
File ID: 2024-01254

6/26/2024

Discussion Item 3.

Sacramento LGBTQ+ Historic Experience Project First Draft Historic Context Statement (M23-005)

File ID: 2024-01254

Location: Citywide

Recommendation: Review and comment.

Contact: Sean de Courcy, Preservation Director, (916) 808-2796, sdecourcy@cityofsacramento.org, Community Development Department

Presenter: Sean de Courcy, Preservation Director, (916) 808-2796, sdecourcy@cityofsacramento.org, Community Development Department

Attachments:

1-Description/Analysis

2-Background

3-First Draft Sacramento LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement

Description/Analysis

Issue Detail: The City of Sacramento's Community Development Department, with funding from the California Office of Historic Preservation, is undertaking a significant initiative to document and evaluate the city's LGBTQ+ historic resources. This project, titled the LGBTQ+ Historic Experience Project, aims to recognize and preserve sites of cultural, social, and political importance to Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community. The project involves comprehensive research, oral history collection, community outreach, and detailed surveys, culminating in a Historic Context Statement that outlines key themes, significant individuals, and crucial events shaping the LGBTQ+ experience in Sacramento.

City staff have completed the first draft of the Historic Context Statement. We are requesting that the Preservation Commission, and the public, review and provide comments on this draft. Your feedback is invaluable in ensuring that the document accurately reflects the rich and diverse history of Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community and effectively supports the city's preservation planning. We encourage you to review the draft thoroughly and share your insights and suggestions to help us refine the draft.

Policy Considerations: This project is part of a larger effort by the City's historic preservation office to celebrate the historical experiences of Sacramento's underrepresented and minority communities. This effort recently resulted in the successful completion of the African American Experience project which included a similar scope of work.

The development of an LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement and the associated Historical Resources Survey aligns with the 2040 Sacramento General Plan's objectives within the Historic and Cultural Resources Element. This project supports the following goals and policies:

HCR-1: Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources: HCR-1.5 Historic Surveys and Context Statements: The initiative addresses the need for updated historic resource surveys and context statements, evaluating the eligibility of properties 45 years and older for listing in national, state, or local registers. HCR-1.1 Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources, Landscapes, and Site Features: Promotes the preservation and recognition of historic resources, ensuring the continued vitality of Sacramento's diverse communities.

HCR-3: Public Involvement and Awareness: HCR-3.1 Education and Awareness: The project fosters an awareness of the significance of LGBTQ+ history and cultural resources, promoting social and cultural diversity.

Economic Impacts: None.

Environmental Considerations:

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): The request for review and comment on the draft historic context statement is an administrative activity, such as general policy making, and is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(2).

Sustainability: Not applicable.

Commission/Committee Action: No official commission or committee Action has been taken on this item.

Rationale for Recommendation: An LGBTQ+ historic context statement and documentation effort would provide guidance for identifying and evaluating potential historic resources related to Sacramento's rich LGBTQ+ history. Historic resources associated with Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community are the product of the dynamic, conflicting, and intersecting perspectives of personal identity, public attitudes about human sexuality, and behavioral science theories concerning sex and gender.

At the current time, these undocumented resources lack the protection that comes from historical designation. Development pressure in Sacramento is more intense now than it has been in the City's history with the highest intensity focused on the City's urban core and the major transportation corridors, the same location where many of the LGBTQ+ resources are expected to be located both within and bordering the Lavender Heights neighborhood. These resources were typically housed in ordinary, non-descript structures lacking architectural design significance-many of them dating from the recent past-and which do not convey their important social-historical associations at a casual glance. Some of these structures have likely been altered in ways that obscure their original architectural character. A LGBTQ+ historic context statement and the targeted survey proposed as part of the grant-funded project will allow the City to identify and incorporate these resources into our historic preservation planning process and directly relates to Goal 2 of the Statewide Historic Preservation Plan to increase collaboration and partnership between preservationists and a diverse array of non-traditional partners.

Financial Considerations: None.

Local Business Enterprise (LBE): None.

Background:

Project Origins and Goals

The LGBTQ+ Historic Experience Project was initiated by the City of Sacramento as part of a broader effort to recognize and preserve the cultural and historical contributions of the LGBTQ+ community. Sacramento boasts a rich LGBTQ+ history, characterized by significant social movements, key events, and influential individuals. However, much of this history remains undocumented and unprotected. To address this gap, the City embarked on this project aimed at identifying, documenting, and preserving sites of historical significance to the LGBTQ+ community. The primary goals of the project are to:

1. **Document & Identify:** Through the development of a Historic Context Statement document significant historical themes associated with LGBTQ+ history. Identify sites, buildings, and landmarks of historical and cultural significance to the LGBTQ+ community.
2. **Preserve and Protect:** Ensure significant sites are recognized and protected under local historic preservation process, including listing resources on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources.
3. **Educate and Engage:** Raise awareness about the historical contributions of the LGBTQ+ community and foster public appreciation through educational initiatives and community engagement.
4. **Enhance Civic Identity:** Strengthen Sacramento's identity as an inclusive city that honors and celebrates its diverse cultural heritage.

Consultant Selection Process

To ensure a comprehensive and professional approach to this significant project, the City issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in late 2023. The RFP invited qualified consultants with expertise in historic preservation, particularly those with experience in LGBTQ+ history and cultural resource surveys, to submit proposals.

The selection process was rigorous and transparent, involving several key steps:

1. **Objective Review Committee:** An objective consultant selection committee was formed with members of the LGBTQ+ community. Preservation Staff facilitated the review, but remained objective and neutral in the selection process.
2. **Proposal Review:** An initial review of all submitted proposals was conducted to ensure compliance with the RFP requirements.
3. **Evaluation Criteria:** Proposals were evaluated based on specific criteria, including the consultant's relevant experience, methodology, project understanding, qualifications of the project team, and cost-effectiveness.

4. **Selection:** Based on the evaluations, the committee selected the most qualified consultant, Page & Turnbull, who demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of LGBTQ+ history, innovative methodologies for historical research, and a proven track record in similar projects, including the award-winning Sacramento African American Historic Experience Project.

Major Project Accomplishments

Since the project's inception, several major milestones have been achieved:

1. **Historical Research:** Page & Turnbull has conducted extensive archival research and reviewed existing oral history interviews. This research provided a foundational understanding of Sacramento's LGBTQ+ history.
2. **Community Engagement:** To ensure the project reflected the community's perspectives and priorities, multiple public meetings were held. The first on April 18, 2024, was attended by roughly 50 people, and the second on May 23, 2024, with about 25 attendees. These meetings provided valuable input and helped shape the direction of the project. Staff has also met with key individuals and organizations and formed pivotal partnerships, including with the LGBTQ+ Community Center, the Lavendar Library, and with Preservation Sacramento.
3. **Draft Historic Context Statement:** A comprehensive first draft of the Historic Context Statement was developed (Attachment 3), detailing the historical narrative of the LGBTQ+ community in Sacramento, significant sites, and key historical themes.
4. **Historical Resources Survey:** Page & Turnbull has developed a survey methodology and begun planning the historical resources survey.

How the Community Can Get Involved

Community involvement is crucial to the success of this project. The City is committed to an inclusive process that values the input and participation of the whole community. Here are several ways the community can get involved:

1. **Review and Comment on the Draft:** The first draft of the Historic Context Statement (**Attachment 3**) was published in the first week of June 2024. Community members are encouraged to review the document and provide feedback. The draft will be available on the City's website as well as at future meetings.
2. **Attend Public Meetings:** The City will host additional public meetings to discuss the draft statement and survey findings. These meetings are opportunities for community members to ask questions, share their thoughts, and contribute to the project's development.

3. **Submit Oral Histories and Photos:** Residents with personal stories, photographs, or memorabilia related to Sacramento's LGBTQ+ history are encouraged to contribute copies of these materials. These contributions can enrich the historical narrative and provide valuable context for the project.
4. **Apply for a Stipend:** The Stipend Program is a partnership with the Lavendar Library and Preservation Sacramento. Funded in part by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the program offers financial compensation to individuals who provide a valuable contribution to the project.

Project Next Steps

As the project progresses, several key steps will be undertaken to ensure its successful completion and implementation:

1. **Finalize the Historic Context Statement:** Incorporate feedback from the Preservation Commission, the public, and other groups and individuals to refine and finalize the Historic Context Statement.
2. **Historical Resources Survey:** Conduct an intensive survey of Lavendar Heights and other individual properties to identify sites with historic significance.
3. **Ongoing Community Engagement:** Continue to engage with the community through regular updates, public meetings, and volunteer opportunities. Maintaining an open dialogue with residents is essential to the project's success and sustainability.

By documenting and preserving Sacramento's LGBTQ+ history, this project not only honors the contributions of the LGBTQ+ community but also enriches the city's cultural heritage and fosters a more inclusive and diverse historical narrative. The City of Sacramento is committed to continuing this important work and ensuring that the stories and sites of significance to the LGBTQ+ community are recognized, preserved, and celebrated for generations to come.

SACRAMENTO LGBTQ+ HISTORIC EXPERIENCE PROJECT HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
[23313]

PREPARED FOR
CITY OF SACRAMENTO

June 2024

FIRST PUBLIC DRAFT



Cover image: March on Sacramento for Lesbian and Gay Rights (1980). Source: San José State University, Special Collections and Archives.

Disclaimer: This First Public Draft skews heavily toward the history of the gay white male experience in Sacramento. Public input is needed to develop a more inclusive history of the LGBTQ+ experience in Sacramento.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| PROJECT BACKGROUND & GOALS | 1 |
| What is a Historic Context Statement..... | 1 |
| Project Team | 1 |
| METHODOLOGY & OUTREACH..... | 2 |
| Literature Review..... | 3 |
| Archival Research | 3 |
| Oral History Interviews | 4 |
| Community Outreach & Stipend Program..... | 4 |
| Lavender Heights Survey..... | 4 |
| TERMINOLOGY | 5 |
| THEME 1: EARLY GENDER TRANSGRESSIVE EXPRESSION IN THE SACRAMENTO AREA, PRE-1940 .. | 9 |
| Two-Spirits in Native American Societies | 9 |
| Spanish, Mexican & Early American Periods | 10 |
| Gender and Sexuality in the United States, Late 1700s-1900..... | 11 |
| The American West..... | 12 |
| Introduction of the Term “Homosexual” | 15 |
| Early 20 th Century & Birth of the First Homosexual Communities | 16 |
| Nonnormative Gender and Sexuality in Sacramento, Mid-19 th to Early 20 th Centuries..... | 18 |
| THEME 2: FINDING ONE ANOTHER: WORLD WAR II & POSTWAR-ERA SACRAMENTO | 23 |
| World War II and Shifting Gender Norms | 23 |
| Cold War and the Lavender Scare..... | 24 |
| The Homophile Movement | 26 |
| Cruising & Gay Bar Culture | 29 |
| THEME 3: OUT & PROUD: DEVELOPMENT OF A VISIBLE SACRAMENTO LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY, 1969-CA. 1995 | 36 |
| Formation of LGBTQ+ Subcultures | 37 |
| Gay Bars & Cruising Locations..... | 39 |
| Lavender Heights..... | 47 |
| LGBTQ+ Newspapers & Media | 52 |
| LGBTQ+ Social Clubs & Recreation | 57 |
| Religious & Spiritual Expression Within the LGBTQ+ Community..... | 63 |
| Gay Pride Parades | 66 |
| THEME 4: AIDS & THE SACRAMENTO LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY’S RESPONSE, 1981-1996 | 70 |
| Federal and Global Context | 70 |

AIDS Advocacy in Sacramento71

THEME 5. POLITICAL ACTIVISM & THE FIGHT FOR LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN CALIFORNIA'S STATE

CAPITAL, 1969-2000 81

 The Gay Liberation Movement in Sacramento.....82

 Political Advocacy & The Push for Legislative Change.....85

 Responses to Continuing Discrimination92

CONCLUSION 95

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 96

APPENDICES 104

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[This section will be completed in a later draft]

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND & GOALS

What is a Historic Context Statement

As part of the effort to accomplish these goals and outcomes, the Sacramento LGBTQ+ Experience History Project provides a historic context statement (HCS) as a foundation for the identification of significant individuals, key events, buildings, and sites associated with Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community. An HCS is a specialized historic study. As defined by the National Park Service, it is an organizational structure for the interpretation of history that groups information about historic properties sharing a common theme, a common geographical area, and a common time period. That is, it is the history of the physical development of a place during a certain time and organized by themes and patterns. In this case, the Sacramento LGBTQ+ Experience History Project HCS focuses on the history of the LGBTQ+ community (theme) in Sacramento (geographic area) from the 19th century through the year 2000 (time period). While the LGBTQ+ community extended across the greater Sacramento area, the primary focus of this context is within the current boundaries of the City of Sacramento, though important locations and events in West Sacramento and the surrounding area are discussed as they played an important role in local LGBTQ+ history. The end date, approximately the year 2000, was selected to capture the LGBTQ+ community's response to the AIDS epidemic and important events in efforts to gain equal rights in the 1990s, as well as to allow for sufficient time and distance between the present and the events described to adequately understand their impact in the context of the past. It is important to note that the HCS is not a comprehensive history of Sacramento or the LGBTQ+ community's contributions to the city. It does not include all themes, potentially significant built resources, or individuals related to the city's LGBTQ+ history. Instead, it provides a general overview of the community's presence in Sacramento and the forces that shaped its lived experiences, development, and activities over a specific period of time.

Project Team

This HCS was prepared by Page & Turnbull, a California-based architecture and planning firm that has been dedicated to historic preservation since 1973. With its headquarters in San Francisco, the firm has had an office in Sacramento since 2006. Page & Turnbull staff responsible for this project includes Principal-in-Charge Christina Dikas, Project Manager/Senior Associate Cultural Resources Planner Clare Flynn, and Cultural Resources Planner Samantha Purnell, all of whom meet the

Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in Historic Architecture, Architectural History, and/or History.

Coordination of the project and public outreach was undertaken by City of Sacramento Preservation Director Sean deCourcy and Preservation Planner Henry Feuss. Considerable day-to-day assistance on the project was provided by City of Sacramento interns.

METHODOLOGY & OUTREACH

The HCS is organized thematically, beginning with two chapters that provide a broad chronological overview of LGBTQ+ history through 1968 and connects important international, national, and statewide events to local LGBTQ+ history in Sacramento. The overview is intended to provide the necessary background information for the more focused thematic chapters that follow. The organization and content of this HCS are consistent with federal, state, and local guidelines for developing historic contexts and registering historic properties. These include the guidelines found in the following publications:

- National Park Service: National Register Bulletin No. 15 *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*
- National Register Bulletin No. 16A *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*
- National Register Bulletin No. 16B *How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form*
- National Register Bulletin No. 24 *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*
- State of California, Office of Historic Preservation "Instructions for Recording Historical Resources"
- California Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2006-2010
- Marie Nelson, State of California, Office of Historic Preservation, "Writing Historic Contexts"
- State of California, Office of Historic Preservation, "OHP Preferred Format for Historic Context Statements"

Numerous and varied sources of information were reviewed to create this report. Primary source documents that originated within the historical period include personal narratives and oral histories, newspaper articles published in *Mom...Guess What...!*, *the Sacramento Bee*, and other media publications; business listings in the Damron Guides; photographs; maps; official reports and records; and records of building construction. Of particular importance are oral histories gathered by community members and scholars that are archived at the Lavendar Library; Center for Sacramento History; California State University, Sacramento; and Sierra College, or which were conducted purposely for this project. These oral histories and biographies provide a first-hand

account of the lives and experiences of individual members of Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community and are an invaluable resource for continued research.

Literature Review

A broad review of existing written academic research and popular histories related to the history of the LGBTQ+ community in Sacramento, as well as the state of California and United States, formed the basis of the HCS. Principal literary sources that informed this study include William Burg's books, *Sacramento Renaissance: Art, Music & Activism in California's Capital City* (2013) and *Midtown Sacramento: Creative Soul of the City* (2014). Research term papers completed by students at local and regional universities were also referenced, including Michael Andrew Claussen's master's thesis, "Lavender Heights: The Emerging Gay Community in Downtown Sacramento, California," (California State University, Chico, 1998); Stan F. Carlsen's master's thesis, "Out on the Inside: A Case Study of the Political Transformation of the LGBTQ Community in California" (California State University, Sacramento, 2006); and Amber Elena Pion's master's thesis, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic: AIDS in Sacramento, 1981-1989" (California State University, Sacramento, 2010).

Recent historic context statements for LGBTQ+ communities in other California cities were also referenced to provide general background information. These include the City of Los Angeles' *SurveyLA LGBT Historic Context Statement* (2014), prepared by GPA Consulting, as well as the City and County of San Francisco's *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco*, written by Donna J. Graves and Shayne E. Watson (2016).

Archival Research

The following is a summary of the archival research that informed the HCS:

- Historic photographs, oral histories, archival collections donated by members of the LGBTQ+ community, and other research materials at the Lavender Library and Center for Sacramento History
- Newspaper articles published in *Mom...Guess What...!* and other local LGBTQ+ newspapers and publications that are held by the Lavender Library, Center for Sacramento History, and California State University, Sacramento Library
- Online historic newspaper articles in the *Sacramento Bee*, *Sacramento Union*, *Sacramento Star*, and others at Newspapers.com
- Online maps, aerial photographs, and historic photographs from the Sacramento Public Library, Calisphere.org, and UC Santa Barbara's FrameFinder website
- Archival materials held by the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco, ONE Archives at the University of Southern California, and other state LGBTQ+ repositories.

- City directories, United States federal census records, and other records held by Ancestry.com
- Photographs, booklets, pamphlets, and other materials provided by members of the public

City of Sacramento interns collected and mapped the addresses of LGBTQ+ businesses listed in Damron's Men's Travel Guide (the Damron Guides) in Sacramento from 1965 to 1989 and scoured Jail Register records at the Center for Sacramento History to document arrests of gender non-conforming individuals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Oral History Interviews

[This section will be completed in a later draft]

Community Outreach & Stipend Program

[This section will be completed in a later draft]

Lavender Heights Survey

[This section will be completed in a later draft]

TERMINOLOGY

The LGBTQ+ community is broad and diverse. Words and terminology used to refer to the community as a whole, as well as subgroups within it, have evolved over time and have complex meanings, many of which vary in usage and acceptance between generations. The term LGBTQ+ is a relatively recent one that came into use in the 1990s and is still contested.¹ Additionally, no term exists that accurately reflects the LGBTQ+ community in all of its complexities before the 2000s.² To address these language challenges, an attempt has been made throughout the HCS to first use terminology that would have been known and understood during the time period being described (such as “gender non-conforming” or “gender transgressive” prior to the introduction of the term “homosexual” in the late 19th century, “homosexual” from the late 19th century to the 1950s, and “homophile” to describe precursors to the gay rights groups of the 1960s and 1970s). The word “gay,” though it does not accurately reflect the diversity of the community, was often used as an umbrella term for the community through at least the 1990s, and has, therefore, been used in some instances to describe the community as a whole in the period between the 1950s and 1990s, prior to the introduction of the term LGBTQ+. Where the gender identification and/or sexual orientation of groups or individuals is known, more specific terms, such as “gay man,” “lesbian,” or “transgender” are used.

The following list of terms is adapted from GLAAD’s Glossary of Terms and UC Davis’ LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary, which were drafted in collaboration with other U.S.-based LGBTQ+ community organizations and leaders.³ Additional historical information has been added to provide context for the emergence of specific terms used in this report, some of which are no longer accepted or used by the LGBTQ+ community.

Bisexual: An adjective used to describe a person who has the potential to be physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Cisgender: An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.

¹ Erin Blakemore, “From LGBT to LGBTQIA+: The Evolving Recognition of Identify,” National Geographic, October 19, 2021, accessed May 21, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/from-lgbt-to-lgbtqia-the-evolving-recognition-of-identity>.

² Elizabeth A. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950 to 1994* (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 2002), xix.

³ “Glossary of Terms,” GLAAD, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://glaad.org/reference/terms/>; “LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary,” UC Davis, accessed May 11, 2024, <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary#d>. This document uses the term “LGBTQ+” rather than “LGBTQIA” with the intention of including all possible gender and sexual identities within the community.

Drag/Drag King/Drag Queen: The theatrical performance of one or multiple genders via dressing in the clothing of a different gender, or in a manner different from how one would usually dress. Drag queens perform in distinctly feminine attire. Drag kings perform in distinctly masculine attire. Drag is a form of gender expression and is not an indication of gender identity. Individuals who dress in drag may or may not consider themselves to be transgender. They may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight or some other sexual orientation.

Gay: An adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). Some lesbians prefer to use the term “gay woman.”

Gender expression: External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, voice, and/or behavior.

Gender identity: A person’s internal, deeply held knowledge of their own gender.

Gender non-conforming/gender transgressive: Terms used to describe people whose gender expression differs from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity.

Heterosexual: An adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to people of a sex different than their own. Also: straight.

Homosexual: An outdated term to describe a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. Historically, it was a term used to pathologize gay and lesbian people.

Intersex: An adjective used to describe a person with one or more innate sex characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive organs, and chromosomes, that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies. Not equivalent to transgender.

Lesbian: A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women.

LGBTQ+: An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and all other, non-straight, non-cisgender identities.

Nonbinary: Nonbinary is an adjective used by people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary gender categories of man and woman.

Queer: An adjective used by some people, particularly younger generations, whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual (e.g. queer person, queer woman). Once considered a pejorative term, queer has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ+ people to describe themselves. However, it is not a universally accepted term within the LGBTQ+ community.

Sexual orientation: The scientifically accurate term for a person's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Sexual orientations can include heterosexual (straight), lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, and other orientations.

Transgender: An adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transexual/Transvestite: Older terms that originated in the medical and psychological communities, which are now considered derogatory. As the gay and lesbian community rejected homosexual and replaced it with gay and lesbian, the transgender community rejected transexual and replaced it with transgender.

Questioning: An adjective used by some people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

EARLY GENDER TRANSGRESSIVE EXPRESSION IN THE SACRAMENTO AREA

PRE-1940

THEME 1: EARLY GENDER TRANSGRESSIVE EXPRESSION IN THE SACRAMENTO AREA, PRE-1940

Two-Spirits in Native American Societies

Native Americans have lived in the land that later became known as California for at least 13,000 years, and perhaps for much longer. It is conservatively estimated that approximately 300,000 indigenous people, who spoke roughly 78 entirely different languages, lived in California just prior to the arrival of the first European explorers in the 16th century, though these numbers may have been significantly higher. The indigenous peoples of California, thus, represented some of the highest linguistic diversity in the world.⁴

Native American tribes throughout the United States had a sophisticated understanding of sexuality, gender, and identity that was more nuanced than that of traditional European-American societies. Individuals who crossed traditional gender roles and dressed in the clothing and performed the traditional tasks of the opposite gender were held in high regard by many tribes. European explorers and settlers called these peoples *berdache*, which roughly translates to “boy slave” or “kept boys.” In the 1990s, Native American tribes began to decolonize the term and adopted the term “two-spirit” for individuals who crossed or combined traditional gender roles.⁵ Anthropologists tend to think of two-spirit individuals as a third, or sometimes fourth, gender; however, Native American societies saw such identities as less about a person’s sexuality or physical characteristics and more closely related to how their special qualities integrated into the social and religious life of the community. Because they fulfilled roles not addressed by traditional male or female roles, two-spirit individuals were often believed to have spiritual powers and frequently served the role as medicine people for their communities and played an important part in religious ceremonies, such as the sun dance, puberty



Figure 1. A Zuni two-spirit (ca. 1879-1907). Source: National Archives.

