



American LGBTQ+ liberation from the beginning to Stonewall.  
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Season 3, Episode 8: “Chicago Ain’t No Sissy Town”  
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The original Mattachine Society jester logo is courtesy of ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.

This transcript includes text from real homophile-era publications, letters, organizational documents, et cetera. These texts contain **identifying terms** that may now be out of date.

HOST: It's just a half-hour walk from Crilly Court, south down Clark Street, cut through Bughouse Square and across Dearborn into a hidden alley — called Tooker Place. The alley's brick wall says "Danger" with two arrows pointing down at the door, a door which says in hand painted letters, "Step high, stoop low, leave your dignity outside." **The Dill Pickle Club** is host to radical discussions, like "Who's Responsible for the Depression?," and "Is Monogamy a Failure?," and even "Is Jazz Better than Opera?" The labor activist who started the club as a performance space, a night club, and an art gallery welcomes intellectuals of all backgrounds — working class, professors, sex workers, socialites—bohemian writers of all backgrounds come and think freely. Anarchist Emma Goldman can stand up and pose the question, "Do Perverts Menace Society?" and she can make her case. Afterward, the crowd votes yay or nay, typically siding with points of view that are considered radical **in the early 1900s**.

Late at night, a guest of the Dill Pickle can quietly slip out, down the alley to cross Dearborn and back into **Bughouse Square**. There, a queer man can cruise the park in the dim light of the gas lamps. By day, the park was full of the free-thinkers who later went to drink at the Pickle. In the park, they'd speak to the passersby about communism and gender and sexuality, it's an open space for soapboxing, welcoming to community discussion. At night, queers cruise Bughouse Square. If they don't find someone there, they might head east toward Michigan Avenue—where the old water **tower** still stands—pick up a sex worker and find a rooming house nearby, or go up to the Lincoln Baths. There are plenty of options for queer folks around this Chicago neighborhood called **Towertown**.

**Magnus Hirschfeld** noted the many bathhouses where queer people gather in late 19th century Chicago. Others have documented upper class cruising spaces like the Chicago Athletic Club. But queers of all classes can be found in even the dirtiest of cruising grounds. An 1879 anonymous letter to the *Chicago Tribune*, simply signed from "Decency," tips off an editor that below the Randolph Street bridge where the bank meets the water of the Chicago River, there's a cave-like space where men are meeting at night. A reporter from the *Daily Inter Ocean* investigates. He arrives at the bridge one night and asks the attendant to take him down where the men meet. The attendant lights a lantern and takes him down the stairs. The reporter informs his readers that he's aware many major cities all over the world have this "filth in men's clothing...whose very touch would contaminate one who came in contact with them," but he wants to see the local trade for himself, to witness, in his words, "how low men will sink." The attendant and the reporter turn a corner at the bottom of the stairs and the lantern light lands on the gathering men. Some scatter, running past the reporter and back up the stairs. The attendant says the men meet here almost nightly from 9 to 11 o'clock. One regular is a doctor, he says, a "sleek-looking fellow, with white vest and silk hat." The reporter describes the regular as a soft-voiced, well-to-do **dandy** with a cane, out looking for trade. And so begins rugged Chicago's fascination with the late 19th century effeminate **fop**.

The **1892 World's Fair** brings a new wave of queer culture to town, while 20 million people in Chicago see things never imagined: electricity, the Ferris wheel, zippers—and **Fatima**, a belly dancer so lewd that police arrest her almost daily. Fatima is considered a crossdresser, born male,

performing a dance the police call “erotic imagery calculated to arouse male members of the audience” so effectively that they might succumb to her queer advances. Every day, she leaves the jailhouse, and returns to her show.

Up the street, on Michigan and Monroe, **Eugen Sandow** performs his erotic weightlifting act at Ziegfeld’s Trocadero Music Hall. Eugen’s lover, **Martinus Sieveking**, plays piano. Papers report on the men as “bosom friends,” with Martinus practicing at his piano “stripped to the waist” while Eugen is “beside him...working his muscles. He is fond of the music and Sieveking likes to see Sandow’s muscles work.” In the years before this act, Sandow sold photos of himself in hunky gladiatorial poses for men who were into what they called “physical culture.” In order to quell the queer rumors about Sandow, Florenz Ziegfeld spreads more rumors about affairs with women, and he announces that women who donate \$300 or more to charity may come to the dressing room after the show to stroke Sandow’s muscles. Many men are allowed in for free, but the female charity donors are the only ones quoted in the press. Of course, Eugen Sandow is never arrested **hustling** this type of **sex work**—male cisgender sex work—unlike Fatima’s. Sandow will eventually go on to publish a bodybuilding magazine called *Physical Culture*, inspiring a future generation of **beefcake** publications right here in Chicago...

When you’ve got Florenz Ziegfeld money behind you—and when you’re a cis man rather than a trans woman—the possibilities are endless. We’ve talked a lot about **graft** on this show, *houses of vice paying protection money to people in power so police don’t shut them down*. Graft is a specialty in Chicago. First Ward aldermen by the nicknames “Hinky Dink” Mike Kenna and “Bathhouse John” Coughlin, they make a ton of cash in graft. These aldermen have been putting on their **First Ward ball** since **New Years Eve 1896**, a massive reception to raise campaign funds — and a clever disguise for payoff money. There’s lots of payoff money to be made in their ward, especially from the **South Side Levee**, a red-light district of about four blocks which are home to dozens of brothels, saloons, and opium dens. Business is booming, it’s the wealthiest neighborhood in Chicago, and protection money to their aldermen is absolutely necessary for them stay in business. Guests who pay to attend the big masquerade ball are bordello madams, gambling ring leaders, pimps, and other business owners who want their establishments protected. They buy tickets — hundreds of tickets — and hand them out to their clients and employees. Even First Ward policemen are required to buy tickets at the steep price of \$10 if they want to keep their jobs. The event quickly becomes so huge that it moves up the road to the **Coliseum**. The aldermen running the show apparently earn about \$50,000 per ball every year. In **1907** one reporter covering the event writes, “If a great disaster had befallen the Coliseum last night, there would not have been a second story worker, a dip or plug ugly, porch climber, dope fiend or scarlet woman remaining in Chicago.” Female impersonators, trans people, and queer folks in general are happy to buy tickets to a guaranteed fun night out in drag—a huge queer party set to current hits played by an orchestra, plenty of alcohol, and maybe even cruising for clients. It’s the event of the year!

And they have no idea that these parties will inspire their queer descendants and their growing Movement.

