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Stories, news, and notes from the National Trust for Historic Preservation



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TRUST NEWS

Proud of Pride: Looking Back at Our Tour of LGBT America

Posted on: July 1st, 2009 by National Trust for Historic Preservation | 1 Comment



June has officially come and gone.

But wait! Before you ceremoniously flip your calendar and start trying to remember to write a “7” before the date instead of a “6,” let’s take a brief morning moment to look back at a month that was literally full of Pride here in the preservation blogosphere.

Our thirty-day sprint through the spaces and places that matter most to all gay-kind started out in Chicago’s [Boystown](#) with an appropriate slogan for the month: Be yourself. Since then, we’ve been to the top of Mill Mountain for a new perspective on [Roanoke, Virginia](#), as well as deep in the heart of Texas for a freshly-out teenager’s take on Houston’s [Montrose](#). Along the way, we toured [Not-So-Naptown](#), got the real story behind New York’s [Stonewall Inn](#), met the legendary [Miss Cookie Crawford](#), hit the pavement on San Francisco’s over-the-top [Valencia Street](#), explored the heart of gay [Tulsa](#), and delved into the fascinating idea of [momentary queering](#).

Out of breath? Hang in there, because our tour has one more stop.

Listen in as National Trust staffers explain in their own words why beautiful Dupont Circle – located mere steps from the front door of our headquarters building – is a place that matters to LGBT people in Washington, DC and beyond.

For a gay man coming out and coming of age in the 1980’s, Dupont Circle was like the Mother Ship, the native sod. It was the place in Washington where gay men and lesbians could freely express themselves before boarding the Metro and heading back to the more closeted lives that we felt we had to lead. It felt safe and comfortable. It also changed lives. One spring day, as my mother – who was visiting from Massachusetts – and I

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walked along Connecticut Avenue north of the circle, she said, "There are a lot of gay people in this neighborhood." I paused for what felt like an eternity, weighing my options (run into traffic, perhaps?), and said, "Yes, mum, there are. I think we should talk." My mother and I always had a very close relationship, but my realization as a young adult that I was gay and the fear that provoked had slowly created a wall between us. After that afternoon in Dupont Circle, the wall came down. She once again became a central and integral part of my life, where she remained until her death in 2007. Indeed, this place matters.

Barry Goodinson, Director of Historic Sites Development

When my partner and I moved to Dupont Circle from Alexandria, VA in 1995, Washington, DC was at a definite low point, and most of our friends were incredulous that we were actually moving into the city rather than out. Despite the city's problems at that time, we were drawn to the neighborhood by the fantastic array of big old houses. We found an 1895 brick and brownstone home with a turret, carved oak fireplaces, inlaid flooring and brass hardware. Over the next seven years, we renovated the house little by little, learning as we went. We also got to know our neighbors and began to understand the rich and diverse history of the neighborhood. The elderly couple across the alley from us had moved to the neighborhood in the early 70's, soon after the riots of the late 60's had devastated the city. Mr. and Mrs. Mezzenotte were drawn to the great beauty of the architecture and, over time, bought and renovated a number of buildings and worked with neighbors to build a sense of community. They epitomized to me what is special about Dupont Circle – the sense of community. They welcomed all their neighbors – young, old, black, white, gay, straight – and fostered a pride in the neighborhood that lives on today.

George Rogers, Director of Development, President Lincoln's Cottage

Why does Dupont Circle Matter?

1. The fountain. (Daniel Chester French's work is masterful.)
2. The tulips in Spring. (Stunning.)
3. The trees in Summer. (Shady.)
4. The impromptu musical performances on weekends. (Surprising.)
5. The chess games. (Captivating.)
6. The photo opps. (Ongoing.)
7. The commuter scene. (Invigorating.)
8. The people watching. (Stimulating.)
9. The canine watching. (Heart melting.)
10. Its preservation, despite encroaching high rises and occasional felonious activity. (A neighborhood success story.)

James Schwartz, Editor-in-Chief, *Preservation*

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I remember the first time I came to Dupont Circle – about 20 years ago. I was not “out,” so it was a racy, risqué destination. I’m not sure if it was my perception because of my circumstances, or if it was indeed reality that it had a more “seedy” feel to it than it does today. However, I am glad to work so close to an area that is so closely identified with the gay community. The architecture around the circle and the adjoining neighborhoods is great – from opulent embassies (once private homes) to the more everyday row houses. And of the course, the people are just as diverse. Dupont Circle is a place that matters to me.

Chandler Battaile, Planned Giving Officer

Dupont Circle is a cosmopolitan neighborhood rich with history and culture. It also happens to be the place where I work and sometimes play. From its grand old houses and museums to its vibrant nightlife, the neighborhood offers something for everyone. At its center is a beautiful park with a white marble fountain donated as a gift by the Dupont family in 1921. I hope and pray this amazing neighborhood never loses its charm due to over development. Dupont Circle is many things to many people, but most people (if not all) will agree that there is no other place quite like it in the world.

Jerry Martin, Program Manager, Member Retention

Dupont Circle matters because:

- 1. It serves as a welcoming park that connects business DC with residential DC – a rare mix.*
- 2. At its heart is DC's best fountain.*
- 3. It is a key part of the original L'Enfant plan for the city. The guy knew what he was doing.*
- 4. In the winter, with all of the leaves off, you can see the circle as a circle (impossible in summer) and clearly view all off those avenues coming together in this one spot. Priceless!*

Arnold Berke, Executive Editor, *Preservation*

Dupont Circle is a place that matters to both the gay community and to the greater Washington, DC area. It is a location that brings communities together via Pride events, farmers' markets, and protests for various causes. The actual circle itself is a great location to meet friends or just sit and people watch. It's something you just have to experience.

Donald Crowl, Director of Membership

Moving to Washington and beginning to work at the National Trust in October 1979, I recall taking walks at lunch to discover Dupont Circle. I remember my first walk down Church Street, with its great row houses, and up Massachusetts Avenue, walking by

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great historic buildings like the Anderson House and the Cosmos Club. I still take those and many other great walks thirty years later, never bored with looking at the varied historic architecture, the tree-shaded streets, the great restaurants and shops on Connecticut Avenue, the bars on 17th Street, and the always-rich mix of people. Dupont Circle is a neighborhood and a way of life that is worth savoring and saving.

Greg Coble, Vice President, Business and Finance



The National Trust for Historic Preservation celebrated Pride + Preservation throughout the month of June. Want to help us show some pride in place? Upload a [This Place Matters](#) photo of a building, site or neighborhood that matters to you and your local LGBT community.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation works to save America's historic places. [Join us today](#) to help protect the places that matter to you.



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July 1, 2009

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