⁴ Naomi Scher, “Native Americans and the California Mission System, 1769-1848,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2023, E-5.

⁵ Brian Joseph Gilley, *Becoming Two-Spirit: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 8.

ceremonies, and name-giving ceremonies. They could also serve as mediators, match makers, or peace makers in their communities.⁶

The land now called Sacramento is the traditional homeland of the Nisenan, Southern Maidu, Valley and Plains Miwok, and Patwin Wintun peoples, and the Wilton Rancheria tribe.⁷ Historical information about the specific role of two-spirit individuals in these tribes is limited; however, the languages of each group have words for male-bodied two-spirit people, indicating that two-spirits existed in their societies. The Nisenan call male-bodied two-spirits *Osa'pu*. The Miwok call them *Nde'isdzan*, which roughly translates to "man-woman," while the Patwin call them *Panaro bobum pi*, which translates to "he has two [sexes]."⁸

Spanish, Mexican & Early American Periods

The reverence many Native American tribes held for two-spirit individuals contrasted sharply with the treatment individuals received if they crossed traditional male-female roles or identities in the European societies that colonized California. Spanish explorers first visited Alta California (present-day California) in the 1540s and established the first mission in San Diego in 1769.⁹ Spanish attitudes toward sex and gender roles and identities were dictated by their Catholic faith. Spain was a devoutly Catholic society that viewed all forms of sexual activity that did not lead to reproduction as sinful and unnatural. For a man to take a submissive position during sexual activity was considered a violation of gender roles, and sodomy was referred to as "el pecado negado," or "the abominable sin."¹⁰ Similar to the views and teachings of Puritan New England colonies, religious Catholic rhetoric under the Spanish government's colonial rule limited sexual expression to the confines of marriage between a man and woman. Sexual expression outside of marriage, including sodomy, was considered a sin and punishment and could include banishment, whipping, or branding with a hot iron.¹¹ Sodomy laws, in particular, applied mainly to sexual activity between two men. In instances of female-female sexual activity, it was commonly assumed that this type of relationship was a result of one of the women possessing intersex/male genitalia, which would give her male urges.¹²

⁶ Trista Wilson, "Changed Embraces, Changes Embraced? Renouncing the Heterosexist Majority in Favor of a Return to Traditional Two-Spirit Culture," *American Indian Law Review* 36, no. 1 (2011-2012), pp. 161-188; Harlan Pruden and Beverly Gorman, "LGBTQ2 Well-Being Education: Two-Spirit People: Then and Now," February 14, 2014, accessed March 1, 2024, https://www.ihs.gov/sites/lgbt/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/lgbttwospirithistory.pdf.

⁷ Sacramento Native American Health Center, "Land Acknowledgement," accessed March 1, 2024, <https://snahc.org/land-acknowledgement/>.

⁸ Pruden and Gorman, "LGBTQ2 Well-Being Education: Two-Spirit People: Then and Now."

⁹ Scher, "Native Americans and the California Mission System, 1769-1848," E-4.

¹⁰ Susan Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, PA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 23, 30.

¹¹ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 31.

¹² Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 31.

After Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821 and the United States obtained California as part of the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, California's society and government was secularized. Sexual behavior no longer came under the control of the Catholic Church, but rather, civil authorities. Californians generally reflected the European Enlightenment's and U.S. Constitution's rejection of blind religious faith in favor of reason, science, and the separation of church and state. However, sodomy remained outlawed, not because it was believed to be a sin against God, but because it was considered dangerous to the natural order of the universe.¹³

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES, LATE 1700S-1900

The integration of cultural norms and traditions from white European and American settlers, explorers, and tradespeople who traveled to California in the 18th and 19th centuries significantly influenced the understanding of gender and sexuality in Californian society. In the late 1700s to early 1800s, a societal attitude emerged in the United States and Europe in which men and women were seen as binary opposites in terms of gender, though with complementary masculine and feminine characteristics. This attitude created a more pronounced division between men and women, particularly among the middle class.¹⁴

Departing from the Colonial-era farmstead in which all family members contributed to the physical and economic upkeep of the household, the Industrial Revolution and subsequent introduction of the market economy to the United States deepened gendered divisions of labor.¹⁵ As men and a smaller percentage of working-class and young immigrant women joined factory work for the first time, the genders were often separated. Women from middle-class and wealthy families typically stayed home to care for the home and children, while their husbands were at work. Following this shift in economic practices, members of the same gender began to spend more time with each other, and "romantic friendships" became more commonplace between members of the same gender. Such friendships, often between two people in separate heterosexual marriages, were common among middle-class white people and were accepted with no sense of sexual impropriety.¹⁶

Through much of the 19th century, any nonnormative form of gender or sexuality was viewed by mainstream American society as voluntary and circumstantial and was treated as an illegal vice that should be punished by the police, lawyers, and judges or treated by doctors and medical professionals.¹⁷ For people with nonnormative sexuality or gender expressions, urbanization

¹³ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 32.

¹⁴ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 35.

¹⁵ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 36.

¹⁶ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 36.

²⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites*, 39.

allowed for an increase in anonymity as individuals could indulge in their “vices” away from the eyes and ears of family and community members.¹⁸ Separation of the workplace from the home also allowed for the newfound freedom to explore the privacy of hidden spaces with others of like-minded interests. For example, the Youth Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), first founded in London in 1844 as a Christian organization for young men to gather in the urban environment, opened its first U.S. location in Boston in 1851. YMCAs across the United States became a popular place for same-sex relationships to flourish as dormitories, showers, and locker rooms became common meeting grounds that allowed for sexual encounters, while maintaining anonymity. Along with new opportunities to gather away from the surveillance of small community networks, urbanization also allowed for men and women to engage in socially non-conforming behaviors such as cross-dressing.¹⁹

THE AMERICAN WEST

The Gold Rush from 1848 to 1855 brought approximately 300,000 people from all over the world to California. For many, the American West symbolized a frontier that was new and uncharted, providing many families and individuals an opportunity for self-determination and a fresh start away from the strict class and gender confines of established society.²⁰ While some women and families made the journey westward, a disproportionate number of men pursued these early economic opportunities on the frontier compared with women, creating a notable gender imbalance. In 1850, there were approximately 12.2 men for every woman in California. Although the imbalance decreased over time, there were still 2.4 men for every woman in the state in 1860.²¹ The severely imbalanced demographics upended many of the gendered and racialized structures of Anglo-American society. Men were forced to take on roles and tasks that had traditionally been assigned to women, including cooking, cleaning, laundering, sewing, and nursing the sick and dying.²² Most spaces catered to and for men, and brothels were one of the only female-dominated spaces. The portion of men was so high that it was common for many men to go weeks or months without seeing a woman.

²⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites*, 39.

²⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites*, 39.

²⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites*, 39.

²¹ Albert Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 76.

²² Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold* (New York City: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 176, 121-122.



Figure 2. Drawing showing the wide diversity of men mining on the banks of the Sacramento River (ca. 1849-1852). Source: UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

From these circumstances, a unique kinship and camaraderie between men developed; including a cowboy culture celebrating the comfort of male friendship and the impersonation of women.²³ During this time, there was reportedly a custom of using different colored handkerchiefs to identify men playing male roles and men playing female roles at all-male dances.²⁴ Cross-dressing was relatively commonplace, and there are several known instances of women and men choosing to live as the opposite gender, suggesting that the West invited individuals seeking less rigid societal gender norms.²⁵ While some men cross-dressed to express their true gender identities, there are also instances in which they did so to commit crimes or escape arrest. For women, cross-dressing was likely motivated by several factors: to travel more safely, gain employment, and/or as an

²³ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites*, 39.

²⁴ William Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance: Art, Music & Activism in California's Capital City* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013), 159.

²⁵ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 41.

expression of their transgender/nonbinary identities.²⁶ One known example from the Sacramento area is Charley Parkhurst, a highly regarded stagecoach driver with one eye who was known for his skill with a whip and ability to transport passengers and gold safely over important routes between gold-mining outposts and major towns, including San Francisco and Sacramento. After Parkhurst's death, it was discovered that he had been born with female anatomy.²⁷

Though records of same-sex relationships in California during the 19th century are extremely limited, they certainly occurred. The term "boom cover trade," referencing sailors having sex under the coverings that protected a ship's mast, emerged to describe a man having sex with another man. Sharing a bed with someone of the same gender was not an uncommon occurrence in 19th century, particularly in frontier areas, and was, therefore, not necessarily a sign of homosexuality.²⁸ Some documented examples of same-sex relationships, though rare, do exist. In 1849, lifelong partners Jason Chamberlain and John Chafee sailed from Boston to California to seek their fortune in the Gold Rush. They lived together in Groveland, California, until Chamberlain's death in 1903.²⁹ Despite the small number of known examples, in the charged atmosphere of the frontier West—which was often characterized by groups of young single men and lonely husbands, who danced, drank, and slept together far from the customary social constraints and gender norms of home—it is not farfetched to assume that same-sex relationships occurred.³⁰



Figure 3. Charley Parkhurst. Source: Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History.

The mid-19th century saw the American West evolve towards a mythological realm in which the white, masculine, and heterosexual male was celebrated for settling and civilizing what was seen as

²⁶ Peter Boag, "The Trouble with Cross Dressers: Researching and Writing the History of Sexual and Gender Transgressiveness in the Nineteenth-Century American West," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 112, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 322-39.

²⁷ Tim Arango, "Overlooked No More: Charley Parkhurst, Gold Rush Legend With a Hidden Identity," 5 December 2018, *New York Times*.

²⁸ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 173-174.

²⁹ "Teaching LGBTQ History: LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History," [LGBTQHistory.org](https://lgbtqhistory.org/lgbt-rights-timeline-in-american-history/), accessed April 4, 2024, <https://lgbtqhistory.org/lgbt-rights-timeline-in-american-history/>.

³⁰ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 173-174.

a vast uncivilized wilderness. These traits were promoted in national rhetoric and celebrated as heroic and patriotic. In order to promote this mythologized vision of the West and justify the exploitative treatment of racial minorities, people of Asian, Mexican, African American, and Native American descent were stereotyped as being effeminate and sexually deviant. However, the resulting exploitative labor and violent colonial practices that ensued on the Frontier allowed for the spread of racist and discriminatory tropes towards people of Asian, Mexican, African American, and Native American descent; most often rooted in accusations of effeminate characteristics and sexual transgressiveness.³¹ By 1873, passage of the Comstock Law forbid sending sexually explicit material through the mail, therefore limiting the spread of information between gender nonconforming people and potential opportunities for self-education and the growth of true communities. Overall, societal fears about sexual deviance served as a catalyst for laws prohibiting dressing in clothing of the opposite sex. Such laws passed in 1863 in San Francisco; 1879 in Oakland; 1882 in San Jose; and the 1890s in Santa Barbara.³²

INTRODUCTION OF THE TERM “HOMOSEXUAL”

While the concept of same-sex attraction and other gender-nonconforming behavior had been integrated into many cultures and ethnic groups for thousands of years, the term “homosexuality” was not formally used until the latter half of the 19th century. At this time, discussions in European and American society and among medical professionals began to emerge around the newly established field of psychology, and early practitioners began to explore gender and sexuality.³³ The concept of same-sex attraction as an innate part of a person’s being was first introduced in 1864 by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a German jurist who identified himself as a member of the third sex (a male with a “woman’s soul” who desires men). Ulrichs wrote a series of essays that described homosexuality as a congenital and natural sexual variation, as opposed to an unnatural defect.³⁴ Austro-Hungarian journalist Karoly Maria Kertbeny adopted Ulrich’s theories and coined the terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” in 1868 in response to the Prussian government’s proposal to prohibit male same-sex relations in its constitution. German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s 1886 pioneering study *Psychopathia Sexualis* introduced the concepts of homosexuality and nonnormative sexuality as inborn traits to the general public in Europe and the United States. Krafft-Ebing defined “heterosexuality” as “erotic feeling for a different sex,” while “homosexuality” was

³¹ Peter Boag, “The Trouble with Cross Dressers: Researching and Writing the History of Sexual and Gender Transgressiveness in the Nineteenth-Century American West,” 337.

³² Stryker, *Transgender History*, 46–47.

³³ Erin Blakemore, “From LGBT to LGBTQIA+: The Evolving Recognition of Identity,” National Geographic, October 19, 2021, accessed May 15, 2024, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/from-lgbt-to-lgbtqia-the-evolving-recognition-of-identity>.

³⁴ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 55–56.

defined as “erotic feeling for a same sex.”³⁵ He also introduced a third category of “psycho-sexual hermaphroditism” to characterize “impulses toward both sexes.”³⁶ The first recorded use of the words “homosexual” and “heterosexual” in the United States occurred in a journal article written by Chicago doctor James G. Kiernan in 1892.³⁷ In contrast to Krafft-Ebing, Kiernan, like other researchers in the United States at the time, viewed homosexuality as a pathology that required treatment, rather than compassion.³⁸

Early 20th Century & Birth of the First Homosexual Communities

During the early 20th century, urbanization grew at a rapid pace, while at the same time, there developed a growing perception among the medical community and mainstream society that same-sex desires and gender non-conformity were outside the societal “norms.” Between 1880 and 1920, the percentage of the United States population living in urban centers doubled from 26 to 50 percent. Wage labor jobs became centralized within the urban core, attracting young working people and immigrants in search of economic opportunity. In addition, Black Americans took part in the Great Migration from Reconstruction-Era Southern states to cities in the Northeast, Midwest, and West in the 1910s and 1920s.³⁹ Cities became melting pots where people from all backgrounds and walks of life met, intermingled, and increased the likelihood that gender and sexually nonnormative people would meet and find each other. The dissemination of new theories from the medical community to the general public increased self-awareness among gender non-conforming individuals that there were others like them. This broader understanding of shared gender and sexual identities and their place in the larger sociopolitical context eventually laid the groundwork for the creation of early nonnormative gender and sexuality communities and cultures in the United States.⁴⁰

While the workplace at the turn of 19th century largely consisted of male workers, women were slowly introduced to the labor force by the early 20th century. Single women began to migrate to urban areas in search of work, and women increasingly enrolled in all-female colleges, the earliest of which were founded in the mid-late 19th century. To quell fears about the safety of single young women in urban areas, organizations were established to provide reputable and safe all-female lodgings.⁴¹ In a similar fashion to the clandestine rooms and spaces in early YMCAs utilized by single

³⁵ Amin Ghaziani, “The Reinvention of Heterosexuality,” *Gay and Lesbian Review*, May-June 2010, accessed May 7, 2024, <https://glreview.org/article/the-reinvention-of-heterosexuality/>.

³⁶ Ghaziani, “The Reinvention of Heterosexuality.”

³⁷ Ghaziani, “The Reinvention of Heterosexuality.”

³⁸ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites*, 56.

³⁹ Graves and Watson, “Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco,” 15.

⁴⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 70.

⁴¹ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 51–52.

men in the mid-19th century, the all-female establishments provided safe and secluded places for women to explore their sexual identities and commune with like-minded individuals.

As the economy continued to evolve into the 20th century, more opportunities were afforded to women to find occupations from which they could support themselves, such as secretarial or clerical work. Two working women could live together and support themselves, and this became known as a "Boston marriage."⁴² Boston marriages between two women were commonly accepted as an extension of friendship until the 1920s, after which suspicions of lesbianism emerged. Around this time, large numbers of unmarried educated women were participating in the suffrage movement, and criticism of the movement took advantage of this social suspicion surrounding female relationships, accusing suffragists of lesbianism.⁴³

The 1920s brought a time of greater sexual exploration, experimentation, and culture throughout the United States. New freedoms in fashion, music, and sexual expression emerged in other countries, as well.⁴⁴ Germany was a hotbed for thought around gender and sexuality. Magnus Hirschfeld, a German researcher and advocate for homosexuals, founded the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin in 1921 and organized the first conferences of sex researchers.⁴⁵ In 1924, German immigrant Henry Gerber founded the Society for Human Rights in Chicago, the first gay rights organization in the United States.⁴⁶ The organization was an outlier, however, and efforts to create advocacy groups in support of gay and lesbian relationships did not begin in earnest until after World War II.

Gender transgressive communities flourished in urban centers such as New York's Greenwich Village and Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. Blues music created by African American women explored themes of lesbian desire, struggle, and humor. Performances of this music, along with those by male and female drag stars, introduced an underground gay community to patrons when society was otherwise restricted by Prohibition.⁴⁷

However, the increased visibility of nonnormative gender and sexual identities and expressions between World War I and the Great Depression led to greater suspicion among mainstream society of practices that had, until that point, been considered common and socially acceptable, such as Boston marriages, romantic friendships, and bachelorhood. This scrutiny made individuals feel the

⁴² Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 53.

⁴³ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 59.

⁴⁴ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 60.

⁴⁵ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 56.

⁴⁶ "Teaching LGBTQ History: LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History."

⁴⁷ Morris, "A Brief History of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Social Movements."

need to create more elaborate public personas to obscure their true identities.⁴⁸ By the 1930s, tolerance for homosexuality further decreased in response to shifting perceptions of the medical community, sociopolitical developments overseas, and a worldwide economic recession. In the 1910s, psychiatrist Sigmund Freud introduced a new medical theory that explained homosexuality as a sexual perversion that was the result of arrested childhood development. Freud's theories were broadly disseminated and influenced public perception of homosexual relationships.⁴⁹

In the years leading to World War II, public support for eugenics and Social Darwinism intensified under the regime of Nazi Germany and other fascist dictatorships in Europe and gained popularity among members of the general public. These theories classified the human race into high and low orders, spreading the idea that desirable traits of the "higher orders," included fair skin and Northern European descent, while those who were poor, disabled, or of any other racial or ethnic background were considered part of the undesirable lower orders.⁵⁰ In 1933, the Nazi regime burned down the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin, destroying its collection of crucial early gender and sexuality research. During World War II, the Nazis rounded up men and women identified as being homosexual and imprisoned them in concentration camps, where they were forced to wear a pink triangle marking their sexual orientation, and systematically murdered, along with millions of disabled, Romani, leftist, Jewish, and otherwise "socially undesirable" groups of people.⁵¹ In the United States, the relative tolerance of homosexuality from the previous decades declined during the Great Depression as people feared they might lose their jobs if they engaged in any behaviors or activities outside the societal norms.⁵²

Nonnormative Gender and Sexuality in Sacramento, Mid-19th to Early 20th Centuries

Very little is known about the existence or lives of LGBTQ+ individuals in Sacramento before the 1960s due to discrimination, lack of acceptance, risk of arrest, imprisonment, or institutionalization of individuals found to engage in homosexual or gender non-conforming activities. In the late 1800s, at a time when an increasing number of cities in California were passing legislation to ban cross-dressing, attitudes in Sacramento appear to have been more relaxed. An editorial article published by the *Sacramento Bee* in 1866 articulated a general consensus that formal legislation to prevent cross-dressing was not necessary in Sacramento because instances of such behavior were limited, and lack of acceptance among the general public would act as a deterrent:

⁴⁸ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 61.

⁴⁹ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 56.

⁵⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 55.

⁵¹ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 56.

⁵² Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 61.

The Legislature has no business to legislate generally upon dress. [...] Grant that it is within the power and province of the Legislature to prevent by law the indiscriminate wearing of each other's dresses by the sexes, is any law on the subject necessary? "The world is governed too much," is the favorite maxim of many. And we incline to the belief that no law is necessary. [...] So far no great evil has accrued in our land, in this matter, because public sentiment has demanded that the distinction [between male and female dress] be kept up. Mrs. Bloomer and Mrs. DeWolf, and all other ladies who have tried the new style, have been kept in check by the reception they have invariably met when appearing on the streets of our cities and villages – for, appearing thus. [...] We may safely leave it to free discussion and good taste to settle this momentous question.⁵³

Despite the attitude expressed by the *Sacramento Bee*, newspaper records indicate a growing institutional criminalization of gender non-conforming behaviors in Sacramento in the 1800s. The *Sacramento Bee* and *Sacramento Union*, as well as city and county jail registers, document several instances of men and women arrested for wearing clothing of the opposite gender, which was often described as "masquerading." Between 1868 and 1876, the local jail registers recorded the arrest of six people in Sacramento for wearing clothing of the opposite gender.⁵⁴ In October 1876, a group of four people—William Faucet, Tom Burns, Clara Hall, and Nellie Boone—were arrested together for wearing clothing of the opposite gender, suggesting that a small underground community existed. Between 1876 and 1916, 10 people were arrested for sodomy. People were often arrested in pairs or groups, suggesting they might have been lovers or arrested at establishments known to be tolerant of same-sex relationships. One of the earliest recorded arrests for sodomy, sometimes recorded as a "crime against nature," in Sacramento was of two young Chinese men, Ah Joe and Ah Lee, in 1876. Punishments were serious. In 1885, a 17-year-old named Thomas Abbott was arrested for sodomy and sentenced to one year in jail at Folsom Prison. A 25-year-old Black man named Joe Franklin was arrested for the same crime and sentenced to eight years at Folsom Prison in 1888.⁵⁵

⁵³ "There She Goes Again," *Sacramento Bee*, 9 August 1866.

⁵⁴ Sacramento Jail Registers, 1866-1940, Center for Sacramento, accessed online May 9, 2024, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/search?query=subject%3A%22Prisoners+--+Sacramento+%28Calif.%29+--+Registers%22>.

⁵⁵ Sacramento Jail Registers, 1866-1940, Center for Sacramento; Sacramento Police Department Mug Books, 1860-1949, Center for Sacramento, accessed online May 9, 2024, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/search?query=creator%3A%22Sacramento+Police+Department%22&sort=-date&and%5B%5D=subject%3A%22mug+books%22&and%5B%5D=collection%3A%22centerforsacramento%22&and%5B%5D=collection%3A%22cshsacmugbooks%22>.



Figure 4. Mug shot of Ah Joe and Ah Lee (1876). Source: Mug Books, Center for Sacramento History.



Figure 5. Mug shot of Thomas Abbott (1885). Source: Mug Books, Center for Sacramento History.

