Newspaper clipping about the history of gay bars and clubs in Washington, DC.
Due to the club’s unexpected success, the city encouraged development of other entertainment businesses. The Glory Hole, a disco/leather club, was opened in 1970 just west of South Capitol Street. Building on the success of the Grand Central dance club opened at 1345 Half Street SE, another Culver and Bickford enterprise, one of the city’s three main bathhouses, Club Baths II, opened in 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 III 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.

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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 Waaay 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 large 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 warehouse 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 1973 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. 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
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