

# The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center



## DESIGNATION REPORT

# The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

## LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan  
208 West 13th Street  
(aka 206-218 West 13th Street)

## LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

## SIGNIFICANCE

A former Italianate-style public school built in c. 1869, which became home to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in 1984 and continues to serve the LGBT Community through political action, social, and health and wellness programs.



**208 West 13th Street, LPC files**  
1964

#### **LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Lisa Kersavage, Executive Director  
Mark Silberman, General Counsel  
Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research  
Cory Herrala, Director of Preservation

#### **REPORT BY**

Jessica C. Baldwin, Research Department

#### **EDITED BY**

Kate Lemos McHale and Margaret Herman

#### **PHOTOGRAPHS BY**

Sarah Moses and Jessica Baldwin, Research  
Department

#### **COMMISSIONERS**

Sarah Carroll, Chair  
Frederick Bland, Vice Chair  
Diana Chapin  
Wellington Chen  
Michael Devonshire  
Michael Goldblum  
John Gustafsson  
Anne Holford-Smith  
Jeanne Lutfy  
Adi Shamir-Baron

# The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

208 West 13th Street, Manhattan

## Designation List 513 LP-2634

**Built:** c. 1869 (central); c. 1879, 1887 (wings)

**Architect:** Ammon Macvey (central), Thomas R. Jackson and William H. Wilcox

**Landmark Site:** Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 617, Lot 47 in part, consisting of the former school building at 208 West 13th Street and the land beneath its footprint, as shown in the attached map.

**Calendared:** May 14, 2019

**Public Hearing:** June 4, 2019

On June 4, 2019, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Landmark Name as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.4). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. At the public hearing, 40 individuals spoke in support of designation including the building's owner, representatives of City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and Councilmember Daniel Dromm. Speaker Johnson's testimony included a joint letter signed by State Senator Brad Hoylman, Assemblymembers Deborah Glick and Daniel O'Donnell, and Councilmembers Margaret Chin, Daniel Dromm, Carlos Menchaca, Ritchie Torres, Jimmy Van Bramer, and Deborah Rose. Representatives of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Society for the Architecture of the City, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society of America, the Real Estate

Board of New York, the National Parks Conservation Association, Village Preservation, Save Chelsea, the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors, and 19 individuals also spoke in support of designation. No one spoke in opposition to designation. In addition, the Commission received 260 written submissions supporting designation, including from Bronx Borough President Reuben Diaz, Councilmember Adrienne Adams, the Preservation League of New York State, and 257 individuals.

## Summary

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender  
Community Center

This former school building in Greenwich Village has been a focal point for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in New York City for 35 years. The Lesbian, Gay Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, known as The Center, acquired the three-story Italianate-style former school from the City of New York in 1984. In the decades since, it has played a key role in supporting the rights, health, and wellness of the LGBT community, welcoming hundreds of community groups and hosting meetings, celebrations, workshops, cultural events, and mental health and social services.

Six original tenant organizations occupied The Center in 1984, including Partnership for the Homeless, S.A.G.E., Metropolitan Community Church, and The Community Health Project, the nation's first community-based HIV clinic. The Center partnered with a variety of groups in an effort to educate a broader public to the health issues facing the LGBT community; one partnership included contributing 1,200 panels to the AIDS memorial quilt with the organization Heritage of Pride. The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights used the building as a meeting place in the 1980s, and played a critical role in winning approval of the 1986 New York City law banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Over the course of its history other prominent groups have gathered at the LGBT Community Center, including Gay and Lesbian Youth, the Lesbian Switchboard, Dignity/New York, Asian Lesbians of the East Coast, Harvey Milk High

School, Salsa Soul Sisters, Survivors of Transsexuality Anonymous, and the Gender Identity Project.

Erected as Public School No.16 (later Grammar School No. 17), the building was substantially enlarged c. 1879 and c.1897. It is located on the south side of West 13th Street, mid-block between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, and is part of the Greenwich Village Historic District, designated in April 1969. Prior to The Center's purchase of the building it had most recently been used by the Food and Maritime Trade Vocational High School.

Since purchasing the building in 1984, The Center has carried out sensitive facade restorations and interior renovations, including a major rehabilitation in 2001 by Francoise Bollack Architects. This work has furthered The Center's mission in the community and upgraded the building to meet safety and code requirements. Since purchasing the building in 1984, The Center has carried out sensitive facade restorations and interior renovations, including major rehabilitations in 2001 by Francoise Bollack Architects, and in 2015 by Brian Ripel and Nicola Mongelli of Combined Architecture and Design.<sup>1</sup> Today it is home to an archival collection, arts and cultural programming, young adult programs, and career services dedicated to the LGBT community.

## Building Description

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender  
Community Center

### Description

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center is a three-story former school building clad in red brick with brownstone elements. Its symmetrical facade is organized with a one-story rusticated brownstone base, a central portion with two flanking wings and crowned with a modillioned cornice that spans the width of the entire facade. The recessed central section is five-bays wide; the two flanking wings are two-bays wide and have triangular pediments. Located on the tax lot but not included in this designation are two utilitarian buildings and a one story masonry wall, extending west from the school to to the edge of the lot.