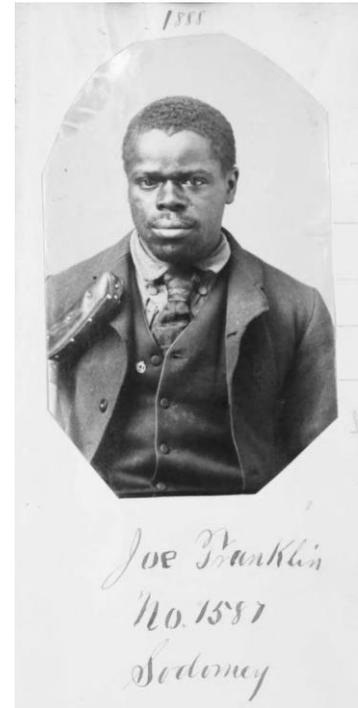


Figure 6. Mug shot of Joe Franklin (1888). Source: Mug Books, Center for Sacramento History.

The increasing intolerance toward gender and sexual non-normativity that was present throughout the country in the early 20th century was also apparent in Sacramento. In response to reports of large numbers of individuals identified as homosexual in other cities around the world, including Berlin, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Venice Beach, and San Francisco in 1914, the editorial staff of the *Sacramento Bee* published an article requesting that the State Legislature pass laws increasing the punishment for homosexuality, which at the time was treated as a misdemeanor. The article warned that homosexuality was "A canker sore [that is] eating into the humanity of this State, as of other States - a leprous evil that is far, far more dangerous than all the prostitution that ever existed."⁵⁶ Given Sacramento's proximity to San Francisco and Los Angeles, there was a fear that homosexuality could spread to Sacramento, where it was considered to be present "although in a limited degree" only. *The Sacramento Bee* followed its initial article with another piece that listed the names of dozens of men who had been arrested as "social degenerates" in Long Beach, including their ages, occupations, nationalities, and punishment. The decision to publish the names of these men was an outspoken attempt to force the State Legislature's hand: "The Bee gives these names, not so much

⁵⁶ "Need of State Legislation Against a Horrible Vice," *Sacramento Bee*, 21 December 1914: 6.

to pillory a few degenerates," the article stated, "as to bring to the attention of The People of California the burning same for which the Legislature has not provided a merited punishment."⁵⁷

These articles exemplify the risks that gender non-conforming individuals faced, such as the possibility of the public exposure to their friends, family, and employers, or in more extreme cases, physical imprisonment or other criminal punishments. The State Legislature ultimately took action to strengthen punishments against homosexual and gender non-conforming behaviors, and in 1921 the Assembly approved a bill to punish "social vagrancy" with a maximum of 15 years for anyone who "commit[ed] any lewd or lascivious act" with other persons," which included sodomy.⁵⁸

Local institutions and civic leaders continued to express vehement opposition toward gender non-conforming behavior in the 1930s. In one notable example, Sacramento chief of police William M. stated publicly in an article in the *Sacramento Bee* in 1934 that he supported the sterilization of so-called "sexual perverts" and "habitual criminals" in an effort to prevent them from passing on their homosexual "tendencies" to their offspring. Reflecting the spread of eugenics into the general population, Hallanan expressed support for the actions taken by the Nazi regime against homosexual people and argued that the sterilization taking place in concentration camps did not go far enough.⁵⁹ Hallanan's willingness to publicly make such extreme statements shows the degree to which anti-homosexual views infiltrated local institutions in Sacramento and were broadcast from positions of power to the general public, creating an atmosphere that was openly intolerant and sometimes outright violent toward anyone who did not fall within the strict lines of socially accepted sexuality and gender norms.

⁵⁷ Clayton Campbell, "Wide Spread of Debasing Practices Make Punitive Legislation a Necessity," *Sacramento Bee*, 22 December 1914: 1.

⁵⁸ "Assembly Passes Bill Aimed at Long Beach Cases," *Sacramento Bee*, 16 April 1921: 11.

⁵⁹ "Chief Hallanan Would Go Further in Sterilization," *Sacramento Bee*, 6 January 1934: 5.

FINDING ONE ANOTHER: WORLD WAR II & POSTWAR-ERA SACRAMENTO

1941-1968

THEME 2: FINDING ONE ANOTHER: WORLD WAR II & POSTWAR-ERA SACRAMENTO

World War II and Shifting Gender Norms

The onset of World War II in the early 1940s brought great economic and social change to the United States. Wartime efforts required enormous shifts in the workforce to accommodate the production of weapons and other goods for troops abroad, resulting in the creation of millions of new jobs in factories and shipyards throughout large cities. Millions of men were drafted into the military, and many who lived in small or rural towns were called to work in large city environments during a time of uncertainty and tumultuous societal change. While disrupting many lives, wartime also brought individuals to new places and subsequently brought increased open-mindedness as people expanded their worldviews beyond the confines of their sheltered hometowns. Accompanying these shifts in environment and workforce was a marked increase in opportunities for same-sex connections, as young men joined the military or factory lines and women remained to take care of the homefront and, in some cases, also joined the factory workforce to support the war effort.⁶⁰ Women experienced a unique period of independence from restrictive heterosexual marriages, and many took over jobs normally reserved for men to keep the economy going.⁶¹ In the years following the war, a cultural shift remained as women maintained their place in the workforce and increasing numbers of women enrolled in college.

Despite these liberties and the benefit that wartime brought many individuals to meet other people of similar beliefs and sexual orientations, there were also risks rooted in increasingly discriminatory rhetoric towards LGBTQ+ individuals as societal fears were compounded by larger global conflicts. Homosexuality could result in dishonorable discharge from the military and, therefore, created barriers to employment and denial of veteran's benefits, along with other negative impacts such as ostracization from society.

At the same time, medical studies and publications in the late 1940s increased overall awareness of nonnormative gender and sexuality, including homosexuality. Alfred Kinsey—a sexologist, biologist, and professor at the University of Indiana—released his groundbreaking studies, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, collectively known as the “Kinsey Report,” in 1948 and 1953, respectively. These publications increased public dialogue around gender and sexuality and received widespread attention for its assertion that same-sex relationships were fairly common. Kinsey surveyed sexual experiences in the American population and found that sexual

⁶⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 62.

⁶¹ Erin Owens, “The Lavender Scare: How Fear and Prejudice Impacted a Nation in Crisis,” *Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History* 10, no. 2 (November 1, 2020): 120, <https://doi.org/10.20429/aujh.2020.100208>.

orientation had notably more variation than was commonly known and accepted. As such, Kinsey asserted that sexual orientation exists on a scale, rather than being limited to either homosexual or heterosexual. Kinsey's survey found that roughly 10 percent of the United States' white male population had same-sex preferences and two to six percent of the United States' white female population identified as lesbian.⁶² This publication played an important role in elevating awareness of same-sex relationships at a broad level and providing a sociological perspective to a subject that had formerly been considered taboo in most medical fields.

Cold War and the Lavender Scare

Despite the Kinsey Report's groundbreaking revelations about the natural variations of human sexuality, the years following World War II brought renewed fear and paranoia surrounding otherhood and the prevalence of identities that subverted normative behaviors. The Cold War was a period of geopolitical struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, lasting between 1947 to 1991. As the predominant political ideology of the Soviet party, Communism was treated as a corrupting threat to American morals and treasonous against the American government. Beginning in the late 1940s, a climate of fear and anxiety around the Cold War led to a "culture of containment" that criminalized anything different as dangerous to society and national security. In 1950, Joseph McCarthy gave a famous speech in which he condemned the insidious presence of Communism within American institutions and communities.

This paranoia was reflected acutely in actions taken by the Federal government, which began to fire employees suspected of being homosexual in large numbers from the late 1940s through the 1950s. In 1950, the United States Congress issued a report entitled "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government," which was distributed to members of Congress following secret investigations of the sexual orientations of federal employees. The report's findings were rooted in the false rhetoric that homosexuality was a mental illness, and therefore homosexual employees "constituted a security risk" to the nation.⁶³ Following these events, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450 in 1953, which prohibited homosexuals from federal employment due to their perceived security risk. The prohibition also extended to government contracts, extending its reach. Persecution of homosexual individuals extended from state and local governments to colleges, where students were sometimes required to take tests designed to expose their

⁶² Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 65.

⁶³ "Teaching LGBTQ History: LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History."

sexualities.⁶⁴ Between 1947 to 1953, twice as many people accused of homosexuality were dismissed from their jobs as those accused of Communist sympathies.⁶⁵

During this time, it became mandated to investigate new government employees and applicants for their sexual orientations, and there was no judicial oversight of cases to ensure legality. Individuals could be fired simply based on accusations.⁶⁶ This order continued to prevent LGBTQ+ individuals from federal government employment until 1993, when President Bill Clinton and Congress passed the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” law.⁶⁷ In general, the era of McCarthyism during the Cold War reinstated a climate of fear for LGBTQ+ individuals who were forced to create a false identity to maintain their livelihoods and a level of safety. Queer subcultures were pushed deeper underground, and many gay men and women often had surface-level relationships in which they married members of the opposite sex to hide their true sexual orientations.⁶⁸ Others remained hesitant to come out for fear of personal harm to their social, familial, and professional lives.⁶⁹

One well-publicized case in Sacramento that showed the severity of accusations of homosexuality revolved around prominent local architect and sportsman Earl Barnett. Employed by the highly regarded architecture firm Dean and Dean, Barnett was responsible for designing several beloved buildings in Sacramento, including the Memorial Auditorium, Sutter Club, and others. In 1944, Barnett was accused of being the center of a “sexual perversion” ring after police raided his house at 3032 44th Street and found items indicating that a network of men and teenage boys had engaged in regular “homosexual orgies” at the house for at least six years. During the raid, the police seized hundreds of pictures of nude young men in sexual poses, photos of young men and



Figure 7. Earl Barnett with some of his masks (1986). Source: Mitch Toll for the *Sacramento Bee*.

⁶⁴ Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 145.

⁶⁵ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 63.

⁶⁶ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 63.

⁶⁷ “Teaching LGBTQ History: LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History.”

⁶⁸ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 155-156.

⁶⁹ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 156-157.

boys wearing “weird and exotic clothing,” several trunks of costumes, a dozen books with pornographic illustrations, and a file of photo negatives showing naked young men.⁷⁰ Several of the young men in the photos were in military service and came from prominent Sacramento families. Sixteen people, many of whom were teenagers, were ultimately arrested and charged with the crimes of sodomy and sex perversion, though approximately 50 young men were ultimately investigated in connection to the ring.⁷¹ Barnett’s case was tried without a jury, and he was sentenced to five to 75 years in jail and sent to San Quentin Prison.⁷² Barnett was eventually released, and the story of his arrest and imprisonment faded into the past. In 1989, the *Sacramento Bee* highlighted Barnett’s career as an architect and later an artist known for designing masks, stating in its headlines that he “deserv[ed] recognition for his art.”⁷³

The Homophile Movement

The first precursors to the gay rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s emerged in the 1950s in California. Amidst this period of immense scrutiny by the federal government and the spread of discriminatory rhetoric, organizations formed that sought to provide support for homosexual men and women. These groups adopted the term “homophile,” coming from the Greek words “homos,” meaning “same,” and “phile” meaning “love.” The first homophile organization was the Mattachine Society, founded by gay activist Harry Hay in Los Angeles in 1950. The group’s name was inspired by Renaissance French and Italian court jester groups, derived from the Arabic word “mutawajjihin” meaning mask-wearers.⁷⁴ The group focused on self-education, building social acceptance, and providing support for the homosexual community.⁷⁵ Active in Communist politics, Hay incorporated some of its ideology into his work with the Mattachine Society. Hay saw the gay community as an oppressed minority that needed to unite in its efforts to fight injustices against them. The group published its own newsletter and organized conventions to educate the community and broader public about homosexual life and provided financial, legal, employment, and spiritual support for gay men in need. Eventually, other branches of the organization formed in other cities in the United States and inspired the creation of other homophile groups. Despite its early influence on the formation of a homophile movement, the Mattachine Society disbanded in 1953 due to differences in ideologies among members. One of the homophile groups inspired by the Mattachine Society was the Society for Rights (SIR). Founded in San Francisco in 1964, it adopted a more militant attitude

⁷⁰ “Architect Held in Probe of Boy Orgies,” *Sacramento Union*, 4 November 1944.

⁷¹ “Architect Held in Probe of Boy Orgies,” *Sacramento Union*, 4 November 1944.

⁷² “Parole Is Denied to Earl Barnett,” *Sacramento Bee*, 15 December 1945.

⁷³ Gary Delsohn, “For Love of Pretty Buildings,” *Sacramento Bee*, 1 January 1989.

⁷⁴ Johansson, Warren, and William A. Percy. *Outing: Shattering the Conspiracy of Silence*. Haworth Gay & Lesbian Studies. New York: Haworth Press, 1994. 92.

⁷⁵ “Teaching LGBTQ History: LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History.”

and had a strong focus on community formation. SIR became the largest homophile organization in the country and also sparked the creation of offshoots in other cities.⁷⁶

Lesbians were not fully represented or welcomed in these early male-oriented homophile organizations. Seeking similar support and connection, women-focused homophile groups formed. In 1955, four lesbian couples—Rose Bamberger (a Filipina woman) and her partner, Rosemary Sliapan; Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon; Noni Frey and her Latina partner, Mary (last name unknown); and Marcia Foster and her partner, June (last name unknown)—founded the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in San Francisco.⁷⁷ The group was the first known women-led homophile organization in the country. Initially started as an alternative to the lesbian bar scene for middle-class lesbians seeking connection and a social outlet, the organization gradually shifted from a social club to taking on an advocacy role for lesbian rights.⁷⁸ The organization hosted private social functions and educational programming with the understanding that developing self-confidence among the lesbian community was the first step toward advocating for greater rights. Similar to the Mattachine Society, the DOB published its own newsletter and held biennial conventions. The group also encouraged participation in research projects to refute negative medical theories about homosexuality.⁷⁹

Transgender people began organizing and forming communities in the 1940s and 1950s, as well.⁸⁰ The most publicized story was that of Christine Jorgensen, a U.S. military veteran who received sex reassignment surgery in Denmark in 1952 to make her body conform to her identity as a woman. Jorgensen became a national celebrity and helped raise awareness of transgender people in the United States.⁸¹ In the early 1960s, transgender woman Virginia Prince founded one of the first modern transgender organizations, the Foundation for Personality Expression (later the Society for the Second Self/Tri-Ess) in Los Angeles. Modeled after the collegiate sorority system, the organization promoted cross-dressing among heterosexual men to express their “full personalities.” The first known transgender support group, Conversion Our Goal, formed in San Francisco in 1967, followed by the National Transexual Counseling Unit in 1968.⁸²

HOMOPHILE GROUPS IN SACRAMENTO

The homophile movement took shape in Sacramento in the early 1960s, about a decade after the earliest groups formed nationwide. Around 1964, Rick Stokes founded a local chapter of SIR in

⁷⁶ Graves and Watson, “LGBTQ History in San Francisco,” 151-152.

⁷⁷ Graves and Watson, “LGBTQ History in San Francisco,” 140.

⁷⁸ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 149.

⁷⁹ Graves and Watson, “LGBTQ History in San Francisco,” 140-149.

⁸⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 68.

⁸¹ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 66-68.

⁸² Stryker, *Transgender History*, 74, 99-100.

Sacramento called the Americans for Responsible Citizenship (ARC). Stokes was an Oklahoma native who moved to Sacramento in 1961 after meeting his partner, attorney David Clayton.⁸³ Stokes was closely connected to the gay community and organizations in San Francisco and had been active in SIR and Glide Memorial Methodist Church, a pioneering church that openly welcomed gay parishioners. Because of these relationships, ARC became deeply connected with and often collaborated with its counterparts in San Francisco.⁸⁴ ARC facilitated connections to other gay organizations and planned special events, such as a visit in 1966 by political activist Jose Sarria, a founder of SIR and the first openly gay political candidate in the United States, who ran for the San Francisco County Board of Supervisors in 1961. Sarria was first empress of the drag community's Imperial Court System, a network of nonprofit charitable organizations, and was better known by his stage name, Empress Jose Norton I. Sarria's visit to Sacramento on Memorial Day in 1966 included a production of "My Fair Laddie," an adaptation of the Pygmalion story that premiered in San Francisco the month before.⁸⁵ By 1966, ARC had grown large enough to publish an article in the 1966 edition of its newsletter, the *ARC Journal*, titled "We're Provincial?," which asserted that Sacramento had enough gay organizations, nightlife, and culture to challenge the perceived dominance of the San Francisco gay community in Northern California.⁸⁶

Reflecting its focus on community advocacy and education, ARC applied for a booth at the California State Fair in 1966. The group's application was initially accepted but was given away to another group as the date of the fair grew closer. ARC and other gay organizations brought a lawsuit against the fair's president, former Sacramento mayor Clarence Azevedo, which was rejected and later denied on appeal by California Governor Pat Brown. In protest, ARC—joined by members of SIR, the Daughters of Bilitis, and other volunteers—gathered at the front entrance to the fair and handed out fliers at the education booth. This action gave the group a much larger exposure at the fair itself, and through media coverage of the lawsuit than it would have experienced if its original application to host a booth in the exhibition hall had been honored. The following year, ARC hosted a forum titled "The Homosexual 1967 Sacramento" at the First Methodist Church on 21st and J streets. The event was envisioned as a part of the organization's educational program to "educate the public as to the nature of homosexuality and to promote mutual understanding and acceptance between the homosexual and heterosexual communities."⁸⁷ A panel of ministers, attorneys, educators, members of the Sacramento City Council, and other civic leaders spoke at the forum.⁸⁸

⁸³ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 160

⁸⁴ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 160

⁸⁵ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 161-162

⁸⁶ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 162.

⁸⁷ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 162.

⁸⁸ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 162.

Cruising & Gay Bar Culture

Because homosexuality during the mid-20th century was socially unacceptable and sex with anyone of the same gender was illegal, gay men and women were forced to find cracks in society where they could meet and have sexual experiences. Although public bathhouses existed in cities across the country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the first bathhouses that catered specifically to gay men were established during the postwar period. Bathhouses provided the safest and most private places for gay men to hook up while maintaining their anonymity.

Bars, however, emerged as the de facto center of homosexual life for both men and women. Though not openly advertised as “gay bars,” small networks of bars that were known to be welcoming to gay men and women developed. Knowledge of these bars initially passed through word of mouth. Gay bars became the primary places where gay men, and some gay women, met to form social and sexual connections, exchange news, share experiences, and openly express themselves.

For those looking for an alternative to gay bars, public places provided a vital option for gay men and transgender women looking to meet for sex anonymously and discreetly. Public places—such as public parks, beaches, public restrooms, and streets—were attractive places to “cruise” for someone to have sex with for those who did not like the bar and bathhouse scenes, were too young, didn’t have enough money, or who had families at home and did not have a private place to go for sex. Public spaces also allowed gay men and transgender women to form important connections and share experiences at a time when community networks remained small and deeply underground. Although cruising took place in the early 20th century, the practice became more prevalent during World War II as military servicemen, visiting cities for short periods of time while on leave, looked for a quick hook up before returning to duty. Cruising locations frequently changed as police raids and crackdowns forced participants to look for alternatives.⁸⁹

In 1965, San Francisco businessman Bob Damron published the first issue of the Damron Guides. Similar to the Negro Travelers Green Books (commonly known as the Green Books) that listed business establishments that welcomed African American travelers, the Damron Guides were a city directory and guidebook that listed known cruising locations, businesses, and accommodations that were inclusive and friendly towards gay individuals. The Damron Guides gradually expanded to an increasing number of cities across the United States and have continued to be updated annually since 1968. The publication’s name was changed to *Damron’s Men’s Travel Guide* in 1999.⁹⁰ The Damron Guides provided a vital service to the gay community, particularly during the 1960s and

⁸⁹ Graves and Watson, “LGBTQ History in San Francisco,” 90-92.

⁹⁰ SurveyLA, “LGBT Historic Context Statement,” 61.

1970s, when homosexual activity remained illegal and individuals risked arrest and imprisonment if they were discovered.

During the postwar period, the most common way for municipalities to control homosexual activity was by repealing liquor licenses of establishments suspected of catering to homosexual clientele. In 1949, the State Board of Equalization accused the Black Cat bar in San Francisco of being a gay bar and suspended its liquor license. The bar's owner filed a lawsuit that was appealed to the California Supreme Court. The court's landmark decision in *Stouman v. Reilly* in 1951 found that a bar could not lose its liquor license because it catered to homosexual people, making California the first state in which gay bars could legally operate. After the decision, the number of gay and lesbian bars increased for a period. However, the decision was undermined by state legislation that passed in 1955, which made it illegal for a bar to serve as a "resort for illegal possessors or users of narcotics, prostitution, pimps, panderers, or sexual perverts."⁹¹ The State Department of Alcohol and Beverage Control subsequently used the law to suspend or revoke the licenses of establishments where people they believed were homosexual were seen. This practice continued until the 1959 California Supreme Court case *Vallegra v. Department of Alcohol Beverage Control* reaffirmed that "a license may not be suspended or revoked simply because homosexuals or sexual perverts patronize the bar in question."⁹²

CRUISING & GAY BARS IN SACRAMENTO, CA. 1940-1968

The crackdown on gay bars and cruising locations that occurred in California in the 1950s extended to Sacramento. In April 1957, the State Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control indefinitely suspended the liquor license of The Windsor, a bar at 731 J Street, because it was a known "hangout for homosexuals."⁹³ The bar was within a block of Plaza Park (now Cesar Chavez Plaza), which had been a popular local cruising spot for gay men for at least the previous 20 years.⁹⁴ The crackdown on the Windsor instigated a police raid of the park in June 1957, in which 26 men were arrested and charged for soliciting "immoral acts" after police officers disguised in plainclothes caught the men being intimate. To cut down on cruising in the park, the police began to close the public restrooms at midnight.⁹⁵ Within a few weeks, the crackdown on cruising locations was expanded to four unnamed major city parks, which the Sacramento Police Department kept under nightly surveillance.⁹⁶

⁹¹ SurveyLA, "LGBT Historic Context Statement," 60.

⁹² SurveyLA, "LGBT Historic Context Statement," 60.

⁹³ "State Suspends License of J Street Tavern," *Sacramento Bee*, 15 April 1957: D-1.

⁹⁴ "No Inference," *Sacramento Union*, 10 July 1957: 10.

⁹⁵ "Where Fault Lies," *Sacramento Union*, 4 July 1957: 12.

⁹⁶ "Unpleasant Task," *Sacramento Union*, 18 July 1957: 12.