At the turn of the century, newspaper editorials and **reformer groups** like the Chicago Law and Order League begin calling on police to arrest troupes of female impersonators in amusement parks and venues in the Loop — groups like Duncan Clark’s burlesque show, a traveling group advertised as “The Hottest Show on Earth!” The arrests are great publicity for the show. After the curtain, their performers also go backstage to secure some trade. Despite Chicago’s 1851 law against crossdressing, Clark’s performers in Chicago aren’t charged with impersonating women because they’re so financially successful that they hire the best lawyers. So, instead, social reformers decide to go after the “bare bronze beauty” **Bertha Faulk**, another White City amusement park performer, a cisgender woman who dances in a waistband, veil, and a string of beads. The reformers are disappointed to find that, in less than 20 minutes, the all-male jury declares her “morally elevating and decent in every sense of the word.” The determined reformers, bent on enforcing “social hygiene,” eventually set their sights on the First Ward balls.

The two aldermen in charge of the balls are so powerful that they openly laugh about the reformers in the papers. They possibly get a bit too arrogant about it and invite ministers to the ball in **1907**, who are disgusted by the event. The ministers call on the police to shut down the balls, describing them as “debauch, which remind one of pagan Rome in her most degenerate days.” The *Tribune* joins in, promising to print the names and photos of men who attend next year. But the night before the 1908 ball, a bomb is set off near the Coliseum. A police inspector tells a paper that “reformers of a certain type have turned Heaven and earth in their efforts to prevent the ball being held.” The aldermen still throw their ball, but when letters come in threatening the 1909 event with more bombs, the aldermen decide they have to compromise. They ban sex workers and female impersonators. The *Tribune* announces “Coughlin Yields; Orgy Called Off.” The ball goes on, and the following year, the rule is dropped and sex workers and drag performers are allowed back in to the party, now bigger than ever. People in **Bronzeville**, just south of the Levee, begin hosting many of their own queer masquerade balls, giving out prizes for the best female and best male impersonators. Queer parties are thriving all over this town. Determined to throw his ball for the queens and never back down, one of the First Ward aldermen tells a reporter, “Chicago ain’t no sissy town.

## Act 1

“Let me tell you from **experience**, it does not pay to do anything for them. I once lost a good job in trying to bring them together,” **Henry Gerber** will write, years after his 1925 arrest in Chicago. He started the first organization for homosexuals in the United States, having seen the vast queer underground in Berlin and in Chicago. Shortly after arriving in Chicago, Gerber gets to know queer folks in Towertown, a neighborhood which you might know as Streeterville, by River North. Gerber enjoys cruising Bughouse Square, but he also socializes by attending events like the literary lectures hosted by the Seven Arts Club in hotels, garages, and an old stable — the lectures are often a cover for secret drag shows. There are many groups like these, all over

Towertown, great meetings for entrance to the queer underground. The neighborhood is so dense with queers because of the cheap rent. The run-down studios with candle wax crusted to the window sills are packed with queers. And living in this big busy town makes **anonymity** easy. You can slip into a male brothel, also called a “**peg house**,” or you can get into drag for a show. No one back home would ever know.

Anarchist Ben Reitman writes, “In bohemia the homos can speak their own language. Two male homos will meet a radical and say, ‘You know this is my wife Ell,’ or ‘I brought Kitty along. She is looking for **trade**.’ I have said to a casual visitor to the Dill Pickle when introducing a group of male homos, ‘I want you to meet these boys, they are a couple of the best known Michigan Avenue ‘bitches’ in town,’ and everybody smiled.”

Towertown even has, of course, it’s own Ye Black Cat. And The Blue Fish. The Green Lantern. The Wind Blew Inn. The Green Mask Inn stages an act billed as a “hermaphrodite violinist,” also a “little Mexican fairy” called Theda Bara, as well as drag stars Bert Savoy and Julian Eltinge (who you might remember from the **San Francisco history episode** last season). Out on Michigan Avenue, sex workers walk. There’s marijuana in the air, and lodging down at the YMCA. A few bucks can get you pretty far in Towertown. Towertown as everything a young queer might need. The neighborhood motto: “Gin, din, and sin for a fin.” A fin is a \$5 bill.

Queer soldiers flood the area in **1917**, when the U.S. joins the Great War. Military bases near Chicago give young men easy access to Towertown’s queer tourism.

Settling into his bustling new home, Bavarian immigrant Henry Gerber has become quite happy in Towertown. He’s in a long-term relationship with a young man and they have a busy social calendar. But it doesn’t take long for Henry’s sister to figure out what’s going on. She realizes that her brother is queer, and has him committed to an asylum. She feels it’s her duty to do so. The Vice Commission of Chicago recently announced,

VICE COMMISSION: The Social Evil in Chicago: A Study of Existing Conditions

HOST: The commission estimates about 20,000 queers in Chicago, and describes Towertown and the Levee as—

VICE COMMISSION: —whole groups and colonies of these men who are sex perverts. The greatest criticism is due the citizens of Chicago, first, for the constant evasion of the problem, second, for their ignorance and indifference to the situation, and third, for their lack of united effort in demanding a change in the intolerable conditions as they now exist.

HOST: Two years go by in that hospital. In **1919**, Henry Gerber is given a choice: either go to prison as an “enemy alien,” because he’s an immigrant, or enlist in the war and prove your patriotism for America. He enlists, and he’s sent to Germany—his former home. But as an openly queer adult, his German experience is very different this time around. He sees a liberal

queer culture, and Dr. Hirschfeld's bold research into queerness, proving that we're not sick. Like so many activists after Henry, he was called sick and yet saw the proof that it wasn't true, so he's inspired to start his organization for homosexuals when he returns to Chicago—the first organization in America for homosexuals to demand their rights. Check out the **very first episode** of this podcast for that full story.

AUDIO: Ma Rainey's "Shave 'Em Dry Blues"

HOST: While Towertown continues to thrive, and the police target the brothels of the Levee and shut them all down, the South Side neighborhood of **Bronzeville** fills with Black migrants from the South. These new Chicagoans bring jazz to the city — people like **Tony Jackson**. Jackson leaves New Orleans for Chicago's sexual freedom. He's queer and plays piano all over Bronzeville, becoming so famous for his musical skills that other pianists begin dressing like him, in "a pearl gray derby, checkered vest, ascot tie with a diamond stickpin." It's performers like Tony Jackson that make Bronzeville's State Street strip, between 26th and 39th, famous as "**The Stroll.**" Ma Rainey's "Shave 'Em Dry Blues" even has lyrics about The Stroll:

AUDIO: Ma Rainey sings: "Goin' downtown to spread the news / State Street women wearin' brogan shoes"

HOST: — men's shoes. The State Street Stroll is a primarily Black strip of booming businesses, jazz clubs and cafés that draw in queer nightlife personalities. While Towertown is mostly white, Bronzeville clubs welcome everyone of any race and any sexuality, so much so that the clubs become called **black-and-tans**.

AUDIO: "Shave 'Em Dry Blues" continues to the end.

HOST: In the same black-and-tans that Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway perform in, many legendary drag queens also sing for queer audiences late into the night. **Peaches Browning, Jean LaRue, Sepia Joan Crawford, and the legendary Sepia Gloria Swanson**, just to name a few, they earn huge groups of fans that follow them from club to club. (Chicago's **Shea Couleé** will follow in their footsteps.) **Sepia Mae West** also records a song about the Stroll, where she performs at **the Cabin Inn**.