### West 13th Street (North) Facade

The center section is five windows wide with paired central windows. The first story has a central entry with double-leaf doors and transom. Two, round-arch openings, with rusticated voussiors and keystones flank the main entrance and contain glazed doors and transoms. Dividing the first and second stories along the width of the entire facade is a cast stone molded cornice.

The upper stories feature four-over-four sash windows with decorative brownstone brackets on the second and third stories. The second-story windows feature molded stone, arched pedimented lintels, the third story windows feature triangular pedimented lintels and molded stone sills with brackets. The paired four-over-four central windows on both stories feature molded brownstone surrounds with

triangular lintels.

The east and west wings were constructed c. 1879. The two identical three-story, two-bay wings project from the central bay on West 13th Street and are capped by triangular pediments. The first stories of both wings match the rustication of the central bay. The first-story windows feature round arches with recessed panels below. The east wing's easternmost opening features a round-arch door with transom that matches the door openings in the central section. The second- and third-story windows feature round-arch, nine-over-nine sash windows with stone keystones and soldier brick lintels. The third-story windows have molded stone sills with brackets that match the windows of the central section.

### Secondary (West) Facade

A side facade of resurfaced brick with no decorative detail is partially visible from West 13th Street.

### Alterations

A metal fence was removed between 1920 and 1940; the westernmost first-story opening was shortened and infilled, and eight vents were infilled at unknown dates. Sensitive exterior alterations performed by The Center as part of renovations in fulfillment of their mission have been approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission and include primarily the replacement of windows and doors, replacement of decorative brownstone elements in cast stone, installation of signage, and facade repairs, as follows (docket numbers provided for reference): brick repointed and paint removed, new cast stone first-story cornice installed, resurfaced brownstone on all stories, new cast-stone second- and third-story window enframements installed to replicate original features that had been removed prior to designation, and metal roof cornice repaired (Docket 90-3669; 1990); all first-story entry doors replaced (Docket 90-1408; 1990); two wood-and-glass bulletin boards

replaced on either side of the central entry, signage above central entry installed (Docket 91-3474; 1991); ADA accessibility ramp installed (Docket 92-0262; 1992); second- and third-story windows replaced (Docket 95-3553; 1995); first-story windows replaced, and metal security grilles installed on first-floor windows (Docket 14-0034; 2014).

## History and Significance

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

### Early Site History

The Italianate-style structure at 208 West 13th Street was built c. 1869 as Grammar School No. 16, replacing a Greek Revival-style school constructed on the site in 1843 as Public School No. 17. Wings were added to the east and west of the central portion of the building in the late 1870s and to the rear in the 1880s. By 1897 the school had expanded onto the lot on the west, adding additional buildings to the property.<sup>2</sup>

The school served the community of Greenwich Village in the 19th century, as the area evolved from an 18th-century village to a fashionable and densely-populated residential neighborhood by 1900. Beginning in the early 20th century, the Village began to attract young intellectuals and artists; associated with creativity and political activism, it became known within New York City and the country as the mecca for Bohemian life and a place that embraced unconventional lifestyles.<sup>3</sup> The neighborhood's tolerance made Greenwich Village a haven for gays and lesbians as far back as the early 20th century and by the 1930s the Village's gay reputation was firmly established.<sup>4</sup> Greenwich Village's gay reputation made it the focus of aggressive anti-gay policing policy that emerged in the 1950s.<sup>5</sup>

### LGBT Discrimination and the Fight for Equality

Discrimination and exclusion of lesbians and gay people from public life dates back to the very

beginning of American history. Despite the obstacles they faced, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community nonetheless thrived in all five boroughs of New York City, and included many of the city's most celebrated cultural figures. After World War II and through the 1950s, an increasing number of anti-gay laws were passed around the country, legalizing discrimination and making life for lesbians and gays even more restrictive.<sup>6</sup> The "Red Scare" of the time not only prompted a search for Communist spies and sympathizers, but included lesbians and gays, who were assumed to be easy targets for Soviet agents.<sup>7</sup> While there were no laws that actually made being homosexual illegal, the illegality of most homosexual acts made being gay a de facto crime. Lesbians and gays could be fired or denied housing, and in the most extreme cases, consenting homosexual adults who had sex within their own home could be convicted to life in prison, forced into psychiatric facilities, and even castrated.<sup>8</sup>

Even the 1960s, a decade known for its political and social change, saw little legal progress in the way of LGBT right, and by the end of the 1960s, homosexual sex was outlawed in every state but Illinois. New York City was no exception. It was, according to David Carter, "the city that most aggressively and systematically targeted gay men as criminals."<sup>9</sup> In New York anti-gay legislation prohibited same-sex kissing and even dancing. New York police could arrest anyone wearing fewer than three items of clothing that were deemed "appropriate" to their sex, and the State Liquor Authority made it illegal for a bar to serve someone who was known to be gay.<sup>10</sup>

