LGBTQ LANDMARKS INITIATIVE

Sharing our Pride of Place

The Landmark Society launched this groundbreaking new initiative in 2016 to educate the Rochester community about the history of the local LGBTQ movement and to enhance the sense of pride about the place that our city occupies in the fight for civil rights & human dignity throughout our nation’s history. Just as Rochester is celebrated for the instrumental role that it has played in the abolitionist and women’s rights movements, so should it be recognized for its contributions to LGBTQ equality. The Landmark Society, with its preservation-based mission, is uniquely positioned to honor this history. We’d like to thank our partners that worked together to plan this walking tour, the City of Rochester, the Human Rights Campaign, and the Out Alliance, as well as our additional partners on the initiative: ImageOut, LGBT Giving Circle, Q Center at RIT, Rochester Area Community Foundation, Susan B Anthony Center at U of R, Trillium Health, U.S. Assemblyman Harry Bronson, U.S. Senator Kirstin Gillibrand, and WXXI & The Little.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORES

Contact: Larry Francer  -  lfrancer@landmarksociety.org or 585.546.7029 X14, to get involved in the LGBTQ Landmarks project.

Our 4th Historic Walking Tour Takes Us for a Stroll Down Monroe Avenue, Known in the 60’s as a Gay & Lesbian Neighborhood.

Upstate New York’s biggest and most vibrant pedestrian-oriented urban villages. It was also the home of the Out Alliance, then the Gay Alliance of the Finger Lakes.

Monroe Village, an eclectic portion of Monroe Avenue is one of Upstate New York’s biggest and most vibrant pedestrian-oriented urban villages. It was also the home of the Out Alliance, then the Gay Alliance of the Finger Lakes. 

Monroe Village is in the eastern portion of Monroe Avenue where our tour begins.

Our Historic Walking Tour Takes Us for a Stroll Down Monroe Avenue, Known in the 60’s as a Gay & Lesbian Neighborhood.
Among the first women's bookstores in Rochester, Silkwood, at 633 Monroe Avenue, opened on October 31, 1982, and closed her doors for the last time on June 3, 2000. The store was more than just four walls and an address on a popular street. Silkwood was about growth, community, connections, change, and acceptance.

"You need to know your history to be adequately prepared for the future!"
- Carol Ebersole-Weiss, HRC National Board of Governors & Western NY Coordinator

Reverend Mulcahy, a former Hospice chaplain, transferred his credentials to UFMCC, and was installed as pastor of Open Arms MCC in August, 2004. In 2001, Rev Mulcahy performed the first openly gay marriage in Rochester at Washington Square Park. This was the catalyst for the drive to pass the Marriage Equality Act of New York State. Today, MCC continues to be a powerful voice in the LGBTQ equality movement, for those who are marginalized and oppressed, and in working for social justice.

The Genesee Center for the Arts & Education

The Out Alliance began in 1970 as the Gay Liberation Front on the University of Rochester River Campus. In 1973, Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley was formed and came under one roof at the Genesee Coop at 713 Monroe Avenue. Over the next fourteen years, the Gay Alliance would see its education, advocacy, and youth programming expand. In 1990 the Alliance moved to 179 Atlantic Ave, and after 11 years at the Auditorium theatre, in the Fall of 2015, the Alliance moved to its current location at 100 College Avenue.

The Genesee Coop is an amalgamation of two buildings. The right side, designed in 1895 by Frank A. Brockett, served as the firehouse for the Hook and Ladder Company No. 4. In 1904-05, the left side was constructed for Engine Company No. 15, to address Rochester’s growing need for firefighters. In 1972 Genesee Street Corporation bought the firehouse to provide a variety of community services including a grocery, restaurant, shelter to a number of social and political groups, low cost courses, and the Genesee Pottery. Today the Genesee Center for the Arts and Education continues to provide art services and art education to all community members.

Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church

“Our first tour stop is Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church, established in June, 1981, at 243 Rosedale St. The Universal Fellowship of MCC recruited Reverend Willie White (former pastor of St. John’s MCC in Raleigh, N.C.) to form a Church in the Rochester area. On Aug. 16, 1981 at 7:30pm, the first worship service of the MCC of Greater Rochester was held at New Life Community Church with an attendance of ten people. In April, 1985, the name of the church changed to Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church. Today it has a new home at 68 Ashfield St., Rochester, NY 14620.”
- Lovely Warren, Mayor of Rochester, NY

Silkwood Books & Paul’s Grocery

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Over its 18 year life it sold tickets for events, had poetry readings, and supported women and the community. The Rochester community owes a debt of gratitude to owner Linda Pancoast for her commitment to women and the community.

Paul’s Grocery, at 644 Monroe Avenue, is best known for its support of Rochester women’s softball, which began in 1977. In 1983, the women’s softball league had 12 teams. Paul’s Grocery Team of 1982 had such legends as Sue Cowell, Patty G., Jo Cummings, Jane Barish, and Sandy Fuhs. Each year for the Gay Pride Picnic, Paul’s Grocery would store the hot dogs and burgers in their freezer until they were transferred on the day of the Picnic to the Genesee beer truck.

Today, new and different commercial storefront businesses occupy 633 and 644 Monroe Avenue. However the memories live on!”
- Out Alliance, Rochester, NY