

Reconnaissance Survey of LGBTQ Architectural Resources in the City of Richmond

By

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Prepared for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources

LGBTQ Heritage Working Group

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November 2017

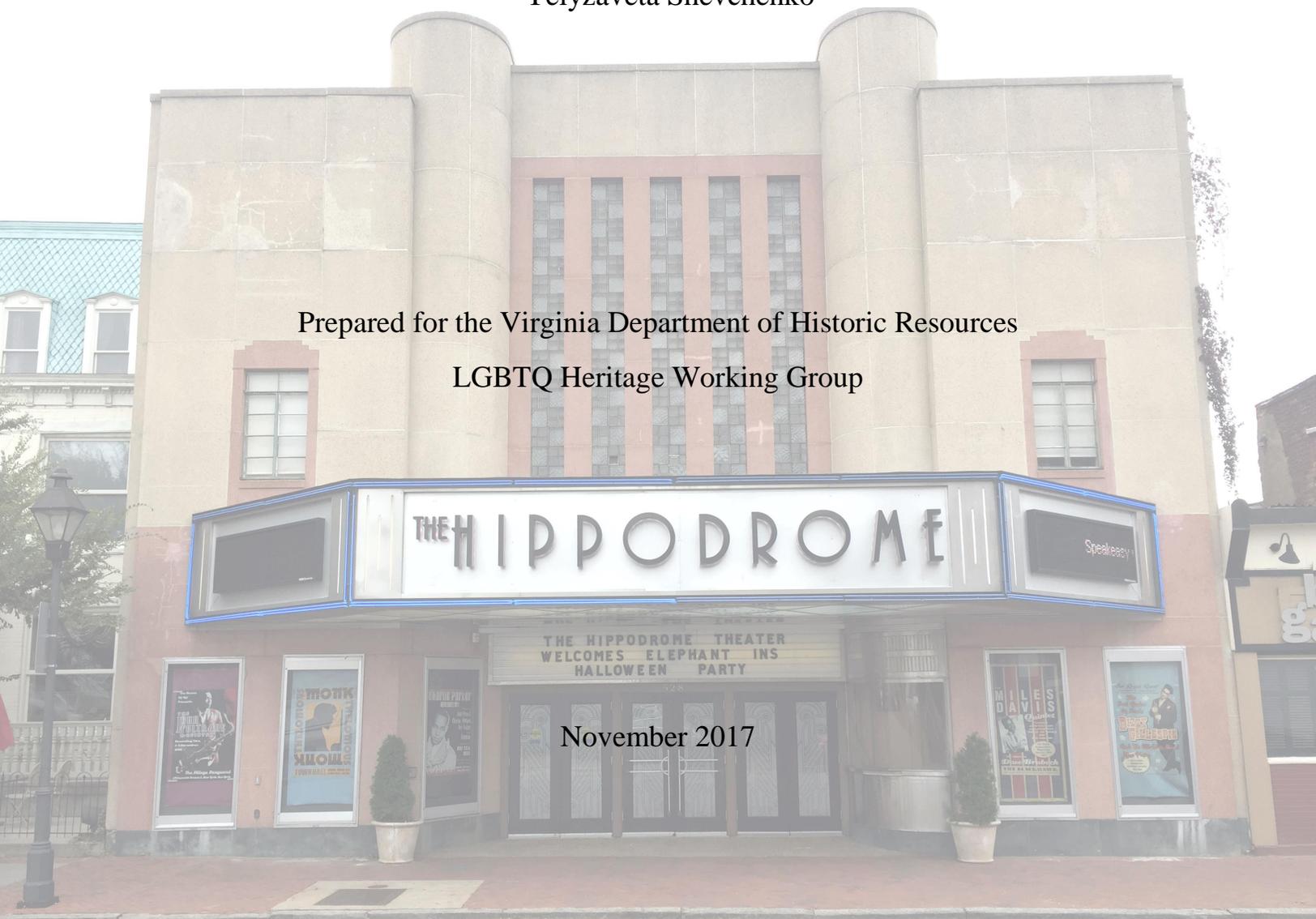


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Introduction

This project seeks to expand public and state knowledge surrounding Richmond's LGBTQ—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer—history through the architectural survey of significant locations. Though the histories of various minority groups have frequently been overlooked, Virginia and its residents can benefit from further attention to the field. By gaining a better understanding of the LGBTQ community and associated architecture, this knowledge can help to enrich Virginia's history and encourage rising interest in the untold stories of marginalized communities. Within the LGBTQ community in particular, representation found in history is quintessential to younger members still learning about their identities. Seeing various LGBTQ figures, along with the historic locations that held importance for the community provides a sense of stability and affirmation necessary for a healthy development of identity and self. Studying spaces of oppression offers the community vital lessons about the types of activism that have been most effective and grant a sense of hope for the future.

