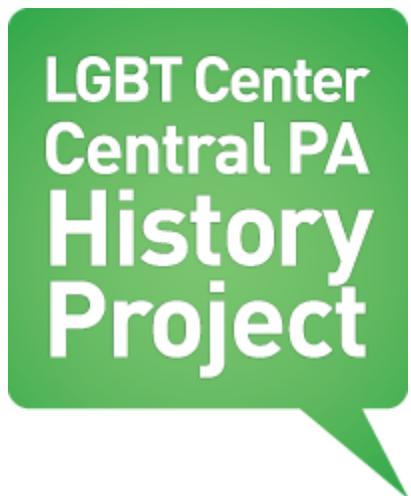


This guide is brought to you by the



Our mission: To engage people to discover, document, collect, preserve and present the history of the LGBTQ+ community in central Pennsylvania through oral histories and material culture.

To donate and support our work:

<https://centralpalgbtcenter.org/history-project-donation-page>



To visit us on the web:

www.centralpalgbtcenter.org/lgbt-history-project

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For more information contact:

history@centralpalgbtcenter.org

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LGBT Center of Central PA
1323 N. Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102

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YORK LGBTQ+ History TOUR



**18 sites in three tours
of LGBTQ+ history in
one guide:**

Tour A: Bars

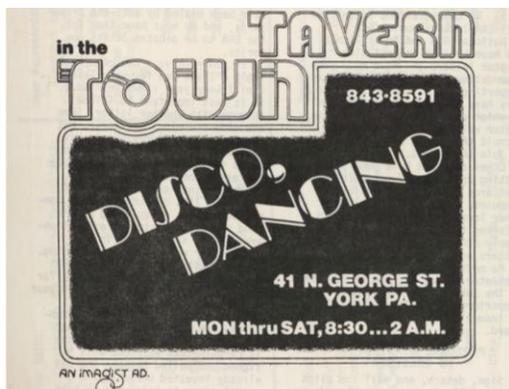
Tour B: Organizations

Tour C: Pioneers & Activists

TOUR A: Bars

A1. Town Tavern, 41 N. George Street

The Town Tavern was a bar that became a gathering place for the LGBTQ+ community. First advertised in the February 1975 *Gay Era* issue as “York’s newest disco,” the Town Tavern became one of the first nightclub establishments opened within York city limits to cater to LGBTQ+ patrons. While the owners of the Town Tavern were not members of the LGBTQ+ community, they were accepting of all patrons. The Town Tavern continued to be a popular disco and bar throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s.



A2. Guerrilla Gay Bar York, 19 N. George Street

Guerrilla Gay Bar York is an LGBTQ+ Facebook group which hosts monthly events at different bars throughout York. York is one of several U.S. cities which have a “Guerrilla Gay Bar,” a concept that emerged from San Francisco in the 1990s to allow LGBTQ+ communities to congregate at non-LGBTQ+ bar spaces. Following the closure of the last LGBTQ+ bar in York County, Altland’s Ranch, in 2016, organizers created this Facebook group in October 2017. The group visits a new bar every second Saturday of each month and does not post information until the day of the event. The first event was held at this location, Revival Social Club, in October 2017.

C3. York Community Access Television Studios, 122 S. Lehman Street

York Community Access Television (YCAT) was a local public access station which aired the program *Gay York!* in the late 1990s. Randy Blymire debuted the 30-minute show in August 1997 to highlight local LGBTQ+ resources and to increase the visibility of LGBTQ+ individuals in the larger York community. After airing an episode in 1998 featuring a series of same sex kisses, the studio received extensive backlash and decided to relocate the show to a later time slot before eventually canceling the program altogether. In 1999, however, the show briefly returned to the air. YCAT has since become White Rose Community Television.

C4. Childhood Residence of Arthur Evans, 120 N. Harrison Street

Arthur Evans (1942-2011) was a longtime LGBTQ+ rights activist. After growing up in York, Evans eventually relocated to New York, where he became involved with the Gay Liberation Front and later cofounded the Gay Activists Alliance. In November 1970, Evans, along with activists Dick Leitsch and Marty Robinson, appeared on *The Dick Cavett Show*, one of the first instances of a nationally syndicated television program inviting LGBTQ+ rights activists for national dialogue. Later, Evans relocated to the West Coast, where he formed the Weird Sisters Partnership commune in Washington and wrote his widely circulated 1978 book *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*.



