



Preserving Our Community's Memories

ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR SIX – 2006

In 2006, The Rainbow History Project (RHP) significantly enhanced its presence in the national archival, historical and LGBTQ communities. Yet it struggled to grow in its own base of Washington, DC. In our sixth year, RHP lived on the research and intellectual capital it accumulated in its first five, to say nothing of financial capital. The 2005 Annual Report noted that the organization faced a number of challenges. This report concludes that those challenges have not been met.

Nonetheless, Rainbow History, with limited human and financial resources, managed to continue to serve the Washington LGBTQ community.

RHP ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

Largely through the work of former Board Chairman Mark Meinke, RHP increased its national activity in the past year. Mark represented Rainbow History at the annual meeting of the Committee on Lesbian and Gay History, an affiliated society of the American Historical Association. Subsequently, Mark was elected to the Board of CLGH. Since Mark does not hold an academic post, this is a particular honor for him and recognition on the part of the academic community of the importance of community-based archival organizations. RHP is proud of Mark's election.

The organizers of the 2006 annual meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archivists Conference (MARAC) invited Rainbow History to organize a session. Mark recruited participants from New York and Philadelphia for a panel presentation on community-based LGBTQ archival groups for an audience consisting largely of archivists from academic and institutional settings.

Mark traveled to Minneapolis for the first GLBT ALMS (Archivists, Librarians, Museums, and Special Collections) conference at the University of Minnesota. He was both a moderator and participant on a panel on virtual archives and virtual museums. Other participants came from organizations based in Milwaukee, Chicago and Boston. Mark also gave a talk on oral history interview techniques at the conference. At the conference there was great interest in using the internet as a distribution channel for LGBTQ history and materials. RHP is recognized as a model for such enterprises. Steven Fullwood of the Black Gay and Lesbian Archive commended RHP for its inclusiveness during his presentation at a panel on diversity in collections.

Mark returned to Minnesota later in the year to provide an oral history training workshop at Macalester College's first reunion of GLBT alumni.

In late spring, John Olinger met with staff at the National Trust for Historic Preservation which led to follow up meetings and a presentation on Rainbow History to a staff seminar by John and Mark Meinke in the late fall. NTHP now stocks our walking tour brochures among the brochures available to the public in the lobby of its headquarters. NTHP also distributed out brochures at their booth at Washington's Capital Pride celebration, for which we are grateful because RHP can not afford to have its own booth at Pride.

John Olinger presented a seminar on preservation and loss of community spaces to development as part of the University of Maryland's Material Culture/Visual Culture Research Program of the Consortium on Race, Gender and Ethnicity.

PROMOTING OUR HISTORY

Treasurer Kim SESCOE produced a palmcard for us, which made its official debut at Capital Pride in June. This postcard-size card is an important promotional tool and it is much more cost-efficient than using the tour brochures for promotional purposes.

This year we participated in both the spring and fall edition of WalkingTown DC, Cultural Tourism's weekend of walking tours of District neighborhoods. In April, we offered four tours, spread over two days. John Olinger led the Capitol Hill tour and the South Capitol Street tour. The South Capitol Street tour drew a large number of participants despite pouring rain because it was the last opportunity to see important LGBT sites in an area that was about to be demolished to make way for the new baseball stadium. Mark Meinke led the Dupont Circle tour and for the first time a tour of the East Dupont/Logan Circle neighborhoods. Both were well attended.

During the fall edition of WalkingTown DC, John Olinger led tours of Dupont Circle and Capitol Hill. The Democratic nominee for the Ward Six seat on the DC City Council joined the Capitol Hill tour. As a result of the Dupont Circle tour, RHP made an important connection with the Dupont Citizens Association which led to their offer to support the publication of the East Dupont tour brochure, now in the final stages of preparation. The Capitol Hill tour led to an invitation of John to speak to a meeting of Out on the Hill, an organization of GLBT people living in Capitol Hill neighborhoods. The Dupont Circle tour led to an offer from the Dupont Citizens Association to underwrite the production of the East Dupont walking tour brochure which is now in the final stages of production.

Once again, our participation with Cultural Tourism DC allowed us to reach a larger and more diverse audience than we might otherwise have been able to generate ourselves. Cultural Tourism featured The Rainbow History Project as its member of the week for the week preceding the April walking tours, providing a lengthy description of our work for visitors to their site.

The DC Convention and Tourism Bureau asked Rainbow History to provide a tour of Dupont Circle for a convention of LGBT travel professionals. Jeff Donahoe led the tour.

