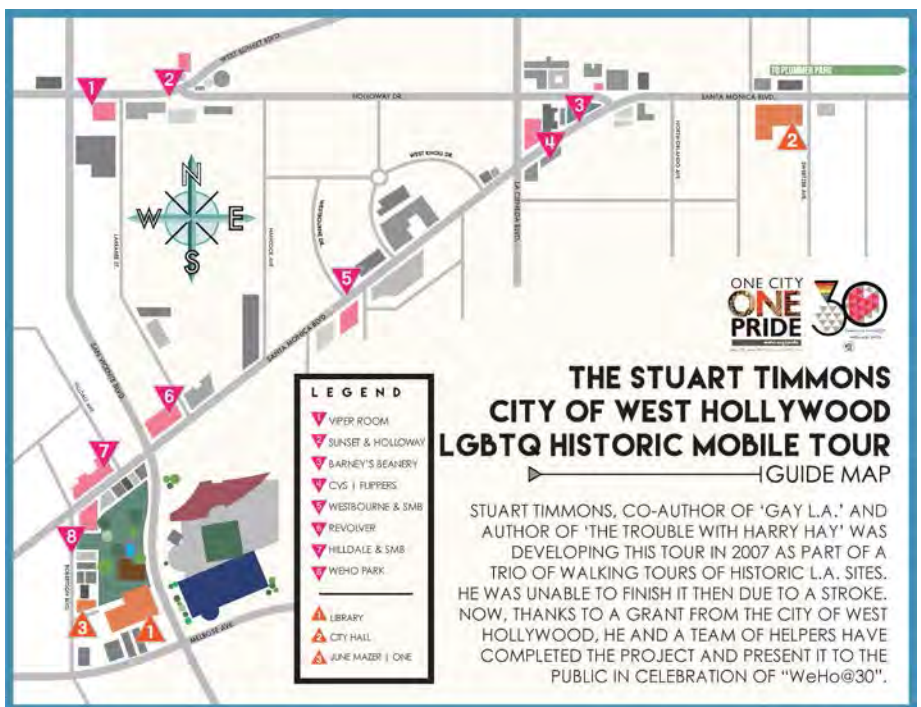


THE STUART TIMMONS CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD

LGBTQ HISTORY MOBILE TOUR



Introduction

Welcome to The Stuart Timmons City of West Hollywood LGBTQ History Mobile Tour! We're happy to have you on board for today's adventure through time and space (well through a very small portion of it at least). This tour was originally researched and written by our beloved historian Stuart Timmons! As you may know Stuart Timmons wrote the biography about gay rights activist and infamous provocateur "The Trouble With Harry Hay" and co-authored the book "Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians" among many other accomplishments. Stuart was developing this LGBTQ history tour in 2007 as part of a trio of walking tours of Los Angeles, but was unable to finish as a result of a stroke in January of 2008. It's been a while in waiting, but now, thanks to a grant from The City of West Hollywood's One City One Pride, Stuart and a small team of helpers have brought it to fruition. We are proud to unveil this newly completed and updated mobile tour to the public in celebration of "WeHo@30".

PLEASE NOTE: This is a printed version of the tour, which will be turned into an audio tour in the near future, so imagine these words as being read to you as you walk through the city. Further revisions and research is underway. Also, the first section of the tour was written for timing with the live event on June 6, which included a brief shuttle ride that looped around the city. We mention several sites you can visit or merely read about as you make your way to the first stop located at 8852 Sunset Blvd where the easy walking portion of the tour begins.

The Illustrations were created especially for this tour and donated by Eugene Salandra. Additional material was compiled and edited for the updated tour by Jason Jenn, Robert Patrick, and Mike Che. All writing is © copyright 2007/2015 by Stuart Timmons.



This little City of West Hollywood is saturated with history and amazing architecture – while only 1.9 square miles large, there’s always a great view here. Before it was called West Hollywood, the area was known as Sherman, named for Moses Sherman, who built much of LA’s train system. For years the local market was called the SherMart after him. Railroad workers were among the original population groups of the area, and their charming little bungalows, which cost only a few hundred dollars to build in the 1910s, now sell for around a million bucks! Of course, many buildings are not so humble. All over WeHo are enchanting Spanish/Moorish houses and apartments with courtyards and fountains, which even poor gay youth could afford a few decades ago.

For an enchanted period between the 1940s and the 1970s, as actor John Carlyle once noted, “old” West Hollywood was at its best as a “not overwhelmingly gay enclave” whose denizens were “hell-bent on enjoying what they could not perceive were their halcyon days.” (That means “most enjoyable” days, not days of taking the drug Halcyon, though a lot of that went on as well.) Those were the days when you could hear Judy Garland’s voice wafting into the jasmine-scented night, singing at someone’s private party, or find literary legend Dorothy Parker passed out in the bushes on her way home from drinking, or you might get picked up by some impossibly handsome actor, whom most of America would never believe would do the things he had just done with you. Movie stars have even died here – Sal Mineo, who had a crush on James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, was stabbed to death in a WeHo carport on Holloway by someone who probably didn’t even know who he was.

Some say homos moved here for two reasons: (ONE) because of the tacky old joke that the zip code includes “69” and (TWO) because it was just outside the cruel clutches of the gay-intolerant LAPD. There were all manner of clashes, arrests, and raids happening to gays by the LAPD – too numerous to detail in our tour today, but the region now known as West Hollywood was always a somewhat safer place to be for LGBTQ people.



West Hollywood became a city on November 29, 1984 and **Plummer Park, located at 7377 Santa Monica Blvd.**, is where the country's first openly lesbian mayor and four other councilmembers were sworn in.

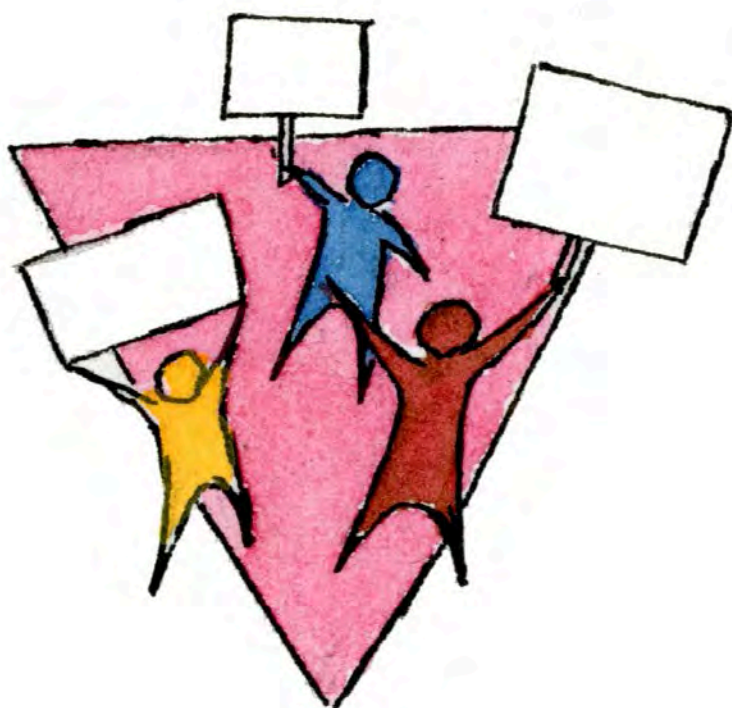
In the early 1980s, a campaign started up for cityhood, driven by a coalition of groups who had more power than they'd ever thought --- LGBT activists, seniors, and renters — these groups came together to form a City like no other with progressive policies and strong tenants' rights protections. In the early 80s, Los Angeles County's rent control laws were about to expire and when faced with this and the possibility of rising rents and a gentrifying neighborhood, West Hollywood's renters banded together to vote for Cityhood. The seniors and local gay population, both whom were mostly renters and not owners, became natural allies. The immediate focal point for the media were the gays. (Ask yourself – “the gay city” or “the old city.” Which one's catchier in the news?) When Cityhood passed, West Hollywood officially became the first City in the United States with a majority of openly gay elected City Council. All eyes turned to the City and Valerie Terrigno, the first openly lesbian mayor in the US, became a worldwide celebrity.

