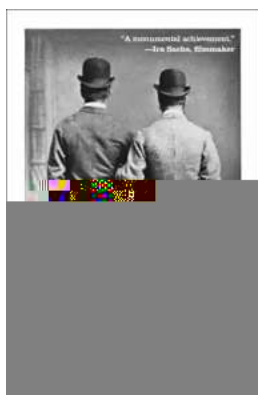


# The Fascinating History of When Brooklyn Was Queer

Have you ever wondered what it was like to be queer in Brooklyn in the past? The borough is known for its vibrant LGBTQ+ community, but what many people may not realize is that this community has a rich and storied history. In this article, we will delve into the captivating past of when Brooklyn was queer and explore the struggles, triumphs, and contributions of the LGBTQ+ community in this diverse borough.

The story of queer Brooklyn begins in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At that time, Brooklyn was a separate city from New York City, and it was rapidly expanding as people from different walks of life settled there. This period saw the emergence of various queer spaces, such as hidden bars and clubs that catered to LGBTQ+ individuals.

One such notable establishment was the "Inverted Circle," a secret underground club that provided a safe haven for queer individuals during a time when homosexuality was highly stigmatized. The Inverted Circle showcased a diverse array of performances, including drag shows and burlesque acts, challenging societal norms and offering an outlet for self-expression.



## When Brooklyn Was Queer: A History

by Hugh Ryan (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 50416 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

X-Ray : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 311 pages



As time went on, Brooklyn's queer community continued to grow and evolve. In the 1940s and 1950s, the borough became a hub for lesbian culture. Notable lesbian bars like "The Solita" and "La Sorbonne" opened their doors, offering a sense of solidarity and acceptance to members of the lesbian community who often faced discrimination in other parts of society.

The 1960s and 1970s marked a turning point for the LGBTQ+ community in Brooklyn. The Stonewall Riots in nearby Manhattan in 1969 ignited a wave of activism, leading to the formation of numerous LGBTQ+ organizations in Brooklyn. These organizations fought for equality and worked towards providing resources and support for queer individuals.

One iconic organization that emerged during this period was the "Gay Activists Alliance Brooklyn Chapter," which played a pivotal role in advocating for the rights of LGBTQ+ people in the borough. Through demonstrations, rallies, and lobbying efforts, the group helped raise awareness about the issues faced by the queer community and fought for legislative changes.

The 1980s brought significant challenges for the LGBTQ+ community in Brooklyn. The outbreak of the AIDS epidemic devastated many lives and disproportionately affected queer individuals. The disease led to a renewed sense of activism and urgency within the community, resulting in the establishment of support groups and organizations dedicated to providing care and resources for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Despite the struggles faced by the LGBTQ+ community, the late 20th century also brought positive changes and milestones. In 1993, Brooklyn elected its first openly gay city council member, paving the way for increased representation and recognition of queer voices in local government.

Today, Brooklyn's queer community continues to thrive, although it has undergone significant changes over the years. The borough is now home to a multitude of LGBTQ+-owned businesses, inclusive spaces, and progressive organizations. Pride celebrations fill the streets with love and solidarity, honoring the struggles and accomplishments of those who came before.

## **Why Understanding Queer History is Important**

Understanding the history of when Brooklyn was queer holds immense importance in providing context and appreciation for the struggles and achievements of the LGBTQ+ community. By learning about the challenges faced by queer individuals in the past, we can gain insight into the progress that has been made and the work that still needs to be done.

Furthermore, delving into this history helps to dispel myths and stereotypes surrounding queerness. It highlights the diversity within the queer community and underscores the vital contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals in shaping politics, arts, and culture in Brooklyn.

By acknowledging and honoring this history, we can foster a more inclusive and accepting society. It is through education and storytelling that we can create awareness, promote empathy, and work towards a future where everyone's identities are recognized and celebrated.

The history of when Brooklyn was queer is a captivating tale of resilience, activism, and community. From hidden clubs to political milestones, each chapter

unfolds to reveal the rich tapestry of experiences that have shaped Brooklyn's LGBTQ+ community. By learning about and appreciating this history, we can continue the fight for equality and ensure that Brooklyn remains an inclusive and welcoming place for all.



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The never-before-told story of Brooklyn's vibrant and forgotten queer history, from the mid-1850s up to the present day.

\*\*\*An ALA GLBT Round Table Over the Rainbow 2019 Top Ten Selection\*\*\*

\*\*\*NAMED ONE OF THE BEST LGBTQ BOOKS OF 2019 by Harper's Bazaar\*\*\*

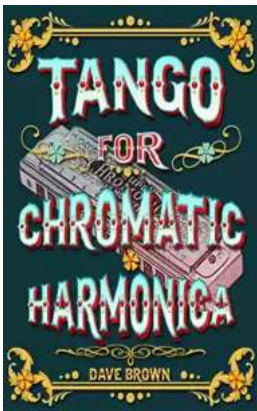
"A romantic, exquisite history of gay culture." —Kirkus Reviews, starred

"[A] boisterous, motley new history...entertaining and insightful." —The New York Times Book Review

Hugh Ryan's *When Brooklyn Was Queer* is a groundbreaking exploration of the LGBT history of Brooklyn, from the early days of Walt Whitman in the 1850s up

through the queer women who worked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard during World War II, and beyond. No other book, movie, or exhibition has ever told this sweeping story. Not only has Brooklyn always lived in the shadow of queer Manhattan neighborhoods like Greenwich Village and Harlem, but there has also been a systematic erasure of its queer history—a great forgetting.

Ryan is here to unearth that history for the first time. In intimate, evocative, moving prose he discusses in new light the fundamental questions of what history is, who tells it, and how we can only make sense of ourselves through its retelling; and shows how the formation of the Brooklyn we know today is inextricably linked to the stories of the incredible people who created its diverse neighborhoods and cultures. Through them, *When Brooklyn Was Queer* brings Brooklyn's queer past to life, and claims its place as a modern classic.



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