As mentioned in last year's report, Board Vice-Chairman Jeff Donahoe was instrumental in organizing a major exhibit, "Pride: Party or Protest", in collaboration with One in Ten's Museum Project. The exhibit was shown at the Sumner School and Archives from January to June. Because of its central location and because a major tourist bus stop is right outside the entrance to Sumner, the exhibit drew a large number of attendees, not just from Washington, but from around the country. The exhibit closed in June and Jeff shipped it off to its next venue, the Stonewall Archives and Library in Fort Lauderdale. From there, the exhibit will travel to other locations.

Once again this year RHP participated in Youth Pride with a booth. We took an ad for Black Pride in the program, as we did last year. As cited above, the National Trust for Historic Preservation featured our brochures and palmcard at its booth during Capital Pride. This year, two of our nominees, Eva Freund and Robert York, were selected as Heroes of Pride.

Rainbow History continued its involvement with the Humanities Council's DC Community Heritage Project and John Olinger consulted with the Council on developing a community heritage fund.

For the first time since 2002, Rainbow History organized a panel at the Washington DC Historical Studies Conference. The panel, moderated by Kenneth Jost of the DC Chapter of the National Gay and Lesbian Journalists Association, was titled "Finding Its Voice: Washington, DC's GLBTQ Community Creates Its Own Media". Jennifer King, of George Washington University's Gelman Library presented "The Cutting Edge: A History of *The Washington Blade*, Metropolitan Washington DC's GLBT Newspaper of Record". Mark Meinke presented "Something in the Air: Friends Radio Chronicles a Community". John Olinger presented "On Screen: Creating *Gay Fairfax* and TV for the Gay Community".

Prior to the meeting of the Society of American Archivists in Washington this summer, the Lesbian and Gay Archivists Roundtable (LAGAR) approached Rainbow History for suggestions for a local GLBT activist to speak to LAGAR's session at the SAA meeting. Following our suggestion, RHP Advisory Board member A. Billy S. Jones spoke to the meeting and was introduced by John Olinger.

Rainbow History served as a source for an extensive article on the South Capitol Street club scene published in *Hill Rag* as the clubs were beginning to close.

RESEARCHING AND ARCHIVING OUR HISTORY

Research - As noted above, for the first time since 2002, The Rainbow History Project presented a panel on the origins of local gay media based on our research at the Washington Historical Studies Conference.

Mark Meinke continues his research on the Mattachine Society of Washington, interviewing participants in the organization and consulting their collected documents. He also researched the background for several significant events which Rainbow History commemorated on its website in 2006.

Mark received a Phil Zwickler Memorial Research Grant from the Cornell University Library's Human Sexuality Collection which he used this summer to research Washington publisher H. Lynn Womack's relationship with the Mattachine Society of Washington and also possible links between the Gay Liberation Fronts in New York City and Washington. Mark continues to work on Womack.

Website - Due to our inability to continue our public programming again this year, our website has become the primary way that we communicate with the community. A detailed website report is attached as an appendix to this report,

As has been customary, Mark began the year with a list of the significant community anniversaries in 2006 and throughout the course of the year added new web pages focusing on many of the events. This year's additions include pages on the Gay Activists Alliance, Gay Women's Open House, Gay MayDay, Zapping the APA, and the Story of a Photo, Christopher Street Liberation Day 1971. In addition, Mark developed a Pride Quiz for Capital Pride week. Other pages focused on virtual archiving and GLBT Oral History Projects. The website also chronicled recent events significant to our



community, including photos from Frank Kameny, photos of the Library of Congress event acknowledging the donation of Frank Kameny's paper to the Library. To mark the closing night of Club 55, the home of the Washington Academy for many years, Rainbow History mounted a photo display of the festivities.

The number of page views increased by 188% in 2006, while the number of visits increased 113%. Only 30% of the referrals to the site come from search engines, suggesting that site visitors are already familiar with our site.

The attached report lists the top 20 visited pages and the list reveals a good deal about how people use the site. In 2006 the second most visited page was the walking tour of South Capitol Street. The higher volume was no doubt due to the attention the new stadium brought to the area, as the media discovered that there really was a there there (apologies to Gertrude).

The pages on Black Pride (#7), the names of Those We Have Lost (#15) and the Furies (#16) peak in May before Black Pride Weekend, in December for World AIDS Day, and in March for Women's History Month respectively. The page on the closing night of Club 55 drew a significant number of visits, placing it at (#13).

As the website has grown it has become more difficult to navigate. We are in the process of remedying the situation with a new website design that is being undertaken by volunteer Tommy Zarembka. Tommy also steered us to JustGive.org so that we can accept online donations, and that process is now complete.

Collections - During the course of the year, Rainbow History received a number of additions to our collections. Michael Claypoole completed our collection of extant DVDs of *Gay Fairfax*. Bart Forbes provided us with copies of the original proposal for *Gay Fairfax* and copies of "Bumper" the production newsletter and production schedules.

