National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Stonewall National Monument
New York, New York

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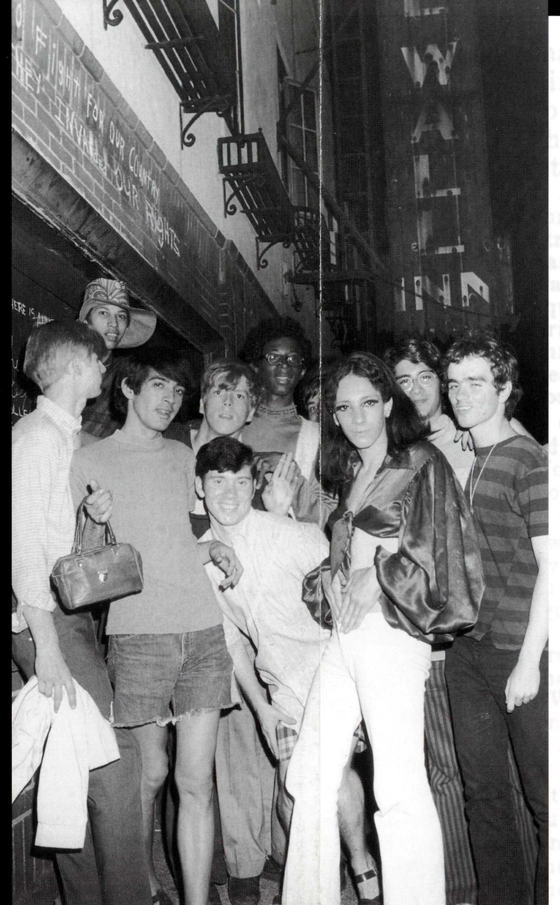

On June 28, 1969, New York City police officers raided the Stonewall Inn. Street kids, who were among the first to fight, were joined by people gathered outside and then by supporters flocking to Greenwich Village as news of the events spread.

Photo: New York Daily News

A Movement Takes Shape

"There was no out, there was just in."

Through the 1960s almost everything about living openly as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) person was a violation of law, rule, or policy. New York City's prohibitions against homosexual activities were particularly harsh. People were arrested for wearing fewer than three articles of clothing that matched their sex. Serving alcoholic beverages to homosexuals was prohibited. For married men and women who lived homosexual lives in secret, blackmail was a constant threat. Discrimination and fear were tools to isolate people when homosexuality was hidden. After Stonewall, being "out and proud" in numbers was a key strategy that strengthened the movement.

Uprising

Stonewall was a milestone for LGBT civil rights that provided momentum for a movement. In the early hours of June 28, 1969, a police raid on the Stonewall Inn provoked a spontaneous act of resistance that earned a place alongside landmarks in American self-determination such as Seneca Falls Convention for women's rights (1848) and the Selma to Montgomery March for African American voting rights (1965). Demonstrations continued over the next several nights at Christopher Park across from the Stonewall Inn

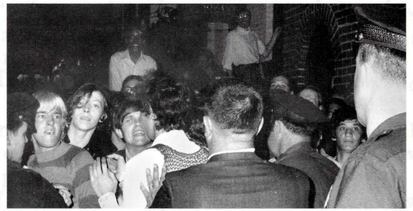

Photo: New York Daily News Archive

The Stonewall Inn, summer of 1969, after reopening and before the windows were repaired. *Photo: Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library*

and in the surrounding neighborhood. When asked to describe the difference that Stonewall had made, journalist Eric Marcus observed that before Stonewall, "There was no out, there was just in."

People who would identify today as LGBT had few choices for socializing in public and many bars they frequented were operated by organized crime. Members of the police force were often paid off in return for information about planned raids. Customers caught in a raid were routinely freed, but only after being photographed and humiliated. In the early hours of June 28, 1969, people fought back.

Following what at first appeared to be a routine raid, a crowd gathered outside to watch for friends in the bar. But as police vans came to haul away those arrested, the crowd became angry, began throwing objects, and attempted to block the way. The crowd's aggression forced police to retreat and barricade themselves inside the Stonewall Inn. Onlookers joined in and attacked the bar with pennies, metal garbage cans, bricks, bottles, an uprooted parking meter, and burning trash. The confrontation grew as the fire department and the NYPD's Tactical Patrol Force, trained for riot control, joined police reinforcements sent to the scene.

Liberate Christopher Street!

The agitated crowd took to the streets chanting "Gay Power!" and "Liberate Christopher Street!" LGBT youth who gathered at Christopher Park—some of them homeless and with little social capital—challenged police, linked arms, and formed a blockade. Police charged the crowd, but rather than disperse, the mob retreated to the neighborhood they knew well with its network of narrow, winding streets, doubled-back, and regrouped near the Stonewall Inn and Christopher Park, surprising the police.

Demonstrator Tommy Schmidt described the feeling of being in the melee: "I was part of a mob that had a kind of deep identity and was acting as one force." John O'Brien said, "What excited me was I finally was not alone."

Social change takes different forms. Pioneers organized and took a range of actions and approaches in the fight for their equality. Stonewall was a galvanizing moment that empowered a range of advocacy; some mainstream, and some non-conforming or militant, that rejected approaches based on assimilation.

Photo: unknown

"By the time of Stonewall...we had fifty to sixty gay groups in the country. A year later there were at least fifteen hundred. By two years later, to the extent that counts could be made, it was twenty-five hundred. And that was the impact of Stonewall." *Frank Kameny.*

"And that was the impact of Stonewall."

A Word About Words...

