

Julius' Bar Building

**155-159 West 10th Street, aka 186-188 Waverly Place,
Borough of Manhattan
Tax Map Block 611 Lot 30**

Built: 1826, 1845, c. 1867-79; altered c. 1920-30, 1982

Architect: Not determined

Style: Arts-and-Crafts

Proposed Action: Propose for Calendaring September 13, 2022



Julius' Bar Building, LPC, 2022

Located at West 10th Street and Waverly Place in the Greenwich Village Historic District, the building housing Julius' Bar is one of the city's most significant LGBTQ+ history sites. In 1966, three years before the Stonewall Rebellion, members of the Mattachine Society sat at Julius' bar, ordered drinks, announced they were gay, and were refused service. At a time of rampant discrimination—when few LGBTQ+ people lived openly, and gay New Yorkers were being targeted for arrest in city bars—this courageous act and other events at Julius' led to major progress in fighting discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and enabling them to gather openly in public places.

Julius' occupies the first floor of a building originally constructed as three separate structures. The corner portion at Waverly Place was built in 1826, the westernmost portion at 159 West 10th Street dates from 1845, and both were raised to their present height in 1874, when the hyphen connecting them may also have been built. The location has housed a bar since the 1860s, with Julius' founded there around 1930. In the 1920s, the building's facades were stripped and coated with stucco, giving the building an English-inspired Arts-and-Crafts-style appearance fashionable in Greenwich Village renovations of the time.

As Greenwich Village's LGBTQ+ community shifted from the South Village toward Sheridan Square in the 1950s, gay men started meeting at Julius' despite its management's unwelcoming attitude toward them, mixing in among the bar's mostly straight clientele. Between 1959 and 1966, city authorities, using undercover police stings to entrap and arrest gay men, initiated several crackdowns on bars and restaurants serving LGBTQ+ people. They were aided by the State Liquor Authority, which routinely revoked the licenses of bars with LGBTQ+ customers because their mere public presence was considered disorderly. Dick Leitsch, Craig Rodwell, and Randy Wicker—leaders of the pioneering gay-rights group the Mattachine Society—organized what was referred to as a "Sip-In" to draw attention to these practices and end this form of persecution. On April 21, 1966, the three men, with fellow activist John Timmons, ordered drinks at Julius' bar and announced they were gay as the bartender served them. The bartender's reaction, with his hand covering a glass to deny service, was famously captured by a *Village Voice* photographer.

The event was publicized by the Mattachine Society and covered by the *New York Times* the following day. The former state head of the NAACP and new head of the city's Commission on Human Rights, William H. Booth, pledged his commitment to ending discrimination against gay New Yorkers. A subsequent court ruling concerning the entrapment arrest of a gay Julius' customer decided that the Liquor Authority could no longer shutter a bar based on the arrest of a single gay patron and that the presence of gay customers did not, on its own, make an establishment disorderly. These events centering on Julius' Bar represented major steps toward the equal treatment of LGBTQ+ people and encouraged the flourishing of gay and lesbian bars as important social spaces.

The building remains highly evocative of the legendary "Sip-In" of 1966 and an unofficial landmark of the LGBTQ+ community, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2016 and widely recognized and appreciated for the role Julius' played in advancing the rights of gay and lesbian New Yorkers. Its designation as an individual landmark, as with the Stonewall Inn, would clearly establish the late 1960s as its period of significance.