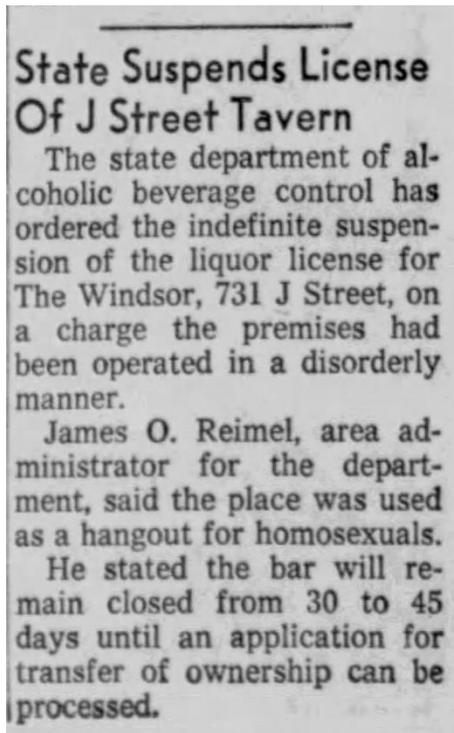


Figure 8. Newspaper article about the suspension of the liquor license of The Windsor in 1957. Source: Sacramento Bee, 15 April 1957.

Such instances of strict policing in Sacramento deterred the development of gay bars, cruising locations, bathhouses, and a true gay social scene within the boundaries of the City of Sacramento until the 1960s and 1970s. West Sacramento, located just across the Sacramento River in an entirely different county (Yolo County) and connected via a busy thoroughfare to Sacramento, became the logical location for gay men and women to seek social and sexual connections. West Sacramento was an unincorporated part of Yolo County, outside of the immediate control of the Yolo County Sheriff's Office, which was headquartered at the county seat in Woodland, approximately 20 miles away. As such, the local police in West Sacramento had little power to enforce vice ordinances in the area and it developed a reputation as "Sin City."⁹⁷ It was also common practice during the postwar period for Sacramento police officers to pick up vice ordinance offenders, such as prostitutes operating in downtown Sacramento, and drop them off in West Sacramento.⁹⁸ This relationship between Sacramento and West Sacramento was similar to that of the Sunset Strip in West Hollywood in Los Angeles, which was located in an unincorporated part of Los Angeles County between Beverly

Hills and Hollywood.⁹⁹

Because of this relationship, the first gay-friendly establishments listed in the Sacramento area in the 1965 edition of the Damron Guides were located in West Sacramento. Many of these businesses were clustered along West Capitol Avenue and Sacramento Avenue, two major thoroughfares that led in and out of Sacramento. The most well-known of these early gay establishments were the Yolo Baths (also known as the Yolo Sauna), a gay bathhouse at 1531 Sacramento Avenue, and the Log Cabin, a gay bar at 1532 Sacramento Avenue. Other gay bars located in West Sacramento in the 1960s included the Kolo Club at 1721 West Capitol Avenue, No Hu Hu Hut tiki bar at 2400 West Capitol Avenue, Robert's No. 3 (address unknown), and the Hide & Seek at 825 Sunset Avenue (extant). The Hide & Seek, colloquially dubbed "Hide & Suck," was the oldest hard liquor bar with dancing in the Sacramento area and became a popular place to stop on the road between San

⁹⁷ "Fred Reminisces About the Bars," undated, private collection of George Raya.

⁹⁸ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 161.

⁹⁹ SurveyLA, "LGBT Historic Context Statement," 58.

Francisco and Tahoe or Reno because of its proximity to the Yolo Baths where those needing to recover could rest and recover after a night of drinking.¹⁰⁰ The Hide & Seek operated under the ownership of Pat Avala and Marge Covino from approximately the mid-1960s to the 1980s.¹⁰¹

One unidentified man interviewed by Sacramento native and gay rights activist George Raya shared his memories of arriving in Sacramento and experiencing the gay bar scene in West Sacramento for the first time:

It certainly was not with a thought of community in my mind as I timidly crossed the threshold of my first gay bar (the Log Cabin) in 1960. I was a junior at Sacramento State College, but had spent most of my life in a tightly closeted redneck corner of the Midwest known as Missouri. I had only a sketchy ill-defined idea of what gay was, much less what mysterious weird or perhaps dangerous things might be happening behind that bar door [...] I opened the door to that bar and ventured inside. There were 8 or 10 men in the bar laughing and telling jokes. They made no move to throw me out just because I was homosexual. In fact they made me very welcome. I did not always understand the jokes between the others, but I laughed anyway and before long I had learned several names. One guy was even willing to drive me home from the Broderick Bar to my apartment in West Sacramento. In looking back at that first night in the gay bar, I must admit that I was not looking for community. I was looking for sex. What I didn't know was that I had found both.¹⁰²

The first lesbian bars were also located in West Sacramento due to efforts by the Sacramento Police Department to prevent women's bars from being established inside city limits. The first known lesbian bar was Jean's Place, although some claimed that the Log Cabin operated as a lesbian bar before becoming an gay men's bar in the 1950s. Jean's Place was eventually replaced by Hide & Seek, which operated as a men's bar. In 1967, another popular lesbian bar known as Off Key opened at 1040 Soule Street (extant).

¹⁰⁰ "Fred Reminisces About the Bars," undated, private collection of George Raya.

¹⁰¹ *Mom...Guess What...!*, October 1981: 11.

¹⁰² Unnamed author, "Bar Story History II 1955-1995," private collection of George Raya.

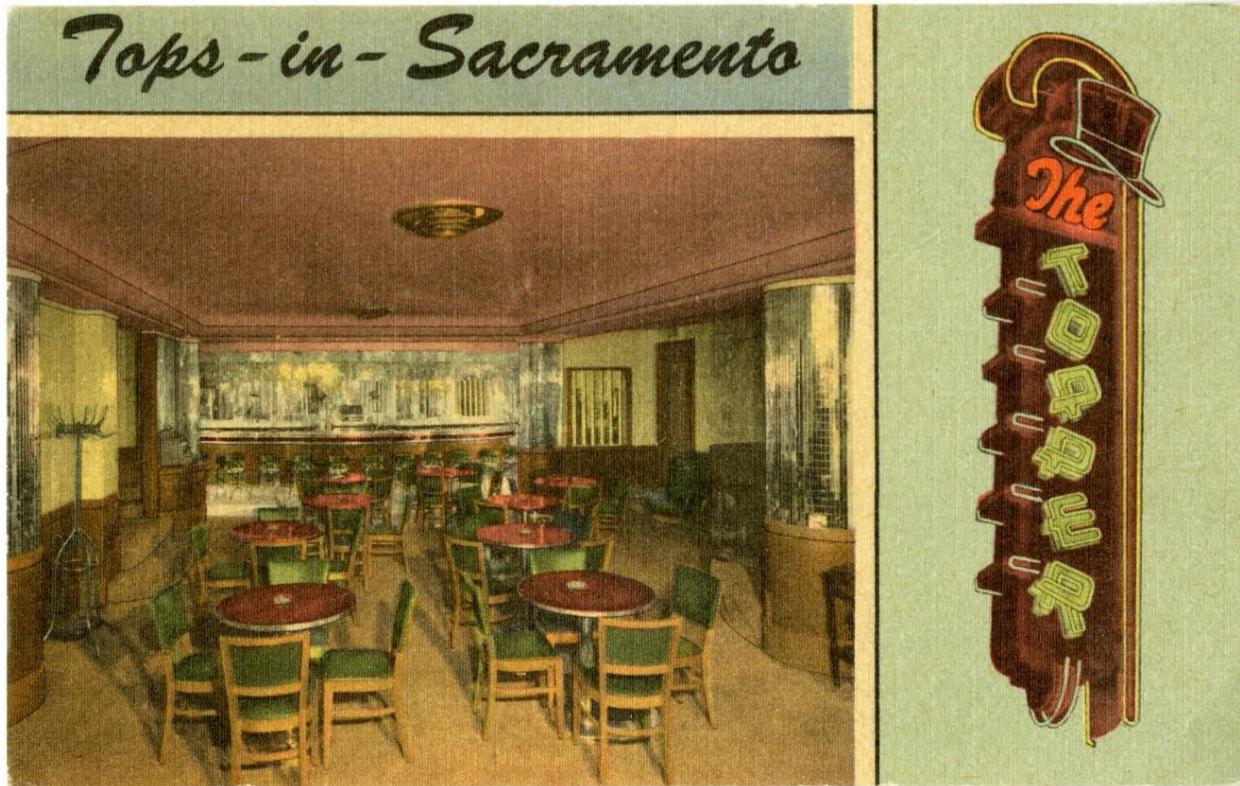


Figure 9. Drawing of the interior of the Topper Club (1950). Source: Sacramento Public Library.

The earliest known gay bar in Sacramento was the Topper Club at 1218 K Street. The Topper opened in 1940 at the same time as Esquire Theater, which was located next door at 1221 K Street, and operated at least through the late 1970s.¹⁰³ Located on K Street, one of Sacramento's busiest commercial streets where the sales staff from Weinstocks, J.C. Penney, and other departments stores worked and socialized, Topper became a known hangout for gay men by the late 1960s. Men would wait at the east side of the building until the traffic light at 12th and K streets stopped traffic, allowing a few minutes in which gay men could enter the bar from the alley without being seen by their coworkers.¹⁰⁴ The bar's popularity declined in the 1970s as residents and businesses moved to the suburbs and commercial activity on K Street and the broader downtown Sacramento area decreased. Downtown also became increasingly unsafe as ex-prison inmates were released into the area.¹⁰⁵ In addition to the Topper, other early gay bars in Sacramento in the 1950s and 1960s

¹⁰³ "Lease is Signed for Cocktail Bar," *Sacramento Bee*, 24 February 1940: 9; Thom Akeman, "Nightlight," *Sacramento Bee*, 22 December 1977: 55.

¹⁰⁴ "The Topper Bar," undated, private collection of George Raya.

¹⁰⁵ "The Topper Bar," undated, private collection of George Raya.

included the Diamond Club at 801 L Street, which had a gay crowd on weeknights, the Mark Twain Hotel Bar at 1316 I Street, and Hickory House at 1300 J Street.¹⁰⁶

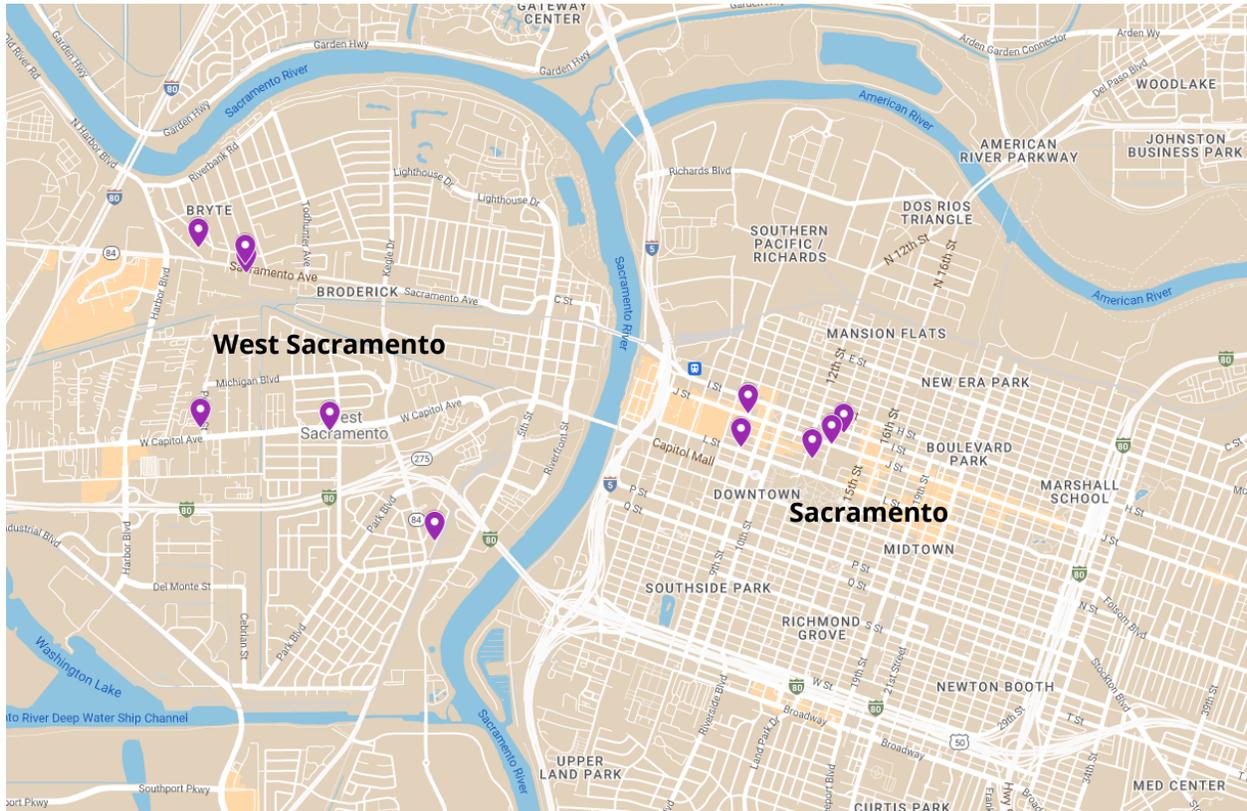


Figure 10. Locations of known gay bars that operated in the Sacramento area at various times between the 1940s and the 1960s.

¹⁰⁶ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 161; "Gay Sac History Bars 1953," undated, private collection of George Raya.

**OUT & PROUD: DEVELOPMENT OF A VISIBLE
SACRAMENTO LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY**
1969-CA. 1995

THEME 3: OUT & PROUD: DEVELOPMENT OF A VISIBLE SACRAMENTO LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY, 1969-CA. 1995

While the anti-gay hysteria and police crackdowns of the postwar period forced many members of the LGBTQ+ community deeper into the closet, the repression of entire groups of people, their desires, and their personal expressions created an increasingly pressurized environment in which generations of pent-up emotions were about to reach a boiling point. On New Years Eve in 1967, a police raid of the Black Cat, a gay bar in Los Angeles's Silver Lake neighborhood, kicked off several days of protests.¹⁰⁷ Then, in June 1969, tensions came to a head in New York City in an event that captured the nation's attention and sparked a gay liberation movement that transformed the experiences of LGBTQ+ people across the United States. On the night of June 28, New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay bar in the city's Greenwich Village neighborhood. Instead of trying to escape or surrendering to arrest, the bar's patrons, most of whom were gay men and transgender women, resisted. Five days of protests followed, inspiring the establishment of gay rights organizations and a new era of political organizing, as well as a seismic shift in the way members of the LGBTQ+ community saw themselves and their place in the world.

Prior to the late 1960s, it was virtually unheard of for LGBTQ+ individuals to be publicly open about their sexual orientations. Inspired by the feminist movement's strategy that "the personal is political," the Gay Liberation Front, one of the gay rights organizations founded in the wake of the Stonewall riots, adopted the slogan "Out of the Closet and Into the Streets" to encourage gay and lesbian people to be open and proud about their sexual orientations in order to increase acceptance among the general public, progress the fight for gay rights, and engender a sense of individual and community pride.¹⁰⁸ The phrase "to come out of the closet," or simply "come out," came to signify revealing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity to oneself or others.

This was accompanied by a major shift in how the medical community viewed homosexuality. Repeatedly throughout the early 1970s, activists associated with the Gay Liberation Front picketed, protested, and spoke at the annual conventions of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in cities across the country and challenged the APA's scientifically unproven treatment of homosexuality as a mental disorder.¹⁰⁹ These efforts convinced the APA to update the official classification of homosexuality in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the definitive source used to diagnose mental illnesses in the United States, in 1974. The 1974

¹⁰⁷ SurveyLA, "LGBT Historic Context Statement," 12.

¹⁰⁸ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 79.

¹⁰⁹ Ray Levy Uyeda, "How LGBTQ+ Activists Got 'Homosexuality' Out of the DSM," May 26, 2021, JSTOR Daily, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://daily.jstor.org/how-lgbtq-activists-got-homosexuality-out-of-the-dsm/>; Sara E. McHenry, "'Gay Is Good': History of Homosexuality in the DSM and Modern Psychiatry," *The American Journal of Psychiatry Residents' Journal*, September 8, 2022, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp-rj.2022.180103>.

update removed homosexuality from the DSM's list of mental disorders, although distress over one's sexual orientation remained in the manual until 2013. Though imperfect, the 1974 update removed the threat that individuals might be incarcerated in mental hospitals for having same-sex relationships.¹¹⁰ Large numbers of people came out as gay over the following decades as a result of these developments. As they found each other and formed connections, the first visible LGBTQ+ communities developed in cities across the United States.

In Sacramento, the number of residents who identified as gay grew to an estimated 70,000 to 80,000 by 1982. That year, the *Sacramento Bee* published a series of articles that highlighted the growing visibility of an identifiable gay community in the city: "Unobtrusive gay and lesbian couples go almost unnoticed in districts as diverse as Curtis Park and Carmichael, Land Park and Rancho Cordova," the newspaper reported. "They are, in a word, everywhere."¹¹¹ A majority of gay residents lived in the suburban areas of Sacramento; however, an increasing number lived in the city's original street grid, known as the Central City or simply as "The Grid." Gay people chose to settle in Sacramento for the same reasons as straight people: they were drawn to job opportunities; the city's proximity to rivers, mountains, lakes, and the Pacific Ocean; and the chance to live in a city without the pressures of being in a large metropolis like San Francisco or Los Angeles. Some moved to Sacramento from other parts of the country where they had experienced harassment and discrimination, hoping to experience a greater degree of tolerance and acceptance.¹¹² As more people came out, a greater number of openly gay-owned or gay-welcoming businesses and institutions were established to serve them, laying the foundation for the emergence of a diverse and rich LGBTQ+ community in Sacramento.

Formation of LGBTQ+ Subcultures

As the visibility of LGBTQ+ people increased and awareness of the complex and multifaceted nature of the community grew, individual members found themselves drawn to others who were like them, resulting in the formation of unique subcultures within the broader community that shared the same sexual orientations, gender identities, life experiences, backgrounds, and/or interests. These subcultures offered a sense of safety and belonging that individual members did not always experience when crossing into other subcultures.

LGBTQ+ residents who lived in Sacramento as the community crystalized in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s described Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community as factionalized and often divided between the various subcultures. In an era in which institutional support was scarce and legal protections were

¹¹⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 81.

¹¹¹ Robin Witt, "Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento," *Sacramento Bee*, 12 September 1982: A1-A17.

¹¹² Witt, "Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento."

minimal or nonexistent, members of one subculture sometimes excluded members of other subcultures as they fought for recognition and an equal piece of the pie.¹¹³

Gay white men were historically, and continue to be, the most visible and recognized subgroup—receiving the most coverage by the media and popular culture—both in Sacramento and the broader LGBTQ+ population nationwide. As in other cities, lesbians in Sacramento sometimes felt resentment toward the dominance held by gay men and the lack of recognition or representation they often received. Some gay businesses and organizations explicitly did not welcome lesbians, and as a result, lesbians began to establish their own safe spaces, social gathering places, clubs, and organizations. Gay men and lesbian women, thus, often chose to socialize and organize separately in Sacramento, as in other cities across the United States. Given this factionalism, instances in which members of different subcultures came together to organize, support each other, socialize, and recreate were particularly notable for their efforts to unite the community.¹¹⁴

More nuanced terms to describe additional equally important identities within the broader LGBTQ+ community emerged in the 1960s, as well. The term “transgender” was introduced by John Oliven’s 1965 book *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology* to identify a person who identifies with a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth. The term replaced earlier derogatory terms coined by the medical and psychological communities, such as “transsexual” and “transvestite.”¹¹⁵ Though the term “bisexual” was first used in the 1897 pamphlet by German psychologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing *Psycopathia Sexualis* to describe people who were attracted to both men and women, the term became a distinct sexual orientation in the late 1960s and 1970s. In 1967, one of the earliest organizations for bisexual people, the Sexual Freedom League, was founded in San Francisco. The National Bisexual Liberation Group formed in New York City in 1972.¹¹⁶

The removal of homosexuality from the DSM in 1973, while a positive development for the gay and lesbian communities, did not apply to transgender people, creating a rift between the transgender and gay and lesbian communities as the transgender community continued to fight for equal

¹¹³ “Sacramento Oral History Episode 2: Linda Birner and Dennis Mangers,” May 30, 2023, Center for Sacramento History, YouTube, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8t3BwNfUXk>; Tina Reynolds, “The Spectrum Archives: Narratives of Courage,” Sierra College Applied Art and Design, December 14, 2016, accessed May 33, 2024, Conversation between Liz [last name redacted] and Clare Flynn, April 26, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

¹¹⁴ “Sacramento Oral History Episode 2: Linda Birner and Dennis Mangers,” May 30, 2023, Center for Sacramento History, YouTube, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8t3BwNfUXk>; Tina Reynolds, “The Spectrum Archives: Narratives of Courage,” Sierra College Applied Art and Design, December 14, 2016, accessed May 33, 2024, Conversation between Liz [last name redacted] and Clare Flynn, April 26, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

¹¹⁵ “Glossary of Terms,” GLAAD, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://glaad.org/reference/terms>.

¹¹⁶ Teaching LGBTQ History: LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History.”

recognition, often with little support. Gender identity disorder (GID), later known as gender dysphoria, remained listed as a mental disorder in the DSM until 2012.¹¹⁷

Members of the LGBTQ+ community who were also people of color experienced additional challenges to feel welcome and accepted by the broader community. Torn between their allegiance to their racial identities and their sexual or gender identities, they often struggled to find a place where they felt they truly belonged. Local gay Black and Latinx residents did not feel comfortable at many gay bars and business establishments in Sacramento, which primarily catered to white gay men.¹¹⁸ Black and Latinx lesbians faced the same feelings of discomfort and rejection at many local gay establishments and often struggled to find girlfriends because of racism within Sacramento's predominantly white lesbian community. Facing rejection from white lesbians, many lesbians of color dated other lesbians from communities of color. Even then, cultural differences sometimes got in the way. Many gay Black and Latinx people came from deeply religious Christian families who disapproved or rejected them entirely if they came out as gay or transgender. Both the Black and Latinx communities often placed high value on traditional views of masculinity and hierarchical family structures and viewed homosexuality as a threat to their families. In many cases, gay Black and Latinx men and women decided to stay closeted to avoid rejection from their families and communities into which they were born. They might secretly visit gay bars and establishments where they could freely express themselves and form clandestine romantic relationships outside their public heterosexual relationships. Because of the risk of being exposed if they were caught, members of the LGBTQ+ community sometimes resented the presence of straight people in gay spaces, such as gay bars and clubs.¹¹⁹

Gay Bars & Cruising Locations

The development of the first openly gay-friendly social gathering places and business establishments in Sacramento did not occur overnight. Through the late 1960s and into the early 1970s, as much of the gay community remained closeted and being publicly "out" could still put one at risk of arrest, losing one's job, and being ostracized from family, friends, and coworkers, gay and lesbian individuals continued to meet in secret.

