

Oates, Jr and Marty Crowetz, who had been at the original Cinema Follies during the disastrous fire. The Glory Hole, now known as the Glorious Health & Amusements club, and the Follies theatre, upstairs, are classic sexual entertainment businesses. The Glory Hole opened in the 1970s.

←[11] 20 O St. SE - Club Baths II Washington, the only gay bathhouse to survive the 1980s in Washington, DC, opened in the early 70s, after the Regency Baths, DC's first modern gay-owned bathhouse. Most bathhouses in the city closed during the early years of the AIDS epidemic. In February 1976, First District police raided the baths without a warrant, in what was widely seen as a 'clean up' by police ahead of the 1976 bicentennial celebrations. Gay activists protested strongly against the raid. Charges were dropped.



←[12] 18 O St. SE/1352 S Capitol St. SE - Purchased in the mid-70s by Robert Siegel, the former restaurant at 1352 became a disco/leather club, called the 1352 Club, in the 80s. La Cage aux Follies, one of Southeast's clubs featuring nude male go-go dancers, opened in 1984. A pizza business on the premises operated under two names: La Cage Pizza for gays and friends and King Pizza for nearby Marines and the gay-wary. La Cage also oper-



ated a steakhouse known as the Mildred Pierce Room on the site in the mid to late Eighties.

←[13] 1824 Half St. SW — Pier 9, to the west of South Capitol St. at Buzzard's Point, was DC's second gay 'super' dance club (following the Plus One, on 8th St. SE). Opening in 1970, the Pier was the first club in this area and known for its two floors of bars and dance floors. Owners included Bill Bickford and Donn Culver. Innovative tabletop telephones allowed customers to talk between numbered tables without moving their drinks or leaving the table, a means of getting around local laws that forbade standing and drinking or moving with a drink. A second floor dining area was called Piazza 9. In 1972, the Awards Club, an organization of female impersonators, began presenting shows at the Pier. In December 1972, the Pier was the site of a 'reunion' of the city's main drag organizations which joined in 1973 to create the Academy Awards of Washington.



THE RAINBOW HISTORY PROJECT

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SOUTH CAPITOL STREET
Gay DC Walking Tours



THE SOUTH CAPITOL STREET area west of the Navy Yard became a new entertainment district for Washington, DC's gay community in the 1970s. As the older bar districts and cruising

areas on 9th St. NW, around Franklin Park, and by the bus stations fell to redevelopment, K St, L St., O, and Half St. SE gained patrons and popularity. The area became a new late night hangout where dance clubs competed for customers with bathhouses, X-rated cinemas, and bars with go-go dancers.

The area's remoteness assured both anonymity for those who sought it and fewer complaints for those partying noisily late into the night. There were few residents in the area, and for gay club-goers that meant fewer problems. For club owners, rents in the area were cheaper.

Gay-owned and gay-oriented businesses began to take over warehouses and light industrial buildings. The Pier 9 was the first, opening in 1970 just west of South Capitol Street. Building on the success of his first club venture, the Plus One on 8th St. SE, Donn Culver joined with Bill Bickford



and other partners to take over an old warehouse in Buzzards Point. The Pier was one of the last 'transition' bars to push, but abide by, the old liquor regulations requiring patrons to remain seated at a table with their drinks.

It was followed in 1971 by the Lost and Found on L St. SE, another Culver and Bickford venture. One of the city's three main bath-houses, Club Baths II, part of the Club Baths chain and started by owners of the Baltimore Club Baths, took over a building on O St. SE, just off South Capitol St. Other gay male entertainment sites soon located on O St. SE. A year after the Grand Central dance club opened at First and I Streets SE, the Washington Square disco opened around the corner from O St. at 1345 Half Street SE.

From 1978 to 1988, one of the city's top women's clubs occupied 1345 Half Street. The Other Side was started by Allen Carroll and Chris Jansen, the owners of Phase One up on 8th St. SE, and became very popular among the city's lesbians. It also became known for its drag shows. Diva Ella Fitzgerald, moved from the Rogue to The Other Side and has been at this location every since. In 1988, The Other Side became Ziegfeld's a drag show bar, still the best place to see professional quality commercial female impersonation in the city.

For customers, the remoteness could also be a hazard when homophobic youth, often from the Marine Barracks area, came looking to beat up gay men. In the Seventies, Marty Crowetz, an ex-Marine who worked in the area and became owner of several establishments, formed Gay Ex-Marines (GEM) to patrol the area and protect customers in the absence of police enforcement.

Despite its supposed anonymity, the South

Capitol area did draw press attention.

Two clubs in the area were accused by others in the GLBT community of discrimination (carding) in admissions: the Lost and Found and the Grand Central. Until the mid-Eighties, carding (asking for multiple picture IDs from customers not wanted by club owners) was a recurrent policy at clubs seeking to discourage African-Americans, Latinos, women, and/or drag queens. This vestige of segregation took years to be erased from the community.

Picketing began almost as soon as the Lost and Found opened in the autumn of 1971. An ad hoc coalition of community groups formed, named itself the Committee on Gay Bars and negotiated changes in the Lost and Found's policies. In the mid-Seventies, community complaints to the Human Rights Commission about carding at Grand Central were the first use of the new Title 34 human rights law by gays and lesbians to deal with discrimination within the community.