The discriminatory environment of the 1950s and 1960s meant that very few people would acknowledge that they were homosexual.<sup>11</sup> In the 1950s, lesbian and gay activists and groups strove merely to have their right to exist recognized. The two major LGBT organizations of the period were the Mattachine Society, primarily a men's group,

which began in Los Angeles in 1950 and opened a New York branch in 1955, and Daughters of Bilitis, a women's group, which started in San Francisco in 1955 and established a branch in New York City in 1958. These organizations sponsored conferences and published newsletters, and membership tended to be urban, white, middle-class; they mostly did not attract the younger or more radical members of the LGBT community.<sup>12</sup>

Starting in the late 1960s, some resistance and success on the part of the LGBT community began to be felt. From 1965-1969, there was a series of peaceful July 4th demonstrations demanding equality in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia. These annual events were the largest peaceful demonstrations for gay rights of their time.<sup>13</sup> In New York, in 1966, members of the Mattachine Society staged "sip-ins," in which members of the group would approach bartenders and state that they were gay. Their actions prompted a lawsuit that resulted in a decision that forbade the State Liquor Authority from refusing to serve gay men.<sup>14</sup>

On June 28, 1969, when the Stonewall Inn was raided as part of a police crackdown on gay clubs, the bar's customers resisted, remaining in front of the club where they were joined by friends and passersby, mostly members the LGBT community. As the crowd grew, its members became increasingly angry at the rough treatment some prisoners were receiving and resentful of the unfairness of the situation. Participants began chanting "gay pride" and "gay power" and throwing pennies and other objects. The police were forced to retreat into the bar, which became the focus of attack. Eventually they were rescued. But for more than two hours, the crowd fought back while anti-riot police tried to clear the streets. The protests and confrontations continued for the next few days until almost midnight Wednesday July 2, 1969, with the Stonewall often at the center of events.<sup>15</sup>



## Formation of the LGBT Community Center

The legacy of Stonewall was the inspiration of a nationwide movement to secure LGBT civil rights. The Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) was headquartered at a firehouse on 99 Wooster Street. The GAA formed as a group that would be “less about promoting gay ‘liberation’ than about promoting gay rights.”<sup>16</sup> They used a variety of tactics to confront politicians and other prominent figures, and allowed other groups to meet in the firehouse. The group disbanded in late 1981. The Women’s Liberation Center on West 20th Street was similar to the GAA firehouse, in that it served as a meeting place for groups focused on both women’s rights as well as the rights of LGBT women. The Women’s Liberation Center closed in 1987.

Alongside the political and social activism of the LGBT community at this time was the growing impact of a major health crisis: HIV and AIDS were becoming an epidemic. As Lillian Faderman described, “AIDS could easily have meant the end of the movement for gay civil rights – gay people were paralyzed by confusion and fear.”<sup>17</sup> Groups such as The Gay Men’s Health Crisis and the AIDS Network began to organize to bring awareness as well as take on the political fight that was surrounding HIV/AIDS. Many groups were still divided in how to address the health crisis that faced the community.<sup>18</sup> The majority of LGBT community members felt isolated and unsure of their own future. As members of the community began to die the sense of loss and the need for a central place of support were great.

The disbanding of the GAA and the Women’s Liberations Center left several organizations in search of a home, and the sweeping HIV/AIDS epidemic meant there was a need for the growing number of LGBT activists and activist groups to have meeting, gathering, and office space. There was also a greater desire for a sense of community that was supportive and accepting. This prompted the

creation of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center.

## LGBT Center’s Early History

In December of 1984, a group called the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center purchased 208 West 13th Street from the City of New York for approximately \$1.5 million dollars.<sup>19</sup> Prior to the purchase of the building the group had organized in hope of finding a physical home to provide services to the LGBT community, established a Board of Directors, and for over a year worked to raise the funding needed to purchase 208 West 13th Street, mainly through individual donations.<sup>20</sup> Originally referred to as the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, it is known today as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, and commonly called The Center. The Center aimed to address the critical needs of lesbian and gay organizations trying to cope with the political, medical, and social service issues facing the LGBT community, and allowed a variety of smaller LGBT organizations to rent space in its new facility.<sup>21</sup>

Immediately upon its opening, The Center began to fill with individuals and organizations looking for physical space to organize, meet, share ideas, and for some, to feel safe. Originally six tenants leased space from The Center, including Partnership for The Homeless, Community Health Project, Friends of the Earth, S.A.G.E., Metropolitan Community Church and the Media Network.

Many of The Center’s early tenants had been originally housed in the GAA Firehouse and the Women’s Liberations Center. The Center served as a central location as well as an incubator for smaller grassroots organizations, many of which are still active today. Tenants of The Center changed throughout the years. Some tenants lasted years while others were more temporary but all benefited from the Center’s physical space as well as the

community of people there.