Cruising continued to be a common way for gay men to find sexual partners and increased during the sexual revolution of the 1960s. The K Street mall – the stretch of K Street in downtown Sacramento between roughly 7th and 13th streets – was a popular cruising destination for gay men in the Sacramento area. Other known local cruising spots included city parks, such as Fremont Park in

¹¹⁷ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 81.

¹¹⁸ Conversation between Clarmundo Sullivan and Henry Feuss, May 24, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

¹¹⁹ Conversation between Liz [last name redacted] and Clare Flynn, April 26, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

Midtown and Del Paso Park in Del Paso Heights, and beaches along the Sacramento River and American River, including Discovery Park near the confluence of the two rivers, Paradise Beach in the River Park neighborhood, and a beach near the end of North 10th Street and Richards Boulevard.¹²⁰

Compared to parks and public restrooms, however, gay bars and bathhouses were safer places to find sexual partners.¹²¹ The first bathhouse within the City of Sacramento was Steve's Health and Social Club (later Steam Works Bath), located at the former Sunshine Chicken Hatchery warehouse at 2551 5th Street. Ward Percifield first opened the bathhouse around 1974. Arsonists firebombed the building in 1976, reportedly after the establishment had received several threats of extortion.¹²² By 1979, the business was described publicly in the *Sacramento Bee* as a 24-hour bathhouse primarily for gay patrons. The bathhouse had a policy of welcoming co-ed couples and straight people three nights a week, in order to allow closeted individuals to enjoy the baths and meet people.¹²³ Steam Works hosted events, such as "An Evening at the Baths," a 1979 benefit for the Sacramento Film Festival that included drinks served by "satin-shortened skaters, hors d'oeuvres in the 'orgy room,' poolside dancing, funky films, a song and dance revue and the 'best of Sacramento in drag.'"¹²⁴

Gay bars – which had covertly served a vital role as some of the only places gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals could openly express their sexual identities since the first decades of the 20th century – blossomed into the public center of LGBTQ+ life in the decades after the late 1960s. Gay bars became not just places to meet sexual partners; they developed into the de facto center of gay life, where LGBTQ+ individuals received and exchanged news, formed lasting friendships and romantic relationships, and organized social, professional, and political groups, clubs, and events.

While some gay bars existed in Sacramento's Central City grid prior to the late 1960s, California's anti-sodomy laws, which had been used to harass and imprison LGBTQ+ individuals for over 100 years, and the City of Sacramento's strict enforcement of those laws, prevented the formation of any recognizable concentration of gay-owned or gay-friendly establishments within the boundaries of the City of Sacramento until the state laws were repealed in the 1970s. In 1975, Assembly Bill 437, which ended California's sodomy laws, passed both houses of the California state legislature and

¹²⁰ Mapping the Gay Guides, accessed April 4, 2024, <https://mappingthegayguides.org/>.

¹²¹ Bill Lindelof, "Gay Bars Flourish in Downtown Area As Places to Relax, Find Partners," *Sacramento Bee*, 12 September 1983: A16.

¹²² "Firebombing Suspected as Massage Parlor Burns," *Sacramento Bee*, 18 October 1976: 19.

¹²³ "Getting Steamed Up at 3:45am," *Sacramento Bee*, 27 December 1979: 65.

¹²⁴ Stanley Gilliam, "Stan's Sacramento," *Sacramento Bee*, 8 May 1979: 38.

was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown, Jr.¹²⁵ The impact of the repeal of the state's sodomy laws is visible in the pattern of development of gay bars and gay-friendly establishments in the Sacramento area. Locations where queer people could openly gather and interact were initially scattered throughout the city, though the largest concentrations remained across the Sacramento River in the City of West Sacramento through the mid-1970s. The Damron Guides recorded only two queer-friendly establishments in Sacramento from the publication of the first issue in 1965 through 1970: the Topper Club and Mark Twain Hotel bar located near the cruising area on the K Street Mall in downtown Sacramento.

Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, however, the number of gay bars and queer-friendly establishments steadily increased and spread throughout the City of Sacramento as policing of sexual activities decreased. A small number of new establishments emerged within the city in the early 1970s, including three Goldie's Book Store locations at 1305 J Street, 5644 Stockton Boulevard, and 2026 Broadway (extant). Both 21st Street and Broadway would gradually include small concentrations of LGBTQ+-friendly businesses. The first, though short-lived, gay bar on 21st Street that was listed in the Damron Guides was Raye's Inn at 1617 21st Street. The Cruz'in bar was located a few blocks to the north at 2026 I Street near the intersection of 21st and I streets. By 1973, the Goldie's Book Store location on Broadway was joined by the Corker Club (later Bob and Frank's Underpass and Corral) at 1946 Broadway.

Many of the area "men's bars" did not welcome lesbians or transgender people. While lesbians and transgender people went to gay bars, they were often harassed and formed their own separate safe spaces for socializing. Lesbian residents formed their own tight-knit bar scene. As in other cities across the country, the local lesbian bar scene grew as more women, including gay women, attended college and met and formed bonds with other women like them. Like the gay men's bar scene, the local lesbian bar scene had its roots in West Sacramento. Perhaps the most well-known lesbian bar in West Sacramento in the late 1960s and early 1970s was Off Key, which opened at 1040 Soule Street around 1967.¹²⁶ Recognizing that lesbians did not have a bar to go to in Sacramento like the Corker Club/Underpass on Broadway, Angie Saldivia purchased a straight bar nearby at 1704 Broadway (extant) in 1978 and opened a lesbian bar there called the Crescent Moon. Saldivia remodeled the building, commissioning a local artist to create a stained-glass crescent moon for the front door, and decorating the building's storage room doors with etched glass inserts of birds and flowers. The 200-person club had a large dance floor, making it a popular destination during the height of disco in the late 1970s. The Crescent Moon also had a pool room in the backyard, which was built by patrons and decorated with unicorns, and hosted variety shows and barbeques.

¹²⁵ Graves and Watson, "LGBTQ History in San Francisco," 227-228.

¹²⁶ Cherie Gordon, "A History of Lesbian Bars in Sacramento," personal collection of George Raya.

According to local resident and patron Connie Allen, the Crescent Moon “had a very homey, relaxing, comfortable environment,” and was a place where many relationships began. A song written by patrons and sung nightly at closing time captured the atmosphere of the Crescent Moon:

It’s another lonely night in Sacramento
Sitting with the girls and drinking wine.
Louise and I were talking of the old days
Trying to remember better times.

And where, where are you tonight?
How come you thought it was all right
For you to walk away
Show yourself the world?

I’m lonely but I’m trying to make it all right.
Now I’m asking this one here
If she would like another beer
And if she’d like to go with me tonight.
Come on, honey. Come go with me tonight.¹²⁷

Other popular lesbian bars that operated between the 1970s and 1990s included the Blue Moon on Broadway and Franklin Boulevard, the Forum at 2840 Auburn Boulevard (extant), the Buffalo Club at 1831 S Street, and the Mirage at 601 15th Street.¹²⁸

Gay bars opened in outlying neighborhoods outside the Central City, as well. By 1976, there were four gay bars in Carmichael: Atticus (later Male Box) and Play Pen near the intersection of El Camino Boulevard and Walnut Avenue and Fay’s and Joseph’s Montana Saloon near the intersection of Fair Oaks Boulevard and Manzanita Avenue. The T-Room at the Carousel Restaurant was located at the Arden Fair Shopping Center, north of the Central City, while the Stardust Room restaurant was located at 5609 Freeport Boulevard near the Sacramento Executive Airport (extant) south of the Central City. In East Sacramento, Bojangles at 7042 Folsom Boulevard (extant) became one of the city’s leading gay disco clubs.¹²⁹ According to Allen, the opening of the Parking Lot at 2804 Auburn

¹²⁷ Connie Allen, email to George Raya, 13 December 1999, personal collection of George Raya.

¹²⁸ Melba, “Fifty Gay Years In The Greater Sacramento Area: 1950 – 2000,” 2007-2020, accessed April 27, 2024, <https://gayinsacramento.com/index.html>; Conversation between Liz [last name redacted] and Clare Flynn, April 26, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

¹²⁹ Mapping the Gay Guides, accessed April 4, 2024, <https://mappingthegayguides.org/>.

Boulevard, a co-ed gay bar with an Olympic sized swimming pool and billiard room, pulled much of the clientele away from the Crescent Moon, which closed around 1980.¹³⁰

"Friendliest Bar in Town"
the Underpass
Daily 2 p.m. - 2 a.m. . . . presents our
Corral Room
Come say Hello to our
Bartenders: Gene
Jerry
Joey
Keith
&
The Manager, Chris
Tues. - Sat. 8 p.m. - 2 a.m.
1946 Broadway
Sacramento
457-5867

BOJANGLES
1/8
DISCO
SPIRITS! PIZZA!
DANCING!
WELCOMES
Mom . . . Guess What . . . !
HOTTEST GAY DISCO
IN
SACRAMENTO !!
7042 Folsom Blvd.
Between Howe Ave. & 65th St.
Open Nightly 8 til 2

THE PARKING LOT
There's still nothing like it.
SACRAMENTO
2504 ALABAMA BOULEVARD
442-7772

STEVE'S
Health & Social Club
More than a bath!!!
Full Gymnasium, Hydra-Massage Pool,
Garden Court Restaurant, Large screen
TV & Movie Theater, \$2.00 Locker
Club, Lounge, Steamroom.
Outdoor Pool & Sundeck now under
construction - Opening Date: May 24th.
2551 5th St. Sacto. 443-1515
Open 24 hours

The CRESCENT MOON
a women's place
442-9375
1704 Broadway
Sacramento
6 p.m. - 2 a.m.

Figure 11. Collection of advertisements for gay and lesbian bars in Sacramento, circa 1970s. Source: Personal collection of George Raya.

¹³⁰ Allen, email to George Raya, 13 December 1999.

By the early 1980s, a new concentration of gay bars began to emerge in the Midtown neighborhood, centered around the intersection of 20th and K streets. The first gay bar in the area was reportedly the Mercantile Saloon (extant), which opened at a converted Victorian house at 1928 L Street in 1977. Lovingly nicknamed “The Merc,” it was credited with making gay nightlife more visible in Sacramento. By 1983, at least four other gay bars opened nearby within two blocks of the intersection of 20th and K streets, including Christie’s Elbo Room (now Faces) (extant) at 2000 K Street, The Western (later the Western Pacific Depot, and now, simply, The Depot) at 2001 K Street (extant), Club 21 at 1122 21st Street, and the Wreck Room at 925 20th Street (extant).¹³¹

The character of these bars varied widely, reflecting the diversity of Sacramento's gay community. The Merc looked like a typical straight bar except that there were usually no women present. Club 21 was a former straight bar that was taken over by Clay Biscoe, his brother Bill Biscoe, and Bernie Ferris around 1980. The bar had a similar “casual and friendly” atmosphere to The Merc. By 1982, the bar welcomed an estimated 350 people on a typical Friday or Saturday night. The Wreck Room, a few blocks away, was a leather bar that featured male underwear hanging on chains above the bar.¹³² In a written recollection, Sacramento resident Tim Holt offered a glimpse of the vibrancy and variety of Sacramento’s gay bar scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s:

The atmosphere in the gay bars was more relaxed than you generally find in most singles bars. People were definitely checking each other out, so there was a certain feeling of nervous expectation, but I noticed that there was a lot more touching going on – much of it obviously just friendly contact – than you’d expect to see in straight bars.

The Mercantile Saloon [was] a quiet, relatively sedate, sit-and-talk-while-you-check-out-the-action bar. It [was] located in Midtown, at the corner of [20th] and L streets.

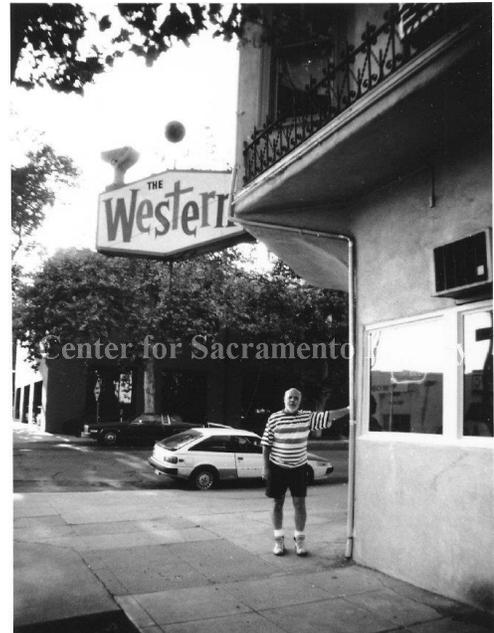


Figure 12. An unidentified man in front of The Western, ca. 1992. Source: Center for Sacramento History.

¹³¹ William Burg, *Midtown Sacramento: Creative Soul of the City* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014), 41.

¹³² Lindelof, "Gay Bars Flourish in Downtown Area As Places to Relax, Find Partners."

Bo Jangles, at 70th and Folsom, [was] a flashy disco spot that cater[ed] to a fairly young crowd, a lot of them from nearby CSUS.

At Joseph's Montana Saloon on a Wednesday night, we encountered what was obviously the regular crowd of women playing pool. One, who wore glasses and played lousy pool, looked matronly enough to be my old fourth grade teacher – except that my fourth-grade teacher never wore tight blue jeans.¹³³

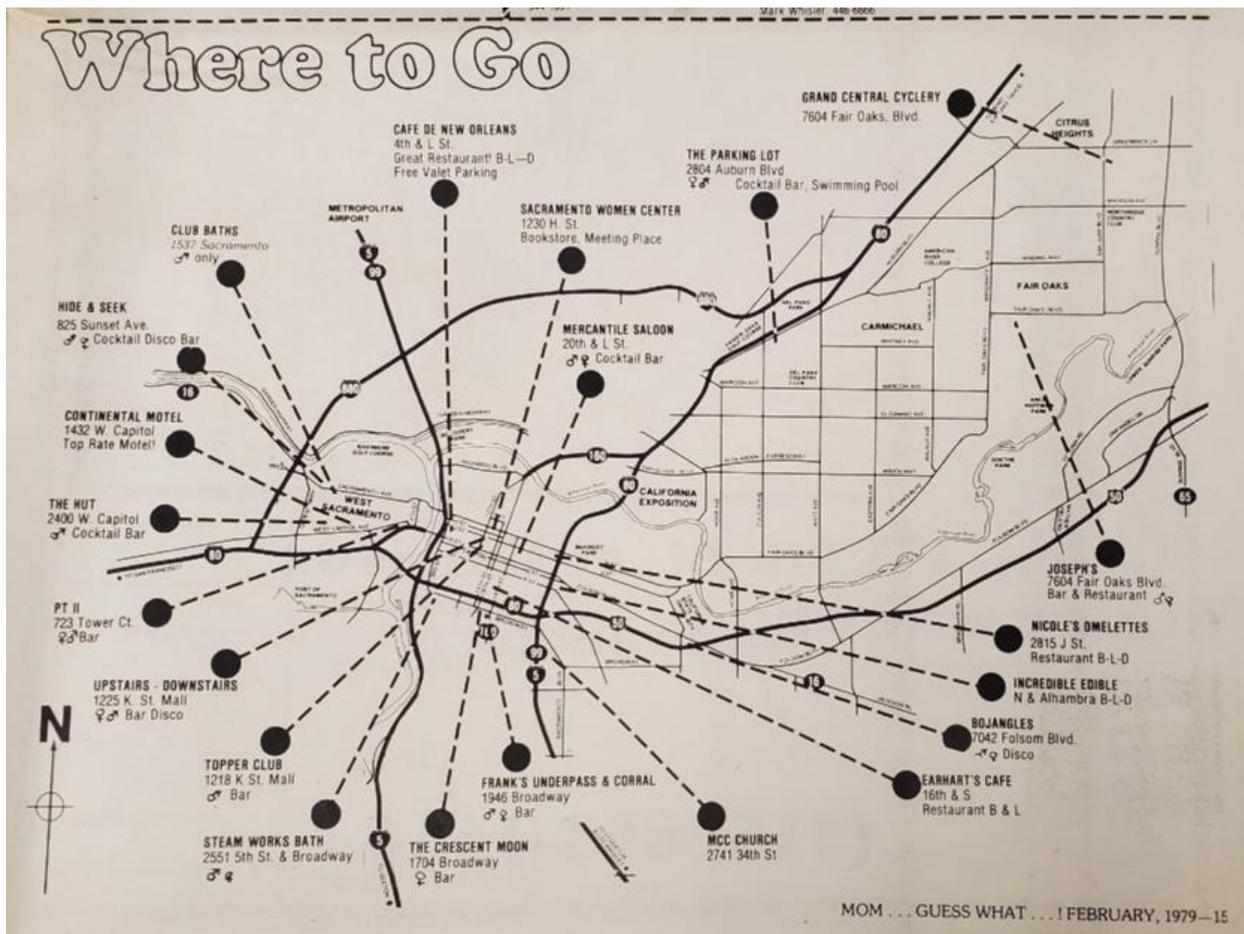


Figure 13. Map showing the LGBTQ+ community "where to go," published in *Mom...Gues What...!* in February 1979. Source: Lavender Library.

¹³³ Tim Holt, "Sacto's Gays," personal collection or George Raya.

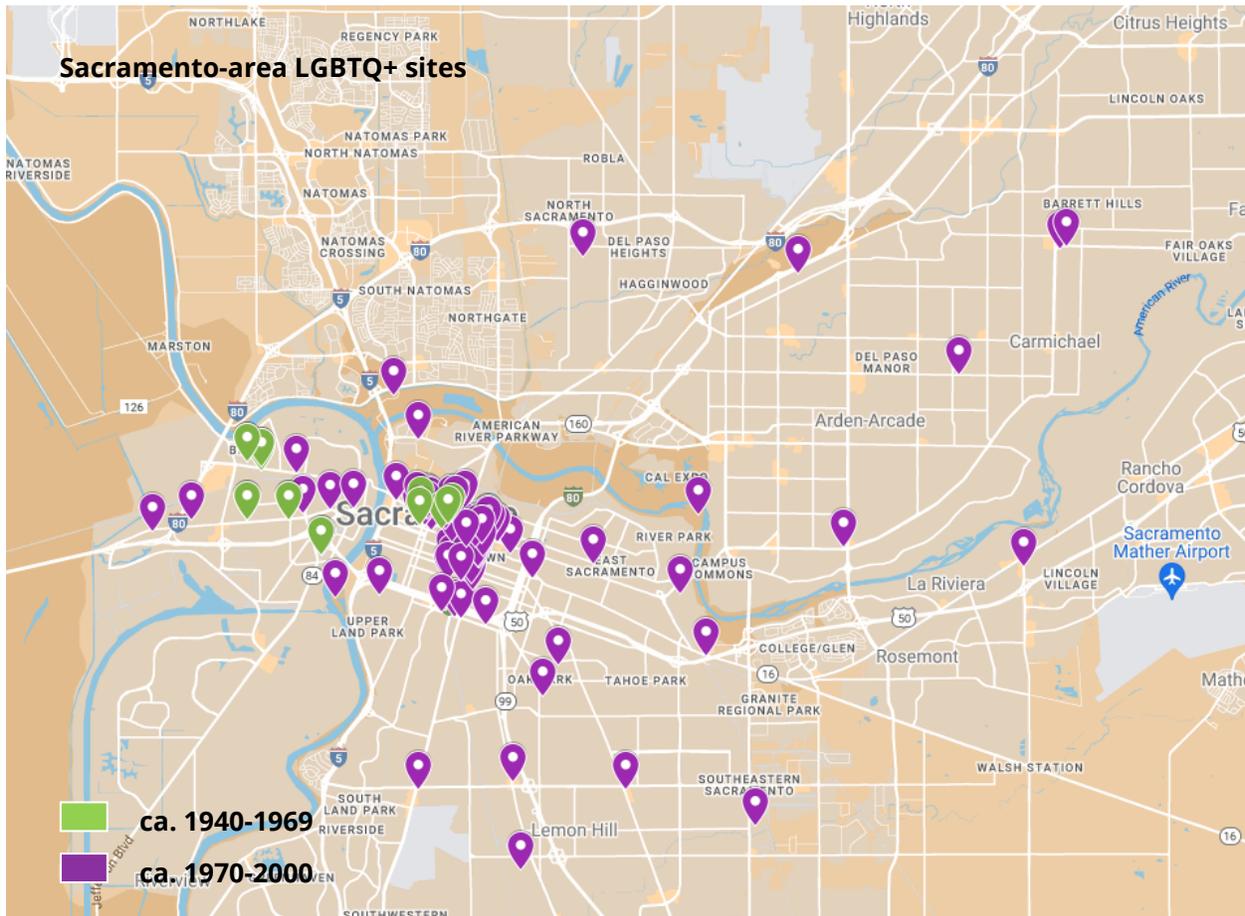


Figure 14. Locations of known LGBTQ+ businesses, establishments, and other community sites in the Sacramento area, showing the shift and growth of community spaces between the postwar period (green markers) and 2000 (purple markers).

Despite the differing characters of the city's gay bars, community members reflected that Sacramento's gay bar scene "had a closeness and unity that larger cities, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, could only wish to have."¹³⁴ By 1982, an article in the *Sacramento Bee* estimated that roughly 3,500 to 5,000 of the city's estimated gay residents frequented the city's gay bars. By 1987, the *Damron Guides* no longer showed any gay bars located in West Sacramento, indicating that the center of gay life had completed its shift east to Downtown and Midtown Sacramento.¹³⁵

Although the number of gay bars grew, most catered primarily to white gay men or white lesbian women. As a result, local transgender, bisexual, and other non-gay residents and LGBTQ+ residents

¹³⁴ "Story - Bar History I, 1955-1995," undated, George Raya collection.

¹³⁵ Mike Walker, "Damron Guide Reveals Sacramento Past," 2005, George Raya collection.

of color often felt unwelcome at many of the area's gay bars and business establishments.¹³⁶ The transgender community was not accepted by the gay and lesbian communities through the 1990s. While some transgender people went to gay bars, they were often beat up or bullied, and instead typically socialized in small groups at potlucks, dinners, or other gatherings at their private residences. It was not until the early 2000s that the transgender community began to be welcomed into Sacramento's broader LGBTQ+ community.¹³⁷

Lavender Heights

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

By the late 1970s, the foundations of a clearly identifiable, vibrant, openly gay neighborhood known as Lavender Heights began to emerge in the Midtown area of Sacramento. The name "Lavender Heights" was coined by members of Sacramento's gay community in the 1970s, but it did not become more broadly used by the general population of Sacramento until the early 1980s, when the *Sacramento Bee* published a series of articles highlighting the neighborhood and several of its businesses. Although the origin of the neighborhood's name is unknown, the color lavender was a reference to the popular association of the gay community with the color purple. Another name, "Fruit Flats," was reportedly considered for the neighborhood and showed the community's sense of humor but did not catch on.¹³⁸

Several factors contributed to the development of Lavender Heights. During the postwar period, the flight of wealthy residents and resources out of the older neighborhoods within and near Sacramento's original Central City street grid to newer suburbs in outlying areas resulted in a decline of property values and rents in the Central City.¹³⁹ Young, single people, some of whom were gay, moved into the area, particularly the Midtown neighborhood, attracted by the abundance of low-rent apartment houses, excitement of urban life, and greater tolerance for alternative lifestyles than suburban areas. One such example was an apartment house near 22nd and P streets, known as the Pink Fairy Palace, which gained a reputation as a residence where groups of gay men lived in the late 1960s, thus becoming one of the first known concentrated groups of gay men in Sacramento.¹⁴⁰

Likely drawn to the Midtown area by the growing number of gay and lesbian residents in the area, gay-friendly businesses began to open in the area. As with many gay neighborhoods throughout the United States, the first seeds of the Lavender Heights neighborhood were planted by the

¹³⁶ Conversation between Clarmundo Sullivan and Henry Feuss, May 24, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

¹³⁷ Conversation between Tina Reynolds, Clare Flynn, and Henry Feuss, May 22, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

¹³⁸ Witt, "Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento."