The locations included in this report were selected for their importance to Richmond's LGBTQ history, and, in particular, center around the period during which Alcoholic Beverage Control laws inhibited the community's freedom, roughly defined as the period between the 1960s through the 1980s. Through this survey, my hope is to establish patterns in the types of locations that existed, as well as the significance these locations have had in shaping the city's LGBTQ community.

Methodology

The project consists of nineteen locations identified by the Department of Historic Resources LGBTQ Heritage Working Group between the summer of 2015 and the fall of 2017. The current undertaking entailed field survey of each site to confirm conditions, followed by research to understand each location's history and significance to the local LGBTQ community. This information was then entered into the Virginia Cultural Resource Information System (V-CRIS) and produced in hardcopy for inclusion in the publicly accessible DHR archives.

The initial step was conducting reconnaissance-level field surveys of the selected locations. Field surveys were conducted to monitor their condition and nearby resources were examined to better understand the significance of the building's location. As it appeared, many of these locations had very deliberate locations in proximity to one another, thereby linking the LGBTQ community together. Smitty's, a former lesbian bar, stood in close proximity to Byrd Park's softball courts, which was understandable considering the popularity of softball among the lesbian community throughout the last century (Swisher, 1889, p. 23). The Block, though not the focus of this study, was an unofficial district where gay cruising occurred. Its location included the Broad Street Station, where stationed men would arrive and depart during the Second World War, and stretched for several blocks to include restaurants, hotels, and other establishments where gay and bisexual men were provisionally permitted (Swisher, 1988, p. 6). Studying these architectural resources on a city-wide, rather than individual scale helped reveal trends in the location which may have been otherwise overlooked.

This report builds on work previously conducted by local researchers within DHR's LGBTQ Heritage Working Group. Since the information was limited, Beth Marschak and Alex Lorch's book *Gay and Lesbian Richmond* was used to find background information on some of the selected locations. Newspapers, flyers, and other primary sources located in the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Virginia Historical Society archives were examined to help expand on Marschak and Lorch's research. These provided a better understanding of the community, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, which is when many of the early LGBTQ organizations were active. Bob Swisher's articles, published in various newspapers, such as *On Our Own Community Press*, also provided valuable insight into social history thanks to his interviews and research. Edwin Slipek, Jr. also wrote about Richmond's gay history through interviews of men who lived during World War II. Though not exhaustive, these sources provided a good foundation for understanding the LGBTQ community through the last century.

Broadly defined, this study aims to evaluate the history of different aspects of the LGBTQ community, though certain factors have contributed to varying amounts of representation for individual groups. Social class and race have been defining factors in establishing how much information exists today on a particular group. Wealthy, white rich men, and, occasionally, women have enjoyed many social freedoms that poor or non-white citizens, regardless of sexual orientation, have not. While this study seeks to focus on all individuals within the community,

there is more information available on those who possessed wealth and social standing, which is evident in the surveys themselves.

Also important to note is the fluidity of labels used to refer to the members of the LGBTQ community. Today, the community recognizes numerous labels to facilitate understanding of one's sexual and gender identity which did not exist, or were not widely used in decades past. Language has also shaped how the individuals understand themselves, and modern ideas, toward gender and sexuality that may not align with those of the past. While this study aims to understand the identities of the community by their own terms, which were often limited to "lesbian" and "gay," the community is referred to broadly as the LGBTQ community, as it better encompasses the different identities as they are understood today. Though it is evident today that transgender individuals inhabit their own category within the broadly defined LGBTQ community, their identities have historically been grouped with lesbian and gay individuals, which complicates the study of their history. Since this was a reconnaissance-level survey, it is vital to note that transgender identities may be underrepresented since most of the locations focus on gay and lesbian realities, which may or may not have included nonbinary or transgender individuals.