AUDIO: "Down at the Cabin Inn" by Dick Barrow

HOST: No longer fops cruising under the bridges, Chicago's **pansies** are in full bloom in the **1920s**.

Pansies are overtly feminine, often in rouge, powder, and lipstick. You know, like me. In 1929, *Variety* reports on about 35 queer "pansy parlors" opening in Chicago, saying they're run by "waitresses who are lads in gal's clothing" who won't open for business in the morning until they've spent "at least two hours...adjusting the drapes just so." When the 1933 World's Fair

begins in Chicago, tour guides market Towertown as “Little Paris,” and queer nightlife has a new steady stream of tourist bucks as the **Pansy Craze** reaches her peak.

AUDIO: “Down at the Cabin Inn” continues to the end.

HOST: University of Chicago sociology professor Ernest Burgess attends some of these **1930s** balls and bars, recording queer history that might have been lost otherwise. He assigns his students to visit nightclubs and study these queer people, too. His notes show a visit to the bathroom with the queens, who “put up their dresses to urinate.” One of his students writes from the Ballyhoo Café at 1942 N. Halsted St. at 11:30 PM on September 24, 1933:

MALE STUDENT: Seventy-five were queer fellows and 25 queer girls. The hostess dressed in masculine style was queer as well as the M.C.

HOST: The student asks one of the girls to dance, and she explains that they, queer people, can’t stand the **jam** people. “Jam” is code for “straight.” The student returns to the Ballyhoo two months later.

MALE STUDENT: Mack, the master of ceremonies and also a female impersonator, who is about six foot three inches tall, and very slim in build, gave his number. Dressed in female costume, he impersonated a woman and walked gracefully about the room making wise cracks.

HOST: Another student records their observations at a South Side cabaret, seeming a bit more bewildered by it all:

CONRAD BINTZEN: Through the blue cigarette smoke you can make out the outlines of crowded tables. Before long, the orchestra strikes up a tune and the master of ceremonies appears on the stage. This person is a huge mulatto with wide shoulders and narrow hips... It is a lascivious creature that strikes the normal as extremely repulsive. With a deep husky voice it begins to sing a wild song and as the tempo increases the stage rapidly fills with a remarkable collection of sexual indeterminates. Each is dressed in a long formal, and each has the same peculiar physical appearance. After the floorshow the homos danced together in all sorts of fantastic routines. They all act far more feminine than a normal girl, carrying filmy handkerchiefs which they draw out of their sleeves and flutter around. They talk and joke about girdles and brassieres, which seem to be the source of most of their humor.

HOST: Ah, I miss the bars. (Recorded in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Police tend to overlook the vice of the early 30s in Chicago, because the city is desperate for money during the Depression. But as soon as the fair is over on **Halloween 1934**, Mayor Kelly cracks down on queer cabarets and bathhouses all over the city. Even though pansies have quickly become popular in books, plays, and films, and the Pansy Craze as been hot for over a decade, remember, **queer popularity in the mainstream can always vanish as quickly as it**

**began.** The law is laid back down on queers so effectively that *Variety* then reports that after years “of fan dancers, Venuses on half-shell, World’s Fair strippers and general hotcha...fan dancers...are now doing their routines in red flannel underwear.”

And, as always with affordable queer neighborhoods packed with nightlife, businesses try to cater to a broader, more heteronormative clientele, rent rises, and the queers are pushed somewhere else. (Looking at you, “**Boystown**.”) Towertown’s bright lights begin to dim.

The mob moves in to run the remaining queer spaces, saying they’re doing this to “protect” queer spaces from cops. The mob then demands tons of protection money. But even The Dill Pickle closes in **1934**, as it becomes a “dangerous tourist trap” under Al Capone’s thumb. The next year, police slap a padlock on the Ballyhoo.

The more discrete vice and queerness has to become, the more dangerous it is. **Langston Hughes** writes to a friend in **1936**, “Chicago is still a savage and dangerous city...And almost everybody seems to have been held up and robbed at least once.” The only sense of queer community remaining in Chicago are the balls on Halloween and New Years Eve, and even those are no longer safe from the **CPD**.

MUSIC: darkness spreads over Cook County

HOST: *Down at the Cabin Inn*, cops raid a campy little gay double-wedding, arresting 12 people. 7 of them are in drag. One of the guests is a gambler, **Albert Finnie**, who is inspired by this wedding to start his own ball in the fall of **1935** for Black female impersonators and their companions. It begins in a tavern basement with a 25 cent cover. They’re not as big as the First Ward balls, but they grow over the first 8 years. Finnie hosts them 5 times a year all over the South Side. And although he’s killed in a gambling fight in 1943, **Finnie’s ball** continues on and becomes *the* major ball event of Chicago by the late 40s. The persistence of the balls is an incredible achievement, as police continue to target Bronzeville black-and-tans. The cops say those clubs are centers for racial violence, which is not at all true. The *Chicago Whip*, an African American paper, describes how wrong the police are, and says Black and white guests on the South Side get “along together after midnight.”

But the cops persist, they shut down lesbian clubs, too. Coliseum drag balls are raided. Queens are forced to put on pants or go to jail. Reformers push a sexual psychopath bill. Cruising becomes even more discrete, down along the Gold Coast’s Oak Street Beach, and in Jack’s Turkish Baths, and, still, in Bughouse Square. Mexican gay men cruise Ashland Avenue, while downtown department store window dressers and ribbon clerks discretely meet in the basement bar of the Palmer House Hotel. Lesbians searching for work secretly help each other out. One woman writes, “There was a girl who worked at Bell & Howell out in Lincolnwood, and she was black and gay, and she did the interviewing. There was almost a whole production line of cameras and projectors that were nothing but gay girls. She made it her business to hire every gay girl on the South Side that she could hire. So a lot of us got in at Bell & Howell.”



By 1939, when **Alfred Kinsey** arrives in Chicago, the city has been pretty well cleaned up compared to the pansy years. The temperament of the whole of the nation has changed. After Nazis marched on Poland and war began to feel inevitable, a sense of patriotism swept the country. Fighting our enemies calls for strength in American men, and stereotypical masculinity becomes expected from them, and support at home is expected of women. Queer life continues further underground in Chicago. That's why Kinsey finds it so difficult to find interview subjects at first. On his first visit, he only finds a few queer men to talk to. Kinsey slowly builds trust, as one man vouches for him to another, and he builds a network, eventually interviewing hundreds of queer Chicagoans. He estimates, not the 20,000 queers the Chicago Vice Commission announced, but about 300,000 queers in the city of Chicago. Kinsey exchanges frequent letters with his Chicago interview subjects, writing things like, "You are a distinctive creature," and "Folk as intelligent as yourself can help my thinking a great deal," and also "Your capacity for love is the thing that stands foremost in my thinking of you." Another writes back to Kinsey from jail, saying "Thank God I got only 60 days and a small fine." Kinsey pays the fine. It's in Chicago that Kinsey, a married Indiana man, also discovers his own queer identity.