¹³⁹ Claussen, "Lavender Heights," 140.

¹⁴⁰ Witt, "Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento."

establishment of several gay bars—traditionally the center of gay life—in the area.¹⁴¹ As previously described, some of the earliest and most prominent gay bars in the neighborhood were the Mercantile Saloon, The Western, Christie’s Elbo Room, Club 21, and the Wreck Room, all of which were located at or within a few blocks of the intersection of 20th and K Steets. Another important corridor in Lavender Heights was 21st Street.¹⁴² In addition to Club 21, the street was the home of the offices of out gay doctor Harvey Thompson at 912 21st Street (extant); Lioness Books, a feminist bookstore that developed from a women’s center founded in 1973, at 1311 21st Street (extant); and the headquarters of *Mom, Guess What...!*, a newspaper founded by Linda Birner to serve Sacramento’s gay community and allies in 1978, at 1919 21st Street (extant).¹⁴³ Lioness Books later moved to 2224 J Street (extant).

The growing concentration of LGBTQ+ residents and bars created a sense of safety, acceptance, and awareness that contributed to the establishment of other businesses and institutions that transformed Lavender Heights into a full-fledged community. In contrast to many of Sacramento’s ethnic and racial minorities, who could be visually identified—and, therefore, discriminated against, due to their physical appearance—gay individuals could not typically be identified as such by their outward appearance alone and were able to seek out locations to set down roots where they felt safe, accepted, able to freely express themselves, and had access to important community services. Thus, Lavender Heights became what graduate student Michael Claussen called a “community of congregation,” a self-created and self-defined place where the LGBTQ+ community chose to establish itself, rather than a community of segregation that was forced into a specific area due to discrimination.¹⁴⁴

As more gay and lesbian individuals moved into Midtown and the number of gay businesses, institutions, and services grew, a true community emerged that provided services for all aspects of daily life. Transgender people also patronized gay establishments but were less visible due to a general lack of acceptance from the gay and lesbian communities through the early 2000s.¹⁴⁵ By the 1990s, Lavender Heights contained not just a concentration of gay bars but also a wide variety of restaurants, clothing stores, laundromats, shops, beauty salons and barber shops, doctors, therapists, lawyers, dentists, and realtors that catered specifically to LGBTQ+ clientele. The neighborhood was relatively self-contained and self-sufficient, thanks to the range of services available to residents and the fact that many residents also worked in the area.¹⁴⁶ Lavender Heights

¹⁴¹ Claussen, “Lavender Heights,” 90.

¹⁴² Witt, “Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento.”

¹⁴³ Witt, “Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento.”

¹⁴⁴ Claussen, “Lavender Heights,” 84, 164.

¹⁴⁵ Conversation between Tina Reynolds, Clare Flynn, and Henry Feuss, May 22, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

¹⁴⁶ Claussen, “Lavender Heights,” 120.

also became the center for the broader LGBTQ+ community of the Sacramento region, as it was the primary location throughout much of the surrounding area in which one could find businesses and services specifically intended to meet the needs and desires of LGBTQ+ individuals.¹⁴⁷

LOCATION

Lavender Heights has historically been centered around the intersection of 20th and K streets and the surrounding blocks, though its boundaries are not clearly defined and evolved over time with the growth of LGBTQ+-owned and LGBTQ+-friendly business establishments in the Midtown area. In the early 1980s, an article in the *Sacramento Bee* described Lavender Heights as "a cluster of gay-owned or gay-frequented businesses along 21st Street between Broadway and C Street."¹⁴⁸

However, by the 1990s, the neighborhood had expanded north and to the east and west, primarily along K and J streets. In a survey of 111 residents and patrons of Lavender Heights conducted in 1998 by graduate student Michael Claussen, participants broadly identified G, H, or I streets as the neighborhood's northern boundary; L Street, Capitol Avenue, or N Street as its southern boundary; 16th or 20th streets as its western boundary; and 23rd Street or Alhambra Boulevard as its eastern boundary. While the

north and south boundaries were geographically relatively close, the variance between the east and west boundaries reflected the locations of establishments that were commonly frequented by the neighborhood's residential community more broadly. Popular gay restaurants in the 1990s, the Bread Store at 1716 J Street (extant) and Hamburger Mary's at 1630 J Street (extant), and local lesbian/feminist café Earhart's Café at 1905 16th Street (extant), were located on or near 16th Street, while 20th Street was the location of several of the most popular gay bars in the city, Faces and The Western. Lioness Books was located nearby on 21st Street. Alhambra Boulevard does not appear to have been selected by survey respondents because of the presence of important gay businesses but rather because it was home to several establishments that were frequented by residents of



Figure 15. Two women outside Earhart's Cafe (ca. 1992). Source: Center for Sacramento History.

¹⁴⁷ Claussen, "Lavender Heights," 122.

¹⁴⁸ Witt, "Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento."

Midtown more broadly, including a Safeway grocery store at 1814 19th Street (extant), humorously nicknamed "Gayway."¹⁴⁹

COMMUNITY CENTERS & SERVICES

The growing self-awareness among Sacramento's LGBTQ+ residents that they were part of a larger underserved community came with the need to come together to help their own. Individuals pooled their resources and social networks to found community centers, charities, and other service organizations to meet the community's needs. In 1977, a local charity called the George Sand Community Benefit Fund was created to provide financial assistance to members of the local gay community who found themselves in a position of need. The charity was evocatively named after the famous 19th-century female novelist who was famous for writing novels that addressed women's rights and sometimes wore men's clothing.¹⁵⁰ The following year, Clay Shipway, a member of the gay religious order the Brotherhood of Simple Life, founded The Way Station at 1403 I Street (extant), a drop-in center where gay individuals could meet and seek help. Shipway funded The Way Station using his personal disability checks and donations from the Valley Knights Motorcycle Club, a social club for local gay motorcyclists and leather enthusiasts, and other local gay clubs.¹⁵¹ The drop-in center closed in 1981 due to lack of funding but maintained an active phone number as a "Gay Switchboard" for referrals for a period after.¹⁵² The Sacramento Women's Center, a feminist bookstore and drop-in counseling center primarily directed at lesbian women, was located at 1230 H Street. The center later evolved into Lioness Books. In the 1970s and 1980s, gay and lesbian professionals opened practices to provide medical, legal, and other professional services to the LGBTQ+ community. Notable examples include the dental office of Dr. Art Katz at 1820 Professional Drive (extant), medical offices of Dr. Harvey Thompson, which opened at 912A 21st Street (extant) in 1978, and all-women law office of Metrailler, Langenkamp, and Buscho, led by attorneys Rosemary Metrailler, Carolyn Langenkamp, Tami Buscho, at 1725 Capitol Avenue (extant) and later 1329 H Street (extant) in the 1980s.

The most prominent and long-standing of Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community centers, the Lambda Community Center (later renamed the Sacramento LGBT Community Center) was established in the 1980s, using funds procured by Reverend Jerry Sloan, founder of the Sacramento Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). As a young man, Sloan attended Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, where his classmate was Reverend Jerry Fallwell. Fallwell later became the leader of the Religious Right, founder of the Moral Majority political action committee, and an outspoken

¹⁴⁹ Michael Andrew Claussen, "Lavender Heights: The Emerging Gay Community in Downtown Sacramento, California," (M.A. thesis, California State University, Chico, 1998,) 100-102.

¹⁵⁰ "George Sand Inc. Alive and Well," *Mom, Guess What...?!*, 1 January 1979, personal collection of George Raya.

¹⁵¹ "Flashback 1977," personal collection of George Raya.

¹⁵² Burg, *Midtown Sacramento*, 41-42.

opponent of homosexuality. Sloan, meanwhile, came out as a gay man and founded chapters of the MCC in Kansas City, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; and Sacramento. On March 11, 1984, Falwell expressed his view that homosexuality was the embodiment of evil, stating, "Thank God this vile and satanic system will one day be utterly annihilated, and there will be a celebration in heaven."¹⁵³ When Falwell and Sloan were guests on a television program in Sacramento a few months later, Falwell denied his statements and promised to pay Sloan \$5,000 if he could provide taped evidence. Sloan produced the tapes, but Falwell refused to pay him, claiming that he had been misquoted. Sloan hired local attorney and lesbian legal pioneer Rosemary Metrailler and filed a lawsuit against Falwell and won nearly \$9,000 in the settlement.¹⁵⁴ After paying his legal fees, Sloan—along with Timothy Warford, Terry Sidie, Marghe Covino, Court of the Great Northwest Imperial Empire (CGNIE) Emperor Randy Hartman, and other community members—used the rest of the winnings from the lawsuit to open the Lambda Community Center in the heart of the Lavender Heights district at 1931 L Street (extant) in 1986.¹⁵⁵ Sloan named a closet at the center of the building after Falwell.

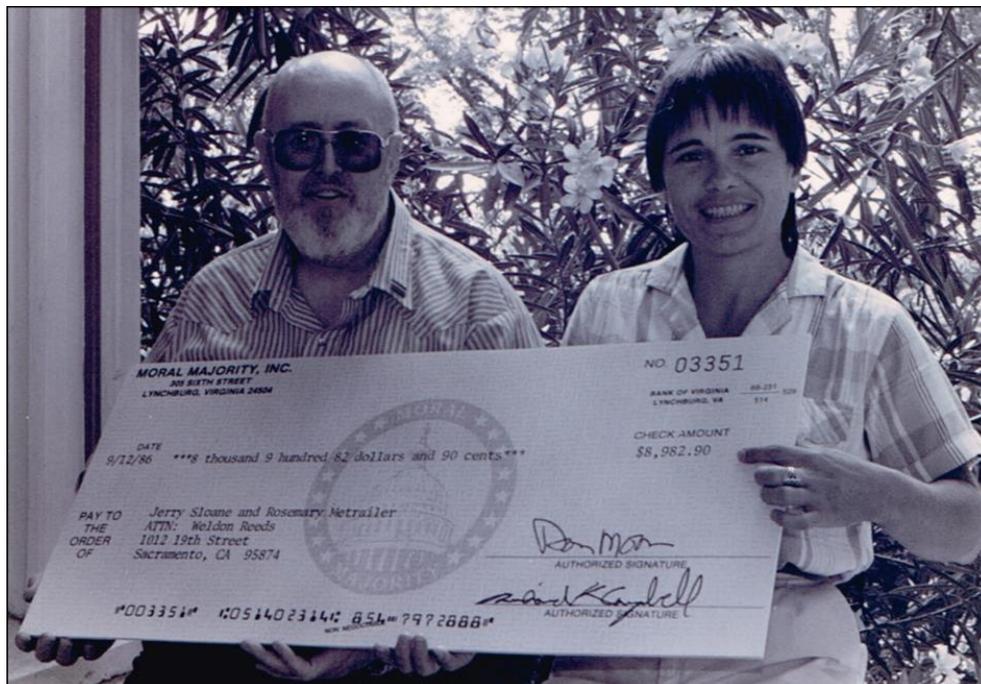


Figure 16. Reverend Jerry Sloan and Rosemary Metrailler with the check from the lawsuit against Reverend Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority. Source: Sacramento LGBTQ Community Center.

¹⁵³ Burg, *Midtown Sacramento*, 41-42.

¹⁵⁴ Burg, *Midtown Sacramento*, 41-42.

¹⁵⁵ "History," Sacramento LGBT Community Center, accessed April 11, 2024, <https://saccenter.org/history>. CGNIE is a continuously operating drag queen and drag king club and charitable organization with a hierarchy of officers, including an Emperor, Empress, Duchess, Lord, and Princess Royal.

The Lambda Community Center was similar in some ways to the earlier drop-in centers, but it offered a larger and more comprehensive scope of services and served the full cross-section of Sacramento's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community.¹⁵⁶ The center provided services such as AIDS education, a youth program, political lobbying and letter writing campaigns, health education, a theater troop called the Lambda Players Theater Group, and a monthly newsletter.¹⁵⁷ The center changed its name to the Sacramento Gay and Lesbian Center in 2006 and again in 2013 to the Sacramento LGBT Community Center. The center moved to 1015 20th Street (extant) in 2019.¹⁵⁸

The Sacramento's community's response to AIDS/HIV is discussed in detail in Chapter 4; however, it was the community's acute need to provide care and services to its sick and dying members during the AIDS/HIV crisis in the 1980s and 1990s that began the process of uniting Sacramento's previously fractured LGBTQ+ community under one banner. Many lesbians stepped up during the epidemic to provide care and other services to sick and dying gay men, breaking down barriers and forming lasting bonds between the groups. The experience began the path toward further collaboration between gay men and lesbians and initiated a shifting perspective that gay men and lesbians were part of one unified community. Transgender people and people with other gender and sexually non-conforming identities were not brought into community until the 2000s.¹⁵⁹

LGBTQ+ Newspapers & Media

Through at least the 1990s, local community newspapers and media catered specifically to the gay and lesbian communities, with little or no coverage of the transgender community or other LGBTQ+ sexual and gender identities. The establishment of newspapers and other forms of media specifically by and for the lesbian and gay communities was crucial to spreading news and fostering connections between individuals, organizations, clubs, and businesses that contributed to the development and growth of gay communities across the United States, including Sacramento. Along with the gay bar scene, gay newspapers, journals, and magazines showed individuals that a wide network of people just like them existed in the same cities and neighborhoods. In the late 1960s and 1970s, gay newspapers began to proliferate in major cities across the United States with the intention of developing positive gay awareness and providing needed support for gay and lesbian individuals as an increasing number of people came out of the closet.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Burg, *Midtown Sacramento*, 41-42.

¹⁵⁷ Claussen, 142.

¹⁵⁸ "History," Sacramento LGBT Community Center, accessed April 11, 2024, <https://saccenter.org/history>.

¹⁵⁹ Conversation between Tina Reynolds, Clare Flynn, and Henry Feuss, May 22, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

¹⁶⁰ David C. Weinerth, "From the Inside Out," *Mom...Guess What...!*, 1 December 1978.

Sacramento's first known gay publications were founded in the late 1970s, as the community became increasingly open and visible. Early publications had short runs, often lasting less than one year and in some cases only publishing a single issue. Examples included the *Gay Voice* magazine, which ran for a short period in 1971, the *Good News* newspaper, which was based in Roseville and published one issue in April 1976; and *Gay Sacramento*, a mimeographed newsletter published by James K. Graham and his friends in June 1977.¹⁶¹ Other forms of media also emerged to serve the community in the late 1970s. In 1976, a radio program specifically for gay men and lesbians began airing on 88.9FM, hosted by Sue Diehl and Allen Chamberlain. Originally titled "Our Hour," the program changed its name to "Interface" in 1977. The program aired every Saturday evening from 6:00pm to 7:00pm and featured news, interviews, music, and other "features of interest to gay people." It ran through at least 1979.¹⁶² Despite their short spans of operation, early gay and lesbian forms of media such as these showed that there was an increasing awareness among Sacramento's lesbian and gay residents of the existence of others like them and a desire for media specifically by and for them.

MOM...GUESS WHAT...! NEWSPAPER

The longest-running and most influential of all of Sacramento's LGBTQ+ media was the *Mom...Guess What...!* (MGW) newspaper. The newspaper was founded by local resident Linda Birner and ran its first issue in November 1978, roughly around the same time that similar newspapers launched in major North American cities, including New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., Toronto, Philadelphia, Montreal, San Francisco, Denver, Los Angeles, and others.¹⁶³ Born in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1949, Birner arrived in Sacramento in 1962, where she earned a Master's degree in Psychology at Sacramento State College (now California State University, Sacramento and also known as Sacramento State or CSUS) doing graphic work for state legislators Mervyn Dymally and Leona Egeland.

After working for a consulting firm for a period, she started her own graphics design business. Demonstrating the close ties between growing activism among the gay community and other activist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, she became active in the Women's Movement through the National Organization of Women (NOW), believing that the first step to achieving gay rights was obtaining equal rights for women. "All of it's related," she said. "I call it the Gay/Feminist Movement."¹⁶⁴ Spurred into action by the campaign to pass Proposition 6, known as the Briggs Initiative, which aimed to ban gay and lesbian individuals from working in California's public schools,

¹⁶¹ "Publications Sacramento," undated, private collection of George Raya; "One Year Later..." *Mom...Guess What...!*, November 1979.

¹⁶² "Gay Radio Returns," *Mom...Guess What...!*, 1 March 1979.

¹⁶³ Weinerth, "From the Inside Out."

¹⁶⁴ "One Year Later..." *Mom...Guess What...!*, November 1979.

she founded *MGW* to share important information about the initiative and encourage readers to vote against it. The first meeting to share information about plans for the newspaper and solicit interest from potential writers, photographers, artists, and other contributors was held at Earhart's Café in November 1978.¹⁶⁵ Early staff members, all of whom initially worked as volunteers, included publisher and design director Linda Birner, executive editor David S. Weinerth, editor James K. Graham, associated editors Bill Spiller and J. Anne Wessel, and photographers Jan-Michelle Sawyer and Adam Ciesielski. Contributing writers included Allen Chamberlain, Sue Diehl, Ron Drum, Colleen Moreland, Greg Low, Doug Biggert, Arthur Corbin, and Zana S. Blazer.¹⁶⁶ Former State Assemblyman Dennis Mangers later contributed to sections on politics, art, and culture.¹⁶⁷ Mangers' involvement in local LGBTQ+ political activism is discussed further in Chapter 5.

The group initially worked out of Birner's house at 3441 Fair Oaks Boulevard, where they brainstormed the name of the paper and assigned and wrote stories, before eventually moving to an office of its own at 1919 21st Street (extant). In contrast to many of the sexually oriented publications directed toward the gay community at the time, Birner insisted that *MGW* be a "clean" newspaper without sexually explicit content so that it could appeal to a broader audience, could be openly displayed on coffee tables in public places, and could improve the self-esteem of the gay community.¹⁶⁸ The newspaper was published monthly and distributed at gay bars and restaurants, the Sacramento Women's Center, and other local gay businesses, establishments, and social gathering places.¹⁶⁹

At a time when the gay and lesbian communities were often distinctly separate from each other, *MGW* was designed as a newspaper for both gay men and lesbians across the Sacramento area and wider region. Reflecting one of its goals of increasing awareness, understanding, and acceptance toward the gay community among the broader population, it also notably targeted straight allies, or "Friends," as part of its main readership base. This mission was explicitly stated on the first page of its first issue:

"MOM...GUESS WHAT...!" is a tabloid newspaper that happens to be Gay. It's for women and men in the Sacramento Valley area and the Mother Lode countries who happen to be gay and for their friends who happen to like sharing the enjoyment of their friends who happen to be gay.

¹⁶⁵ *Mom...Guess What...!*, November 1, 1978.

¹⁶⁶ *Mom...Guess What...!*, November 1, 1978.

¹⁶⁷ "Sacramento Oral History Episode 2: Linda Birner and Dennis Mangers," May 30, 2023, Center for Sacramento History, YouTube, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8t3BwNfUXk>.

¹⁶⁸ "Sacramento Oral History Episode 2: Linda Birner and Dennis Mangers," Center for Sacramento History.

¹⁶⁹ *Mom...Guess What...!*, November 1, 1978.

"MOM...GUESS WHAT...!" is designed to appeal to the interests of a lot of nice people who may not know each other yet but probably should. After all, Sacramento's a big place. In and around River City there are thousands of Lesbians, Gay Men, and Friends of all ages and all walks of life who are not only interesting and unique in themselves, but who are also eager to find out more about each other and about their many opportunities for social activity, recreation, and personal growth through involvement with each other.¹⁷⁰

As demonstrated by its original mission statement, *MGW* went beyond political activism and was explicitly intended to foster the creation of a gay community in Sacramento. In the newspaper's one-year anniversary issue, associate editor James Graham stated, "You can't decide, 'we are going to organize a community.' It has to happen, develop and come together. You can work to create the conditions, and I feel MOM...GUESS WHAT! is doing that."¹⁷¹ With that goal in mind, *MGW* published articles not just about local news, important legislation, and policies that were of special interest to the gay community, it also included a calendar of social events, a guide to local entertainment locations, a list of social organizations along with their contact info, and classified advertisements.

According to local mental health worker Elizabeth Harrison, Sacramento's gay community had been primarily bar-oriented until *MGW* began publishing issues. "When *Mom, Guess What...!* started, it opened a whole new world," she said.¹⁷² The newspaper allowed lesbians and gay men find not just bars and clubs but also doctors, therapists, sports leagues, professional organizations, and other social clubs, events, and services, specifically by and for members of the gay community. Demonstrating its goal of uniting and uplifting the community, *MGW* was unique in that, as Harrison described it, "the newspaper was kind – it didn't go after people or do exposés. It elevated people and brought people together."¹⁷³

Often the newspaper literally did just that. Classified ads published in *MGW* were frequently the way gay and lesbian individuals met each other and found romantic relationships. People would place an ad in the newspaper and typically list a P.O. box address as their contact in order to keep their personal addresses private. According to Sacramento resident and former State Assemblyman Dennis Mangers, it was common for individuals to meet for coffee at New Helvetia café located in the former fire station at 1215 19th Street (extant) or for some other activity after work.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ *Mom...Guess What...!*, 1 November 1978.

¹⁷¹ "One Year Later..." *Mom...Guess What...!*, November 1979.

¹⁷² "Sacramento Oral History Episode 4: Linda Birner and Elizabeth Harrison," May 31, 2023, Center for Sacramento History, YouTube, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nWsdGrixw>.

¹⁷³ "Sacramento Oral History Episode 4: Linda Birner and Elizabeth Harrison," Center for Sacramento History.

¹⁷⁴ "Sacramento Oral History Episode 2: Linda Birner and Dennis Mangers," Center for Sacramento History.



Figure 17. *Mom...Guess What...!* founder Linda Birner (2023). Source: Hector Amezcua for the *Sacramento Bee*.



