

How a Hangout for Teenage Transvestites Became a National Historical Site

Clinton's Monument to Child Abuse

By Terence P. Jeffrey



What should the federal government do when an unlicensed Mafia-owned saloon serves bootleg liquor to minors, caters to teenage male hookers, harbors violent racists, employs a neo-Nazi bombmaker and is suspected of being the epicenter of a major hepatitis epidemic?

Once upon a time, conservatives might have debated whether the issue should be left to state and local authorities, or whether the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, and the Centers for Disease Control should step in to protect national interests in public health and law enforcement.

No religious sects or law-abiding gun owners frequented the saloon, however, so President Clinton last month named it a national historical site.

Bear with me. This is not satire.

On June 11, President Clinton announced he was enrolling the now-defunct Stonewall Inn, and the surrounding streets of New York City, on the National Register of Historic Places. On June 21, Assistant Secretary of the Interior John Berry conducted a ceremony on the sidewalk in front of the closed saloon in honor of those who once pined and whored there.

"Let it be forever remembered," said Berry, "that here, on this spot, men and women stood proud, they stood fast, so that we may be who we are, we may work where we will, live where we choose and love whom our hearts desire."

What happened at the Stonewall?

For purposes of this article we will assume that the details recorded in Martin Duberman's *Stonewall* published in 1993 by Dutton Books are true. Duberman, unabashedly pro-homosexual, supported listing the Stonewall on the National Register because, he said, it would "serve as a spur to additional advances in tolerance."

'Queens Who Hustled'

When a hepatitis epidemic broke out among homosexual men in New York in 1969, a pro-homosexual newsletter called the *New York Hymnal* blamed the epidemic on the Stonewall. They had good reason. "Stonewall had no running water behind the bar," writes Duberman, "a returned glass was simply run through one of two stagnant vats of water kept underneath the bar, refilled, and then served to the next customer. By the end of the evening the water was murky and multicolored."

Middle-aged men cruised the Stonewall in search of under-age male prostitutes. Duberman cites as his authority for this two prominent New York homosexual activists, Jim Fouratt, and *Hymnal* publisher Craig Rodwell. "Craig also thought Stonewall was a haven for 'chicken hawks'—adult males who coveted underage boys," says Duberman. "Jim Fouratt shared that view. He characterized Stonewall as 'a real dive, an awful, sleazy place set up by the Mob for hustlers, chickens to be bought by older people.'"

"One segment of Stonewall's varied clientele did consist of street queens who hustled," concludes Duberman. "Some sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds did frequent Stonewall, and were admitted with the friendly complicity of somebody at the door (the drinking age was then eighteen)."

Ed Murphy, the Stonewall's doorman, Duberman says, was accused by Rodwell and Fouratt of "purveying drugs and young flesh there." "Murphy," says Duberman, "did deal drugs, did leech after teenagers, did make 'introductions' (for which he accepted 'tips'), and was involved in corruption, simultaneously taking payoffs from the Mafia and the New York Police Department."

For all this, Murphy earned his own place in homosexual history. "Indeed," writes Duberman, "in later years the Christopher Street Heritage and Pride Committee would canonize Murphy as an originating saint of the gay movement."

Mob-Owned Hellhole

But the corruption at the Stonewall didn't end with Murphy pimping young boys. The bar itself was owned by the mob. "[T]he Genovese family operated the Stonewall," writes Duberman.

"In 1966," he says, "it was taken over by three Mafia figures who had grown up together on Mulberry Street in Little Italy: Mario (the best liked of the three), Zucchi, who also dealt in firecrackers, and 'Fat Tony' Lauria, who weighed 420 pounds." These three answered to "the local don, Matty 'the Horse' Iannello."

"Matty the Horse got his percentage like clockwork," says Duberman.

"The Stonewall partners also had to pay off the notoriously corrupt Sixth Precinct," he says. "A patrolman would stop by Stonewall once a week to pick up the envelopes filled with cash."

The Stonewall was not egalitarian. Clients had to pass muster at the door with a bizarre group that Duberman nicknames "the Junior Achievement Mafia team." The team featured "Vito, who was on salary directly from Fat Tony" and who "was hugely proud of his personal collection of SS uniforms and Nazi flags, and made bombs on the side."

"Very few women ever appeared in Stonewall," says Duberman.

For three years the saloon did business with only nominal interference from the police. "The Stonewall management," says Duberman, "had always been tipped off by the police before a raid took place—this happened, on average, once a month—and the raid itself was usually staged early enough in the evening to produce minimal commotion and allow for a quick reopening."

But then the feds got involved. "The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms had apparently discovered that the liquor bottles used at Stonewall had no federal stamps on them—which meant they had been hijacked or bootlegged straight out of the distillery," says Duberman. "Putting Stonewall under surveillance, BATF had then discovered the bar's corrupt alliance with the Sixth Precinct. Thus when the feds decided to launch a raid on the Stonewall, they deliberately kept the local police in the dark until the unavoidable last minute."

When the police showed up—this time at 1:20 in the morning—they were met by a bar full of male prostitutes and drugged and drunken drag queens. Who started the ensuing riot? Duberman says eyewitnesses "divide over whether to give the palm to a queen—Tammy Novak being the leading candidate—or to one of the many ordinary gay male patrons of the bar."

A spiteful, rival drag queen told Duberman, "Tammy was seventeen and could not control her intake."



President Bill Clinton

"When a cop shoved Tammy and told her to 'keep moving, keep moving,' poking her with his club, Tammy told him to stop pushing and when he didn't, she started swinging."

"By now," says Duberman, "the crowd had swelled to a mob, and people were picking up and throwing whatever loose objects came to hand—coins, bottles, cans, bricks from a nearby construction site. Someone even picked up dog s— from the street and threw it in the cops direction."

"Dodging flying glass and missiles, Patrolman Gil Weisman . . . was hit near the eye with a shard, and blood spurted out," reports Duberman. "[A] beer can glanced off Deputy Inspector Charles Smyth's head."

A man Duberstein describes as "a wild Puerto Rican queen" verbally threatened to rape a male cop he believed to be of "Irish" ancestry.

This was in the days before hate-crimes legislation.

Police Suffered Human 'Bites'

When the cops retreated inside the Stonewall and barricaded the door, some enthusiastic civil-rights activist tried to do to them what Bill Clinton's BATF would later do to a religious sect in Waco. "At that moment," writes Duberstein, "an arm reached in through the shattered window, squirted more lighter fluid into the room, and then threw in another lit match. This time the match caught, and there was a whoosh of flame." Just then police reinforcements arrived and saved their colleagues from immolation.

Four police officers were wounded in the riot—some suffering human "bites."

But a deeper wound was cut in the fabric of the American family. Parents now are less certain the law will be on their side if a child runs away from home and becomes trapped—as some patrons of the Stonewall were trapped—in an evil web of drugs, disease, prostitution, and organized crime.

What did the riot mean for the current President of the United States?

"Thirty years ago this month at the Stonewall Inn in New York City," Clinton said in his June 11 proclamation, "a courageous group of citizens resisted harassment and mistreatment, setting in motion a chain of events that would become known as the Stonewall Uprising and the birth of the modern gay and lesbian civil rights movement."

And what does that mean to the Republican members of Congress? Who knows? Not one made a peep to protest the President's listing a Mafia-owned haven for chicken hawks and their prey as a national landmark for civil rights.