MUSIC: joyful march approaching

HOST: Just like when the turn-of-the-century reformers tried to scare off the First Ward Balls, Chicagoans don't back down from the police. *Ebony* writes in 1953,

EBONY REPORTER: More than 1,500 spectators milled around outside Chicago's Pershing Ballroom to get a glimpse of the bejeweled impersonators who arrived in limousines, taxis, Fords, and even by streetcar.

HOST: **In the 1950s**, *Ebony* will note drag impersonations of Josephine Baker, Billie Holiday, and Lena Horne at Finnie's Ball. Meanwhile, another renowned drag spectacle opens in Chicago, the **Jewel Box Revue**. At the Regal Theatre in Bronzeville, the Jewel Box show billed as "25 Men and a Girl" captivates audiences trying to figure out who the one woman is.

JEWEL BOX ANNOUNCER: The World's Most Unusual Show. You'll Have To See It To Believe It!

HOST: It's revealed at the end that the woman is a masculine lesbian, named **Stormé DeLarverie**, wearing a tailored suit. She'll go on to sing at the Apollo and Radio City Music Hall, and possibly attend a certain famous riot—(put a pin in that). Drag star **Tony Midnite** also books the Jewel Box Revue, against police pressure, at the Roberts Show Lounge on the South Side. The booking is just for two weeks, but the Jewel Box stays eight months with packed audiences.

Down the street in Bronzeville, a jazz trumpeter named “**Tiny**” **Davis** and her partner **Ruby Lucas** open a club called **Tiny & Ruby’s Gay Spot**.

TINY DAVIS: Where the daddies are daddies and the fems are fems!

HOST: Up on the Near North Side, queer folks gather at **Big Lou’s** on Rush Street. The area is becoming so notorious for queers that if you tell someone you live anywhere near Dearborn and Division on the Near North Side they’ll probably say, “Oh, **Queerborn and Perversion?** On the Queer North Side?” One cop reports on Big Lou’s in **1952**,

COP: observation of effeminate men and mannish women in the place, males dancing with males, females dancing with females, and undue demonstrations of intimacy between women at the bar.

HOST: The cops are cracking down on Mafia spaces, including the queer bars. The Crime Commission has been set up to investigate Mafia businesses, and things are quickly heating up. Mayor Kennelly appoints nine aldermen, the Big Nine, they’re called, to start an “emergency crime committee.” (Kennelly is trying to get ahead of some bad publicity.) The Big Nine aldermen hire a police detective, who focuses his investigation of the Mob on one of the Mob’s bars: *Big Lou’s*.

INVESTIGATOR: Approximately half the persons in this tavern were perverts, this being evident from their lewd suggestive conversation and actions. Other patrons observed in the booth and at the bar while dancing in the place were also very lewd in their conduct. The place continues to be a pervert hangout to both sexes but more emphasis being upon the lesbians. From the conduct of the female patrons, it was very evident they were lesbians and their lovers.

HOST: **Big Lou** herself, **Lucille Kinovsky**, is arrested as the police raid her bar in January 1953. She’s a heavyset butch woman. She and her girlfriend Bernice wear matching rings. Lucille is taken to jail with three of her patrons. Gambling, prostitution, and agents of organized crime are listed on the special investigator’s report. The *Tribune* follows up, detailing the area as—

TRIBUNE REPORTER: —a segment of Chicago and a cast of characters as strange and colorful as anything ever dreamed up for a Hollywood movie. They said the women generally were attired in men’s clothing and were dancing together. The men, police said, were consorting with one another.

HOST: Lucille denies that her club is a resort for sex perverts, but she’s found guilty of being the keeper of a disorderly house. Big Lou’s bar is shut down, Lucille is run out of town, and two more lesbian bars on Queerborn and Perversion follow.

The Big Nine crime committee begins to play the press and police off of each other: First, the nine aldermen report the so-called “*conditions*” of a bar to the police in order to set off a raid.

For example, they write to their commissioner that the **Lake Shore Lounge** on Rush Street is “a pervert joint so packed that it was impossible to get to the bar or move around. Language filthy and obscene.” Then, secondly, if officers don’t clean the place out, the Big Nine aldermen threaten to leak to the press that the police won’t raid this filthy bar. So, under that pressure, the police do raid, and the press writes about the bar raid anyway. The bar goes down, and the city looks clean.

After years of this creative abuse by the police and the city, a Mattachine Society chapter forms in **1954**, the first chapter outside of California.

**Hal Call** soon finds all Chicago members are inactive, terrified of coming out, because it’s only getting worse in the Midwest. **Richard Daley** begins a strategic targeting of queers in **1955** as he campaigns for Chicago mayor.

He’s targeting the incumbent, Kennelly. Daley capitalizes on the *Tribune*’s longtime taunting of Mayor Kennelly for never marrying, which, of course, implies that he’s homosexual. Richard Daley releases campaign ads featuring himself alongside his wife and their seven children with the headline “A Family Man for a Family City.”

The tactic works well with his overall brand, as Daley says he will end all gambling and strip tease clubs, and he promises,

MAYOR DALEY: an all-out war on crime in every form, to make our neighborhood streets safe for women and children. The syndicate will be driven out of Chicago.

HOST: While his message is spread by the papers to all the families in town, reporters also detail the discovery of three murdered teen boys, found naked and abandoned in the woods on the northwestern outskirts of the city. Police search for the killer. The newspapers openly wonder who might have abducted these boys. A gang? A sex degenerate? The CPD hires a psychiatrist who says these boys “were killed by a member of Chicago’s colony of sex degenerates,” even though the autopsies prove no sexual behavior. The psychiatrist says police should “round up every known sex offender and moron... there are several Chicago areas where persons with abnormal sex attitudes tend to congregate.” Just like the story in the season 1 episode about “The Lavender Scare,” this is a Hoover-style gay sex panic catalyzed by the murder of a minor. There are so few clues to go on that the city speculates all kinds of wild possibilities. The police interview more than 300 people who are listed on the sex deviates record—including a tattoo artist and English professor, **Samuel Steward**, one of Kinsey’s interview subjects. Steward isn’t a suspect, since the killer had to know how to drive a car, but in order to give the officers his alibi, Steward, a registered sex deviate, has to say where he works. He writes in his journal,

SAMUEL STEWARD: If word of this gets to DePaul...it would definitely end me there.

HOST: By the end of the week, Samuel Steward is called in to speak with the dean and told his contract will not be renewed. He asks why, and the dean says, “Shall we say for outside activities?”

