s Greenwich Village Historic District (designated April 1969) and is protected by the city’s Landmarks Law.
- **Stories and Archives.** Personal experiences, oral histories, and archives record the history of events leading up to the Stonewall uprising, the event itself, and related events that occurred following the uprising. These records also document the diversity and complexity of people’s personal experiences and perspectives, past and present.
- **Partnerships.** With limited NPS ownership, cooperative partnerships with existing and future organized groups and government agencies are fundamental to telling the Stonewall story and preserving related resources. The presidential proclamation directs the National Park Service “to use applicable authorities to see to enter into agreements with others, and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation in particular, to enhance public services and promote management efficiencies.”
- **National Stage for Public Expression, Commemoration, and Public Engagement.** Christopher Park and its environs have remained a key gathering place for the LGBTQ community to assemble for marches and parades, express grief and anger, and participate in celebrations of victory and joy. For example, on June 26, 2015, within moments of the issuance of the Supreme Court’s historic ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, LGBTQ people assembled in Christopher Park to celebrate the court’s recognition of a constitutional right to same-sex marriage. The monument also provides learning opportunities to raise public awareness about LGBTQ history, the effects of injustice, and foster an interest in preserving the monument’s resources and lessons.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Stonewall Uprising.** The week-long Stonewall uprising that started on June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn and spilled into Manhattan’s surrounding West Village neighborhood was the catalyst that launched the modern LGBTQ movement.
- **LGBTQ Civil Rights Movement.** Protesters from the uprising quickly became activists, converting their success into a civil rights movement for the LGBTQ community that borrowed an array of strategies already proven successful in other civil rights and social movements of the 1960s.
- **The Legacy of the LGBTQ Civil Rights Movement.** Informed and motivated by the successful strategies of the Stonewall activists, the LGBTQ civil rights movement inspires passion and commitment from next generations of LGBTQ people and allies who continue advancement in the fight for full equality in the United States.



Description

Stonewall National Monument (the monument) is a 7.7-acre site in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City established by presidential proclamation in 2016. The monument encompasses both public and private property, including the privately owned Stonewall Inn, portions of the New York City street network, and 0.12-acre Christopher Park, which was donated to the federal government by the City of New York. Viewed from Christopher Park's central location, this historic landscape—the park itself, the Stonewall Inn, the streets and sidewalks of the surrounding neighborhood—reveals the story of the Stonewall uprising, a watershed moment for LGBTQ rights and a transformative event in the nation's civil rights movement. It was not the first time members of the LGBTQ community organized in their own interest. Yet, the movement to commemorate Stonewall on the first anniversary of the event inspired the largest and most successful collective protest for LGBTQ rights the nation had ever seen.

As one of the only public open spaces serving Greenwich Village west of 6th Avenue, Christopher Park has long been central to the life of the neighborhood and to its identity as an LGBTQ-friendly community. The park was created in 1837 after a large fire in 1835 devastated an overcrowded tenement on the site. By the 1960s, Christopher Park was a destination for LGBTQ youth, many of whom had run away from or been kicked out of their homes. Christopher Park served as a gathering place, refuge, and platform to voice demands for LGBTQ civil rights. Christopher Park continues to be an important place for the LGBTQ community to assemble for marches and parades, including the annual NYC Pride; expressions of grief and anger; and celebrations of victory and joy.

The Stonewall Inn (51-53 Christopher Street), located across the street from Christopher Park, was originally built in 1843 and 1846 as two separate two-story horse stables. In 1930, the two buildings were combined into one commercial space with a new, single exterior facade. In 1934, the first-floor space opened as a restaurant called Bonnie's Stonewall Inn, which served the neighborhood for more than 30 years. The restaurant closed in 1966, and reopened in 1967 as a gay bar called the Stonewall Inn. Since the Stonewall uprising in 1969, the Stonewall Inn has experienced a series of modifications as ownership and commercial use leases changed, including separation of the first floor interior into two individual commercial spaces in the early 1970s. A privately owned bar, the Stonewall Inn, now occupies the space at 53 Christopher Street, while 51 Christopher Street is used for other commercial businesses. In 2015, the Stonewall Inn was designated as a New York City Landmark.

The streets and sidewalks surrounding Christopher Park and the Stonewall Inn are an integral part of the neighborhood's historic character and played a significant role in the uprising. The irregular street grid to the west of 6th Avenue is a relic of the 18th century. Narrow streets at odd angles to each other cause directional havoc. During the Stonewall uprising, the labyrinthine street pattern helped the demonstrators, who knew the neighborhood, evade riot-control police who were not from the local precinct.

Today, Christopher Park is surrounded by brick sidewalks and a 19th-century wrought-iron fence with gated openings. Christopher Park is open daily to the public and contains a small plaza lined with brick pavers and benches. George Segal's sculpture, "Gay Liberation," is a focal point of the plaza. The sculpture was commissioned in 1979 on the 10th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising. Its installation in 1992 reinforced Christopher Park as a site to interpret the Stonewall uprising.

