

# LGBTQIA+ Historical Marker Resolution No. 20230914-078

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Staff Briefing for LGBTQ+ Commission

October 14, 2024



# Resolution No. 20230914-078

*“...directs the City Manager to coordinate and initiate the installation of an LGBTQIA+ historical marker on 4th and Colorado streets as a symbol of the community's historical significance and contributions. Council directs the City Manager to gather input from LGBTQIA+ community leaders, Human Rights Commission, LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, and the Historical Landmark Commission regarding the content and queer figures to highlight on the historic marker.”*

<https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=415998>

# Work accomplished to date

- Toby Johnson and Dennis Paddie from [The Memory Project](#), a subcommittee of the Austin LGBT Coalition on Aging, along with a committee of 10 other interested community members, conducted extensive research and worked together to compose and revise language for a commemoration of LGBTQIA history for an historical marker. Mr. Johnson offered to develop draft text to support the development of the historical marker.
- March 13, 2024: Mr. Johnson presents draft text to the Architectural Review Committee of the Historic Landmark Commission.
- April 3, 2024: Briefing to the Historic Landmark Commission, which provides informal support for the text. An HLC Commissioner offers further assistance.

## AS QUEER AS YOU WANT TO BE.

This historical marker commemorates the contributions, struggles, and successes of Austin's LGBTQIA+ community, whose once -denigrated members have always spanned all genders, races, classes, creeds, generations, and origins.

In earlier times, people lost their jobs, social standing, and sometimes even their lives for being sex- or gender-variant. Outside of the isolation of private homes, downtown bars and nightclubs offered secret, safe havens for LGBTQIA+ people to gather.

Social justice movements in the 1960s advancing the struggles for justice, acceptance, equality, and freedom for women and racial minorities gave rise to a national gay and lesbian rights movement. Austin was quick to respond. A local chapter of the Gay Liberation Front was founded in 1970, with the first National Gay Liberation Conference hosted here in 1971.

A vibrant culture evolved with restaurants, bars, retail shops, bookstores, theaters, churches and a wide variety of professionals and service providers. In the 1980s, a nightlife scene developed in the old warehouse district around 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Colorado. Clubs with drag shows, entertainment, and dances provided opportunities for gathering and community building. During the AIDS crisis of the 80s and 90s, the clubs offered occasions for sex education, counseling, and fundraising—and solace. In the 21st century, as the movement evolved to recognize all Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other segments of the community, these blocks of bars and coffee shops became integrated with the rest of downtown—much like the assimilation of queer representation into mainstream culture.

With many of the political and social dreams of the leaders of past decades realized, Austin remains a vibrant place for all communities to call home.

# Existing research & resources

- [LGBTQ+ History in Austin](#) (Oakwood Chapel exhibit)
- [The Memory Project: LGBTQ History in Austin](#) (Austin LGBT Coalition on Aging)
- [Issues in Preservation: LGBTQIA Spaces and a Fight for Austin's Soul](#) (Preservation Austin)

## National resources

- [Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites](#) by [Susan Ferentinos](#)
- National Park Service Series: [LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History](#)



The Manhattan Club at 905 Congress Ave (PICH-01461, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library)