### **The Center and Political Action**

The majority of the early tenants of The Center had grown out of a political battle for equal civil rights for the LGBT community following the Stonewall riots. These organizations were some of the first to challenge local and national politicians in advancing the LGBT community's civil rights.

The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights was an influential organization that used The Center for meetings, discussions and gatherings from early its history. The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights was founded in 1977 as an umbrella organization of gay and non-gay groups to fight the discrimination based upon sexual orientation in New York City.<sup>22</sup>

Shortly after organizing, the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights began to campaign for a gay rights bill in New York City. The group brought much needed attention to the social, economic, and safety issues that were impacting the LGBT community, and the need for legal protection. In 1981 the Coalition consisted of 52 different organizations fighting to protect the LGBT community from discrimination.<sup>23</sup> Andrew Humm and Eleanor Cooper led the Coalition in their campaign to raise awareness that basic human rights that were being denied to the members of the LGBT community. In a 1983 op-ed to the *The New York Times* the two noted that all people have the right to be themselves and to have access to housing without the fear of eviction because of their sexual orientation.<sup>24</sup> The Coalition used The Center as a home base, relying on its facilities as a meeting point for all of its organizations to gather, and prepare for the marches, demonstrations and rallies that supported their campaign of equal human rights for the LGBT community.

More than a decade after an original bill banning discrimination based on sexual orientation<sup>25</sup> was

introduced, the City Council passed Intro 2, colloquially known as the "gay rights bill," with a vote of 21 in favor to 14 opposed.<sup>26</sup> Mr. Humm noted to the *New York Times* that the bill gave more confidence to the gay community and provided security to them in their jobs and home life.<sup>27</sup> The Coalition appeared consistently in the *Center's Happenings*, its calendar of activities, through 1994.<sup>28</sup>

In 1986, the New York City Organizing Committee for the March On Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights was formed in New York City and met at The Center.<sup>29</sup> The Center's monthly calendar of events for October 1986, announced "A March On Washington Committee – Volunteer Meeting is scheduled."<sup>30</sup> According to an October 1987 article from *The Center Voice* the March On Washington New York Committee met in the west wing of 20 West 13th Street.<sup>31</sup> In the same article, Leslie Cagan, the Executive Director of the New York Committee, expressed the organization's desire to promote awareness of LGBT civil rights issues not just to the LGBT community but to the nation.<sup>32</sup>

In October of 1987 The March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights was held. The exact number of marchers is unclear; *The New York Times* reported 200,000 marchers while other groups and papers estimated closer to half a million.<sup>33</sup> The march reportedly rejuvenated the LGBT community and led to the growth of a broader, more extensive nationwide network of advocates for LGBT rights.<sup>34</sup>

In March of 1987 Larry Kramer gave a lecture at The Center. Mr. Kramer, a former board member of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, was looking to take on the government's lack of acknowledgment of HIV/AIDS in a more radical manner than many of the HIV/AIDS organizations had done to that date. Kramer wanted to "teach the gay community the tricks of civil disobedience, to show them how they could send the message to the powers that be."<sup>35</sup>

This lecture was a call to start new, louder more radical activism and launched ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power).<sup>36</sup>

ACT-UP began to attract members at their weekly meetings at The Center,<sup>37</sup> and it quickly became a “revolutionary medical advocacy organization.”<sup>38</sup> The organization held protests, marches, and sit-ins all over the country, including a protest on the New York Stock Exchange’s trading floor. Each demonstration was intended to expose the country to the inhumane treatment of HIV/AIDS patients.

The organization’s actions lead to faster and more affordable drug treatments for infected individuals. When Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, was asked if he felt ACT-UP played a significant role in the new expanded access to [AIDS treatment] experimental drugs, he said “the answer is yes.”<sup>39</sup> By 1997 ACT-UP had convinced the U.S. government to expand HIV/AIDS treatment and research funding from \$290 million in 1987 to approximately \$1.5 billion.<sup>40</sup> The New York founding chapter of ACT-UP eventually grew too large to meet at The Center and moved their meetings to the Great Hall at Cooper Union.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1990s The Center started Promote The Vote, a non-partisan lesbian and gay voter registration program.<sup>42</sup> In the beginning of the 21st century, The Center received a grant from the Ford Foundation to establish Causes in Common. Causes in Common was a Center-designed program that served and as an umbrella organization aimed at providing the infrastructure for LGBT and reproductive justice organizations to work together effectively.<sup>43</sup> The Center also led the way for the promotion of the Marriage Equality Act in New York State. In June of 2011, the New York State Assembly and Senate passed legislation that allowed same-sex couples to be legally married in New York

State, and Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed the measure into law just before midnight on June 24, 2011. Legal same-sex marriages began in New York in late July, and The Center held a wedding reception to celebrate with over 300 people in attendance.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Center and Social Programming**

The Lesbian, Gay & Transgender Community Center provided space for organizations to meet, provided a sense of safety and community, and offered programming that acknowledged the complexity of the LGBT community and its members.

Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE), one of the original tenants of The Center, provided social services to elderly members of the LGBT community through weekly discussion groups, workshops, monthly socials, and arranges visits to homebound or institutionalized LGBT community members. Ken Dawson of SAGE noted in *Center Voice* that SAGE members range in age from 18 to 94,<sup>45</sup> and that the organization seeks to provide services and be a voice for elder LGBT people and to connect them with a network of support within the LGBT community.<sup>46</sup> Though SAGE is no longer housed in The Center it continues to provide support to older members of the LGBT community.

Other social programming included “Second Tuesdays at the Center,”<sup>47</sup> centered on the cultural expression of the LGBT community. A variety of speakers and guests participating in Second Tuesdays included author Fran Lebowitz in April of 1986, Tony Award-winning playwright Harvey Fierstein in November of 1985, and Dennis deLeon, Chair of the NYC Commission on Human Rights in 1993.<sup>48</sup> A blurb in *The Center Voice* acknowledged Mr. Fierstein “will move from the world of talk shows, where he has been ‘explaining’ himself to the straight world, and address his own gay constituency.”<sup>49</sup> Second Tuesdays not only provided the LGBT community with direct access to speakers

who represented them in the public realm, it offered an open safe space for presenters to speak freely and honestly about their own experiences in front of others from the LGBT community.

Recognizing the need for space and programming geared specifically to women, The Center established a Women's Coffee House. The Women's Coffee House created through a series of alterations to one of the former school rooms, which included a stage, lighting, and wheelchair accessibility.<sup>50</sup> It provided a space for women to gather and to express themselves through music, spoken word, and theater.<sup>51</sup>

The Center partnered with and leased space to other organizations with programs that matched The Center's mission. The Lesbian Switchboard, previously located the Women's Liberation Center on West 20th Street for 15 years, moved into the Center in 1987.<sup>52</sup> At the time of its move in to The Center, the organization was strictly volunteer-based and according to The Center's archives, its goal was to "provide information on a broad range of issues of concern to lesbians and to function as an information clearinghouse about relevant organizations and events."<sup>53</sup> The Switchboard operated from The Center until 1997.<sup>54</sup>

In October of 1985 the Harvey Milk School, "a program for gay and lesbian teenagers who have dropped out or been expelled from school"<sup>55</sup> found a temporary space in The Center<sup>56</sup>. According to the *New York Times* the Harvey Milk School was the first public school in the United States specifically for homosexual adolescents and the issues they face.<sup>57</sup> It was a collaborative effort of the New York City Board of Education and the Institute for the Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youth, and it began to hold classes at the Washington Square United Methodist Church in April of 1985.<sup>58</sup>

Dr. A. Damien Martin the executive director of the Institute for the Protection of Lesbian and Gay

Youth was quoted in *The Center Voice* about the temporary location, acknowledging that the students "appear to like the Center, feeling safe and comfortable there, and they benefit from being in a positive gay setting that is not a bar, a pier or a street corner."<sup>59</sup>

From its inception The Center sponsored and hosted dances at 208 West 13th Street. These dances provided the LGBT community with a safe space to relax and enjoy each other's company without fear or judgment, and raised income for The Center. Every month the *Center's Happenings* calendar listed dances sponsored by The Center and other LGBT organizations, and The Center's Board of Directors established a Dance Committee to promote, plan and produce dances for The Center and its partner organizations.<sup>60</sup> In 1987 The Center recognized the importance of the dances and the Dance Committee at their Annual Garden Party with a "Heart of the Center" Award.<sup>61</sup> These dances built upon The Center's mission of providing a safe, non-judgmental space for the LGBT community and its allies.

The Metropolitan Community Church of New York was one of the first tenants of 208 West 13th Street. The church used The Center as their offices, worshiping across the street at 201 West 13th Street.<sup>62</sup> According to *The Center Voice* and calendar of events the church held a variety of activities at the Center, including a food bank that was used by both the LGBT and non-LGBT community.

The Metropolitan Community Church is a nationwide, nondenominational and independent religious organization. An article in *The Center Voice* noted that the church's congregation at the time its offices were in the Center was made up of equal parts gay men and lesbians. Having a diverse congregation allowed the Metropolitan Community Church to offer more varied programs. The various programs were crafted to cater directly to the

individual groups within the larger LGBT community.<sup>63</sup> This crafting of programs allowed the church to reach a larger audience as it was acknowledging that each group within the larger LGBT community faced different challenges.

### **The Center and Health and Wellness Programming**

Since its opening, The Center has strived to educate, protect and provide health services for the LGBT community and the broader public. One of the first tenants of The Center was The Community Health Project, today known as the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center. The Community Health Project (CHP) began as a grassroots organization formed in 1983 with the merging of the St. Mark's Community Clinic and the Gay Men's Health Project.