Police continue interviewing deviates all over the city, releasing names to the press as suspects, and then dropping them after evidence and alibis prove the person innocent. But by then, their names have been printed and their lives are already ruined. Mayor Daley announces a \$10,000 reward for anyone who can help solve the murder. **Emmett Till**’s mother sends her condolences to the three white mothers on the North Side of Chicago. The killer is never found, but queer suspects continue to be rounded up, interrogated, and convicted of various crimes involving what the police call “perversion.”

## Act 2

AUDIO: siren

HOST: CPD cars pull up on a dark city street to stop two young men walking to the el. One of them is a dishwasher named Frank. The other is 14-year-old ballet dancer **Craig Rodwell**. Yes, Craig Rodwell, who will one day participate in pickets and the Sip-in at Julius’ in New York. The police refuse to believe that young Craig picked up the older man, Frank. The DA pressures Craig to say the dishwasher paid him for his company, but Craig refuses. Craig says he lied to Frank, told him he was older than 14. The officers recommend that Craig’s mother and new stepfather send him to a reformatory school. He’s just returned from Christian Science school, and his mother cries, gets on her knees, and begs Chicago police not to take him away again. The officer says if she sends Craig to a private psychiatrist he can stay and be on probation. But Frank gets five years. Craig is furious, he becomes “an angry queer,” he’ll later say. Craig quietly waits to be old enough to do something about it. Two years later, he meets a man named Harry on the gay beach who tells him about the Mattachine Society. Harry shows Craig some publications, and Craig is fascinated that there is an organized group just as angry as he is — and they’re right here in Chicago. He goes to the address listed on the publication. He looks through the building directory. Wanders the halls. But there is no bustling office. It’s just a mailing address. He’s devastated. Craig comes to learn that many of his people are gathered in Greenwich Village, so he saves all of his money for the next two years, when he’ll finally get to put his anger to good use.

Craig Rodwell isn’t the only Chicago queer waiting for his turn to speak his mind. Schoolteacher **Valerie Taylor** finally gets her chance when her novel *Hired Girl* is published. Her debut book isn’t queer, but she is, and she’s paid \$500—her chance to start anew. She buys two dresses, a pair of shoes, and a divorce. Valerie leaves her abusive husband and heads for Chicago with her three sons, where they live in house by the beach built for the workers of the 1893 World’s Fair. Valerie sees lesbian pulp books suddenly filling the shelves of drug stores—which we covered in

season 2, episode 9. As **Ann Bannon's** pulp book *Odd Girl Out* is printed, Valerie Taylor's own Gold Medal **lesbian pulp book** is also published:

VALERIE TAYLOR: *Whisper Their Love*

PULP WOMAN 6: There's was the kind of love they dared not show the world.

HOST: It sells an outrageously high number of copies—2 million. Valerie Taylor's stories are often set in Chicago and feature complicated lesbian characters, often discovering their gay identity, such as Erika, a young Jewish survivor of a concentration camp who moves to the Midwest U.S. and explores lesbian love. Valerie writes many pulp fiction books, including my favorite title, *A World Without Men*, and also *Stranger on Lesbos*—

PULP WOMAN 7: The searching novel of a lonely young wife faced with the temptations of unnatural love.

HOST: Write what you know, Valerie! Soon she's in touch with Kinsey Institute bibliographer and librarian **Jeanette Howard Foster**, and she's hooked up with a new job writing for *The Ladder*.

Lots of Chicago queer art is making national waves: lesbian pulp, and **Chuck Renslow's** beefcake publications. They're sending him to court with the Chicago Postal Service, much like gay icons before him. Like the beefcake act of Sandow and Sieveking, Chuck works alongside his lover—ballet dancer **Dom Orejudos**. Chuck shoots physique photography. Dom paints erotic art—under the name **Etienne**. They were only in their early twenties when they met on the Oak Street Beach and began business ventures together. Etienne started drawing for work in 1953, when he was hired to create erotic drawings for the magazine *Tomorrow's Man*. That magazine was published by the man who owned the gym where he worked out. Chuck and Etienne eventually buy the gym and rename it Triumph Gymnasium, in order to scout for models for their other business venture, Kris Studio. It's named in part to honor trans pioneer Christine Jorgensen. In this studio space, the couple publishes their own physique magazines *Triumph*, *Mars*, and *Rawhide*. The city tries to hit the brakes on Chuck and Etienne's queer creations after the postmaster finds photos featuring “excessive genital delineation.” It's just pictures of buff guys in posing straps. The U.S. Justice Department is called in to raid Kris Studios. Chuck is arrested in the studio on a warrant in the studio and he's reported on in the papers as “the porno king.” He says in court that the negatives found inside his studio were just being held until they're eventually legal, and the cops laugh at the idea of mailing porn someday being legal. Chuck and his ACLU lawyer don't argue to the judge that these images are art, they simply argue that the images *are not* pornography. They point out nude statues around Chicago as an example. That's not pornography. The judge asks the attorney,

JUDGE: Then what is it?

ATTORNEY: It's not for us to determine what it is. All we are saying is what it's not.

JUDGE: You have a good point. Is the prosecutor here saying this is pornography? Because it looks to be just a picture of the human body. Are you saying the human body is pornographic?

HOST: The case is dismissed. And this outcome is supported by the recent ruling of *ONE Magazine* versus postmaster Oleson last year, featured in the finale of season 1. The obscenity laws are slowly eroding away. Chuck and Etienne then buy the Gold Coast Show Lounge and turn it into one of the world's first **leather bars, the Gold Coast**. The walls are decorated with Etienne's erotic Tom of Finland-style artwork. (Check them out on my Instagram @queerserial before *those* censors take the art down. Or visit [queerserial.com/s3e8](http://queerserial.com/s3e8).) In the late '70s, they'll hold a Mr. Gold Coast contest that's so successful, with crowds pouring out into the streets—of the former Towertown—, that they'll transform the event into **International Mr. Leather, IML**, which will run...indefinitely for decades to come. Chicago is still packed with leather daddies every spring. Chuck and Etienne also open the **Chicago Eagle**, among many other bars, and **Man's Country**, an enormous bathhouse where Grace Jones will perform, and so will Barry Manilow, accompanying rising star Bette Midler as she flings poppers into the crowd—true story. But that's the '70s. This is 1961, and Chicago is about to see drastic changes.

MUSIC: darkness returns

HOST: Federal funds are given to the city for **urban renewal**, which is code for luring white people into town to live and shop and push people of color out. It's all part of Daley's plan for Chicago. Norman Mailer will say Mayor Daley is "not a national politician, but a clansman." Vice crackdowns are ordered by the mayor, and Daley pushes for state liquor law changes, in order to shut down gay bars. And if he can't just shut it down, he'll have the gay bar raided, then he'll drag out the bar's license appeals process in order to keep the gay bar closed for months or years. Then the owner's savings will just dry up and they'll be forced to give up the business. Daley says he's doing it to fight organized crime.