Historical Context

Like most American cities, Richmond has supported a LGBTQ population throughout its history, whether it was visible or not. While much of Richmond LGBTQ history prior to the twentieth century has either been erased or was never recorded in the first place, the last century has seen a vibrant development of culture in the Virginia's capital. It is undisputable that LGBTQ individuals—loosely defined as those attracted to the same sex, identifying differently from their assigned gender, or rejecting traditional binary understanding of sexuality—have always existed, but tracking their history has become much more feasible with increased visibility since the 1960s.

A constant has been the role that private residences have played in the community. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, most LGBTQ individuals had only private residences to serve as their social spaces as there were no bars or restaurants to cater to their needs. It was a time of strict social conservatism, but residences provided a privacy impossible elsewhere and allowed a small community to exist. This is evident in the Ellen Glasgow house, where she met with fellow suffragists and foster close relationships with different women (Marschak & Lorch, 2008, p. 19), as well as the Hunter Stagg residences, where he would host parties for various artists, writers, and other creative individuals to meet (Wilt, 2014, n.p.). Though it is difficult to confirm the orientation of these individuals, much evidence points to them prioritizing same-gender company.

Prior to the 1960s, there appears to be some consensus that the LGBTQ community largely circumvented persecution; as long as they avoided publicity and kept to themselves, there were few police crackdowns. Bob Swisher (1989), a Richmond journalist and historian, has found through interviews of gay and lesbian members that the climate in Richmond for the LGBTQ community was far more tolerant than in many other cities during McCarthy's Era (p. 23). While this may have been the case, social stigmas against same-sex relations remained a significant problem for many gay, lesbian, and bisexual people regardless of the lack of criminal persecution. Numerous people had no option but to remain in the closet for their safety, and many struggled to find relationships or community.

Social attitudes, legislation, and other factors contributed to a largely hidden community—or rather one purposely ignored by both the public and the police until the 1960s. Soon enough, attitudes began to shift across America; it was a time of social and sexual revolution, and visibility for the first time became possible. Notably, June 1969 marked the beginning of the Stonewall Riots in New York, which resulted from protest to a police raid at the Stonewall Inn. Although now known in popular culture as a gay uprising, some of the most vigorous protestors were transgender people. As the first activist organizations began conducting meetings across Richmond in the early 1970s, the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control board, in conjunction with Richmond Police began to crack down on LGBTQ-friendly establishments that served alcohol. This tension has been responsible for Richmond's flexible and fluid gay community, which has learned to find new places to socialize and different avenues for meeting—though this

ingenuity is hardly surprising considering that only decades before, the need to hide, conceal, and improvise influenced all gay social life.

Though there is a relatively well-recorded history of LGBTQ establishments that served white patrons throughout Richmond's recent history from the mid-century to the present, it is important to note that Richmond was a racially segregated city, and this was no exception at white-only establishments such as Marroni's, a gay restaurant in the basement of the now-demolished Capital Hotel. Unfortunately, black LGBTQ bars are less known, and few sources are currently available that mention even their existence. The Hippodrome is a notable exception, since it was a popular theatre located in the midst of Jackson Ward, historically regarded as the African American economic capital in the South. A white gay man under the pseudonym Ralph revealed that he frequented the Hippodrome for entertainment, food, and community during the wartime years (Slipek, 2002, p. 19). However, as George Chauncey (1994) aptly notes in his evaluation of New York's Harlem, "it was easier for white interlopers to be openly gay during their brief visits to Harlem than for the black men who lived there round the clock" (p. 244).

By the 1960s and onward, Virginia's ABC laws were more frequently cited as an excuse to penalize or even shut down LGBTQ-friendly establishments. Richmond's architectural history also reflects this; starting this decade, there were numerous restaurants and bars that opened and were shut down in the span of several years. This prompted a wave of unease and restlessness within the community, which would eventually culminate in the establishment of Richmond's first LGBTQ activist groups. Notably, Richmond's first formal gay organization, Gay Awareness in Perspective (GAP) was founded in 1974 and held weekly meetings at the Pace Memorial United Methodist Church (Marschak & Lorch, 2008, p. 40). Another organization followed a year after: The Richmond Lesbian-Feminists also held their meetings at Pace Memorial (p. 67). On October 8, 1977, in response to Anita Bryan's homophobic "Save the Children" concert, the first organized gay rights rally was held in Monroe Park (Outhistory, "Rainbow Timeline").