CHP provided the LGBT community with health services, particularly geared to patients with HIV. Initially staffed by volunteers and one paid coordinator, CHP was the first community-based HIV clinic in the nation and served around 20,000 patients a year from the Center.<sup>64</sup> In addition to catering to HIV/AIDS patients, CHP also provided general medical care to the LGBT community.<sup>65</sup> CHP volunteers were mostly from the LGBT community, which for many facing the complications and dangers of HIV/AIDS provided an additional sense of comfort and support, something that many were not receiving and traditional hospitals during this time<sup>66</sup>. CHP was an integral part of educating not only the LGBT community but also the broader public about health and wellness issues that impacted the LGBT community, especially the HIV/AIDS crisis in New York City.

The Center's creation of the Gender Identity Project (GIP) in 1989 was geared towards promoting mental health in the transgender and gender non-conforming community at the Center.<sup>67</sup> GIP was the

first organization in the nation to provide peer counseling and peer support programs to transgender individuals.<sup>68</sup> The program offered workshops, panel discussions and meetings focused on female sexuality and on connecting the transgendered-identified women to the other women of the LGBT movement,<sup>69</sup> as well as for transgender and male-identified individuals.<sup>70</sup> Today the services have evolved to "include a range of transgender-driven support, advocacy, education and economic stability initiatives."<sup>71</sup> The CHP has since morphed to become the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center.

Project Connect was started by The Center to address substance abuse concerns of the LGBT community, and received grant funding from the New York State Division of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse. According to a 1987 announcement in *The Center Voice*, Project Connect was a program dedicated to "alcoholism intervention and education in the lesbian and gay community."<sup>72</sup> In an article by *The Center Voice* in 1988, the director of the program noted that "one-third of all lesbians and gay men are having problems with alcohol."<sup>73</sup> Project Connect's mission aimed to provide direct services to the LGBT community through education, help sessions, and support groups, while providing general education to a larger audience about substance abuse within the LGBT community. It also offered professional training to other organizations who worked with substance abuse issues within the LGBT community.

In 1989 the Center started its Youth Enrichment Services (YES) program, also funded through New York State grants. YES aimed to provide a safe space for LGBT teens and educate them about substance abuse in an alcohol and drug-free environment. The Center continues to provide guidance and support in health and wellness to the LGBT youth today.

Since its formation, The Center has been a

meeting place for Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Alcohol Anonymous, Sexually Abused Anonymous, Breast Cancer Support Group and Bisexual Circle of Support.<sup>74</sup> These and many other organizations continue to hold support meetings at the Center.

In the beginning of the 21st century The Center combined its health and wellness programs into one comprehensive program called Center CARE.<sup>75</sup> Seven years later Center CARE became the first LGBT treatment program licensed to accept Medicaid in New York State and in its first month helped over 200 individuals receive the help they needed.<sup>76</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Since 1984, The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center at 208 West 13th Street in Greenwich Village has been a pivotal focal point for New York City's LGBT community, offering support and providing physical space for the LGBT community to connect with each other and a broader public. The Center's political engagement and advocacy, social and wellness services, and inclusive programs have had a substantial impact on LGBT people's civil rights and daily lives for 35 years. The Center has been dedicated to its Greenwich Village home on West 13th Street, a former school built in 1869 and expanded in the late-19th century and has sensitively adapted the building through interior alterations and exterior facade repairs, in order to meet the needs of its growing and evolving mission. Today The Center continues empowering LGBT people to lead healthy, successful lives, celebrating diversity, building strong community, and advocating for justice and opportunity.<sup>77</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For additional information on these renovations: : <https://www.combined-architecture.com/#/lgbt-community-center/>.

<sup>2</sup> Bromley, G.W. *Atlas of the city of New York, Manhattan Island*. Plate 10. New York, 1897, New York Public Library Digital Collection.

<sup>3</sup> Portions of this section were adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission [LPC], *Stonewall Inn Designation Report* (LP-2574) (New York: City of New York, 2013). Information in this section is based on the following sources: Carter; George Chauncey, "Long-Haired Men and Short-Haired Women," in *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture*, by Rick Beard and Leslie Berlowitz (New Brunswick, NJ: Published for the Museum of the City of New York by Rutgers University), 151-164; Christine Boyer, ed., "Straight Down Christopher Street," in *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture*, 36-53; Ken M. Lustbader, "Landscape of Liberation: Preserving Gay and Lesbian History in Greenwich Village," (M.S. Thesis, Historic Preservation, Columbia University, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Carter, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Chauncey, 151-152.

<sup>6</sup> This section adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, *The Stonewall Inn Designation Report*. Information in this section is based on the following sources: David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004); John Strausbaugh, *The Village: 400 Years of Beats and Bohemians, Radicals and Rogues, a History of Greenwich Village* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2013); National Register of Historic Places, Stonewall, New York, 99000562.

<sup>7</sup> Strausbaugh, 457.

