



# The Up Stairs Lounge Arson: Thirty-Two Deaths in a New Orleans Gay Bar, June 24, 1973

*Clayton Delery-Edwards*

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On June 24, 1973, a fire in a New Orleans gay bar killed 32 people. This still stands as the deadliest fire in the city's history. Though arson was suspected, and though the police identified a likely culprit, no arrest was ever made. Additionally, government and religious leaders who normally would have provided moral leadership at a time of crisis were either silent or were openly disdainful of the dead, most of whom were gay men. Based upon review of hundreds of primary and secondary sources, including contemporary news accounts, interviews with former patrons of the lounge, and the extensive documentary trail left behind by the criminal investigations, The Up Stairs Lounge Arson tells the story of who used to go to this bar, what happened on the day of the fire, what course the investigations took, why an arrest was never made, and what the lasting effects of the fire have been.



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