“The Creative City” was adopted as West Hollywood's motto with the understanding that while the LGBT population was very important to its identity and values, that WeHo supported the rights and needs of all its residents, including large percentages of seniors and Russian-speaking immigrants.

Plummer Park served as the location where many other renters' rights meetings took place prior to Cityhood, and was also a very active meeting area for the organization ACT UP and New Age healer Louise Hay (known for her ‘Hay’ rides) during the AIDS epidemic.

SANTA MONICA BLVD & THE AREA AROUND CRESCENT HEIGHTS

One of the notable buildings of this area is the FRENCH MARKET, a WeHo dining institution since 1974. It is currently undergoing renovation, but the restaurant was where anyone who was anyone could go for breakfast or ample amounts of cruising among the kitschy New Orleans styled interior setting. The building housed many small businesses and offices, including Dorothy's Surrender, an oh-so-gay Wizard of Oz themed gift boutique.



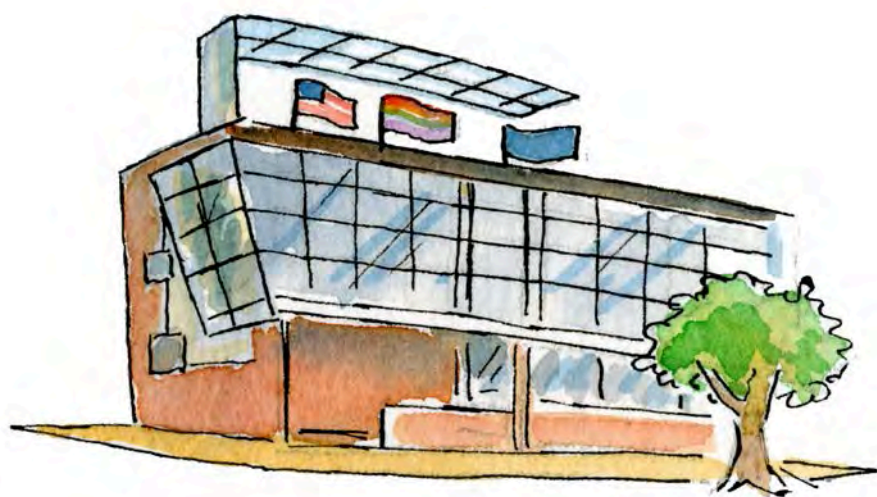
This small triangle section of park at the corner of Santa Monica Blvd and Crescent Heights is the location of the Matthew Shepard Human Rights Triangle and known as "Queer Village." In 1989 two HIV-positive men named Wayne Karr and Lou Lance held a hunger strike here to demand compassionate release of experimental AIDS drugs. "Queer Nation," a group of radical activists, held their planning meetings there sitting in a circle, like modern day Camelot Knights. In 1991, Rob Roberts fasted there in support of AB 101, the gay civil rights bill. When Gov. Pete Wilson vetoed the bill, thousands of gays and straights gathered at the site and marched down Santa Monica Blvd to San Vicente where they rallied for five nights. There is a standing plaque commemorating those events and trees are planted there in honor of the activism of Morris Kight and Ivy Bottini.

Project Angel Food was a program to deliver food to people debilitated by the AIDS crisis and other critical illnesses. It was co-founded from a fund-raiser in 1989 organized by Course in Miracles guru Marianne Williamson, death-and-dying expert David Kessler, and motivational author Louise Hay. Project Angel Food was an outreach program of the LA Center for Living. It first operated out of the kitchen at the Crescent Heights Methodist Church on Fountain. They held several fantastic fundraisers where you could bid on an auction for David Hockney to paint your swimming pool or have a birthday party at Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch. To meet the growing demand in 1994, a new Project Angel Food kitchen facility was opened at 7574 Sunset Boulevard, and now its permanent offices are located at 922 Vine Street.

SANTA MONICA BLVD BETWEEN HAVENHURST & LA JOLLA

This stretch of block is known for its fashionable and affordable “Out of the Closet Thrift Store” outlet – which benefits the AIDS Healthcare Foundation via your recycled clothes and household items. But the alley way behind it has another story (make that stories), for it is widely called “Vaseline Alley,” a once active cruising spot for anonymous male sexual encounters. (Incidentally there was another infamous “Vaseline Alley” located in Downtown Los Angeles

Today you might only find men on their way from their cars to The Gold Coast bar on the corner or Circus of Books across the street. The eclectic bookstore sells a mix of X-rated and mainstream materials. The adult toys they sell were the subject of numerous "Freedom of Speech" court cases as late as 1992. It now has a large selection of "vintage" material, which includes the books and magazines it sold when the store opened in 1960. We haven't completed all of our historical research on this just yet – you're most welcome to join us to thoroughly investigate. Wink, wink!



And here we pass by City Hall on Santa Monica and Sweetzer. Before City Hall was relocated here it was housed in rented space down the boulevard in the building that currently holds a Trader Joe's.

NORTH ON SWEETZER TO FOUNTAIN ON ROUTE TO SUNSET & LARRABEE

Here in West Hollywood, if you can't be a star, you might live next to one. Or at least tell stories that you did.

There is a very tall old building on Fountain at 1416 Havenhurst called The Colonial House. It is apparently where Hollywood icon Bette Davis lived for years. This part of town is filled with celebrity addresses. Before recent decades they were less afraid to walk among us, and didn't all live in high security hilltop fortresses. Several West Hollywood fellows used to tell the story that they lived in the Colonial building, kept seeing Miss Davis in the elevator, finally conjured the nerve to invite the movie legend to dinner, and were delirious when she accepted. They had a delightful evening. A few weeks later, she reciprocated, and the astonished, star-struck queens had another delightful evening at her place. At the end of it, the story goes, Bette said, "You've had me to dinner and I've had you to dinner. I never want to speak to either of you again."

"TAKE FOUNTAIN!"



One of the great silent movie hunks, William Haines, left stardom to live openly with his handsome lover Jimmie Shields. Their home on N. Stanley Ave. became a showplace of style when Haines became Hollywood's premier interior decorator. His relationship with Shields lasted over 40 years.

Famed screenwriter, novelist, and biographer Gavin Lambert who wrote *Sons and Lovers* and *Inside Daisy Clover* lived at North Laurel Ave. near Fountain until his death in July 2005. He was attended by his friend, writer/director Mart Crowley, author of the ground-breaking *Boys in the Band*.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, while not gay himself, most certainly crossed paths with quite a few, wrote his final novel, *The Last Tycoon* at his home on N. Laurel Ave.

And above Sunset on Kings Road, lived Paul Monette, who wrote *Borrowed Time*, *Becoming a Man*, and many other significant works about love in the time of AIDS.

On Cordell Drive was the house of one of the biggest early Hollywood movie directors, M.G.M.'s George Cukor, who made films like "Little Women," "A Star Is Born" & "My Fair Lady." Did you know that he was also originally slated to direct "Gone With the Wind?" - until its star Clark Gable, always afraid of being associated with anything gay, used his clout to have Cukor fired! Well, that didn't stop Cukor from holding many notoriously wild parties where closeted movie stars mingled with the neighborhood's most attractive men.

