



Line, 15 Years After Two Gay Men Saved It

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BY NEAL BROVERMAN

It was a decade and a half ago that a *New York Times* article brought two gay men together who joined forces to create a modern landmark.

Like the Statue of Liberty and Broadway, the High Line is now a quintessential part of New York City. Tourists must see it, and locals appreciate it when crowds thin out. But the 1.6-mile elevated park and urban refuge — which served as a freight line beginning in the 1930s — was this close to being torn down in 1999. That was when a [New York Times article](#) brought the High Line and its imminent demise to the attention of two preservation-minded gay men, Robert Hammond and Josh David.

The Gray Lady story alerted Hammond and David to a community meeting on the forthcoming tear-down. The guys met there and soon decided to work together to turn the rail line into the crown jewel that it is today. Upon its opening in 2009, it became not only a respite from Manhattan's busy streets, but also a catalyst for development on the once-dingy far West Side.

The High Line is especially beloved by many gay men, who partied in the clubs that surrounded it; places like the Roxy, Twilo, and Anvil bar. Back before gentrification took hold, men would sneak up to roller skate on the tracks and have sex on warm nights. Two years ago, Hammond and David hosted a discussion at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center in the West Village entitled “Behind the Bushes: The Secret Homo History of the High Line.” They shared a few tidbits about the event [in *The New York Times*](#), the newspaper that inadvertently helped save it from destruction.

[Click here](#) to read more about the High Line, including info on the newest northern extension — to 34th Street — which opens in the fall, and see images from the park below.



David (left) and Hammond









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