<sup>8</sup> Carter, 1, 14-17.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Stonewall, sec. 8, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Information in this section is based on the following

sources: National Register of Historic Places, Stonewall; "About the National LGBT 50th Anniversary Celebration," 50th Anniversary July 4, 2015 @ <http://lgbt50.org/about>, accessed June 3, 2015; Sheryl, "Before Stonewall: The 'Sip In' at Julius," *Off the Grid*, Aug. 30, 2012, <http://gvshp.org/blog/2012/08/30/before-stonewall-the-sip-in-at-julius>, accessed June 4, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Stonewall, sec 8, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> "About the National LGBT 50th Anniversary Celebration," National Register of Historic Places, Stonewall, sec 8, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Stonewall, sec. 8, p. 5; Sheryl, "Before Stonewall: The 'Sip In' at Julius."

<sup>15</sup> Harris, Stonewall, LPC Designation Report.

<sup>16</sup> Faderman, Lillian, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, (New York City: Sim and Schuster Paperbacks, 2015) p 214-15.

<sup>17</sup> Faderman, Lillian, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, (New York City: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2015), 418.

<sup>18</sup> Faderman, Lillian, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, (New York City: Sim and Schuster Paperbacks, 2015), 423.

<sup>19</sup> Fischer, Michael. "A Home At Last," *The Center Voice*, Feb 1985, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Fishcer, Micahel, "A Home At Last," *The Center Voice*, Feb 1985, p.1; "LGCSC Annual Report," *The Center Voice*, Feb. 1985, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Fischer, Michael. "A Home At Last," *The Center Voice*, Feb 1985, 1.

<sup>22</sup> LGBT Center. "Center Archive." [https://gaycenter.org/archive\\_item/coalition-for-lesbian-and-gay-rights-records/](https://gaycenter.org/archive_item/coalition-for-lesbian-and-gay-rights-records/) (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> LGBT Center. "Center Archive." [https://gaycenter.org/archive\\_item/coalition-for-lesbian-and-gay-rights-records/](https://gaycenter.org/archive_item/coalition-for-lesbian-and-gay-rights-records/) (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Humm, Andrew and Eleanor Cooper. "The City Council Should Pass the Gay Rights Bill," *New York Times*, March 5, 1983, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Kaiser, Charles, "Marchers Back Homosexual Bill: passage of Rights Measure Before Council is Urged," *The New York Times*, July 13, 1975, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Purnick, Joyce. "Homosexual Rights Bill is Passed By

City Council in 21 to 14 Vote,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1986, A1.

<sup>27</sup> Purnick, Joyce. “Rights Measure Ready to Vote After 12 Years,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1986, B1.

<sup>28</sup> “Special Events,” *Center Happenings*, April 1986, 1.

<sup>29</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Archive,” [https://gaycenter.org/archive\\_item/march-on-washington-for-lesbian-and-gay-rights/](https://gaycenter.org/archive_item/march-on-washington-for-lesbian-and-gay-rights/) (accessed May, 9, 2019).

<sup>30</sup> “Center Events,” *Center Happenings*, October 1986, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ferris, Elizabeth. “March On Washington,” *The Center Voice*, October, 1987, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Ferris, Elizabeth. “March On Washington,” *The Center Voice*, October, 1987, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Williams, Lena. “200,000 March in Capital to Seek Gay Rights and Money for AIDS,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1987, p. A1; Faderman, Lillian, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, (New York City: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2015), 728, note 41.

<sup>34</sup> Riemer, Matthew and Leighton Brown. *We are Everywhere*, (United States: Ten Speed Press, 2019), 262.

<sup>35</sup> Faderman, Lillian, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, (New York City: Sim and Schuster Paperbacks, 2015), 422.

<sup>36</sup> Faderman, Lillian, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, (New York City: Sim and Schuster Paperbacks, 2015), 428.

<sup>37</sup> DeParle, Jason, “Rude, rash, Effective Act-Up Shifts AIDS Policy.” *The New York Times*, Jan.3, 1990, B1.

<sup>38</sup> Riemer, Matthew and Leighton Brown. *We are Everywhere*, (United States: Ten Speed Press, 2019), 256.

<sup>39</sup> DeParle, Jason, “Rude, rash, Effective Act-Up Shifts AIDS Policy.” *The New York Times*, Jan.3, 1990, B4.

<sup>40</sup> Bruni, Frank. “Act Up Doesn’t Much, Anymore,” *The New York Times*, March 21, 1997, B1.

<sup>41</sup> Faderman, Lillian, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, (New York City: Sim and Schuster Paperbacks, 2015), 428.

<sup>42</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Timeline,” <https://gaycenter.org/about/history/> (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Timeline,” <https://gaycenter.org/about/history/> (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>44</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Timeline,” <https://gaycenter.org/about/history/> (accessed May 9, 2019); Nicholas Confessore and Michael Barbaro, “New York Allows Same-Sex Marriage, Becoming Largest State to Pass Law,” *New York Times*, June 24, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> S.A.G.E. “Our Story.” Sageusa.org. <https://www.sageusa.org/about-us/our-story/> (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>46</sup> Fischer, Michael. “A Home At Last,” *The Center Voice*, Feb 1985, 3.