Oh – and icon Marilyn Monroe once said "I am trying to find myself. Sometimes that's not easy." She may have made it hard for others to find her as well, considering she apparently lived at 7 different addresses throughout the city, including a place on Doheny Drive that Frank Sinatra also resided.

And that is only a mere sampling of some of the historic stars that have graced this little city just west of Hollywood. The neighborhoods are full of local living legends. Who knows, you might just catch a glimpse of some along your tour today as you now proceed for the rest of the journey on foot!

#1: SUNSET BLVD & LARRABEE ST
The Viper Room, 8852 Sunset Blvd



Now we come to an area marked by delicious stories from different decades. For some, ancient history begins in 1993 when a young straight actor named River Phoenix died of an overdose outside this club, the Viper Room. But did you know that way back in the 1940s, this club hosted transvestite strippers and was apparently owned by the gangster, Bugsy Siegel!

There's a lot of surprising queer history on this strip – the Sunset Strip, a mile and a half long dense cluster of nightclubs, ritzy hotels, chic boutiques, and rock venues.

Why is West Hollywood so associated with gay goings-on? It's partly a continuation of the glamour of Hollywood Boulevard, which was thick with gay bars in the 1930s, '40s and '50s. But WeHo was a gay "safe zone" for an additional and very specific reason: it was "over the line" from the City of L.A., which was under the thumb of the anti-gay LAPD. Located in Los Angeles County unincorporated territory until 1984, West Hollywood was under the much more lenient and gay tolerant Sheriff's department. Speakeasies, gambling clubs, and houses of ill repute tended to flourish along the Strip and in other parts of West Hollywood. And as for gay-friendliness, speakeasies were illegal, so it didn't matter much what other illicit activity might be going on. In fact, the illicit boys were often the entertainment! Drag shows were very popular in those early clubs. It was all one big illegal tipsy underground.

Ciro's (at 8433 Sunset now the Comedy Store) was one of the most glamorous nightclubs of 1940s Old Hollywood before it eventually turned into a rock and roll club in the late 1960's. Sunday's hosted gay tea dances – and one of the first places where men were allowed to dance together. The LAPD had rules governing public dances and No. 6 was "The management shall not permit any person to dance with another person of the same sex while attending and participating in a public dance." Hmph!

Another factor for West Hollywood's queer attraction was its concentration of Bohemian actors, writers, and costumers. Many, if not gay themselves, were very friendly to unconventional sex arrangements. Most typical of this was a happening scene circa 1920 to 1950 called the Garden of Alla (later Garden of Allah), down at the intersection of Sunset Blvd & Crescent Heights. The Garden's 25 bungalows were rented to superstars and has-beens, who were either skyrocketing up or plummeting down. To the glow of colored garden lights, inebriated guests giggled, gossiped, and sometimes jumped into a pool shaped like the Black Sea while still wearing their tuxes or evening gowns. This was obviously pre-paparazzi and before AA. It was a haven both for wild hetero adultery and frisky homo cavorting –right in the middle of Los Angeles, but in that mystic Sheriff's Department safety zone.

Presiding over all this was a major silent star who was also a major lesbian, a Russian émigré named Alla Nazimova. As forgotten as she is today is how popular she was then – her fame was gigantic. Her flamboyant lifestyle was visible in real life and on screen in roles like her 1922 version of Oscar Wilde's "Salome." Part of the party at Alla's Garden involved the Sapphic scene of that era – which she referred to as the "Sewing Circle," a group of lesbian and bisexual entertainment industry women who lived secret lives. There was Jean Acker, a motorcycle-riding actress who was Rudolph Valentino's first beard/wife. Acker later lived openly with lover and former Ziegfeld Follies girl Chloe Carter. Other notable women in Alla's life: Dorothy Arzner (who just so happens to have the largest body of studio film work of any female director to this day), actress Eva Le Gallienne, Oscar Wilde's niece Dolly Wilde, the writer Mercedes de Acosta, and theatrical benefactor Glesca Marshall who lived with Nazimova at the Garden of Allah until Nazimova's death in 1945.

Another of the Alla scene was columnist Lucius Beebe, one of the wittiest New York queens (and one of the best dressed) who came out to cover Hollywood. He wrote, "Nothing interrupted the continual tumult that was life at the Garden of Allah. Now and then the men in white came with a van and took somebody away, or bankruptcy or divorce or even jail claimed a participant in its strictly unstately sarabands. Nobody paid any mind."

Sheliah Graham, lover to F. Scott Fitzgerald even wrote an entire book about the place and said: "There is no place for a Garden of Allah that, for one brief moment, was Camelot. It was inevitable that Hollywood as we knew it, and its satellite, Alla's garden, should disappear together." In 1959 the hotel was razed to make way for a new branch of Lytton Savings and Loan. There's not much to look at now but fast-food stands and banks and it may have even inspired laurel canyon resident Joni Mitchell's lyrics in *Big Yellow Taxi* - "they paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

So that's just a bit of the atmosphere of "gay old Hollywood" and its Western parcel. Now that you're drunk on that bit of history, move your tipsy self on down Sunset another block to the intersection of Holloway.

**#2: WALK EAST ONE BLOCK TO THE
JUNCTION OF SUNSET, HORN, & HOLLOWAY**

Look Across the Street to:

**The old Café Gala / Spago on Horn & Sunset
above The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf Bldg**



That unassuming white building over there on Horn housed two legendary restaurants. The first was Café Gala, a movie-star club and a gay club all rolled into one. The Café Gala (jokingly referred to as “Cafegaleh” or more prominently called “The World’s Most Interesting Supper Club”) opened in 1939 as the brainchild of patroness Catherine D’Erlanger, a Franco-Germanic Baroness, and a for-certain fag hag. Her young man, a singer named Johnny Walsh, ran the club with an iron hand and a huge white handkerchief that he waved around. Walsh was said to have growled at guys who got a bit too ‘relaxed,’ saying – “Butch it up – I don’t want people to think I’m running a grope-a-teria here.”

The Gala was a supper club with a bar. One attendee recalls that it was gays at the bar and movie stars in the dining room. Remember, this was the don’t-ask-don’t-tell era for those engaged in the entertainment industry. Gays had to be very discreet, but this was one place they could feel a bit of queer comfort without getting fingered in the tabloids. At Café Gala you could find the likes of Cole Porter, Judy Garland, Lena Horne, Conny Salinger, Roger Edens, Lenny Hayton, Christopher Isherwood, and Kay Thompson to name a few.

In the early 1950s, famed pianist Bobby Short started his career as a sophisticated “saloon singer” at the Gala. Short never came out but, at the Gala, he never really had to. In the 1980s, the Gala was reborn as Wolfgang Puck’s Spago, the Hollywood restaurant known for its fancy duck-sausage pizzas, high prices, and hungry celebs, where only the maitre D’ was an obvious homo.

Look now at location 8804 Sunset



A charming little bar has been lost under this massive building: It really is a loss. Its walls were decorated by a Disney artist, the waiters wore red sarongs, the drinks were killer, and if all of that didn't do you in, the music did. This vanished club was called the Café Bali, and was owned by an LA society man named (get this) Icky Outhwaite, but the power was all in the pianist, a guy named Bruz Fletcher. (Google him! There's a fabulous web site that tells all about his incredible queer life.)