In what was perceived as a political 'clean up' campaign ahead of the bicentennial celebration, First District police raided the Club Baths in February 1976, but without warrants. Strong community reaction and the work of the Gay Activists Alliance brought about the suppression of charges. The Club Baths raid was an unfortunate throwback to earlier days of hostility and confrontation with the Metropolitan Police Department.



but also to development of alternatives to cinemas and bars for men still closeted, such as the Gay and Married Men's Association.

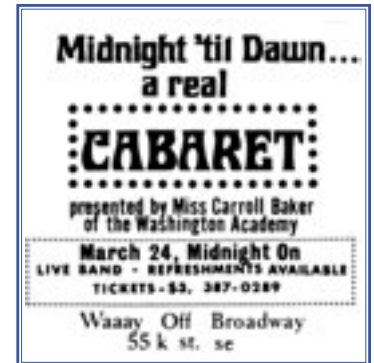
In October 1977, a disastrous fire at the Cinema Follies theatre brought still more media attention and calls for stricter fire code laws and enforcement at city clubs from both gay activists and the press. The fire led not only to fire code enforcement

←[1] 900 First St. SE - Grand Central followed the Pier and the Lost and



Found when it opened in 1974. Like Pier 9 and Lost and Found, the club was an instant success with a gay public hungry for dance clubs. Using Title 34's anti-discrimination provisions, gay activists filed suit protesting the club's 'carding' policies against admission of women, drags, and African-Americans. DC's Office of Human Rights upheld charges of discrimination by the club. Grand Central's owners, Glenn Thompson and George Dotson, then closed the club in 1977. The site became the Chapter II in February 1977, then Marty's in 1984 and finally Chapter III in 1985. As Chapter II and Marty's the club attracted events arranged by the city's African-American social clubs. It is now a club called Nexus.

←[2] 55 K St. SE — Waaay Off Broadway opened in 1972 as a major gay theatre space, owned by Lost and Found, under the leadership of Donn Culver and Bill Oates Jr. The



theatre provided a popular venue for artists such as Wayland Flowers, Craig Russell and Red Shoes Walking and drew crowds. The theatre opened December 16, 1972 with a production of 'Cabaret' by the Washington Academy, the city's oldest gay social group, starring Mame Dennis and other female impersonators. The



association with the Washington Academy continued after the theatre's closing; it became the Club 55, which still hosts events of the Washington Academy. The Waay Off Broadway theatre seated 300 and was first managed by Jessie Kinneson.

←[3] 37 L St. SE - The Cinema Follies opened in 1975 in a former auto repair building as a cinema showing X-



rated gay films. The club was managed by Bill Oates, Jr and owners included Roy Barnard and Henry Jaffe. A disastrous fire on October 24, 1977 trapped patrons in the second floor theatre. Nine men died in the fire. Following the fire, there was considerable controversy as to whether there should have been more and better lit exits. However, the cinema was in compliance with existing fire code regulations. The disastrous fire led to renewed enforcement and strengthening of fire regulations at DC clubs. It led also to the founding of the Gay and Married Men's Association as a social alternative. Following the fire, the Cinema Follies re-opened at 24 O St. SE.

←[4] South Capitol and K St. SE - This site was originally the Capital Ballroom, a popular largely straight dance hall. Shortly before the closure of Tracks, a block east, Nation opened in 1999 and became heir to the Lost and Found and Tracks clubs. The popular Saturday gay night event is called Velvet Nation.



←[5] 52 L St. SE - The side entrance to the old Lost and Found building became the

entrance to the Zone in 1992, "a video pool hall for the 90s" that also offered nude dancers. In 1999, the club became Wet.

←[6] 56 L St. SE - In September 1971, Donn Culver and Bill Bickford, partners in two earlier 'super' clubs-Plus One and the Pier, opened the Lost and Found in a ware-



house on L St. Lost and Found proved extremely popular, initiating a trend for major dance clubs to locate in the area, and endured for more than a quarter of a century. At its opening in October 1971, Lost and Found was picketed by local gay activist groups protesting a 'carding' policy meant to discourage African-Americans, women, and drags. Local activist groups formed the Committee on Open Gay Bars. Nonetheless, the club became and remained the place to be for many years. In 1993, the Edge replaced the Lost and Found.

←[7] 58 L St. SE - Food and Friends, founded in 1988 as an AIDS service organization moved to this location in the



1990s. This more spacious location enabled Food and Friends to produce more meals for persons living with AIDS. Food and Friends' new facilities in Northeast Washington will be on the site of a late 1960s African-American club, the Third World.

←[8] 80 M St. SE/1111 First St. SE - (The site has been demolished and replaced with an office building.) Tracks opened in September 1984 and

reigned as one of DC's premier dance clubs. It was very popular with gays and lesbians for the next 16 years. In staging of special events and



fundraising in the community Tracks set new standards. Tracks was one of the first clubs to feature 'foam' dances and presented performers such as RuPaul.

←[9] 1345 Half St. SE - Since 1975, this address has been home to a succession of dance and entertainment clubs. The first club here was Washington Square, from 1975 to 1977. Washington Square was briefly succeeded by the Blue Plains Dance Palace. In



1978, Allen Carroll and Chris Jansen opened the Other Side, a popular women's dance club, here The Other Side also presented drag shows, a feature of Ziegfeld's which opened here in 1988. Ella Fitzgerald, one of DC's female impersonator divas, began working at the Other Side and has continued at Ziegfeld's as MC and show manager.

←[10] 24 O St. SE - Following the fire at 37 L St. SE, the Cinema Follies re-opened here under management by Bill

