

# Hidden in Plain Sight: Mapping LGBT+ History in the Alamo City

By: Kristen Clay

Department of History

## Abstract & Introduction

*Today, there are numerous websites and publications dedicated to finding LGBT+ spaces in every major city in the world, but it wasn't always so easy. Word of mouth and secret codes were often the only way of accessing these safe havens. In San Antonio despite, or perhaps because of, the proximity of military bases, LGBT+ nightlife flourished even hidden as they had to be. Like other marginalized groups, the LGBT+ community of the 21st century often finds itself struggling to find concrete evidence of the community's historical existence. As businesses came and went, and as the community fought for survival during the AIDS crisis, documenting lives became more important than documenting spaces. Without community archivists and business owners, these spaces can disappear with no real record of them ever having existed. Now, as the community faces historical denials from inside the federal government, it is more important than ever that these spaces are not only acknowledged, but celebrated. Drawing on research from scholars like Melissa Gohlke, Amanda Mixon and the lived experiences of San Antonians like Carolyn Weathers, Jimmy James, Lollie Johnson, and John McBurney this project brings together oral histories, urban geography, and LGBTQ+ studies. By documenting this history, we honor those who lived it and remind ourselves that visibility has always been a battleground.*

**Editor's Note:** This is a digital story map as an interactive webpage. Thus, it cannot be effectively included in the pdf version of this journal. For the full ArcGIS Project experience, please visit: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cddecaf739e74fdbbf07c514dacd32d0>.