The Bali was covertly known as a "gay spot" but advertised itself as the "it bar" for everybody – one write-up described it as perfect for the "partially potted." Pianist Fletcher all but flew around in a purple cape. He sang wicked songs with titles like "Get It Up Kitty" and "Just Keep an Eye on His Business," which were thick with triple-entendres. My favorite:

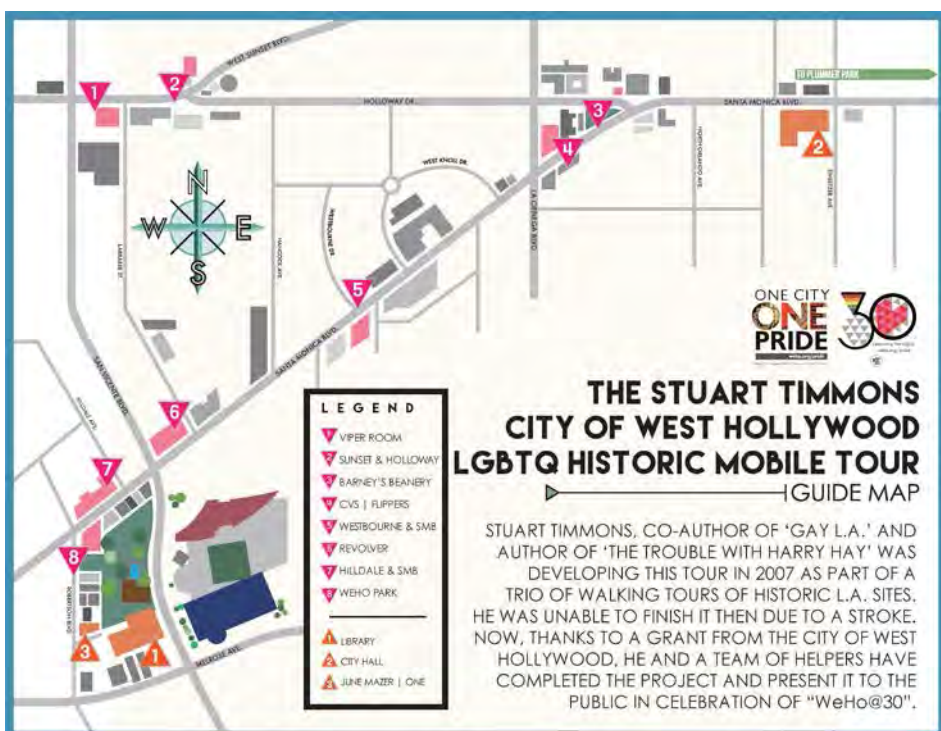
*I want a cozy little nest,
somewhere in the West
Where the best of all the worst
will always be
I want an extensive,
expensive excursion
To the realms of "per," "in,"
and "di"-version
It's the simple things of life for me*

Initially booked for a mere two-week gig, Fletcher reigned at the Café Bali from 1935 until the club's closing in 1940. Everyone from silent-screen beauty Louise Brooks to future president Ronald Reagan drank and laughed at Bruz Fletcher's antics– and a gay time was had by those in the know. Unfortunately, Bruz may not have been having as much fun as his guests, for in 1941, at the young age of 34, he sadly committed suicide.

During the hard-drinking 1930s, there was also Club Rendezvous on the Sunset Strip, run by comic singer Ray Bourbon, an intimate of sultry sex symbol Mae West. Bourbon who changed his clothes (to female) and his name (to Rae), was one of L.A.'s most charismatic female impersonators.

Speaking of crossdressing, in a famous scandal, some of West Hollywood's local workmen turned out to be women. One such laborer cut her hair, dressed carefully in overalls and won the respect of her male colleagues for her skill with a hammer. However, she was discovered and arrested for impersonation, but then was cleared of charges by the judge who accepted her explanation that she could not make as much money as a woman as she could as a man – which 80 years later is still sadly true!

***NOW MOVE DOWN HOLLOWAY toward SANTA MONICA BLVD.
(a bit of a lengthy stretch)**



**#3 STOP AT THE FOUNTAIN AT THE
SAL GUARRIELLO VETERANS' MEMORIAL
look to Barney's Beanery, 8447 SM Blvd.**



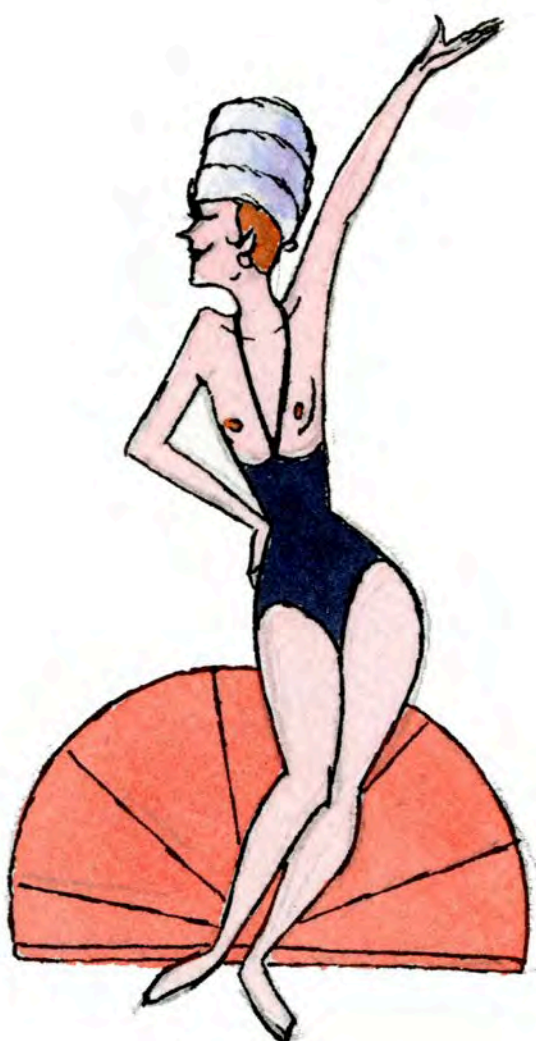
“Beans for the Queens!” That was the wording of a funny sign carried outside this joint by one of dozens of gay protesters at several points in the early 1970s. But the sign that started the trouble wasn’t so funny at all: it read “FAGOTS STAY OUT!” (sic) and it hung for more than thirty years over the bar in a place that has been – and still remains – an institution in West Hollywood - Barney's Beanery. Nowadays, the rainbow flag flies there proclaiming Gay Pride, but back then, Barney's was homophobic.

World-famous Barney's Beanery dates from at least the 1940s. Barney Anthony, who founded it, was a beloved old bigot who posed in front of his hateful sign for a spread in LIFE magazine in the mid-1960s. He told the world in that article his feelings about homosexuals: “I don't like 'em. There's no excuse. They'll approach any nice-looking guy. Anybody does any recruiting, I say shoot him. Who cares?”

Some gay men hung out at Barney's anyway, and said the sign didn't matter, but as pride-politics jelled, the sign became seen as a festering insult. The Gay Liberation Front protested it fiercely. People would take it down. But it would go back up. When West Hollywood became a city in 1984, Valerie Terrigno (the first openly lesbian mayor of an incorporated City in the United States) marched a group of activists to Barney's Beanery to personally take down the sign after the city council passed an anti-discrimination ordinance. Finally, it was handed over for good to activist Morris Kight, and now resides in the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.

For much of the 20th century it was an unwritten national policy that gays were unwelcome everywhere, so it's ironic that such a sign was a prominent public feature of this gay capitol of West Hollywood for so long. It was destiny that the damn thing came down once and for all at the hands of an openly lesbian elected official.