In the 1980s, the HIV/AIDS epidemic swept through the country and had a profound impact on Richmond. One of the first clinics to treat patients with HIV/AIDS was the Fan Free Clinic, which contributed significantly to the health of the LGBTQ community by offering treatment and spreading vital information and awareness throughout the community (Fan Free Clinic, 2017, n.p.). The medical center at Virginia Commonwealth University and other local hospitals undoubtedly treated individuals with HIV/AIDS during this period, though pertinent records on this topic are not readily available. The global epidemic would eventually result in increased activism within the LGBTQ community, which was especially affected by the epidemic.

The following decade saw much progress as a result of activism through rallies, petitions, and legal cases. The homophobic ABC law that enabled the agency to fine and close LGBTQ-friendly establishments was finally overturned in 1991, which allowed the legal existence of LGBTQ alcohol-serving establishments and a new sense of security for the community (Maranger, 1991). In the following years, numerous other LGBTQ-friendly establishments opened since the overturn of the law.

Resource Analysis

Through evaluation of the architectural resources associated with Richmond's LGBTQ history, including their locations and their past functions, a possible typology of resources became evident. The categories are as follows:

- Private residences
- Activist spaces
- Alcohol-serving social spaces
- Non-alcoholic social spaces
- Spaces of oppression
- Healthcare spaces

Private Residences

From the beginning of the 20th century until the 1940s, the majority of the social spaces were private residences, such as those of Lewis Ginter, Adele Clark, and Ellen Glasgow. There were few, if any, non-private social spaces; gay bars did not exist, unlike in New York, which saw the development of the first gay and lesbian social spaces. Therefore, most of the community was connected through certain LGBTQ or LGBTQ-friendly individuals. During this time, more so than any other, most members experienced alienation society at large due to the challenges of finding other allies.

Activist Spaces

Following the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York, a wave of LGBTQ activism swept through the nation and did not fail to pass through Richmond. Though the GAP Rap publication notes that many Richmond inhabitants did travel to participate in various rallies in the 1970s in New York and Washington DC, Richmond itself saw the rise of various activist organizations. During this time, accessible public spaces became an important meeting space for LGBTQ organizers who strove to promote acceptance and equal rights for the community.

Public parks, particularly Byrd Park and Monroe Park, became vital spaces for protests and rallies. Richmond organized its first pride march in June 1979 (Marschak & Lorch, 2008, p. 66). These rallies helped promote visibility of the community, thereby establishing the members as a significant part of the population capable of organized protests and political influence.

Alcohol-Serving and Non-Alcoholic Spaces

Though some of these establishments have existed for some time prior, it was in the 1960s that the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control board began to cooperate with the police to shut down

LGBTQ-friendly spaces that served alcohol to LGBTQ patrons. These categories make sense primarily within the context of oppression, as the ability to serve alcohol was vital for granting the ABC authority to shut down an establishment.

What enabled the ABC to act was Section 4-37 (2-C) of the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Act, which established that:

“The Board may suspend or revoke any licenses issued by it if it has reasonable cause to believe that the place occupied by the license has become a meeting place or rendezvous for users of narcotics, drunks, homosexuals, prostitutes, pimps, panderers, gamblers, or habitual law violators” (GAP Rap, 1976).

The surveyed locations reveal several LGBTQ-friendly establishments that were closed as a result of this law. The general trend following 1960 until 1991, when the law was repealed, shows that numerous restaurants and bars opened for only a few years and were shut down soon after. The clientele often shifted to another place, often close to the original location, or the new establishment that opened in the place of a previous one also continued serving LGBTQ patrons.

Spaces of Oppression

The most notable architectural resource within this category is the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control headquarters, which played a role in fining and shutting down numerous LGBTQ establishments.

Healthcare Spaces

Though this survey features only a single architectural resource within this category, healthcare for LGBTQ individuals became increasingly important during the 1980s amidst the AIDS epidemic, which affected the LGBTQ population significantly.