Gays can't even gather socially, so they're certainly not a politically strong bloc that can fight this. In order to ever get together under the rain of Bette Midler's poppers, they'll have to figure out how to fight Mayor Daley.

After his reelection, news breaks that Daley actually loosened regulation on organized crime. To turn attention away from this, Daley just replaces the police superintendent. A reformer, O.W. Wilson, takes the job and takes wide authority over the police department and cracks down on the city so hard that churches aren't even allowed to raise money with bingo games. Wilson sends cops to churches to collect their bingo cards—just imagine how he feels about queers and people of color. He uses the press to make mountains out of every little molehill. And he's very strategic about how he orders crackdowns—he says,

O.W. WILSON: One story each day is better than three stories every third day.

HOST: Wilson loves undercover cops, and so-called “preventative” actions by cops in Black neighborhoods.

Reporters are also sent along with plainclothes cops into Black and gay spaces to write true crime articles. It’s a strategy to glorify the crime-stopping investigators working in disguise. Police brutality in Chicago reads like film noir.

Even the drag queen **Tillie the Dirty Old Lady of Chicago** goes into a five-year retirement as the bars get shut down all over town. Panic around every major crime leads to accusations of deviancy. Teens in high schools found out to be homosexual are sent to mental institutions. Women, who secretly meet at house parties, carry a pair of pants to change into at the party and they put their skirts back on before leaving. Transgender people help connect each other to doctors who will discretely supply hormones. *Ebony* and *Jet* pull back on their coverage of the drag balls as their readers write in:

READER 2: Prostitutes, male homosexuals and drug addicts arrogantly paraded along the street with the air that it was a badge of honor to be this sort of scum.

READER 1: I saw in your paper some months ago some men dressed as women. Please don’t advertise the mess.

AUDIO: 1960s house party

HOST: **May 3, 1964.**

AUDIO: pounding on apartment door

COP: Police!

HOST: More than 100 people inside a Chicago apartment panic. They’re here to celebrate... a private gay wedding, and now they scramble for the exits. Running into the bedroom, a guest throws up the window and tumbles out onto the fire escape. He grabs the ladder and slides down to the alley and runs.

AUDIO: steps on fire escape, ladder falling, going back up, man running

HOST: A cop comes around the corner.

COP 2: Where the hell are you coming from?

GAY GUY: Did you see my little poodle, it got away from me, it ran down the alley, and I’m trying to find it, did you see it?

COP 2: Get the hell out of here.

HOST: The cop steps up the fire escape ladder.

AUDIO: ladder coming down

HOST: Everyone else following the guy down the escape stairs turns around and shoves each other back into the window. Inside the apartment, one of the hosts of the wedding, dressed in Marilyn Monroe drag, mouths off to the police as they as they grab her and put her under arrest. The arrested are taken down the main stairs and out the front door. Marilyn Monroe sees the hot floodlights of the press, who were invited along by the police for the raid.

AUDIO: camera flashes

HOST: Marilyn, wrists cuffed behind her, begins to swish down the stairs, blowing kisses to the cameras... as she's shoved into the paddy wagon.

AUDIO: doors slam shut

The next day, the *Chicago Tribune* reports:

TRIBUNE REPORTER: Sex Party – 58 Are Seized, Including Two Juveniles

HOST: Local activists feel discouraged by raids like this. Valerie Taylor, the lesbian pulp author, is invited to speak to the dwindling local Mattachine chapter. There, she meets attorney **Pearl Hart**. Pearl is in her 70s, and has been defending gay men arrested in bars and tearooms for decades, earning her the unofficial title “The Guardian Angel of Chicago’s Gay Community.” She worked with lesbian social worker **Jane Addams at Hull House**. Back in the ‘30s Pearl Hart defended “*ladies of the evening*” in the Chicago Morals Court. Before Pearl, 90% of the women were found guilty. Pearl reversed it, helping 90% of the women go free. She later defended leftists during the Cold War and saved immigrants from deportation. All this while sharing a home with two women, in a polyamorous relationship for decades. When she meets Valerie Taylor at the Mattachine meeting, they fall in love. Valerie begins writing *Unlike Others*—

PULP WOMAN 8: Neither condemning nor condoning but merely revealing the truths of twilight love.

HOST: A story about a Chicago woman who works downtown and lives a secret lesbian life, and receives a call from her best friend, a gay man, who has been arrested in a bar raid. Valerie writes about the need for loyalty between gay women and gay men. Because the two attempts at Mattachine chapters have failed and the local DOB chapter is very small, in that summer of



**1964**, Pearl and Valerie, along with **Ira Jones** and **Bob Basker**, decide to launch the third and final *Chicago Mattachine!*

AUDIO: Mayor Daley “law & order” grandstanding newsreel, fading into...

MUSIC: 1960s bar

HOST: **Louie’s Fun Lounge** has been raided before. But now the bar is prepared. After it was blown up by an alleged gas leak, the Fun Lounge was rebuilt even larger with no windows, no sign, and a steel door. The owner, Louie Gauger, is a large Chicago-born gangster, and pretty much everyone knows what type of business he runs. But people don’t feel too scared drinking at his bar since it’s rumored to be immune to the law, located between two townships. The Fun Lounge is packed with gays coming out from the city to hear the piano player named Georgia White sing her “dirty ditties.” Georgia often neglects to wear underwear, and she’ll pull her dress up to show it all off. But Georgia is not the reason why police raid the Fun Lounge. It comes from much higher—and it’s a very Chicago story:

Prosecutor Richard B. Ogilvie was out to get Tony Accardo. Tony was Al Capone’s bodyguard and a suspect at the St. Valentine’s Day massacre. They called him Joe Batters and Big Tuna. Ogilvie finally got Tony on tax evasion, just like Capone, because Tony deducted expenses for using his own sports car while selling beer. Back in 1960, two tavern owners showed up to Tony’s trial to testify in his defense. One was Louie Gauger of the Fun Lounge. He said, Tony pulled up to the Lounge in his red Mercedes in July of ’56 to take an order for 25 cases of beer. A couple weeks later, Big Tuna was found guilty, but the sentence was overturned. That’s a whole other story. The point is, Ogilvie was bent on revenge after Tuna slipped off the hook, so Ogilvie publicly bashed the Fun Lounge in his campaign speeches, saying it was “too revolting to describe in detail in public,” which, I think, is a pretty lazy insult. Ogilvie has the bar watched for three weeks, and, on **April 25, 1964**, a sheriff is sent in plainclothes to Louie’s Fun Lounge. He sees 10 or 15 male couples dancing and half a dozen embracing. He leaves the bar and comes back with a team of officers, bursting in and lining up to block patrons from leaving. More cops block the back door. Customers scurry, running for the beer storage room and into Louie’s apartment connected to the back of the club. Arrests are made. 109 people are taken outside to waiting buses, surrounded by the press. Arrestees cover their faces as cameras flash. Cops give reporters names, addresses, and places of employment. Fun Lounge guests range from 19 to 56 years old and work all sorts of different professions—including a couple CPD employees. 6 hours later, everyone is finally booked and then released on a bond of \$25 each after a charge of either “inmates of a disorderly house” or “lewd and lascivious conduct.” The next morning, the story hits the doorstep of every home in Chicago. The *Chicago Sun-Times* announces,

SUN-TIMES REPORTER: Area Teachers among 109 Seized in Raid on Vice Den

HOST: The *Chicago Tribune* prints the story on the front page:

TRIBUNE REPORTER: Teacher, 1 of 8 Seized in Vice Raid, Quits. Many of the men arrested carried powder puffs and lipsticks and some of them wore wigs, according to Richard Cain, the sheriff's investigator.