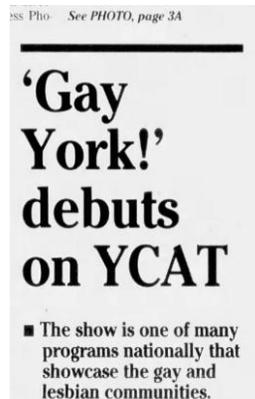
Courtesy of Archive.org

TOUR C: Pioneers & Activists

C1. Residence of Randy Blymire, 131 S. Beaver Street

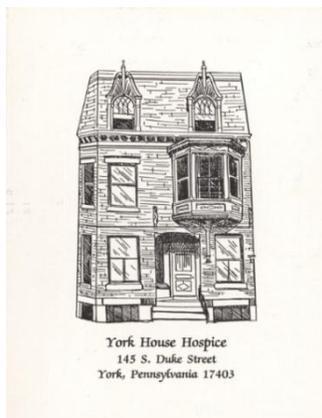
Randolph “Randy” Blymire (1954-2005) was a lifelong York resident, LGBTQ+ rights activist, founder of Gay York Productions, and longtime member of York Community Access Television (YCAT).

Through his involvement with YCAT, Blymire hosted the public cable program *Gay York!* and produced shows for PFLAG York. Blymire was a tireless activist who joined York Area Lambda (formerly York Support), advocated for the passage of York’s anti-discrimination ordinance in 1993, organized the Gay and Lesbian Short Film Festival at the Capitol Theatre in the 1990s, and designed Pride Month window displays at Martin Library in the 2000s.



C2. York House Hospice, 145 S. Duke St.

York House Hospice was a medical facility serving HIV/AIDS patients from across the Central Pennsylvania region. The organization was founded in 1991 by Joy K. Ufema, a nurse who specialized in treating terminally ill patients. Ufema acquired this space after purchasing the building for one dollar. York House Hospice became the premier HIV/AIDS hospice facility within the region. In 1996, however, due to decreasing funds and declining patient admissions, Ufema was forced to close York House Hospice, leaving York and the Central Pennsylvania community without a dedicated HIV/AIDS hospice facility.



A3. Valencia Ballroom, 142 N. George Street

Valencia Ballroom is a large events space and ballroom in downtown York. First opened in 1911 as “The



Coliseum,” the Valencia Ballroom has also served as a meeting place for the LGBTQ+ community. In the 1950s, Valencia Ballroom featured the Rainbow Grill in the basement of the building, which served as one of the earliest LGBTQ+ bars. This was the space where Bernie Ehrhart and Rodney Nagle, future owners of Altland’s Ranch, first met. Additionally, Valencia Ballroom has hosted numerous events on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community, including concerts by the Harrisburg Gay Men’s Chorus and several of York Area Lambda’s “Judy!” benefits in the mid-1990s, which raised money for HIV/AIDS and breast cancer research and for PFLAG’s Youth Outreach Suicide Prevention Program.

A4. LUX Night Lounge and Cigar Bar, 1327 N. Duke Street

LUX Night Lounge and Cigar Bar was a short-lived LGBTQ+ bar in York. The bar first opened in March 2011 and at the time was not an explicitly LGBTQ+ social space. After a successful “G.A.Y. Night” in September 2012, however, owner Stephen Perko, Jr., and entertainment director Travis McCarty relaunched LUX as an LGBTQ+ nightclub in July 2013. The bar eventually closed in November 2014.

A5. LGBTQ+ Bars at 36 W. 11th Avenue

A series of LGBTQ+ bars opened at this location on W. 11th Ave. throughout the 2000s. The first bar to open at this location was the Velvet Rope, a nightclub featuring movie screenings, karaoke nights, gay beauty pageants, and

themed '70s and '80s retro parties in the early 2000s. Later, Club XS opened in this same space in September 2006 before being abruptly closed in August 2012 following incidents of violence and alleged liquor law violations.



A6. 14 Karat Room, 659 W. Market St.

14 Karat Room was an LGBTQ+ bar which first opened in 1976. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, 14 Karat Room was the only LGBTQ+ bar establishment that existed within the city limits. In 1995, the bashing of a gay male patron leaving 14 Karat Room one evening prompted community dialogue from York Area Lambda about the importance of the anti-discrimination ordinance based on sexual orientation and gender identity in York.