Survey Findings

Private Residences



DHR ID 127-0056: Ellen Glasgow House, 1 W. Main Street, Richmond, VA

Ellen Glasgow (1873-1945) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning author who resided in Richmond throughout her life. Ellen Glasgow focused her writing career on questioning patriarchy and traditional gender roles in southern culture. She published nineteen novels, the most acclaimed of which were *The Deliverance* and *In This Our Life*. She was also a member of the Equal Suffrage League in Virginia. Glasgow had a close relationship with Anne Virginia Bennett for over thirty years, as well as Radclyffe Hall, who was the author of the early lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness*.

Her home also served as a meeting place for the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia.

While already individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Ellen Glasgow House is recommended as a potential candidate for a nomination update to document Glasgow's nontraditional social sphere and same-sex relationships.



DHR ID 127-0179: Lewis Ginter House, 901 W. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA

Lewis Ginter, one of Richmond’s most famous businessmen and philanthropists, has been regarded by some scholars to have been exclusively attracted to men, which makes his Franklin Street residence worthy of consideration for its relevance to Richmond LGBTQ history. According to his *New York Times* obituary, he “never pointedly sought” the company of women. Ginter spent the majority of his life with John Pope, a former delivery boy who Ginter adopted when Pope was sixteen; such an arrangement was one of the few options to same-sex couples who wanted to have legal rights pertaining to property ownership, medical care, and other important life events. They lived together until Pope's death in 1896 at 901 West Franklin Street. He left his fortune to his niece, Grace Arents, who continued to work in philanthropy by opening schools, a library, and other services to benefit Richmond. Arents lived together with her long-time companion, Mary Garland Smith, who was a teacher at the school Arents founded. The Ginter House is worthy of further study in the context of local LGBTQ history.



DHR ID 127-0201-0101: Adele Clark's home, 3614 Chamberlayne Ave, Richmond, VA

Adele Clark (1882-1983) was an artist during the beginning on the 20th century, known for her suffragist activism and the art it inspired. She worked together with several other suffragists and artist along with writers Nora Houston and Willoughby Ions. She lived with Ions at 3614 Chamberlayne Avenue. It may be argued that the two of them had been in a romantic relationship, which would make the site significant to Richmond's LGBTQ history. However, since the building has been significantly altered and now functions as part of a mid-twentieth century apartment complex, it is not recommended eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Activist Spaces



DHR ID 127-0383-0017: Pace Memorial United Methodist Church, 700 W. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA

Richmond's first formal gay organization, Gay Awareness in Perspective (GAP) was founded in 1974 and held weekly meetings at the Pace Memorial United Methodist Church. According to their publication, GAP Rap, meetings were held every Thursday at 7:30PM. The organization existed until April 1978, and had a significant impact on bringing the Richmond LGBTQ community together at a time that there were few community connections.

Richmond Lesbian-Feminists (RLF), an activist group that remains active today, also held their first meeting at Pace Memorial United Methodist Church on February 22, 1975. Due to its role as an activist and community space for the early LGBTQ community in Richmond, the Pace Memorial United Methodist Church is recommended for further survey.



DHR ID 127-0170: U.S. Courthouse, 1000 E. Main Street, Richmond, VA

In 1976, the Gay Alliance of Students (GAS), a student-led organization associated with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), went to court against Alfred Matthews, the Dean of Student Life at VCU, and several others in order to petition for GAS to be allowed to register as a student organization and therefore receive the same space and funding opportunities as other student organizations at VCU. According to the case, GAS claimed their objectives were to establish a community for gay or same-gender attracted students, to promote education and awareness, and to advocate for “gay rights” as a civil liberty. A lower court ruled in favor of the university. With legal and financial help provided by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the American Civil Liberties Union, GAS was able to appeal to a higher court.

In a groundbreaking decision, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, housed in the Lewis F. Powell, Jr., U.S. Courthouse, ruled in favor of GAS, which enabled them to become an official student organization at VCU. The decision effectively reformed similar laws in ten other states and enabled the official formation of numerous LGBTQ student clubs. Due to its significance to the early LGBTQ rights movement in Richmond, the already National Register of Historic Places-listed Lewis F. Powell, Jr., U.S. Courthouse is recommended for further study in the context of a potential nomination update focused on the GAS court case.