Words trace progress of the LGBT movement. They are intensely personal and politically powerful. In describing historic events, words used here are often the terms of the times and the people who said them, even if those terms are not used today. For example, "homophile," meaning a positive attitude toward homosexuals, dissipated over time. "Transgender," dates only from the mid-1980s and may not appear in an historic context, although many embrace it. In some places, "LGBT" is used although the people did not describe themselves that way.

Stonewall National Monument

Stonewall was a milestone, but it wasn't the first stand for LGBT rights. . .

Employment Denied

A 1953 Executive Order banned homosexuals from federal employment. In 1957, Franklin (Frank) Kameny was fired as an astronomer for the US Army Map Service for being gay. Kameny fought dismissal and in 1961, filed the first gay rights appeal to the US Supreme Court. That year, Kameny co-founded the Mattachine Society of Washington, DC with Jack Nichols, and helped to start the National LGBTQ Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign. He worked to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association and coined the phrase "Gay is Good."

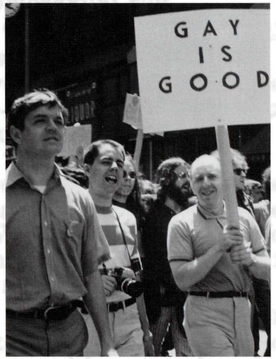

Photo: Associated Press

Early Acts of Rebellion

In San Francisco's Compton's Cafeteria in 1966, officers grabbed a transgender patron who, rather than surrendering as they expected, instead tossed coffee on them, setting off a riot. In response, reflecting the era's persistent treatment of homosexuality as a mental illness, the city created a network of social, mental, and medical services followed in 1968 by the National Transsexual Counseling Unit. In 1967 a violent raid at the Black Cat Tavern in Los Angeles led to a large demonstration days later.

Photo: Associated Press

Protest

Barbara Gittings organized the New York chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis and in the 1960s organized some of the first protests against the federal government's ban on employing homosexuals. Gittings helped to lobby until the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental illness in 1973 saying that her life mission was to tear away the "shroud of invisibility."

Photo by Diana Davies, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Sip-In

Inspired by civil rights sit-ins in the South, the New York City Mattachine Society held a "sip-in" to challenge a regulation that prohibited bars from serving gay clients. In April 1966, with reporters in tow, activists declared they were gay and asked to be served at Julius', a bar sympathetic to gay customers that was under observation by authorities. Publicity from the sip-in was a catalyst to reform the New York State Liquor Authority anti-LGBT policies.

Photo: Fred W. McDarrah

The Mattachine Society, Philadelphia's Janus Society, and the New York chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis held protests in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia on July 4, 1965 and on each of four successive July 4ths. Protesters demanded rights for homosexual Americans, emphasizing that a substantial number of Americans were denied "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Organizers enforced a strict dress code for participants to represent homosexuals as "presentable and employable."

Photo: Associated Press

After the Uprising

After the uprising, the windows of the Stonewall Inn were boarded-up, painted black, and quickly became message boards for the community. The Mattachine Society urged restraint while others sought more active responses and posted notices of meetings.

Photo: Fred W. McDarrah

Fighting Back

Marsha P. Johnson was one of the most outspoken members of the New York transgender community when she was targeted by police at the Stonewall Inn and among the first to fight back.

In the early 1970s, Johnson and friend, Sylvia Rivera, co-founded STAR, the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, to support young "drag queens," trans women, and street kids living on the Christopher Street docks and in STAR House on New York's Lower East Side. Johnson continued street activism as an organizer with ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power).

Photo: Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Christopher Street Liberation Day

A year after the uprising, the first Christopher Street Gay Liberation March began with a few hundred people outside the Stonewall Inn and swelled to several thousand by the time it concluded in Central Park. These annual marches–part celebration, community builder, and political rally–showed LGBT people in significant numbers and as a force that mainstream society had not previously recognized.

Photo by Kay Tobin ©Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Sylvia Rae Rivera was an LGBT liberation and transgender activist. In addition to STAR, she was a founding member of the Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance. Sometimes homeless herself, Rivera focused her activism to help people she believed that mainstream society and assimilationist LGBT groups left behind, particularly people of color.

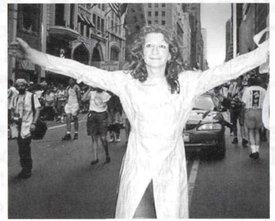

Photo: unknown

Stonewall National Monument is a place that the LGBT community and their allies gather in times of celebration, reflection, and sadness. Crowds here gather to remember the victims of the Pulse nightclub shooting in June 2016.

Photo: Big Gay Ice Cream

Park Planning and Community Engagement

Stonewall National Monument is a new national park area with limited services. It is a park in progress and will take shape after public involvement. Check www.nps.gov/ston for updates about park planning. In the coming years, services will be added to the park in cooperation with partners.

About Your Visit

For a safe visit, be aware of your surroundings and cross streets at the corners. The Stonewall Inn, across from the national monument, is a private business and working bar; patrons must be 21 years old to enter.

Getting to the Park

The park is bounded by Christopher, Grove, and West Fourth Streets. By subway, take the Broadway 1 Line – 7th Avenue local to Christopher Street-Sheridan Square Station; or via the 7th Avenue bus line on the M8 or M20.

More Information

www.nps.gov/ston

Stonewall National Monument is one of more than 400 parks in the National Park System. They reflect the American experience through natural wonders, sites of celebration, conscience, and civil rights such as Women's Rights National Historical Park, and the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. Learn more about parks and how the National Park Service serves communities at www.nps.gov.