Figure 18. *Mom...Guess What...!* staff (from left to right): Bill Spiller, J. Anne Wessel, Linda Birner, James K. Graham, and Gary Kimball. Source: *Mom...Guess What...!*, November 1979. Photo by Rebecca Gregg.

MGW ceased publication in 2009, having published approximately 585 issues over the course of its over 30-year existence.¹⁷⁵ The newspaper paved the way for other LGBTQ+ publications in Sacramento, including the *Paltar Gazette*, founded by Larry Lanham in the early 1980s; the *Sacramento Star*, which also ran in the early 1980s; and *Jane and Jane*, a Sacramento-based women's magazine.¹⁷⁶ In 1987, Kate Moore founded *The Latest Issue*, a publication that covered local gay happenings. In 1995, Moore sold the publication to Fred Palmer, who transformed it into *Outword Magazine*.¹⁷⁷ The wide-ranging coverage offered by gay and lesbian media, most prominently by *Mom, Guess What...!*, achieved what it intended to do and increased the visibility of gay and lesbian residents while helping to build a rich, vibrant, and self-sustaining gay community in Sacramento.

LGBTQ+ Social Clubs & Recreation

SOCIAL CLUBS

As shown by the wide-ranging coverage of social and recreational activities published in *Mom, Guess What...?!*, bars and clubs were no longer the only place for members of Sacramento's lesbian and gay communities to socialize and meet people by the early 1980s. A myriad of alternative forms of entertainment, recreation, and socialization began to proliferate during this period, fostered by the connections and promotional opportunities provided by publications like *Mom, Guess What...!*. The variety of offerings reflected the diversity of Sacramento's gay community.

Social groups were organized around common interests. The Valley Knights (for gay men) and Leather and Lace (for lesbians) were clubs for local motorcyclists and enthusiasts and were important early incubators for the leather community. A drag queen and drag king club and charitable organization, called the Court of the Great Northwest Imperial Empire (CGNIE), was founded in 1973. The organization was based in Sacramento but expanded to include 27 counties in Northern California. CGNIE held annual elections to choose its hierarchy of officers, which included an Emperor,



Figure 19. CGNIE's Pat Monclair at the Parking Lot (1979). Source: Fifty Gay Years In The Greater Sacramento Area.

¹⁷⁵ Graham Womack, "Community Gathers Issues of Sacramento LGBT Newspaper," *Sacramento Bee*, 2 July 2023: D1.

¹⁷⁶ "Publications Sacramento," undated, private collection of George Raya; Witt, "Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento," *Sacramento Bee*.

¹⁷⁷ Conversation between Tina Reynolds, Clare Flynn, and Henry Feuss, May 22, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

Empress, Duchess, Lord, and Princess Royal. The Emperor and Empress were selected at an annual Coronation Ball. The fourth Empress of CGNIE was Pat Monclaire, who performed drag shows at the Hide and Seek, Log Cabin, Parking Lot, and other local bars.¹⁷⁸ In 1976, the ball was held at the Senator Hotel in downtown Sacramento. The same year, the group organized a fundraiser for the George Sand Community Fund at the Parking Lot. The event notably brought together members of the local lesbian and gay motorcycle clubs and LGBTQ+-supporting church organizations, such as the Metropolitan Community Church and Dignity.¹⁷⁹ Sacramento also had gay and lesbian clubs for roller skating, square dancing, sailing, and other hobbies and activities.



Figure 20. The Valley Knights in front of Bob and Frank's Underpass (1978). Source: Fifty Gay Years In The Greater Sacramento Area.

¹⁷⁸ Melba, "Fifty Gay Years In The Greater Sacramento Area: 1950 – 2000."

¹⁷⁹ Tim Holt, "Sacto's Gays," undated, private collection of George Raya.

SPORTS

The number and variety of sports clubs and leagues also grew in the 1970s and offered many options to the local community. Sacramento had its own gay baseball league for a time in the 1970s. The league was comprised of four or five teams, each of which represented one of the area's local gay bars: the Hu Hu Hut in West Sacramento, Mercantile Saloon, Faces, the Parking Lot, and Wreck Room. Games were held on Sundays and attracted approximately 300 to 400 fans. Similar clubs from San Francisco that were looking for more teams to play traveled to Sacramento for games for a period, before the league folded due to a lack of a sufficient number of teams.¹⁸⁰

In 1982, the first Gay Olympic Games was held in San Francisco. According to founder Tom Waddell, the event's "formula for success was visibility and identity. And both were right there on the field. We were visible, and we were identified. And what did people see? They saw healthy people, out there, doing something that everyone could understand. They were out there to complete and have fun."¹⁸¹ More than 1,300 athletes from approximately 170 cities participated in the first event. Music legend Tina Turner performed. After the U.S. Olympic Committee demanded that organizers remove the word "Olympic" from the event's name, the event was changed to the "Gay Games."¹⁸² A second Gay Games was held in San Francisco in 1986. Gay and lesbian athletes from Sacramento participated in the games, including Don F. Dingler, who won the bronze medal in triathlon in 1986, and Carl Ray McCollum, who won a bronze medal in bowling at the 1990 games.¹⁸³

[More to be added, based on further research and public input]

ARTS

Sacramento also had plenty to offer for gay and lesbian residents with an interest in the arts in all of its forms. In the 1960s and 1970s, artistic offerings were directed primarily at gay and lesbian residents, but did not specifically cater to transgender people or other LGBTQ+ subgroups. *Mom...Guess What...!* advertised live music, theater, dance performances; art shows and exhibitions; and other artistic events in its monthly publications. The newspaper also published reviews of new music releases, highlighting those that were the work of local gay and lesbian musicians, and profiles of local artists. Many of the local gay bars and clubs regularly hosted live music performances by local and traveling musicians.

¹⁸⁰ Tim Holt, "Sacto's Gays," undated, private collection of George Raya.

¹⁸¹ Scottie Andrew, "Welcome to the 'Gay Games,' An Alternative to the Olympics, Where Activism is Encouraged and Everyone's an Athlete," CNN, July 31, 2021, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/31/us/gay-games-lgbtq-olympics-trnd/index.html>.

¹⁸² Andrew, "Welcome to the 'Gay Games.'"

¹⁸³ "Don F. Dingler," *Sacramento Bee*, 13 December 1989: C2; "McCollom, Carl Ray," *Sacramento Bee*, 17 September 1992: B7.

In 1979, a woman named Donna opened a co-op for gay artists and their friends to display and sell their work on a commission basis. The co-op was located at the Double D Manufacturing Shop at 3443 La Grande Boulevard (extant).¹⁸⁴



Figure 21. J.L. Larsson, performing in Le Theatre Lesbien's production of "Dykes on Parade" in 1982. Source: *Sacramento Bee*.

The Sacramento Experimental Theatre, a theater troupe whose productions often focused on gay and lesbian themes, announced a production at the Pease Conservatory's Geery Theater at 22nd and L streets (extant) in February 1979.¹⁸⁵ Le Theatre Lesbien, a lesbian theater company, was founded by Cherie Gordon in 1971 and was "dedicated to the presentation of lesbians with positive models with whom they can identify."¹⁸⁶ The troop performed plays such as "Return of the Cowdykes at the Lavender Corral," described in advertisements as "a slick and sleazy sapphic satire" at the CSUS's theater in 1979. Tickets were sold at Lioness Books.¹⁸⁷ Performances in the early 1980s often took place at the Sierra II Community Center (extant) in the Curtis Park neighborhood.

Another theater troop, the Lambda Players, began performing at the Lambda Community Center (now the Sacramento LGBT Community Center) in 1989. The troop featured both gay and lesbian actors.¹⁸⁸

In 1984, Dennis Mangers helped found the Sacramento Gay Men's Chorus, originally simply called the Sacramento Men's Chorus to protect its members from discrimination. Early members included successful lobbyists, lawyers, school principals, teachers, businessmen, and community leaders, some of whom were closeted in their professional lives and for whom the club was an outlet and refuge from the realities of discrimination they faced in their daily lives. The early choir consisted of between 25 and 40 singers, who sang in straight lines and dressed in conservative clothing. As it became increasingly safe and accepted to be openly gay in the early 2000s, the choir began to

¹⁸⁴ "Gay Art Co-Op Has Display Area," *Mom...Guess What...!*, February 1979.

¹⁸⁵ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 172.

¹⁸⁶ Alfred Kay, "Strategically OK Lesbian Play Fails as Theater," *Sacramento Bee*, 10 September 1979: B7.

¹⁸⁷ Advertisement clipping, private collection of George Raya.

¹⁸⁸ "A Comic T-shirt," *Sacramento Bee*, 7 December 1989.

incorporate dancing and more expressive styles of singing and clothing into their performances. The club celebrated its 30th anniversary at the Memorial Auditorium in 2015.¹⁸⁹

[More to be added, pending further research and public input]



Figure 22. Thomas Bach (right) and Patrick Elkins-Zeglarski (left) in a Lambda Players' production (ca. 1990).
Source: Center for Sacramento History.

¹⁸⁹ Marcos Breton, "Men Live, Sing in the Open," *Sacramento Bee*, 10 May 2015: B1.

PROFESSIONAL CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Several professional clubs and organizations supported Sacramento's local gay and lesbian business leaders starting in the 1970s. In 1979, Linda Birner and copy shop owner Norvell "Norv" Giles created the River City Business Association (RCBA), a local business association modeled after the Golden Gate Business Association in San Francisco, as well as similar groups in San Jose, San Diego, Chicago, New York City, and other major U.S. cities. The organization aimed to help local gay and business owners and professionals network and build mutual support. Members met monthly at the Whistle Stop restaurant in Old Sacramento, where they passed around business cards and discussed issues facing them. Giles, who served as president of the association, envisioned RCBA eventually becoming part of a national gay chamber of commerce with connections stretching across the country. Within two months of its founding, 26 people joined the RCBA. Members included lawyers, accountants, restaurateurs, interior decorators, boutique owners, graphic designers, newspaper employees, housekeepers, and other local businesspeople. Members' names were kept secret upon request to prevent backlash if employers discovered that their workers were members.¹⁹⁰ Giles used his position to publicly speak out against the discrimination that gay businesses and patrons faced, particularly anti-gay attitudes and treatment they received from the Sacramento Police Department.¹⁹¹

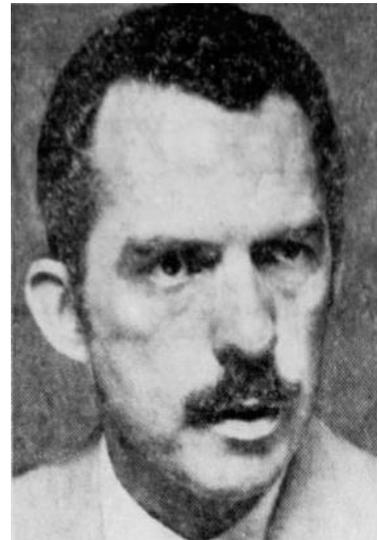


Figure 23. Norvell Giles, founder of the River City Business Association (1979).
Source: *Sacramento Bee*.

Pillars, founded by Larry Hoover, was a popular gay and lesbian social group that met monthly at local restaurants and hotels with large banquet rooms. Hundreds of people often attended their events, providing important opportunities for members of the gay community to make personal, as well as professional, connections.¹⁹²

Looking to form a group to help lesbians socialize and network, attorney Rosemary Metrailler founded the Sacramento Area Career Women's Network in the 1980s. The group's 1989 constitution stated that its purpose was to provide "a structure for sharing ideas and resources" to lesbians "of all

¹⁹⁰ Margaret Peterson, "'Mom, Guess What?' Gay Tells of Fear Overcome, Association Started," *Sacramento Bee*, 10 July 1979: C7.

¹⁹¹ "Hiring Ban 'Immature,'" *Sacramento Bee*, 31 July 1979: B2.

¹⁹² "Sacramento Oral History Episode 5: Linda Birner & Frank Lawler," May 31, 2023, Center for Sacramento History, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56Y3lmxsLsU>.

cultures, ages, physical abilities, and social and economic backgrounds.”¹⁹³ The organization continued to operate in the Sacramento area until the 1990s.

Religious & Spiritual Expression Within the LGBTQ+ Community

Just like any other community, members of the LGBTQ+ community have sought spiritual fulfillment through religion and other spiritual traditions. However, for much of their existence, LGBTQ+-identifying individuals have had to hide their identities when worshiping openly and publicly, due to discrimination they often faced from mainline religious congregations and fellowships. Starting in the 1960s, however, some churches began to welcome gay and lesbian individuals into their congregations. For example, Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, known for its progressive teachings and focus on social justice, had a pioneering role in advocating for the LGBTQ+ community at a time when other churches rejected them, providing ministry, social support, and organizing retreats and conferences to educate others about homosexuality. The church formed strong bonds with local homophile groups, with whom the church and became an important partner in advocating for LGBTQ+ rights.

In Sacramento, a similar relationship developed between the Oak Park Methodist Church at 36th Street and Broadway in the Oak Park neighborhood and the local chapter of the homophile group Americans for Responsible Citizenship (ARC), founded by Rick Stokes and his partner David Clayton in 1965. Oak Park Methodist was Clayton’s long-time family church and hosted early meetings of the ARC, disguised under the name “David’s group,” until the growing size of the meetings alerted other parishioners to their true purpose. Oak Park Methodist allowed the meetings to continue, as long as attendees refrained from drinking or smoking, and, similar to Glide Memorial Church, held regular church services, educational forums, and dinners, in addition to organizational meetings for ARC.¹⁹⁴

Sacramento’s first religious congregation dedicated primarily to serving the gay community was the Sacramento Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). Founded in 1971, the Sacramento MCC was an offshoot of the Metropolitan Community Church, first established by Reverend Troy Perry in Los Angeles two years earlier in 1969. The MCC welcomed gay, lesbian, and straight parishioners.¹⁹⁵ The scope of pent up demand for spiritual sustenance among the lesbian and gay populace was immediately apparent, and attendance soared, spawning the establishment of local congregations in other cities in California, starting with San Diego and San Francisco.¹⁹⁶ The Sacramento MCC was founded by Sacramento native Vance Babineau, a young deacon who decided to establish a

¹⁹³ “S.A.C.W.N. Inc. Constitution, Policies and Committee Descriptions,” 1989, Lavender Library.

¹⁹⁴ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 161.

¹⁹⁵ SurveyLA, “LGBT Historic Context Statement,” 49.

¹⁹⁶ SurveyLA, “LGBT Historic Context Statement,” 49-50.

congregation in his hometown after serving at the MCC in San Francisco. The congregation initially met in Babineau's mother's living room.¹⁹⁷ After hearing Troy Perry preach at his church in San Diego, pastor Joseph H. Gilbert offered his services to the fledgling Sacramento congregation and became its first pastor.¹⁹⁸ In the spring of 1971, the Sacramento MCC voted to become a separate church from the San Francisco MCC. Among the 13 original charter members were Reverend Gilbert,



Figure 24. Reverend Freda Smith of the Sacramento MCC (1987). Source: *Sacramento Bee*.

Reverend Freda Smith, Reverend Jean Hart, Madeline Reed, Eugene Brockett, and Keith Kimball.¹⁹⁹ After meeting in Reverend Gilbert's living room for a time, the congregation rented offices on the second floor of the Ruhstaller Building at 902 J Street (extant) for one year, before moving to a building at R and 16th streets, which included a small sanctuary, 10-bedroom parsonage, and separate building, which they leased to the first Gay Community Center in Sacramento. The congregation welcomed 72 parishioners at Sunday services in 1972, by which time the Sacramento MCC was one of 26 MCC branches in California. By 1974, the number of MCC branches had grown to more than 70, including branches in Nigeria, Australia, England, and Sweden.²⁰⁰

Reverend Freda Smith, a graduate student at CSUS, was ordained as the first female and lesbian pastor by the national body of the MCC in 1973 and became one of the Sacramento MCC's pastors the same year. When Reverend Smith joined the congregation, its membership primarily consisted of men, but her presence helped shift membership so that it was split roughly evenly between men and women within one year. She was also instrumental in helping the Sacramento MCC acquire and relocate to the former Odd Fellow's Building at Broadway and 34th Street in the Oak Park neighborhood in 1974.

There, Reverend Smith married gay and lesbian couples who had been together for at least six months and, at the couple's request, filed the marriage certificate with the Sacramento County

¹⁹⁷ "History of the Metropolitan Community Church," undated, private collection of George Raya.

¹⁹⁸ David Deas, "Metropolitan Church Preaches, 'God Also Loves Homosexuals,'" *Sacramento Bee*, 12 February 1972: A12.

¹⁹⁹ "History of the Metropolitan Community Church."

²⁰⁰ Ann Reed, "Gay Church," *Sacramento Bee*, 22 September 1974: 29.

Clerk's office, using a special form designed for heterosexual couples who had been living together and wanted to legitimize their weddings without others finding out. Such certificates were officially recorded by the County but sealed by the clerk's office to ensure the couple's privacy. Reverend Smith believed that the church helped gay and lesbian individuals overcome the "heartache, alienation and loneliness which they encounter so often in the gay community."²⁰¹ "We aren't only lesbians, only homosexuals here. We are the children of God," she preached. "This is the church that God, that love, is building. [...] I no longer feel I am wrong. I feel that the people who oppress me are wrong."²⁰² In 1990, the congregation purchased a former bank building at the other end of the block on Broadway for a new sanctuary so that they could offer expanded activities and services from its building on 34th Street. Before this could happen, however, the building on 34th Street was destroyed by a fire. Instead, the congregation moved to a church on the closed Mather Air Force Base in 1994, where it remains.²⁰³

A local chapter of Dignity, an organization of lesbian and gay Catholics, began in Sacramento in 1975, after local resident Ron Drum attended several Dignity meetings in San Francisco the year before. The pastor at St. Francis Church at 26th and K streets in Midtown encouraged Drum to form a local chapter and offered the church's social hall for monthly meetings. The first Dignity meeting was held in April 1975, with Drum serving as its first president. According to a pamphlet produced by the group, "Dignity exists to show lesbian and gay Catholics—God loves all people unconditionally."²⁰⁴ Dignity masses, retreats, dinners, and other events were held at St. Francis Church. The local chapter's membership was much smaller than that of other chapters in California. In 1989, the Sacramento Dignity chapter had 34 members, compared to 245 in San Francisco, 189 in Los Angeles, 171 in San Diego, and 115 in Long Beach. According to Drum, Sacramento Dignity's "main purpose was always to merge into our Parishes as active and contributing members—This has happened almost miraculously at St. Francis Church with the Franciscans." Feeling that this purpose had been achieved, the Sacramento Dignity chapter disbanded around 2000.²⁰⁵

In the decades following the 1960s, several other religious congregations or fellowships, representing a wide range of denominations and faiths, were established to serve Sacramento's diverse LGBTQ+ community. By 1987, seven such congregations existed in Sacramento: MCC, Dignity, Affirmation (Methodist), Ahavat Zion (Jewish), Integrity (Episcopalian), Kinship (Seventh-Day Adventist), Sacramento Family (Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints), Presbyterians Concerned,

²⁰¹ Ann Reed, "Gay Church."

²⁰² John Robin Witt, "The Gospel According to Freda Smith," *Sacramento Bee*, 17 May 1987: 6.

²⁰³ "History of the Metropolitan Community Church."

²⁰⁴ Dignity pamphlet, undated, private collection of George Raya.

²⁰⁵ Ron Drum, "Dignity History Update," 2005, private collection of George Raya.

Lutherans Concerned, and Sierra Oaks New Covenant Christians (Independents).²⁰⁶ By the late 1990s, additional congregations and fellowships that welcomed LGBTQ+ members included the Pioneer Congregation Church at 27th and L streets (extant), CA House, Interfaith Counseling Service, the Sun Holy Communion, the Unitarian Universalist Community Church, and the Assembly of Wicca.²⁰⁷

Gay Pride Parades

The gay liberation movement's messaging and mission included instilling the community with a sense of pride, rather than loathing, toward their authentic selves and their sexual orientations. On the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall riots in June 1970, the Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade was held in New York City, marking the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall riots. The event inspired gay pride parades and celebrations that occur every June across the country, including Sacramento.²⁰⁸

Sacramento's first gay pride parade took place on June 17, 1979. The parade's theme was "It's About Time," and was billed as a celebration of how far the community had come while recognizing how far they had yet to go to achieve equality. The march started at the Way Station at 14th and I streets, traveled down I Street to 7th Street, from 7th to J Street, east on J Street to 11th Street, and ended with a rally at Capitol Park on the north steps of the Capitol. An estimated 800 to 1,000 people participated in the march. Keynote speakers at the rally included Leonard Matlovich—then a candidate for San Francisco County Supervisor who, as a gay federal employee, had successfully sued the government for anti-gay employment discrimination—and Theresa Corrigan of the Sacramento Rape Crisis Center, a notable manifestation of the Women's Movement during the 1970s. Representatives of various gay and ally organizations also spoke, including Sacramento Human Rights Commissioner Gary Miller, *Mom...Guess What!* associated editor James Graham, River City MCC Reverend Freda Smith, and Audrey Merz of Le Theatre Lesbien. Free buffet dinners at the Topper, Upstairs/Downstairs, and Bojangles followed the rally. Bojangles also held a "victory dance."²⁰⁹

A second gay pride parade was held the following June. The event attracted 1,000 marchers. In the lead-up to the event, Mayor Phil Isenberg declared the week of June 15-22, 1980 as Sacramento Gay Pride Week.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Witt, "The Gospel According to Freda Smith."

²⁰⁷ Claussen, "Lavender Heights," 149.

²⁰⁸ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 81.

²⁰⁹ *Mom...Guess What...!*, July 1979.

²¹⁰ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 173-174.



Figure 25. Various photographs from Sacramento's first gay pride march in 1979, including (clockwise from upper left): a banner with the parade's theme, members of an interracial lesbian motorcycle group, members of the Parking Lot's baseball team, and marchers with out gay dentist Dr. Art Katz. Source: *Mom...Guess What...!*, July 1979.