DHR ID 127-0300: Young Women's Christian Association, 6 N. 5th Street, Richmond, VA

The Richmond YWCA, or Young Women's Christian Association, was a small boarding facility that opened in 1888. It played an important role for women historically and retains its significance to this day. It assisted working mothers in caring for children in this facility's nursery. The YWCA relocated their organization to a larger building on 5th Street in 1914, where the additional space was used for residence and fitness areas. The 5th Street location remains active to this day and continues to offer women numerous social services. Notably, the group also seeks to eliminate racism, which they have been working on since the 1930s when the YWCA assisted in establishing the Southern Commission on Interracial Cooperation.

In addition to supporting women and the advancement of race relations, the YWCA building also served as a meeting space for Richmond Lesbian-Feminists and the Women's Political Caucus in the 1970s, and had an active role in assisting the feminist community of Richmond. Due to its historic significance and architecture, this location would be a good candidate for further survey.



DHR ID 127-5546: Richmond Public Library, 101 E. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA

The Richmond Public Library has been among Richmond’s most important meeting places for members of the LGBTQ community since the 1960s. As a public venue, it was never under risk of being shut down by the Virginia ABC board for serving alcohol to LGBTQ people. The organizers of Richmond’s Lesbian/Gay Pride Day Committee met here, as well as numerous others, due to its accessibility. In the mid-1970s, the Richmond Gay and Lesbian Pride Coalition met at the library to assemble the “Gayellow Pages,” which provided listings of local LGBTQ-friendly businesses. In 1984, supporters of gay rights met at the Richmond Public Library during the forum for Richmond City Council candidates. This revealed the voting power of the LGBTQ population in Richmond, and helped bring LGBTQ issues to attention at a local level. Because of its significance to LGBTQ activism since the 1970s, this site is recommended for further survey.



DHR ID 127-0383: Monroe Park, 620 W. Main Street, Richmond, VA

Monroe Park served as an activist and social space for college students and activists over the last several decades. It lies at the center of several important LGBTQ spaces in Richmond; Pace Methodist Church, the original Fan Free Clinic building and VCU dormitory Rhoads Hall. Its proximity to VCU's campus is notable, for VCU is regarded as a liberalizing factor, and was among the city's early sites of LGBTQ activism.

It was also the site of a famous LGBTQ protest on October 8, 1977, in response to homophobic comments made by singer and anti-gay activist Anita Bryan during her "Save the Children" concert. This protest is regarded as Richmond's first organized gay rights rally, and gathered hundreds of participants according to the *Richmond Times Dispatch*. The park also hosted the Women's Festival in 1974. Notable figures in attendance were Florynce Kennedy, Rita Mae Brown, and Margaret Sloan. This space was open to lesbians and same-sex attracted people and served as both an activist space, and a social forum. As the site of several events associated with early LGBTQ rights in Richmond, Monroe Park is recommended for further study and a potential historic district nomination update to include the history of activism associated with the park.

Alcohol-Serving Social Spaces



DHR ID 127-7175: Smitty's/Leo's/The Male Box, 310 S. Sheppard Street, Richmond, VA

This location started out as a bar called Smitty's in 1954-1959; it was originally a space popular among women's softball teams, being located just blocks away from Byrd Park. Due to the association of softball with lesbians and bisexual women, as well as the status of some of the patrons, this was likely an early lesbian-friendly establishment, albeit not officially. Leo Joseph Koury acquired Smitty's in the 1960s and renamed it Leo's. Under his ownership, it became a bar for gay men. He was able to charge higher prices as one of the few Richmond establishments that served "homosexuals." Men may have been more profitable customers than women, who had fewer opportunities to earn money. In 1976, it was renamed The Male Box after Koury surrendered ownership to a relative. However, it was promptly closed after an incident when a co-conspirator hired by Koury to regain ownership of the bar shot at the patrons, killing one, which resulted in Koury's indictment on federal charges, including murder. Due to its significance to LGBTQ history, it is eligible for further study.



