Kollege Klub

714 State Street (1953-1972)

529 N. Lake St (1973-current)

The Kollege Klub was founded in 1953 by Jack Meier and his sons John and Jim. It replaced the Campus Soda Grill, a longtime student hangout dating back to the 1930s. The Kollege Klub was known for its iconic UW rowing shell that hung above the bar.

It’s not clear how, why or when the Kollege Klub became a gay hangout, but it was listed in national gay guides throughout the 1960s as a popular meeting spot.

The Klub was displaced in 1972 by the construction of the Library Mall. After relocating to the corner of Lake and Langdon Streets, the Kollege Klub seems to have fallen out of favor with gay men. It’s likely that the opening of the Back Door, the Pirate Ship, and other “community first” gay bars were more attractive to the Stonewall Generation than the earlier, more mixed venues.

The Kollege Klub was renovated (for the first time) in 2011. It remains open today, under the fourth generation of Meier family leadership.