<sup>47</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Timeline,” <https://gaycenter.org/about/history/> (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>48</sup> “Center Events,” *Center Happenings*, April 1986, 1; “Center Events,” *Center Happenings*, Nov. 1985, 1; “Center Events,” *Center Happenings*, Dec. 1993, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Ferris, Elizabeth. “Mark Your Calendars,” *The Center Voice* Nov. 1985, 5.

<sup>50</sup> “Women’s Coffee House To Open at Center,” *The Center Voice*, Nov 1985, 3.

<sup>51</sup> “Women’s Coffee House To Open at Center,” *The Center Voice*, Nov 1985, 3.

<sup>52</sup> “Lesbian Switchboard Is Sixth Tenant,” *The Center Voice*, Dec. 1987, 2.

<sup>53</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Archive” [https://gaycenter.org/archive\\_item/the-lesbian-switchboard-of-new-york-city-inc-records/](https://gaycenter.org/archive_item/the-lesbian-switchboard-of-new-york-city-inc-records/) (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>54</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Archive” [https://gaycenter.org/archive\\_item/the-lesbian-switchboard-of-new-york-city-inc-records/](https://gaycenter.org/archive_item/the-lesbian-switchboard-of-new-york-city-inc-records/) (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>55</sup> The Center Voice “Harvey Milk School at Center One Month,” page 1 Nov 1985.

<sup>56</sup> *The Center Voice* noted that “S.A.G.E. was instrumental in facilitating the school’s move to the Center by agreeing to share space with the students.”

<sup>57</sup> Rother, Larry. “New York Offering Public School Geared to Homosexual Students,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 1985, A1.

<sup>58</sup> Rother, Larry. “New York Offering Public School Geared to Homosexual Students,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 1985, A1.

<sup>59</sup> Strauss, John. “Harvey Milk School at Center One



Month,” *The Center Voice* “Nov. 1985, p. 2; The Harvey Milk School moved to The Center when the school “had problems meeting Fire and Building Department regulations.”

<sup>60</sup> “Center Sponsored Events,” *Center Happenings*, January 1987, p. 1; Into the 1990s the committee held dances on most Saturdays of each month. Themed dances were common and many of the themes catered to specific groups within the LGBT community. In the May-June 1993 *Center Happenings*, a Women and Friends Dance was advertised, followed a few weeks later by the Center Prom.

<sup>61</sup> Sanginario, Len “New Season at the Center,” *The Center Voice*, Oct 1987, 3.

<sup>62</sup> “Church for Homosexuals asks to Join Council,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1981, 34.

<sup>63</sup> “Health and Social Services in Community Services Center,” *The Center Voice*, Feb 1985, 3.

<sup>64</sup> “Health and Social Services in Community Services Center,” *The Center Voice*, Feb 1985, 3 (estimation based on data provided in article).

<sup>65</sup> “Health and Social Services in Community Services Center,” *The Center Voice*, Feb 1985, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Faderman, Lillian, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, (New York City: Sim and Schuster Paperbacks, 2015) p 419; Faderman notes that in hospitals, people with AIDS were pariahs, often sitting for days in emergency rooms and when a patient died the person would be put into a black trash bag.

<sup>67</sup> Term “gender non-conforming” was not used in 1989 information about the LGBT community.

<sup>68</sup> LGBT Historic Sites, “The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center,” [Nyclgbtsites.org](https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/lgbt-community-center/), <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/lgbt-community-center/> (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>69</sup> “Gender Identity Project on Transsexual Female Sexuality,” *The Center Voice*, Dec 1993, 5.

<sup>70</sup> “Center Mental Health and Social Services,” *The Center Happenings*, September-October 1994, 1.

<sup>71</sup> LGBT Center, “About Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Support,” <https://gaycenter.org/recovery-health/health/tgnc/> (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>72</sup> “1987: A Year of Growth and Change,” *The Center Voice* Feb. 1988, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Martinac, Paula. “Project Connect is Now in

Operation,” *The Center Voice*, April 1988, 1-2.

<sup>74</sup> “Calendar of Events” *Center Happenings* 1986-1995.

<sup>75</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Timeline,” <https://gaycenter.org/about/history/> (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>76</sup> LGBT Center, “Center Timeline,” <https://gaycenter.org/about/history/> (accessed May 9, 2019).

<sup>77</sup> LGBT Center, “Our Mission,” <https://gaycenter.org/about/> (accessed May 24, 2019).

## Findings and Designation

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center and designates Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 617, Lot 47 in part, consisting of the former school building at 208 West 13th Street and the land beneath its footprint, as shown in the attached map, as its Landmark Site.



**The Lesbian, Gay Bisexual &  
Transgender Center,  
208 West 13th Street**  
Jessica Baldwin, May, 2019



**208 West 13th Street**  
New York Public Library, 1920



**208 West 13th Street**  
LPC Files, c. 1940



**The Lesbian, Gay Bisexual & Transgender Center,**  
**208 West 13th Street**  
Sarah Moses, June, 2019