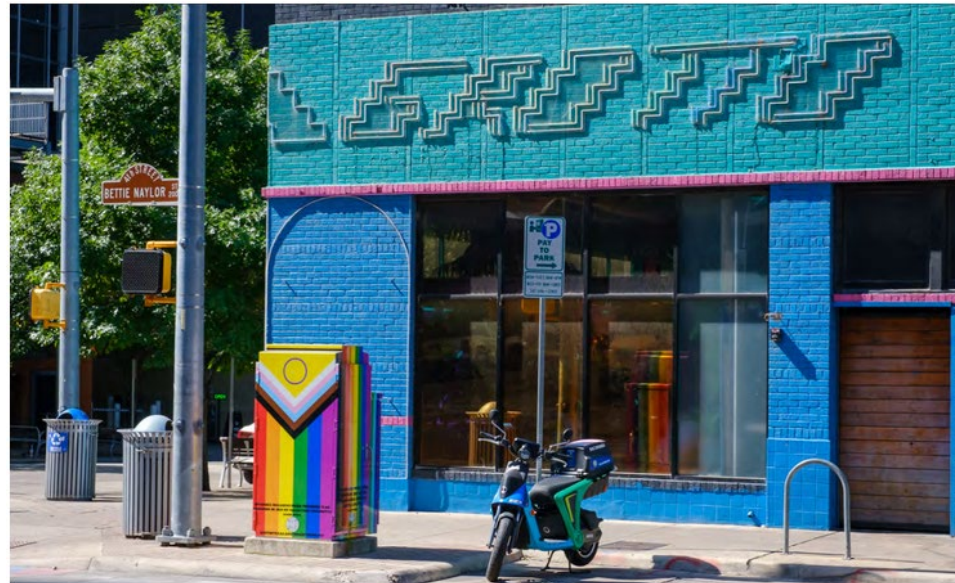
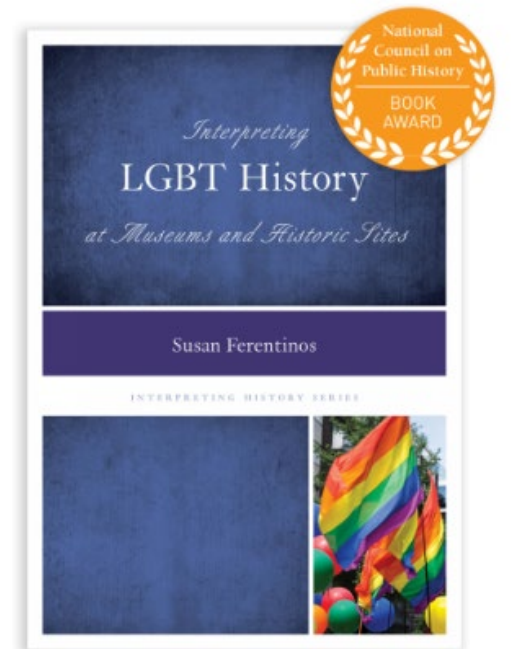
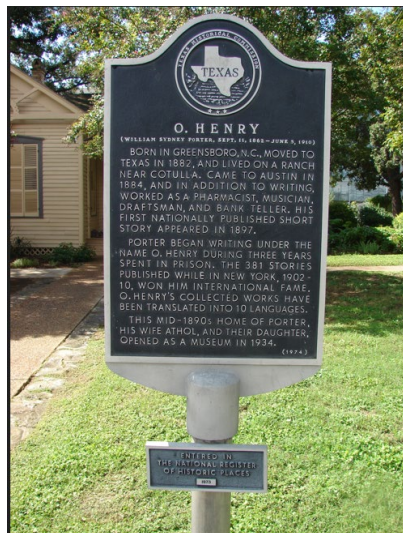


Photo: Bret Brookshire



# Marker options: Texas Historical Commission Subject Marker Program

- The [THC Historical Marker Program](#) commemorate diverse topics in Texas history, including: the history and architecture of buildings, religious congregations, and military sites; events that changed the course of local and state history; and individuals who have made lasting contributions to our state, community organizations, and businesses.
- For Texas Historical Commission subject markers, the applicant works with the County Historical Commission to research the topic and develop narrative history, which is part of the marker application. Text is developed collaboratively between City, Travis County Historical Commission, and THC.
- Research Cost: \$3,000-5,000; Marker Cost: \$1,500- 2,500
- Application deadline: March 1- May 15, 2025; If accepted, marker typically completed within 18 months after approval