Courtesy of York County History Center

A7. Altland's Ranch, 8505 Orchard Road, Spring Grove

Altland's Ranch was a longtime LGBTQ+ bar located in Spring Grove in York County. Opened in 1966 by Bernie Ehrhart and Rodney Nagle, Altland's Ranch became a cornerstone for Central Pennsylvania's LGBTQ+ community and attracted visitors from other nearby metropolitan areas. Over the years, Altland's Ranch hosted numerous events, including

B5. Lutheran Home, 750 Kelly Drive

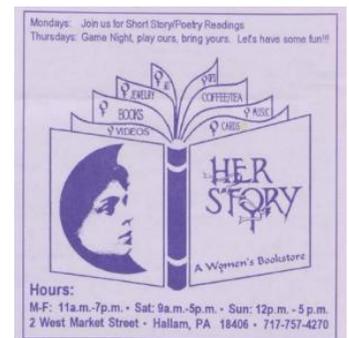
Lutheran Home is a senior care and retirement community home serving York County residents. First opened in 1959, the facility became the site of the first meetings for PFLAG York, a regional chapter of the national organization. Spearheaded by Cindy Mitzel, Pat Brandl, and Judy Morreels, PFLAG York first met in June 1994 at the facility's Lutheran Social Services building, located at 1050 Pennsylvania Ave. PFLAG York later held their meetings at this location on Kelly Dr. from 1997 to 2003, before moving to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York.

B6. Cousler Park, 1060 Church Road

Cousler Park is a park in York which became the site of the first York County Pride event. Prior to York County Pride, York Equality Fest was a successful event which celebrated diversity amongst all of York's marginalized communities from 2014 to 2019. Following the cancellation of Equality Fest in 2020, organizers reconsidered the need for an event specifically for the LGBTQ+ community. In 2021, York County Pride debuted virtually and then in person in Cousler Park in 2022.

B7. Her Story Women's Bookstore, 2 W. Market Street, Hallam

Her Story Women's Bookstore was a feminist bookstore frequented by lesbian women in York County during the 1990s.



The bookstore opened in 1992 in Wrightsville, before relocating to Hallam in 1993. Her Story served as a social space, providing patrons opportunities to attend feminist book discussion groups, tarot card readings, activist workshops, book signings, and concerts.

B2. Cherry Lane Park, 21 W. Market Street

Cherry Lane Park is a small park located in downtown York which was the site of the first York Equality Fest. In 2014, following the legalization of same-sex marriage in Pennsylvania, organizers decided to host a celebration which recognized diversity within the York community. During the inaugural event, approximately 1,000 residents packed into Cherry Lane Park to celebrate equality. After the success of the event, York Equality Fest relocated to the corner of Bond and East King Street in 2015. Later, it moved to Penn Park, the event's home from 2016 to 2019.

B3. YWCA York, 320 E. Market Street

YWCA York is a branch of the national organization. Much of YWCA York's support of LGBTQ+ individuals stems from their longtime Associate Executive Director Peg (Stoppard) Welch, an LGBTQ+ rights activist and former President of York Area Lambda, a local LGBTQ+ rights organization. YWCA York hosted organizational meetings for York Area Lambda and the Pride Festival of Central PA, performances by the Women's Theatre Guild, and social events like a Valentine's Day Square Dance.

B4. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York, 925 S. George Street

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York is a longstanding LGBTQ+ affirming church in York. The congregation originated as the Unitarian Society of York in October 1954 and met at several locations over the years, including around the corner at 49 E. Springettsbury Ave. from 1972 through the 1990s, before moving to this location in 1999. In the 1990s, the congregation hosted MOIRA, an LGBTQ+ youth support group. Since 2003, PFLAG York, a local chapter of the national LGBTQ+ organization, has held their monthly meetings in the church's Carriage House Library.

charity benefits, drag performances, discos, and themed parties, in particular Halloween parties which became must-attend events. The bar eventually closed in 2016, leaving York's LGBTQ+ community without a public space where they could congregate.