DHR ID 127-7177: Babes of Carytown, 3166 W. Cary Street, Richmond, VA

Babes of Carytown, or “Babes” as it is locally known, is located several blocks away from another well-known lesbian-turned-gay bar, Smitty’s/Leo’s/The Male Box at 310 S. Sheppard Street. Though the latter is closed, Babes of Carytown remains open and popular with Richmond’s lesbians and other same-sex attracted women. It is mentioned in sources starting in the 1970s, such as the GAP Rap publication, but the exact date of operation is unknown.

There may be a correlation between the change of ownership of Smitty’s—which had been a women’s space but started to cater to gay men instead—and the appearance of Babes, but additional research is necessary. As a venue catering specifically to LGBTQ clientele, Babes of Carytown is a rare survivor from the pre-1991 period, during which the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Board regularly shut down establishments that served or employed LGBTQ individuals. Due to its significance to LGBTQ history, it is eligible for further study.



DHR ID 127-0375-0112: 409 Club, 409 W. Broad Street, Richmond, VA

409 Club once served as a LGBTQ friendly social establishment and was quite popular thanks to its prime location facing Broad Street in the heart of Richmond. One of the first cataloged mentions of the 409 Club is in the GAP Rap newspaper on March 30, 1975, which celebrated the renovation of the building, implying that it had been in use prior. The publication notes the addition of Dixie's Back Bar, which offers a dance floor and a sitting area. Today, it serves as the Medical Arts building, but appears vacant. Further research on this space would be beneficial as part of the larger LGBTQ club scene in Richmond, but this individual location does not appear to rise to the level of individual National Register eligibility.

Non-Alcohol Serving Social Spaces



DHR ID 127-0226: Broad Street Station, 2500 W. Broad Street, Richmond, VA

Though the building today serves as the Science Museum, Broad Street Station used to be a train station used by servicemen on leave to military assignments. As a result, Broad Street Station, as well as several nearby hotels and restaurants served as places of gay cruising, putting it at the heart of a district that would later be known as “the Block,” active since the 1940s. The district stretched from First Street, through Franklin, Main, and Foushee Streets, though the lines have shifted throughout the years in response to police presence. The resource is listed on the NRHP, though its LGBTQ significance is not detailed in the nomination.



DHR ID 127-0237-0634: Hippodrome Theatre, 528 N. 2nd Street, Richmond, VA

The Hippodrome was a theatre located in the Jackson Ward, the former economic capital for African Americans in the South. While there are no discernible LGBTQ Harlem Renaissance figures associated with the Hippodrome, several accounts mention it as LGBTQ friendly establishment. In an interview with a local writer, a white gay man under the pseudonym of Ralph mentioned visiting the Hippodrome during wartime, where some soldiers would go for entertainment. It likely served as a social forum for African American LGBTQ individuals during the time it was active as a theatre, as well, though information about this community is notoriously scant. Due to its significance to both the African American and LGBTQ community, as well as their overlaps, this building is recommended eligible for a nomination.



DHR ID 127-6067: Byrd Park, 600 S. Boulevard, Richmond, VA

Byrd Park, and more specifically its sport facilities, are said to have been used by the lesbian softball community since the 1950s or earlier, according to Bob Swisher's interview of lesbians who lived in Richmond during that time. There has been a long-term association between lesbian communities and softball, making Byrd Park an evident social space for same-gender attracted women in the decades that it has been active. Byrd Park is notably close to a bar that was once called Smitty's, which was a popular lesbian space from 1954 to 1959 before it changed ownership and became predominantly a gay male space. The park is listed on the NRHP, though its LGBTQ significance is not detailed in the nomination.



DHR ID 127-7178: Humphrey-Calder Field, 414 N. Thompson Street, Richmond, VA

This publicly-owned field has been in use since the 1940s and provided women with a vital social space in the community, particularly since it is accessible to all social classes. Due to the popularity of softball in lesbian and bisexual circles, as well as the visits of players to Babes of Carytown, it is likely that the Humphrey-Calder Field was an important space for the Richmond lesbian and bisexual women's community. According to local historian Beth Marschak, "in the late 1990s, the city decided that this field would no longer be available to the women's teams and instead would become a Little League field." In response to this, the Metro Richmond Women's Sports Association opposed this decision and organized a protest at City Hall. While important to Richmond's LGBTQ past, Humphrey-Calder Field is likely not individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Spaces of Oppression



DHR ID 127-7176: Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Headquarters, 2901 Hermitage Road, Richmond, VA