***Look to 8430 Santa Monica at Croft
– The former Rudi Gernreich Studio***

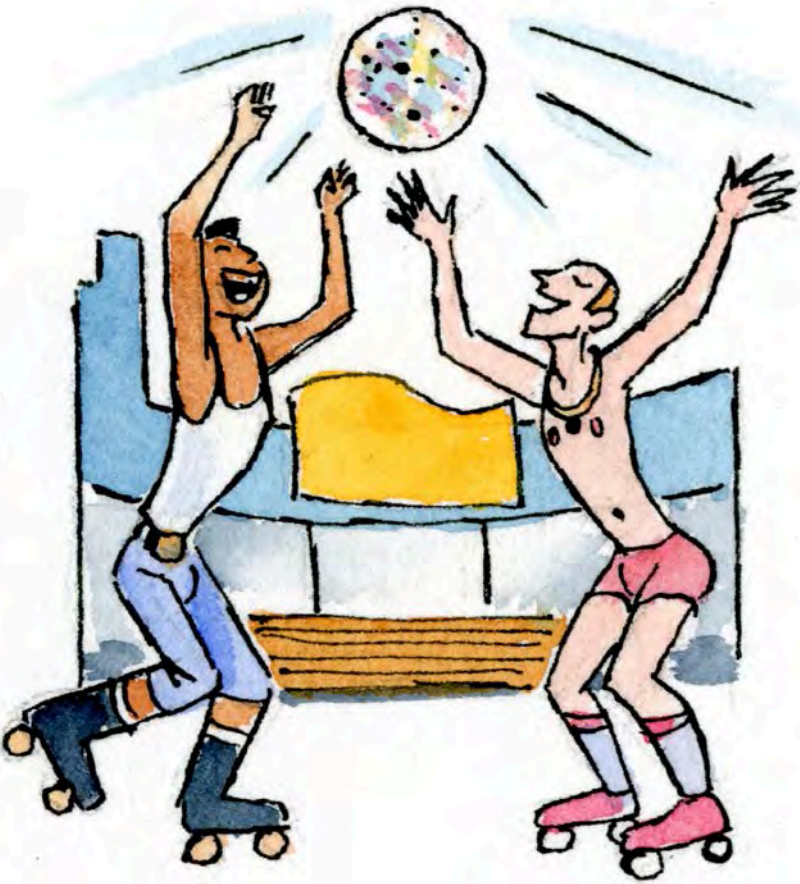


At the corner of Santa Monica and Croft, 8430 SM Blvd., you'll see the remains of what used to be the studio of great fashion designer Rudi Gernreich. He was incredibly talented and one of the first designers given the cover of TIME magazine. His overriding fashion message was freedom: he designed the no-bra bra (back in the days of "bullet tits"), haute couture involving leather, and the Unisex look. In 1964, he became internationally famous for creating the Topless swimsuit. He also invented the Thong. No kidding – he patented it.

In 1950 Rudi met Harry Hay and for a few years they became lovers. Harry showed Rudi his document "The Call" which discussed plans for creating a gay rights organization. Rudi said it was "the most dangerous thing ever read." He secretly became a founding member and private funder for that group, the Mattachine Society.

On slow business days, it's said that Rudi used to stand out in front of his studio and pick up guys. He never came out publicly – no one in fashion did in those days – but here in West Hollywood, he could have the same sexual freedom as a gay man that he advocated for women. That's an important part of our history – before everyone could come out for life, some daring souls came out one hour at a time. And had a little fun!

**#4: THE INTERSECTION OF LA CIENEGA &
SANTA MONICA BLVD**
The CVS at 8491 Santa Monica Blvd



The building you see before you now is an architecturally significant...drugstore! Before that it was a clothing phenom – Do you remember Esprit? Well, clothing trends come and they go. But back in the late 1970s, this address really cooked as Flippers, the disco on wheels. Roller skating was a huge fad universally, and very much so in the gay world. It was great for the legs, great for the glutes, and people went absolutely wild over it. There were skaters on the beach, there were skaters on the streets. Some hustlers even would skate up to parked cars and negotiate a date.

Homo skaters enjoyed wearing satin bomber jackets and very worn blue jeans cut off at the tippy-top of the thigh. Flippers was the homo roller paradise for a brief burst – especially since Cher was believed to be one of the owners and stars like Olivia Newton John made it her WeHo Xanadu. And another place for skaters to gather, was, of course, the offices of local orthopedists.

When developers bulldozed Flippers, they also demolished a black gay landmark, the Jim Morris Gym next door – now this parking ramp. Jim Morris was a handsome African-American, a former Mr. Universe. He trained celebrities as private clients before opening one of the first gyms in this part of town.

In the 1970s, guys with big deltoids were rather a rarity in the gay world. Many gay American men had grown up with the idea that athletics were for straight men only, and had never developed their bodies. But in the 1970s, that changed - big time! Jim Morris Gym was famous for its pink neon sign that glowed with the word “Muscles.” It was a very busy place. They say Morris often took on young aspiring body builders as “special projects.”



The cult of the body was becoming a big deal, and West Hollywood became a sort of ground-zero for macho men in tight t-shirts and jeans seeking other macho men in tight t-shirts and jeans – on the streets as well as in bars. It's hard to describe the electric feeling of being in the midst of so much homoerotic possibility. That hasn't changed entirely, but what has changed is the sense that it was a daring new public adventure – and genuinely idealistic. Exploring one's gay sexuality felt like a righteous political and moral cause. There was the feeling of inventing something new and world-changing. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, the love that dare not speak its name was finally never going to shut up again.

Now, let us celebrate, for a moment, this strip of Santa Monica Boulevard known colloquially around the world – or at least certain corners of it – as Boystown. It was jokingly named “Boystown” after a Catholic charity home for orphan boys, run by kindly priests. (Leave it to gays to twist sexual innuendo into something so spotlessly innocent as the Church, right?)

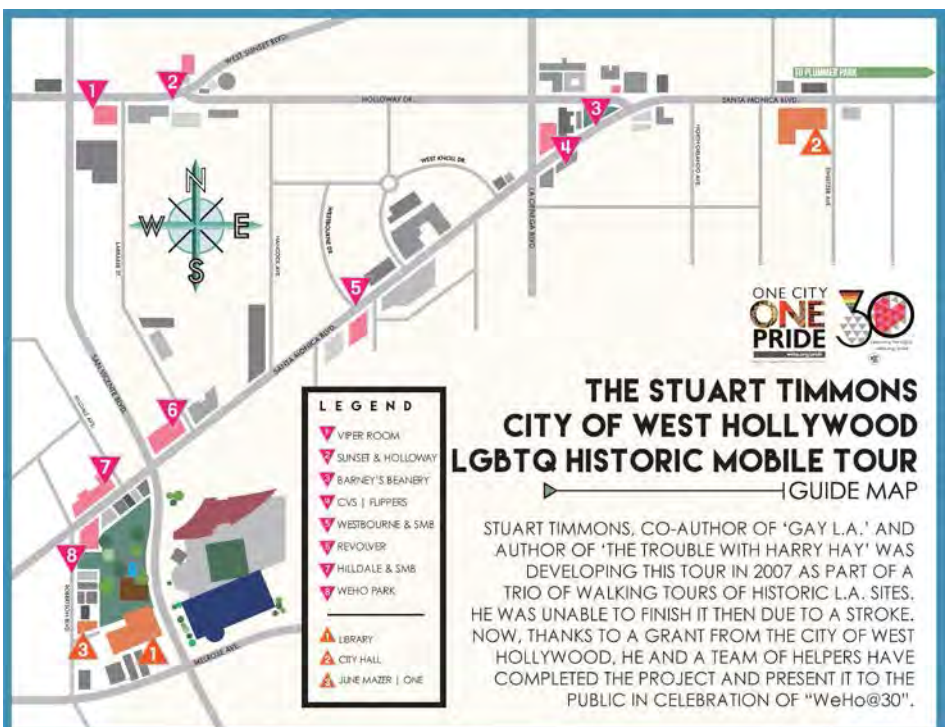
West Hollywood is bigger than this one street, but “the Boulevard” carries the distinction of being one of the most publicly gay streets in L. A. – known for its massive Gay Pride parade every June and wildly festive street party on Halloween. Both have an interesting origin: Gay Pride started on Hollywood Boulevard in 1970, reflecting a time when that street had stronger gay associations. Plus, in 1970 it would not have attracted as much media to have a Gay March down Santa Monica as it would have down Hollywood Boulevard – an equation that has since completely reversed.