HOST: In May, a circuit court judge dismisses the charges against 99 of the Fun Lounge patrons, but it's too late for the many people whose names already appeared in the papers. *ONE Magazine* in LA reports "conviction by publicity." Not surprising, the investigator Richard Cain and the plainclothes sheriff are soon after convicted of being part of the same crime syndicate Louie Gauger was rumored to be working for. The *Tribune* reports,

TRIBUNE REPORTER: It is a little hard to tell who are the cops and who are the robbers in this script.

HOST: Richard Ogilvie is later elected governor. A wave of raids follow.

AUDIO: sirens

TRIBUNE REPORTER: 33 Men Seized Thru Vice Raid on Bathhouse

HOST: The Lincoln Baths in Old Town are cleared out.

LIEUTENANT THOMAS KERNAN: There has been an increase recently in night spot performances by female impersonators.

HOST: Many of the people arrested in these raids lose their jobs and families, and some commit suicide. Furious at the scale of the Fun Lounge raid in particular, Pearl, Valerie, Ira, and Bob go into action as—the **Mattachine Midwest**.

**July 25, 1965.** The first Mattachine Midwest meeting is held in the ballroom of the Midland Hotel. More than 140 people show up. Pearl Hart speaks, so does a woman from Chicago's Bilitis chapter, and so does the new group's chosen president, Bob Basker:

BOB BASKER: In our time, homosexuals have been the victims of abuses winked at by the law authorities. They have been arrested without due process of law, victimized by odious police methods such as entrapment, manhandled by the police and deprived of legal redress when physically assaulted by gangs. Our work will help many people who will never support or understand our purpose of existence. Nevertheless, those of us here tonight have the responsibility to give of ourselves to strengthen Mattachine Midwest. It is our vehicle in this generation for advancing the rights of homosexuals.

MUSIC: optimism

HOST: Many of the guests have never heard such an empowering message. Most of them don't know an era like the Pansy Craze ever existed — right where they're sitting — not that long ago. Mattachine Midwest hits the ground running. They announce a 24-hour hotline, their newsletter, and a lending library. They hold a news conference announcing their founding and invite Frank Kameny of the Mattachine Society of Washington, Randy Wicker of the New York Mattachine, Clark Polak of the Janus Society, and Larry Littlejohn of SIR to join them on the Nightline radio program and Irv Kupcinec's very popular Chicago television program. Afterward, Frank Kameny shows a large audience of new local homophile activists his films of the recent ECHO pickets.

After **Jim Bradford** becomes president, Mattachine Midwest only becomes more militant. Bradford openly criticizes the behavior of police through the newsletter, which reaches about 2,000 people. Valerie Taylor writes the newsletter on her dining room table, and members take stacks of it to bars and bookstores around Chicago every month to spread word of the movement. The paper becomes so well known that police start to use it as evidence that a bar is a “disorderly house” of homosexuals. In the newsletter, Bradford criticizes cops for using the “stop and quiz” method — an easy way to question men in suspected gay cruising areas, and people of color walking in white neighborhoods, and women who are alone and dressed too sexually. Jim takes on police tactics like entrapment and he demands police meet with Mattachine, but the cops claim they have, in their words, “inadequate knowledge of the topic”—which is the point Mattachine is trying to make. So the Mattachine members start reporting specific names of officers who tried to flirt with them and entrap them in public.

JIM BRADFORD: It's time things were changed. It's time to stop running. Hold your heads up high. Be proud of your individuality. Spend your energy fighting for equality.

HOST: Soon, the Chicago Daughters of Bilitis chapter starts growing, and they start looking for an office. 150 women can't fit into a living room. In **September 1965**, Randy Wicker reports in *Eastern Mattachine Magazine*:

RANDY WICKER: Mattachine Midwest got off to a good start with a minor victory in the courtroom. In Chicago, Friday night is often “round-up” night for homosexuals. The police, as we hear it, arrest those they think to be homosexuals and charge them with disorderly conduct. They are held overnight or over the weekend, and when they appear in the courtroom, the cases are dismissed because the arresting officer doesn't show up to testify against them.

A recent “round-up” resulted in one of the victims calling the offices of Mattachine Midwest, [which] arranged bailbondsmen and attorneys for the victims. The next day, when the cases came to trial there were no arresting officers on hand to testify. The attorney complained to the judge that this practice wasted the lawyer's time, the defendants' time and the court's time. It was simply a means of harassment and crowded the already over-crowded calendars. The judge agreed, and he sent for the arresting officers. They, being night-working cops, probably were dragged out of their warm beds. One of the officers confessed that he and his brother officers never appeared in such cases. The judge not only dismissed the cases against the defendants, but

reprimanded the cops.

HOST: The Mattachine Midwest Newsletter reports dangerous cruising areas, and your rights if you're arrested. They even have Pearl Hart's piece reprinted as its own pamphlet, called, "**Your Rights If Arrested**," and they pass them out in the bars.

And on **June 20, 1966**, the underground gay community rises into more mainstream press.

HOST: The Chicago *Daily News* runs a special series by Lois Wille about the mysterious gay community. Lois has recently won a Pulitzer for a series on hospitals neglecting to give birth control to women who can't afford it, and she's assigned this piece about the gay underworld since sex crimes are hot right now. Her editor even hires a male police reporter to accompany her into the so-dangerous gay bars, but the guy dresses so square that the gay bars won't let him in. He waits outside while Lois goes in for her scoop.

AUDIO: typewriter

LOIS WILLE: Twilight World That's Tormented. The all-too-obvious and disturbing facet of life in Chicago are that homosexuals—male deviates—are emerging openly in the city as never before.

HOST: She doesn't mention lesbians at all in the four-part series, and she only visits predominantly white gay bars. But—despite all that, and the grabby lede, her pieces are fairly sympathetic.

LOIS WILLE: Big cities act like lodestars, drawing homosexuals who can't hide their deviancy in small towns.

HOST: She even quotes Pearl Hart:

PEARL HART: It just doesn't make sense to go after homosexuals.