Ken Sleeman, the last station manager of WGTB-FM, provided us with approximately 60 reel-to-reel tapes of *Friends* and *Speakeasy* radio programs. These tapes are in excellent condition and labeled making cataloguing much easier. He also included papers related to these programs and to the closing of WGTB by the Georgetown University authorities. Ken Rothschild added further material regarding *Speakeasy*, WGTB and WPFW in the 1970's. We now have a significant collection of media resources.

Paul Kuntzler presented us with papers on the Mattachine Society of Washington, Frank Kameny's Congressional candidacy, and the Stein Democratic club.

Finally, Barbara Gittings, whose passing we note, and Kay Lahusen donated a significant collection of papers documenting the Mattachine Society of Washington, other eastern regional organizations in the 1960s, gay student organizations and PFLAG-DC.

Preservation - We continue to work on preserving the *Friends* radio program tapes we received as a bequest from RHP founding member Bruce Pennington. We have been supported in this by donations from Brother Help Thyself and the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance, in addition to funds from the original Pennington bequest. However, fundraising for this project continues to be a major concern.

After many years of work, Rainbow History submitted a formal nomination for the DC Historic Landmark Registry of Frank Kameny's home at 5020 Cathedral Avenue NW in September. This process began in 2003 and involved the work of many Rainbow History members and also volunteers from Burgundy Crescent who helped to get the property shipshape before the final nomination. To date, no hearing on the nomination by the Historic Preservation Review Board has been scheduled.

PARTNERS AND RELATIONSHIPS

A number of the new partnerships and relationships have been cited above. Mark is working with the organizers of the GLBT ALMS conference on planning for a 2008 conference.

Our membership in Cultural Tourism DC continues to benefit Rainbow History. We were asked to provide additional information on the Dupont Circle neighborhood and on the Nob Hill bar in Columbia Heights when Cultural Tourism updated its website on these neighborhoods.

Rainbow History continues to serve on the planning committee of the annual Washington Historical Studies Conference.

We continue to maintain good working relationships with many GLBTQ organizations in the Washington area. These organizations have supported and promoted our work.

In July, we applied for another grant from Brother Help Thyself and we learned at the end of the year that we would receive \$3200 this year, \$500 from the Medford fund for equipment and \$2700 from the general fund supporting our storage space rental.

Best of Washington and the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance also supported us with generous donations. The Washington Academy's plans to hold their fourth annual revue to benefit Rainbow History were put on temporary hold in the autumn because of the unexpectedly early closing of Club 55. We are happy to note that the revue will go ahead in March. We appreciate the perseverance of the Academy and their many years of support.

From our earliest days, Nancye Suggs, Director/Curator of the Sumner School Museum and Archives, has supported our work by providing a place for us to meet. We appreciate her support and encouragement. This fall, with the assistance of then-former Deputy Mayor and now Deputy Mayor Neil Albert, we met with staff of the DC Department of Parks and Recreation to discuss using their facilities for future events. We appreciate Mr. Albert's assistance.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

This year marked another board transition as Ric Mendoza-Gleason, one of our founding board members, retired from the board. Ric continues to serve on the Advisory Board. We are grateful for the many years of dedicated service Ric gave the organization and look forward to consulting him in the future. Secretary Joe Rawson resigned from the board in the fall for personal reasons. We appreciate Joe's work for the organization. Mark Meinke agreed to fill in as Secretary for the remainder of Joe's term. Founding board member James Crutchfield, who has been Rainbow History's treasurer since its founding, stepped down as Treasurer this year. James remains a member of our board. James took on the responsibilities of treasurer and guided us through our first five years. Kim Sescoe was elected Treasurer in April, succeeding James.

With these two resignations, our board is now at eight members. We will need to recruit new board members in the future.



Chuck Goldfarb wrote and produced an electronic newsletter, the first edition of which was sent to members and friends in early December.

We submitted our application for final approval, after our five year transition period, to the IRS for our 501 (c) 3 status, which was approved.

As noted at the outset of the report, we face a difficult future. As with any volunteer organization, it is difficult to find willing hands to undertake the myriad tasks required to keep Rainbow History functioning. Too often in the past years we have had to turn down offers of volunteer assistance because of a lack of time or people to work with the volunteers. We have encountered difficulties, all of them resolved, in allowing people to work on our collections offsite.

As our reputation grows, just keeping up with queries takes more and more time. We have to pass up many opportunities to work with other organizations or undertake new projects because of the limited board hours.

In the next few months Rainbow History will have to develop a new organizational structure if it is to continue to operate.