The first Christopher Street West gay parade, started by Morris Kight, Troy Perry, and Bob Humphries, stepped off from Hollywood Boulevard and McCadden Place in June 1970, led by a Lesbian on horseback, followed by a float portraying a crucified Tinkerbell.

Halloween, on the other hand, used to be both carefree and cruisy –all over the city. Public outdoor parties and private masked balls were common – as was drag – on that night. But by the 1970s when the gay safety zone of West Hollywood (then unincorporated Sherman) became informally established, this street exploded with costume creativity. It's an unofficial parade in itself, and certainly many complain that it's a bigger attraction for straight tourists to gawk at the clever queens than it is the purely gay pagan rite that some loved it as.

One last note about the streets of WeHo. Some became wild pick-up scenes. The alleys around Melrose were particularly crazed in the '80s, and prior to that, Robertson Boulevard was known for outrageous carryings-on. Eventually, gay organizations partnered with the LAPD to stop all that “compulsive” behavior. Many activists were incensed that community members seemed to take sides with, literally, the sex police. Some called it the price of wider acceptance—others call it an obscene obsession with respectability. It is a division that continues to this day.

walk west down Santa Monica Blvd



**#5: WESTBOURNE DRIVE & SM Blvd
look to 8714 SM Blvd – formerly MCC**



This building once owned by Metropolitan Community Church, may not look like home base to the largest lesbian and gay church in the world now, but it once was. It began in 1968, the work of Reverend Troy Perry, then working at Sears after having been forced out of a ministerial job due to his homosexuality. Like so many, Perry came out West, enjoyed L.A. gay life, and, like so many at the time, got caught in a police raid –the infamous Flower Power raid at a Silver Lake bar called the Patch. Among those arrested was Troy Perry's boyfriend, who was so devastated he renounced God as not caring about homosexuals.

That sparked Perry to stop worrying about fitting gays into established churches, and instead to start building a church for gays themselves. He started small – in his living room in his Highland Park apartment –and advertised in a new local gay paper, The Advocate. The Metropolitan Community Church grew and grew, literally outgrowing building after building. What's remarkable about its story is that the trend at that time was for gays to abandon religion because they saw nothing but evidence that religion had abandoned them. The counter-culture, in which so much of gay life was fixed, considered atheism to be chic, and religion to be part of the oppressive establishment. Besides, gay life was hedonistic anyway. But even though Perry, tall and good-looking, fit perfectly into the bar scene, he had the ministers' calling and skills.

One more thing about the House that Troy built: He encouraged not just his own church, but all expressions of spirituality. Pagan witches who wanted meeting space formed the Susan B. Anthony Coven at MCC for a time. So many Jews attended MCC that Perry encouraged them to form their own temple, which became Beth Chayim Chadashim, which made history on its own and is still thriving down on Pico Boulevard. Likewise, he encouraged the formation of Unity Fellowship Church, the first African-American GLBT church, founded by Carl Bean. Where there's flesh, there's spirit.



And now for a bit about some of WeHo's spirited lesbians. Down the street in the now empty lot just east of 24 Hr Fitness and Capitol Drugs was The Palms, which for 40 years was a bar frequented by many women who were making a mark in the entertainment industry, and for whom a glamorous look was part of their stock in trade. They claim that Ellen Degeneres, Melissa Etheridge, k.d.lang, and Jim Morrison stopped in at the Palms – (was Jim Morrison a lesbian?) In later years, as the lesbian clientele dwindled, it was known for its transgender nights.

Further up the street just past Crescent Heights, at 7969, there used to be a booming lesbian disco called Peanuts hosting girls purportedly even femmer and wilder, and a very butch door-woman named Mel (wearing suits and a blonde pompadour) who made sure that predatory straight men didn't crash to try to pick up on the women. At Peanuts drag queens were actually employed by the management to hit on those obnoxious straight guys and scare them away. But the women of the Palms could take care of themselves.

Girlbar, which we'll move to later, was known as the birthplace of the lipstick lesbian. But nothing comes into being fully formed. This bar existed for many decades as the grounds of stomping butches and flitting femmes. By the late 1970s, the plaid flannel crowd began to give way to a growing number of girls who actually didn't object to being called "girls" and started showing up looking "Hollywoody" – silk blouses, gold chains, and those oh-so '70s designer jeans. Lady-loving ladies with these fashion tastes became known as "Lipstick Lesbians," and some of their sisters considered them politically incorrect.

move west down Santa Monica Blvd

**#6 CORNER OF LARRABEE & SM Blvd
8851 Santa Monica Blvd - The Revolver Bar**



What better place is there to “drink in” a bit of local queer history than a bar? We are now in one of the densest areas for gay bars in all of Los Angeles. What you see here called the Revolver, used to be called the East/West Lounge, and before that the Revolver! What goes around, comes around again! The original incarnation of Revolver became famous as one of West Hollywood’s first video bars. A television in a bar – how revolutionary (for the time)! And they played these new things called music videos. Astonishing – and so 1980s!

One night in the early ‘80s, to launch her dubious new “hit” *The Clapping Song*, Revolver hosted the famous Pia Zadora. Who? Exactly: Here today, has-been tomorrow. Semper Hollywood. There was Pia, in a beaded gown, on the bar, lip-synching as local boys screamed. After eight minutes of hysterical adulation, everyone ignored her and began cruising again. Semper homo.

Before its novel revolving door and televisions, this place was known as the Blue Parrot. Here’s a fascinating little tidbit of queer bar history. Back in those shady, raid-y days, “gay” was a word that could mean either “lighthearted” or “you’re busted, you disgusting pervert!” Therefore many queer bars, which could not really exist officially, or they’d get shut down, used code names. Often the first word of the bar’s name was a color, and the second word was a bird. This was known as the “bird circuit” – you could visit any urban area in the country and usually find a “Blue Parrot” or a “Purple Parrot” or a “Black Swan” or such like. Here in L.A. we also had the “Red Raven” down on Melrose near La Brea. Of course, everyone’s favorite bird circuit bar name was in San Francisco, called the White Swallow. Ahem.

The strip is so thick with landmarks here we can only mention a few. Next to Revolver used to be the pioneering gay bookstore A Different Light, West Hollywood. Before the era of internet giant Amazon, A Different Light was the most influential LGTBQ book source, and used to hold all manner of community readings.



And nearby is Micky's, which has lasted for years as a popular dance spot. It's even survived after once coming close to burning down. Mickey's was once a "grungy gay sanctum" from the Mesozoic era called the Four Star Saloon. OK, it only went back to the late 1950s, but that's still going way back for some of us.

