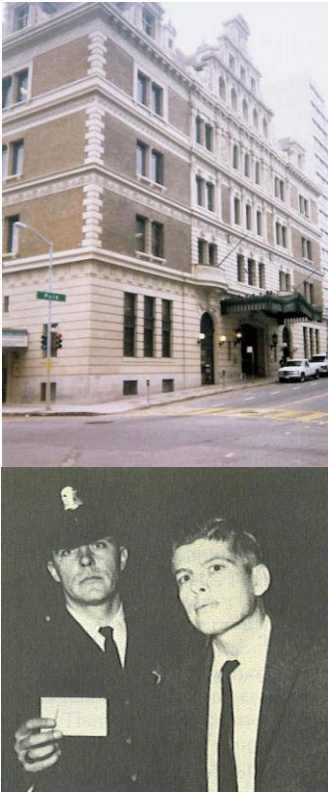


## A SHORT HISTORY OF LGBT ACTIVISM IN THE USA

enlist religious leaders to advocate for homosexual concerns. The pioneering work of these religious leaders and homosexual activists had immediate and ever-growing social impact. The six major homophile groups in San Francisco joined together to cosponsor a private dance on New Year's Day 1965 to raise funds for the fledgling CRH. Notwithstanding the irony that CRH's first major public event was a lavish drag ball, the clergy worked with the homophile groups to ensure the success of this event. This included negotiating terms with the San Francisco police and city government that were notorious for their harassment and persecution of gays and lesbians.



**Above:** California Hall, now the California Culinary Academy.  
**Below:** Herb Donaldson, CRH Lawyer, arrested for attempting to block police from entering the New Year's Day Ball, went on to become San Francisco's first gay judge.

Despite the agreement, as guests began to arrive at California Hall for the New Year's Day Ball, dozens of police officers appeared in the street with kleig lights and cameras. Police officers periodically entered the hall on the pretense of inspecting and six people were arrested. Even in the face of such harassment, more than 500 persons - including several clergymen and their wives - ignored or endured this attempted persecution and entered the dance. In response to the raid, the clergy leaders of CRH held a press conference the next morning. Their expression of outrage and call for an end to police harassment of homosexual persons provoked unparalleled public clamor and mobilization of activity by homophile groups and leaders. For the first time in a gay rights case, the ACLU stepped in to assist the three CRH lawyers and the "ticket-taker" who had been arrested. All four were acquitted and the police berated by the judge for their tactics and harassment. The outpouring of activity following the California Hall incident, often recognized as San Francisco's "Stonewall," thrust the newly-formed CRH into the public spotlight. A new organization, Society for Individual Rights, formed around the same time as CRH and, with more grass roots emphasis than some earlier homophile groups, began its rapid rise to become one of the preeminent gay rights groups of the late 1960s. The California Hall affair is recognized by San Francisco historians and activists as a major turning point in the modern gay/lesbian liberation movement, preceding the resistance at Stonewall in New York City by four years.

The 1960's also saw numerous gay rights protests in major cities on both coasts and in Chicago. One of the best remembered followed the LAPD raid on New Year's Eve parties, January 1, 1967 at two gay bars, the **Black Cat Tavern** and **New Faces**. Several patrons were injured, and a bartender was