HOST: Lois Wille covers Mattachine Midwest and other organizations, and describes a scene in a courtroom in which a defendant yelled at the judge, "I'm happy. Are you happy? Well, I am... Don't tell me I'm sick." The reporter even reveals how the Mafia abuses the gay community. She ends the pieces by suggesting homosexuals should have protection by police against blackmailers and violent people, and she says that the police have failed this community. Lois Wille will later cringe at the insensitive language she uses in the pieces, but the coverage, at the time, is seen as a very progressive call to action for Chicago to radically change the way they treat queers.

But a summer of raids continues and the Chicago papers expose more homosexuals, while Mattachine Midwest still can't get many of those same papers to print ads for their organization. Cops still cruise gay men on the street in plainclothes until someone invites them to go home

with them – then they make an arrest. The officers expose themselves in public restrooms and arrest any gay man who responds to it. They hide, literally, in closets waiting to catch men in park restrooms. They listen in on flirtatious encounters in bars and shut the place down when they hear a pickup line. Valerie Taylor writes in the *Mattachine Midwest Newsletter*:

VALERIE TAYLOR: Enticement, Entrapment, and Harassment face the homosexual every time he steps into the street. As children, we were told that the policeman was there to protect and help us. To the homosexual citizen such thoughts are pure nonsense. The time for shrinking violets and closet queenery is over. ‘Lawless police’ is a phrase which still aptly describes Chicago’s cops...the entrapments, shakedown, brutality, and corruption continue...no one is immune. Quit buying the right-wing line about crime in the streets and wake up to YOUR rights. Crime is as much rampant inside the police department as elsewhere. It’s time things were changed. It’s time to stop running. Hold your heads up high. Be proud of your individuality. Spend your energy fighting for equality.

HOST: The Midwest group follows after Frank Kameny’s *Mattachine* militancy. The Midwest president writes,

JIM BRADFORD: Maybe we need to form a ‘Gay Power’ bloc! Chicago’s homosexual community once again faces the dangers of a jittery police department as election time draws near. A series of raids shook responsible homosexuals to the core.

HOST: The *Mattachine Midwest Newsletter* encourages people to join their fight with simple arguments – that they might need the *Mattachine* any day upon a random arrest. And that it’s not enough to survive a broken system — we should challenge it.

VALERIE TAYLOR: The homosexual charged with being an ‘inmate of a disorderly house’ who refuses to fight for a ‘not guilty’ decision continues to put every drinking homosexual in jeopardy.

HOST: **October 1, 1966.** *Mattachine Midwest* calls for a demonstration outside the Chicago *Sun-Times* and the *Daily News*.

JIM BRADFORD: Why on October 1? October 1, 1966 is a day of nationwide efforts sponsored by 22 organizations across the country which are active in the Homophile Movement.

VALERIE TAYLOR: Why at the *Sun-Times & Daily News*? The Chicago *Daily News* and *Sun-Times* provided a good example of the misunderstandings society has about homosexuals. *Mattachine Midwest* submitted an ad to them for publication today. The ad would have drawn attention to October 1. The newspapers refused the ad, stating that while homosexuality might be fit for news coverage, it was not fit for their advertising pages. We feel the papers missed the point: We did not wish to advertise in favor of homosexuality; we merely wanted to illuminate the problems homosexuals face. This is a legitimate social issue, but out of squeamishness as

well as ignorance of advertising practices in other parts of the country, the Sun-Times and Daily News rejected our ad. We therefore take this limited means of publicizing that fact.

HOST: Such a militant Midwest movement has its conservative backlash, of course. The following year, **1967**, a 50-year-old closeted pastor briefly takes the reigns of Mattachine Midwest. He puts a patriotic bald eagle over his column in the newsletter and writes “Printed in the U.S.A.” on the cover page. The whole newsletter is printed entirely in caps, with his own rhetoric pushed. He says—to his fellow homophiles—that homosexuals want to create—

PASTOR: A FRUITY FRUIT WORLD. THEY ARE DISTURBED.

HOST: Mattachine Midwest members begin holding their meetings in secret while this pastor holds control for 16 months. Their activism basically stops. The pastor rants in the newsletter about the people he calls “radicals” on CBS, like Jack Nichols.

PASTOR: I AM SPEAKING OF THE LESS MASCULINE MEMBERS OF OUR GROUP WHO SEEM TO PRIDE THEMSELVES IN PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF PSEUDO-FEMININITY... GAY PEOPLE ARE NOT SO BAD TO BE WITH, EXCEPT FOR THE ‘FEMMES.’

HOST: Fortunately, in **May 1968**, Jim Bradford is voted back in as president and Valerie Taylor returns as editor — just in time for Chicago to pull the focus of the world.

MUSIC: The Trip

HOST: West of Michigan Avenue, *in Towertown*, a new gay-owned restaurant and bar called **The Trip** has become a new hot spot. Midday lunches are packed with upscale shoppers on the first floor, and after-dinner cabarets fill the space on the second floor. Up on the third, people play pool and pinball. On Sunday nights, The Trip is a private club with membership cards required. This neighborhood still becomes very gay at night when all the heteros leave work and the shops and head home.

**In January 1968**, a plainclothes officer slips into The Trip — on a gay night. How’d this cop get into a members-only club? During a previous, unrelated arrest, he illegally stole a membership card to The Trip from someone he was arresting. Now inside the club, he observes members of the same sex dancing together. The Trip is raided. 13 patrons are charged with public indecency and soliciting for prostitution.

TRIBUNE REPORTER: More than 140 men, including prominent professors, business men and several clergymen, were questioned by police last night after a raid on a reputed private club for homosexuals on the near north side.

HOST: The charges are dismissed in March. And although they lose some straight lunchtime business because of the bad publicity, The Trip stays open.

Until two months later, **May 1968**. This time, two undercover cops go in, but they only arrest one patron and one employee. But more importantly, they get the local liquor authorities to issue an emergency closing order to revoke the bar's liquor license. Just as Mayor Daley strategized, if the bar wants to appeal this, it will drag on for months until they run out of money to keep the building. But the gay owners, Ralf Johnston and Dean Kolberg, are determined to stay open. No gay bar has ever challenged this law before, but they hire an attorney and prepare to take the case to the Illinois Supreme Court. The Trip will remain closed until their case is heard.

In the meantime, The Trip will host Mattachine Midwest's monthly public meetings. The Trip will also receive a request to host a rather large gay meeting: the **North American Conference of Homophile Organizations, NACHO**, will bring leaders such as Barbara Gittings, Frank Kameny, and Shirley Willer to hold their multi-organization national homophile event inside The Trip.

Meanwhile, as The Trip prepares, gay bars shut down all over Chicago—voluntarily. Queer business owners are worried that the mayor and the police will be sweeping through the city again as mobs of visitors arrive and the eyes of the world are on Chicago for the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Next week on episode 9, “Mattachine Millenia,” or, “The Whole World Is Watching.”

*Learn more in the episode credits & at [queerserial.com/s3e8](http://queerserial.com/s3e8)*