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board was a major antagonist to Richmond's LGBTQ community. Due to Virginia's alcohol laws, notably Section 4-37 (2-C), the ABC Board was able to suspend alcohol licenses for any place that served as a "rendezvous for users of narcotics, drunks, homosexuals, prostitutes, pimps, panderers, gamblers, or habitual law violators." Due to the ABC's enforcement of the law, numerous LGBTQ-friendly establishments were forced to shut down over the years, with some being open for only a short time before another replaced them. For example, Renee's restaurant, located in the Capitol Hotel, opened a year after Marroni's closed in the same location, and boasted popularity after another LGBTQ-friendly restaurant, Eton's, was forcibly shut down by the ABC. In 1969, Renee's own beer and wine license was revoked, which started Richmond's first public LGBTQ protests. Further study is recommended to determine the scope and impact of ABC laws on Virginia's LGBTQ communities. Though the ABC headquarters building has experienced a number of additions and alterations, it is significant as a space of oppression of LGBTQ people in the mid-to-late twentieth century.

Healthcare Spaces



DHR ID 127-0248-0102: Fan Free Clinic. 1103 Floyd Ave, Richmond, VA

The Fan Free Clinic, though it has changed locations several times over the years, was Virginia's first free health clinic founded in 1968. It was initially located in the middle of Richmond's Fan district at 1103 Floyd Avenue and was modeled after San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury free clinic, which offered similar services. It worked in helping provide women with health services, such as oral contraceptives and other forms of birth control, and offered testing for sexually transmittable diseases. Fan Free Clinic personnel also provided first aid during riots and protests. It was one of the first locations that helped treat people with HIV/AIDS during the pandemic in the 1980s, largely through volunteers, and later expanded their attention towards education, prevention, and support services. The Fan Free Clinic has been renamed the Health Brigade and continues to serve the Richmond community. The clinic operated out of 1103 Floyd Avenue for a short period before moving to larger accommodations at the nearby First Unitarian Universalist Church. Though it was an important site associated with healthcare for LGBTQ Richmond residents, this temporary location is not recommended individually eligible for the National Register for its association with the history of Fan Free Clinic.

Recommendations

From the research conducted, it is evident that further research would be beneficial to our understanding of Richmond's LGBTQ community. Though this project was limited in scope as a reconnaissance-level survey of the physical spaces and structures associated with the community, there are many directions toward which researchers could direct their attention.

Most notably, the LGBTQ Heritage Working Group's research would benefit from the inclusion of non-white, non-affluent individuals. While the Hippodrome stands out as a space for LGBTQ members interacting at the height of the Harlem Renaissance and following into the Second World War, additional sites would enrich understanding of Richmond's history. Most of the LGBTQ-friendly restaurants and bars mentioned in this report served whites only. This demonstrates that even the marginalized white LGBTQ community had more privilege and power than the non-white community. Locations worthy of further study are Lulu's, a black lesbian bar in Church Hill, and the general Jackson Ward historic district, which was notable for being the economic center for African Americans in the South during Jim Crow segregation.

Another area in need of more research is Richmond's LGBTQ history prior to the 1930s, since there are very few accessible records about this time. While Bob Swisher has provided several articles detailing what life was like for the community during World War II, further study of more private residences associated with LGBTQ individuals would help understand the period. Hunter Stagg is another figure to consider for his role in fostering an artist community in the 1920s, particularly for his interest in race, gender, and identity (Wilt, 2014, n.p.). The VCU James Cabell Library's Special Collections and Archives collection contains some of Stagg's papers and correspondence, which would enable further study.

Sites associated with the AIDS epidemic, such as hospitals, free clinics, hospices, and locations serving similar functions would prove beneficial for understanding the role that AIDS had in shaping Richmond's LGBTQ community. Considering today's improved record-keeping practices, information and statistics may be available to aid the research.

An update to the Tanglewood National Register nomination would help bring attention to its significance. Tanglewood was—and continues to be—a restaurant in Goochland County that served LGBTQ patrons since the 1950s. Bob Swisher mentions visits to Tanglewood as significant events for Richmond's gay and lesbian community, which founds the merit for further study (1989, p.7).

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Appendix A: VCRIS Survey Forms