In the book *Under the Rainbow* (edited by Chris Freeman), the actor John Carlyle mentions that singer Johnnie Ray and actor Clifton Webb, both lavender lads, often "had to be helped off their bar stools at closing time." He adds that composer Leonard Bernstein, while a married man in New York, he was quite queer out here in West Hollywood. He'd come to the Four Star Saloon "in evening clothes after a concert and ogled hustlers." Working boys? Oh yes, there still such bars (and websites) for such things still in existence – but we wouldn't want to restrain their trade by naming them...

So many bars have come and gone: the Purple Lion, the Rusty Nail, the Stampede, the Rafters. To paraphrase that Kansas girl, "My! Bars come and go so quickly here." There have been hundreds of different gay bars that have come and gone in WeHo –and thousands of different stories from every one. A few of those tales are even true!

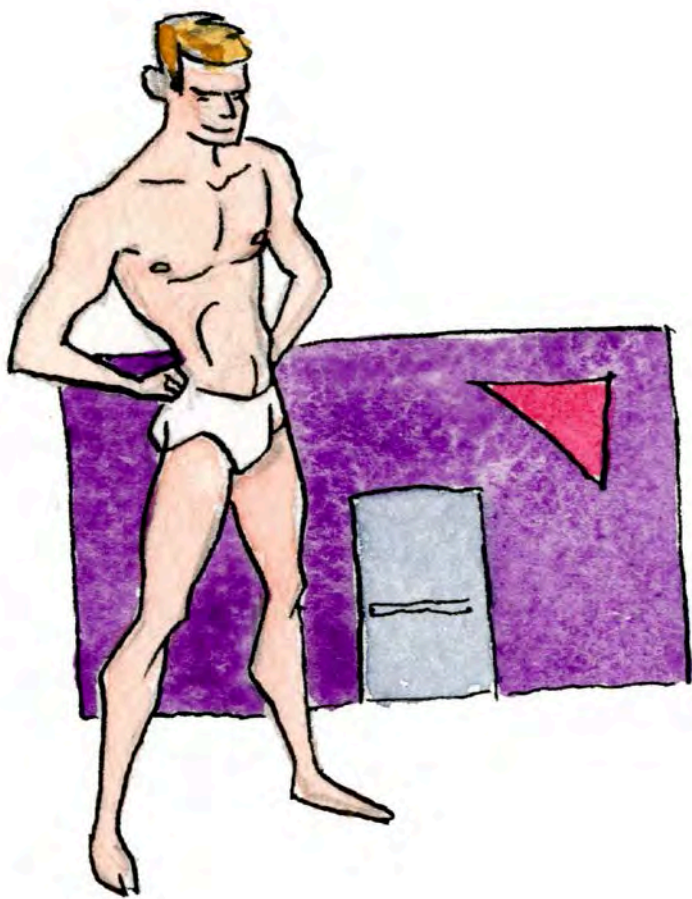
move west down Santa Monica Blvd

THE STUART TIMMONS CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD LGBTQ HISTORIC MOBILE TOUR | GUIDE MAP

STUART TIMMONS, CO-AUTHOR OF 'GAY L.A.' AND AUTHOR OF 'THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY HAY' WAS DEVELOPING THIS TOUR IN 2007 AS PART OF A TRIO OF WALKING TOURS OF HISTORIC L.A. SITES. HE WAS UNABLE TO FINISH IT THEN DUE TO A STROKE. NOW, THANKS TO A GRANT FROM THE CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD, HE AND A TEAM OF HELPERS HAVE COMPLETED THE PROJECT AND PRESENT IT TO THE PUBLIC IN CELEBRATION OF "WeHo@30".

#7 CORNER OF HILLDALE & SM Blvd

Look at 8933 SM Blvd formerly AhMen!



There's more to gay life than just drinking, right? Of course: there are clothes! Starting in the late 1950s, a little freak boutique called AH MEN! set up shop, and soon became a local legend, as well as one of the first booming gay mail-order businesses. The brainchild of one Don Cook, Ah Men! sold fashions for the homosexual persuasion. Sheer harem pants – for men! Nylon rear-cleavage revealing underwear – for men! Loose-knit tank-tops with peek-a-boo nipples – for men! And caftans. Lots and lots of caftans. Now, some were in bold butch patterns such as camouflage. It's a wonder the Army didn't subsidize Ah Men! It was more than just WeHo boys who did.

AhMen! rode the unstoppable social wave of the sexual freedom movement – as early as 1964 they marketed a small brass plaque, to be installed by the front doors of “sophisticates,” saying “If you Don't Swing, Don't Ring”!

The great inheritor to Ah Men! is International Male. There was another men's boutique called All American Boy, and shops called Propinquity and The Mart, just a few of the many unique shops catering to fey tastes, a tradition carried on today by various boutiques in this area. Although an elaborate network of showrooms and suppliers for the home décor industry has developed throughout the area, the creation of a specifically gay set of businesses (aside from just bars) helped give West Hollywood the quality that makes it **so** very special.

Oh! And imagine walking around WeHo in the '70s, when the cool twinks wore a “Big Weenies Are Better” T-shirt from The Big Weenie Hot Dog on Wilcox. Incidentally, Big Weenies sold for a mere \$1.39.

Looking across the street to The Mother Lode



The Mother Lode is historic itself as possibly the oldest continuing gay bar in Boystown, and has been proudly packed with pick-ups since 1979. Back in the '60s, it was a bar/restaurant called the Por Favor, and a famous movie star who loved the gay boys was a regular there. She caused everyone to stare because she was Judy Garland! She had the status of a minor deity among all Americans, but was a major deity among homosexuals. She loved gay guys – she even married several. And at the Por Favor, she used to occasionally stand up, wave at the crowd, and sweetly call, “Hi fags!” That was “in-family” and meant with affection.

But in all gay bars, there were much meaner customs. Like no touching. Seriously: you could not touch if you were a gay person in a gay bar. A tap in the shoulder, an affectionate hug, and certainly any sort of contact dancing – Any of those constituted the arrest-worthy offense of “lewd conduct.” Bar owners and bartenders were the enforcers of this policy –gay or not, they stood to lose their liquor licenses and their livelihoods.

Activists in the Gay Liberation Front targeted this policy, and decided to make an example of the Farm, a hugely popular bar that used to be across from the French Market. The Farm had a reputation as one of the wilder bars, where the long-hairs, freaks and naturally defiant types would gather. So the Gay Liberation Front started protesting there every weekend – urging gays not to support their own oppression. One bartender threatened a GLF activist with violence, and the activist threatened to bomb the bar. (A bluff in those days of clenched fists.) Finally, the Farm backed down, and was “liberated.” (You can see a photo of this in the book “Gay L.A.”)

Another phenomenon was also at work: Burt Pines, the new Los Angeles City Attorney, was among the first who courted the gay vote instead of running from it. He abolished the practice of unequal enforcement in gay bars. If touching wasn't really sexual, either gay or straight, the prosecutions stopped. We cannot take our modern day freedoms for granted.

***MOVE WEST ON SANTA MONICA BLVD AND
CROSS STREET TO ROBERTSON BLVD
PROCEED SOUTH***

**# 8: THE ENTRANCE OF
THE WEST HOLLYWOOD PARK**
Look across the street to 661 N Robertson



Long before Manhattan's trendy Studio 54, Scott Forbes' Studio One was the gay-owned disco that invented attitude, proclaiming itself a Valhalla of blond, buff youth. It extends between Robertson and Lapeer at the former site of The Mitchell Camera Company built in 1929, which just so happened to manufacture the early Technicolor motion picture cameras used in films like *The Wizard of Oz*!