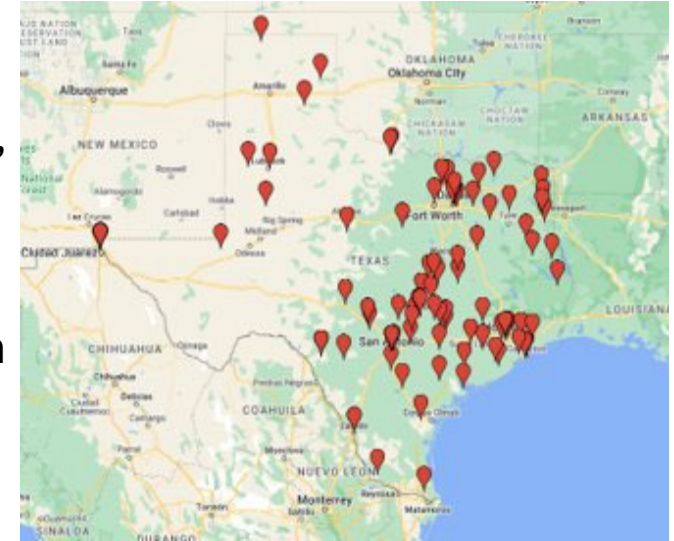


Photos by Austin PARD



# Marker options: Texas Historical Commission Undertold Marker Program

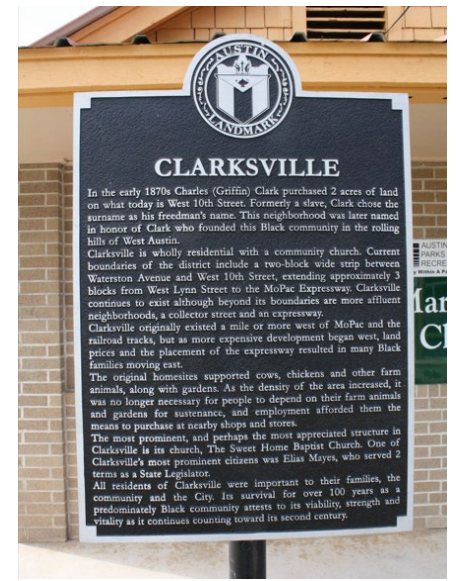
- The THC's [Undertold Marker Program](#) develops markers that address historical gaps, promote diversity of topics, and proactively document significant underrepresented subjects or untold stories.
- Applicant submits basic application with minimal documentation directly to THC. If accepted, Text is developed collaboratively between City and THC with support from Travis County Historical Commission.
- Research Cost: \$3,000-5,000; Marker Cost: \$0
- Application deadline: October 1 - November 15, 2024; If selected, marker typically completed within 18 months



Photos by Austin PARD

# Marker options: City of Austin marker

- City staff with public history expertise and historic marker experience would develop the marker as there is not yet a formal local historical marker program, but it is a major recommendation of the Equity-based Preservation Plan.
- Research Cost: \$3,000-5,000; Marker Cost: \$1,900 - 3,500; Additional cost for special pedestal
- This process could possibly happen more quickly than state markers and would entail no collaboration with county or state partners. The timeline is uncertain as the city is undergoing a rebrand and marker should likely reflect new brand. Important to consider that a local marker would not be included in statewide databases of historical topics so might be missed opportunity to contribute to a larger state-wide story.



Photos by Austin PARD

# Suggested next steps

- Develop advisory committee– strive for equitable representation from LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities
  - One representative from each of the following commissions: LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Commission, Human Rights Commission, Historical Landmark Commission (per resolution)
  - Consider additional reps from leading LGBTQIA+ organizations: Potentially AustinLGBT Chamber, Austin LGBT Coalition on Aging, OutYouth; Other ideas?
- Convene the advisory group to review and/or enhance the marker text that has been developed; Affirm the best option for marker and identify funding source (Undertold Marker deadline is 11/15/2024)
- Staff will determine if additional support is required for additional research
- Staff will also work with City of Austin Right-of-Way to determine location and understand constraints