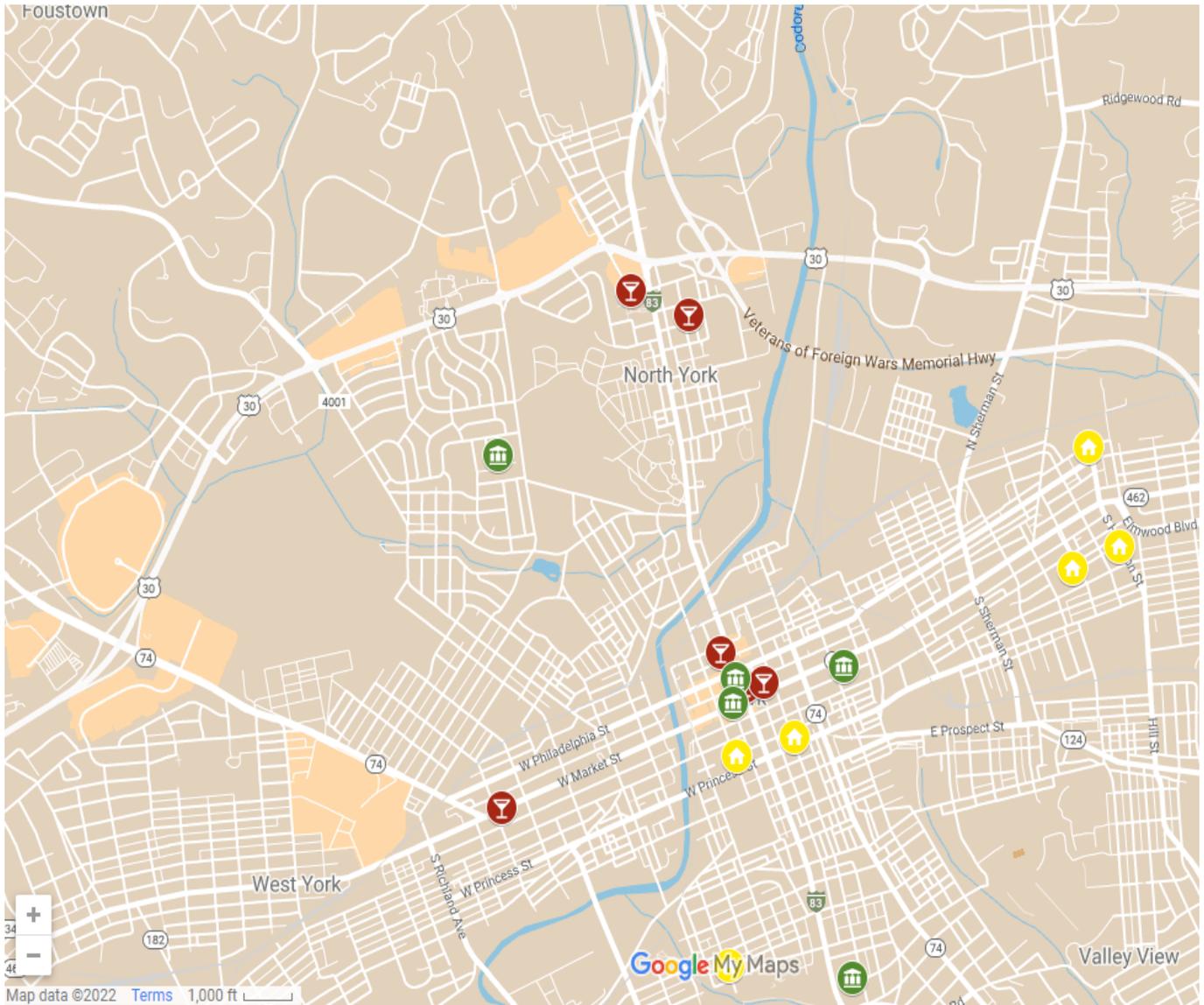


TOUR B: Organizations

B1. Appell Center for the Performing Arts, 50 N. George Street

The Appell Center, formerly known as the Strand Capitol, is a performing arts venue located in downtown York. Over the years, the Appell has hosted numerous LGBTQ+ performances and community events. These include performances by Lily Tomlin, Suede, Kate Clinton, and the Harrisburg Gay Men's Chorus and benefits for York House Hospice and HIV/AIDS research. In the 1990s, the Appell hosted the Gay and Lesbian Short Film Festival, organized by Randy Blymire. Additionally, in the early 2000s, the Appell hosted the LGBT Center of Central PA's Fall Achievement Benefit for several years.

MAP OF YORK



Tour A: Bars (red)

Tour B: Organizations (green)

Tour C: Pioneers & Activists (yellow)

Sites not included on map:

Altland's Ranch (A7)

Cousler Park (B6)

Her Story Women's Bookstore (B7)