There were other discos in town – the *Odyssey* on Beverly, where way underage kids could dance and drink juice boxes, the *Paradise Ballroom* downtown, and more. But Studio One was “it” – the best deejays, the best lights, at a time when disco lightshows were new. And tons of guys – those cute built types, fresh from working out at Jim Morris.

However, before getting into their ugly racist door policy, let me stress that this place saw some wonderful history. Some of the first gay fund-raisers which showed straight candidates that gay money existed as a potent force - happened right here. The first AIDS fundraiser in town happened here, headlined by Joan Rivers during a time most performers were scared silent. Her face may have been a bit *plastique*, but her heart was as real as it gets. That happened at the *Backlot Theater*, later called *Ultrasuede*, which was an absolute phenomenon in its early days.

Among its many stellar performers were Wayland Flowers, a cute, funny puppeteer, and his foul-mouthed old lady alter-ego named Madame. In one act, Madame was going on and on about screwing a cute 22-year old. Flowers asked her gently if she wasn't, uh, worried about the danger the age difference could make with such vigorous sexual activity. Madame replied, “Honey, if he dies, he dies.”

The “gay homeland” of West Hollywood actually started off as rather inclusive – as one man put it, “there weren't so many people out, so everyone was welcome everywhere.” Unfortunately, a myth developed that in this valley of harmony and erotic possibility, the streets were paved with blonds – gorgeous,

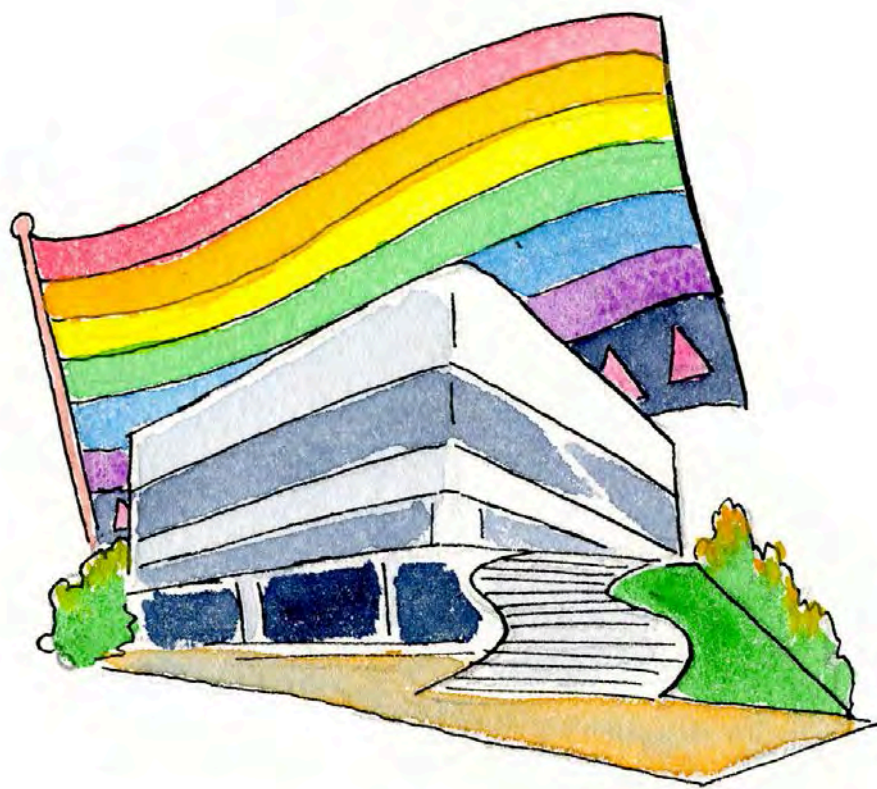
young blond guys – and no one else was deemed good for business, hence not so welcome.

That golden boy myth started to attract paying customers to places like Studio One. Racism and sexism became “just business.” The late Scott Forbes, the principle owner of Studio One, defended – in the LA Times – his policy that people of color and women were not welcome, basing it partly on the idea that non-white people were associated with higher crime. The door enforced a policy of “three pieces of ID” required for anyone who didn’t fit the preferred look. For years, many gay progressives protested constantly, but the crowds of hedonists—and their dollars –never stopped coming. The same racial profiling and judgement over being young and fit began to occur at several local bath houses. Unfortunately these policies still exist to this day. Just look at popular hook-up/dating apps where users proclaim “no fats, no fems, no rice, no chocolate, no poz, no over 30” – ugh - it sounds like no fun!

After last call at Studio One, the sweaty humpy masses flocked to an equally exclusive sex club called the 8709, located at that address down on Third Street near San Vicente Boulevard. 8709 was the Xanadu of bath-houses, admitting beauties only. Its owner, Sheldon Andelson, was an attorney known as “Mr. West Hollywood” who became a regent of the University of California – but only after selling his most lucrative holding of Studio One to power-lesbians Sandy Sachs and Robin Gans. The duo transformed the place into The Factory and the wildly successful Girlbar.

There are currently proposals aiming to transform the popular nightclub into a hotel and shopping boutiques. As we have learned from our history travels, nothing lasts forever, except in the minds of history lovers!

Enjoy a walk through the park to West Hollywood Library



And now for our last bits of West Hollywood history on this tour. We wind up where the old ways ended and the new ways began in West Hollywood. Over on the San Vicente side of West Hollywood Park you'll find the entrance to the West Hollywood Auditorium. That's where West Hollywood City Council meetings were held for many years, before the City built the West Hollywood Library and a new City Council Chambers within the building.

Changes of attitude in West Hollywood are evidenced by everything that went on behind the City Council's old meeting place, West Hollywood Park. It was a public park. It was in West Hollywood. It was filled with gay men. This used to be a very cruisy park. Now West Hollywood Park is filled with many parents. Moms and babies. Moms and toddlers. Straight Moms, Lesbian Moms, gay dads, and lots of nannies.

But there's still tons of queer history in the neighborhood, especially nearby housed in the Werle Building, just off Robertson, in donated space from the City of West Hollywood. There you will find the **June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives** (originally the West Coast Lesbian Collections), a fantastic archival resource which contains not only books, but manuscripts, magazines, pins, posters and early periodicals. Even June Mazer's Birkenstocks! June Mazer adopted the Archives from Oakland California, and kept them at her home in Altadena until her death. Today the archives is run by a volunteer staff and community events in addition to preserving lesbian history.

Also in the same building is the **ONE National Archives Museum and Gallery space**. ONE Archives is the largest gay and lesbian archive in the world and the ONE Foundation which published ONE Magazine is the oldest existing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organization in the United States. The archives are no longer housed in this building, but were moved to the University of Southern California several years ago and are now part of the USC Libraries Collections. This location now serves as a gallery/museum space and currently is co-hosting an Art AIDS America preview exhibit as part of this year's One City One Pride Arts Festival. Plan a visit to ONE Archives. They're fabulous, they love volunteers, and they're a great place to continue your explorations.

We've tried to give you a wide, general idea of West Hollywood history, but by no means did we share it all. In addition to this tour, you can experience LGBTQ history tours all year long throughout Los Angeles from "**Out and About Tours**" who are partnered with The Lavender Effect, both dedicated to preserving LA's LGBTQ history. If you enjoyed today's history tour, you'll also love theirs – so definitely check them out.

Ok, after all this walking –you've got to be exhausted. So find yourself a lovely spot nearby to sit down, have a drink or a meal in one of the nearby venues, enjoy the human scenery and raise a toast to the scenes and scenesters of years past.

Thank you for participating in our tour – we hope you had fun!



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