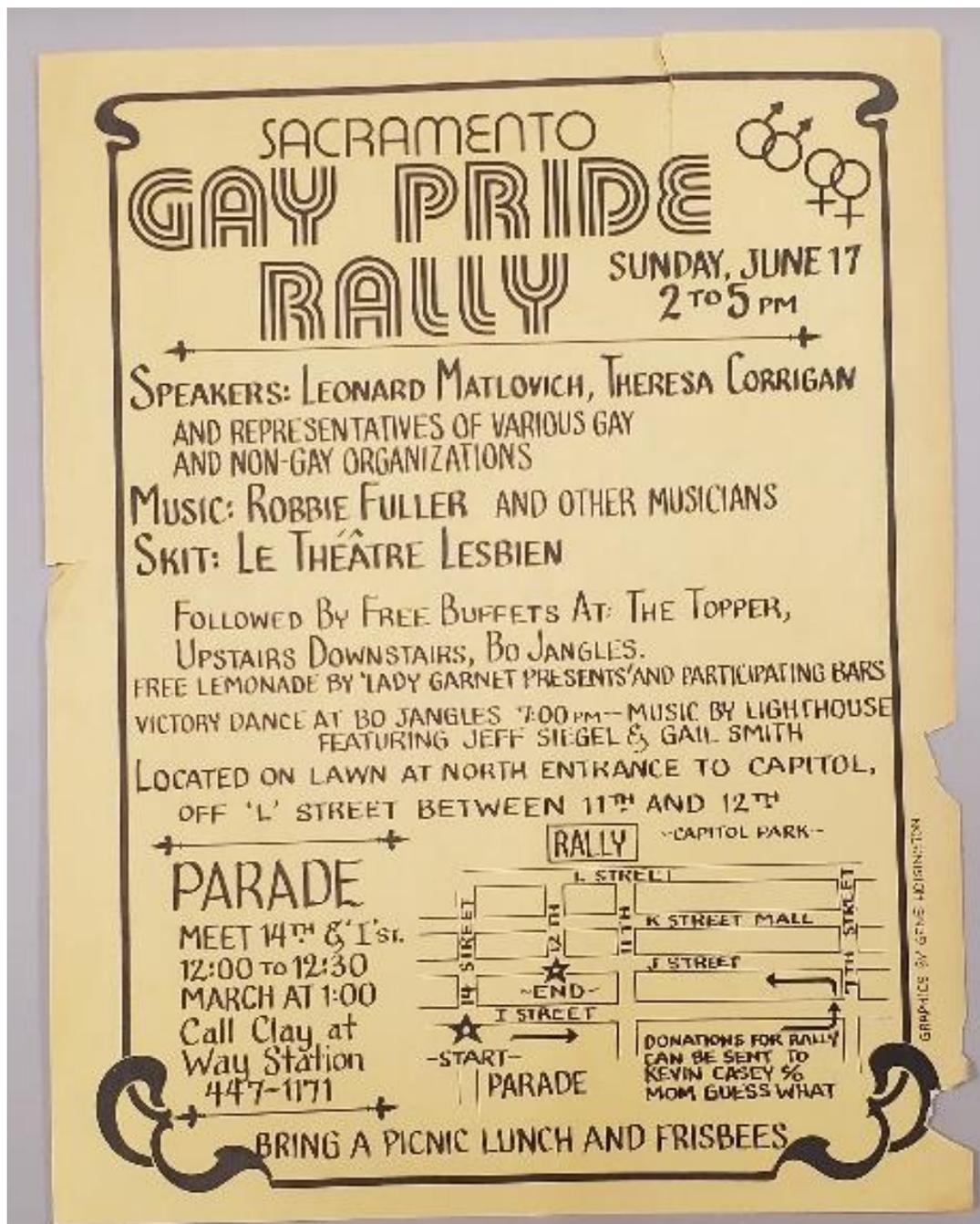


Figure 26. Flyer for Sacramento's first gay pride parade (1979). Source: *Mom...Guess What!* Collection, Center for Sacramento History.

AIDS & THE SACRAMENTO LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE

1981-1996

THEME 4: AIDS & THE SACRAMENTO LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE

Federal and Global Context

The AIDS outbreak in the 1980s and the subsequent global pandemic was a watershed moment in history and led to profound loss, stigmatization, and alienation for those within the LGBTQ+ community. In 1981, a rare cancer-like illness was detected in California and New York City among otherwise young, healthy men, many of whom were gay. In the earliest years, the disease had a very high mortality rate, leading to panic within the general public and alienation of patients for fear of the spread of the disease. Despite the emergence of cases amongst women and other heterosexual patients, the media began to perpetuate rhetoric stigmatizing the gay male community, calling the illness the "gay disease," "gay cancer," "gay plague," or "gay-related immune deficiency" (GRID).²¹¹ It was not until August 1982 that the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) began calling the disease "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome," or AIDS; however, misconceptions and associations of the disease with the gay community persisted. AIDS is a disease caused by the spread of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and is defined as an advanced stage of the HIV infection. Regardless of their sexual orientations, those infected with HIV/AIDS, including numerous healthcare workers who treated infected patients, were often ostracized by friends, family, and employers due to the intense stigmatization of the disease.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community quickly and harshly discovered how little support they had from within mainstream society and political institutions to help their sick and dying loved ones. Because same-sex marriages were not yet legal, gay couples were not able to extend health benefits provided by their employers to their partners. The mainstream media ignored or only provided minimal coverage of AIDS in the early years, and only fractional funding was initially provided to study the disease. At the federal level under President Ronald Reagan (in office from 1981 to 1989), there was little to no response to the public health crisis and minimal funding for research or aid that would normally assist with a national emergency and global pandemic of this scale.²¹² In January 1983, 18 months after the first cases were reported, a total of \$2.2 million had been given to the CDC to study AIDS, even though more people had died of AIDS during that short time period than Legionella and toxic shock syndrome, which received seven times the amount of research funding.²¹³ As a result, the LGBTQ+ community was largely left to navigate the horrors of AIDS, provide care for victims, and advocate for funding to research the causes and treatments for the disease on its own.²¹⁴ In the following decade, numerous organizations were founded across the

²¹¹ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 86.

²¹² Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 88.

²¹³ Don Stanley, "AIDS Nightmare: Puzzling, Deadly – And Spreading," *Sacramento Bee*, 4 January 1983: A18-A19.

²¹⁴ Conversation between Liz [last name redacted] and Clare Flynn, April 26, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

United States to provide education, resources, and care to the LGBTQ+ community for those who were sick and dying.²¹⁵

Within the country's largest cities—including San Francisco, New York City, and Los Angeles—bathhouses where many gay men congregated were forced to close in an attempt to curb the spread of the disease. After such action, many members of the gay community saw the closures as a misguided solution and an infringement on their civic freedoms.²¹⁶ The death of movie star Rock Hudson from AIDS in 1985 was a pivotal moment for many Americans outside of the gay community to understand the breadth and impacts of the epidemic. Hudson was a closeted gay man, and his death marked the first of a major American celebrity to die from an AIDS-related illness. President Reagan, who was a fellow actor and close friend of Hudson, acknowledged the HIV/AIDS epidemic publicly for the first time upon Hudson's death. The statement was deemed long overdue, and the federal government faced immense criticism throughout the 1980s and early 1990s from the LGBTQ+ community and allied communities for its perceived failure to provide timely and adequate resources for lifesaving research and medical coverage.²¹⁷ Over the next decade, case numbers rose exponentially. By 1990, over 31,000 people had died of AIDS.²¹⁸

In 1986, the landmark Supreme Court case *Bowers v. Hardwick* upheld the constitutionality of a Georgia state sodomy law that criminalized oral and anal sex in private between both same-sex and heterosexual partners. This case was eventually overturned by the Supreme Court case *Lawrence v. Texas* in 2003, however during the 1980s the *Bowers v. Hardwick* ruling, coupled with overall federal inaction, contributed to further radicalization of rhetoric about AIDS within the media and increased social castigation of HIV positive/AIDS patients.²¹⁹ To combat these larger political setbacks and lack of government assistance, many gay and lesbian communities united in grassroots efforts in the fight against AIDS. In 1987, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was founded in New York City and played an important role in nationwide LGBTQ+ mutual support and advocacy efforts. ACT UP staged protests and "die-ins" to draw attention to the AIDS crisis, including its publicized debut at the Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Washington, D.C.²²⁰

AIDS Advocacy in Sacramento

While Sacramento had a significantly smaller population than the larger cities of San Francisco or Los Angeles, the AIDS epidemic still took a grim toll on Sacramento's gay community and local

²¹⁵ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 87.

²¹⁶ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 87–88.

²¹⁷ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 88.

²¹⁸ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 86.

²¹⁹ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 88.

²²⁰ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBT History*, 89.

resources. Prior to 1982, most of the reported cases were clustered in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and coverage of the topic in *Mom...Guess What...!* shows that the perception of the disease remained at a distance. The perception within Sacramento's gay community became more heightened after the summer of 1982 when the CDC formally named the virus the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the disease the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and after the first member of Sacramento's gay community died later in 1982 with symptoms mirroring people infected in other large cities.²²¹

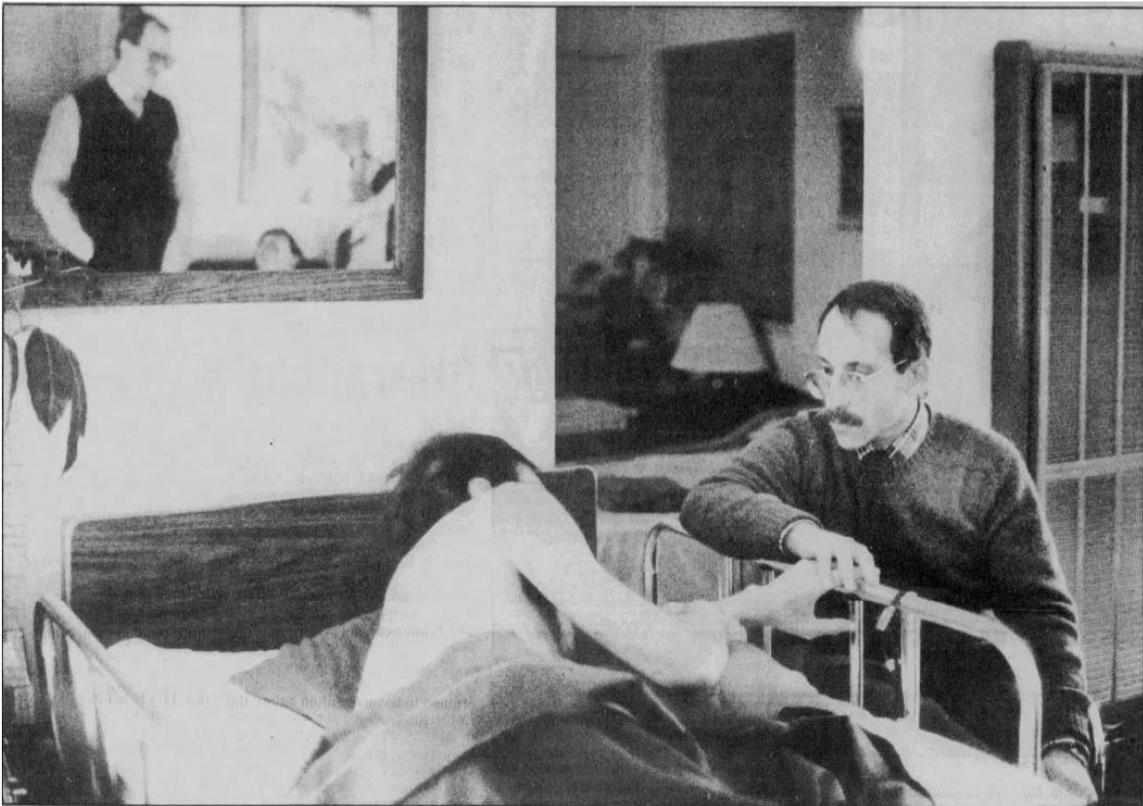


Figure 27. Dr. Sandy Pomerantz comforts a patient with AIDS at their home in Sacramento (1987). Source: *Sacramento Bee*.

From 1981 to 1985, the spread of HIV and resulting AIDS cases as managed through community advocacy within Sacramento's gay and lesbian populations, who took an overtly internalized and compassionate approach to care, rather than treating patients as a threat or dangerous, as was

²²¹ Amber Elena Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic: Aids in Sacramento, 1981-1989" (California State University, Sacramento, 2010), 28-29, Sacramento State University Library, <https://scholars.csus.edu/esploro/outputs/99257830893001671/filesAndLinks?index=0>.

common by the media and outsiders.²²² At the forefront of local efforts were Dr. Harvey Thompson and Dr. Sandy Pomerantz, two Sacramento-based internal medicine physicians. Both members of the gay community themselves, Dr. Thompson and Dr. Pomeranz had mostly gay, male patients and focused their work on the treatment of AIDS. Dr. Thompson opened a medical clinic, which mostly served gay men, at 912A 21st Street (extant) in 1978. Dr. Pomeranz was a recent transplant from San Francisco and teamed up with Dr. Thompson to serve Sacramento's gay community.²²³ Dr. Pomeranz authored a regular column that focused on health issues facing the gay community in *Mom...Guess What...?!*. His August 1981 column "Gay Medical Symposium: Two New Gay Illnesses" was the first mention in Sacramento of the disease that became known as AIDS.²²⁴ *The Sacramento Bee* did not step up its coverage until 1983.

In the fall of 1982, shortly after diagnosis of the first reported case of AIDS in Sacramento, Dr. Thompson and Dr. Pomeranz met with other members of the gay and lesbian communities to brainstorm methods to manage the further spread of AIDS within their community. The meeting held by Pomeranz and Thompson in 1982 was attended by Stanley "Stan" Hadden, a senior administrative aide to State Senate President Pro Tem David Roberti, and Dr. Elizabeth Harrison, a psychiatrist and contributor to *Mom...Guess What...!*. The meeting produced the early framework of what would become the AIDS/Kaposi's Sarcoma Foundation, later changed to the Sacramento AIDS Foundation (SAF). Inspired by (and originally affiliated with) the San Francisco Aids Foundation, SAF officially began operation at 2115 J Street (extant) in the spring of 1983 and provided educational advocacy along with emotional and hands-on support to patients through a service called "Hand to Hand."²²⁵ SAF was a volunteer-run, community-funded organization. Much of the initial funding came from gay bars, including \$4,000 from the Wreck Room, which was used to get the organization started. Funding for much of the first year of operations came from the Sacramento County Public Health Department and various fundraisers and donations.²²⁶ SAF worked in affiliation with the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) Medical Center, where Dr. Thompson served as an assistant clinical professor of medicine and family practice. Later addresses that housed the clinic included 1900 K Street (extant) and 1330 21st Street (extant). Other key leaders of SAF were Dr. Jerome Lackner and Dr. Neil Flynn, head of the UC Davis AIDS Clinic.

Dr. Thompson and Dr. Pomeranz held meetings with the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) at the Carmichael Presbyterian Church at 56465 Marconi Avenue and a free public forum for members of the gay community called "AIDS: Implications for Lifestyles" at the auditorium of Sutter

²²² Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 2-3.

²²³ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 29.

²²⁴ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 24.

²²⁵ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 29.

²²⁶ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 29-30.

General Hospital at 2820 L Street (extant) in January 1983. By this time, studies had begun to indicate that AIDS was sexually transmitted, and Dr. Pomeranz was determined to relay this essential information to the gay community in the hope of slowing the spread of the disease.²²⁷ Dr. Pomeranz's column in *Mom...Guess What...!*, along with others in the *Sacramento Bee*, highlighted the outreach that was done amongst Sacramento's medical professionals to educate the gay community regarding sexual health and information on the HIV virus, a vital service at a time when little information was known about HIV and AIDS.²²⁸ Dr. Thompson's column in *Mom...Guess What...!* was eventually syndicated and distributed nationwide to the gay and lesbian press. Throughout this time, SAF played an integral and often intersectional role in Sacramento's gay community, serving as a fundraiser for important medical and educational services and advocating for policy changes, among other capacities. Dr. Thompson died of AIDS in 1986 at the age of 45. Dr. Pomeranz died of AIDS in 1993 at the age of 44.²²⁹

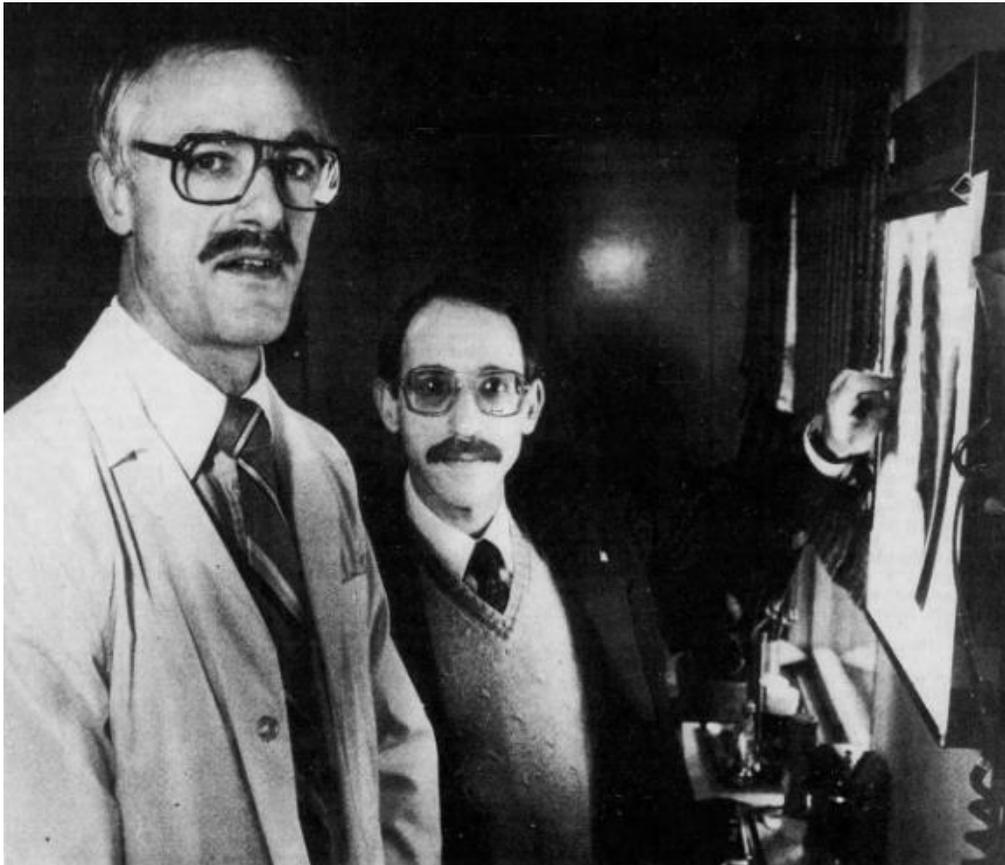


Figure 28. Dr. Harvey Thompson (left) and Dr. Sandy Pomeranz (right) in 1983. Source: *Sacramento Bee*.

²²⁷ Stanley, "AIDS Nightmare: Puzzling, Deadly – And Spreading."

²²⁸ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 3.

²²⁹ Robert D. Davila, "Noted AIDS Physician Dead at 44," *Sacramento Bee*, 6 October 1993: B1.



Figure 29. Dr. Elizabeth Harrison (1982).
Source: Leilani Hu for the *Sacramento Bee*.

Such efforts by the gay male medical community were aided extensively by members of the local lesbian community. A tight-knit group of local lesbian doctors and medical professionals, such as Dr. Elizabeth Harrison, treated AIDS patients on the front lines. Dr. Harrison founded Hand to Hand, a program within SAF, to provide home health and emotional support for AIDS patients. The program was modeled after the Shanti hospice program created by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, author of the best-selling book *On Death and Dying* author, in the Bay Area in the 1970s. The program's volunteers – who were a mix of gay men, lesbians, and heterosexual allies – were trained to provide emotional or practical support for a single AIDS patient, six to eight hours a week. They cooked meals, cleaned, did laundry, shopped, drove patients to appointments, helped them with their medications, and performed other essential tasks.²³⁰ Local lesbian residents stepped up to aid community AIDS efforts by raising funds for local AIDS programs and clinics, giving blood, volunteering in local AIDS clinics and organizations, and directly caring for the sick and dying.²³¹

Some members of the local religious and spiritual communities also provided support. Many SAF volunteers were parishioners from St. Francis Catholic Church, which hosted the Sacramento chapter of the gay Catholic organization Dignity and was located in Midtown, where many gay residents lived, and a few blocks away from Sutter General Hospital, where many AIDS patients were treated. The church hosted monthly potlucks for SAF volunteers and patients. Franciscan Brother Angelo Cardinalli also assisted patients at the hospital.²³²

As residents of California's capital city, several members of Sacramento's gay community were directly involved with policymaking and specifically with the drafting of California state legislation that provided funding for AIDS research and treatment. Across the United States, there were five main focuses of AIDS policy: domestic HIV/AIDS funding, U.S. foreign policy in response to international AIDS, preventative education, government regulation of blood products, and AIDS drug

²³⁰ Gretchen Kell, "Volunteers Help to Ease Pain of AIDS," *Sacramento Bee*, 8 February 1987: B1.

²³¹ "Sacramento Oral History Episode 4: Linda Birner and Elizabeth Harrison."

²³² "Sacramento Oral History Episode 4: Linda Birner and Elizabeth Harrison."

testing.²³³ Along with his work through SAF, Stan Hadden, in his role as legislative aide to State Senate President Pro Tem David Roberti, helped to draft the legislation that established funding for most of the programs carried out by the state Office of AIDS. Hadden is also credited with the passage of a California Senate bill that established the California AIDS Advisory Committee in 1983 and legislation in 1985 that encouraged a coordinated approach to local AIDS programs and services. Hadden died of AIDS in 1991 at the age of 41.²³⁴



Figure 30. Stan Hadden (1991). Source: *Sacramento Bee*.

In 1985, local interest groups from various sides came together to address AIDS in Sacramento. In response to pressure from the LGBTQ+ community and concern from the public and medical community about the growing number of AIDS cases among low-risk groups, Mayor Anne Rudin organized the Mayor's AIDS Task Force in December 1985. The idea for the task force came from a letter Hadden sent to Mayor Rudin, suggesting the creation of a task force led by the combined governments of the City of Sacramento and Sacramento County to help coordinate responses and services for AIDS, which up to that point were disorganized and scattered amongst various groups and organizations. The task force's mission was two-fold: to address the LGBTQ+ community's demand for improved treatment services for those with AIDS while also addressing the broader public's desire for better prevention and containment of the disease.²³⁵ Members consisted primarily of doctors, public health officials, and policy makers. Some of these people, such as Hadden and SAF executive director Kate Guzman, also represented the gay community. The task force recommended a four-prong response, consisting of understanding how the disease was transmitted, preventing its spread, and treating and preventing discrimination against those with AIDS. Although most of the recommendations were not funded or adopted, the task force resulted in the adoption of an AIDS anti-discrimination ordinance, similar to Sacramento's anti-discrimination ordinance that had been adopted in 1985, and organization of a needle exchange program to reduce transmission among IV drug users. Lacking funding at the local level to address the need for increased treatment and care services, in

²³³ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 19.

²³⁴ "Stan Hadden; Roberti Aide Influenced AIDS Policy," *Los Angeles Times*, December 26, 1991.

²³⁵ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 5.

March 1988, Mayor Rudin spoke at the Hearing of Western States Response in San Francisco, part of the Presidential Commission on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, to request federal and state funding for a regional AIDS care center. That center, the Center for AIDS Research and Education Services (CARES), opened at 2710 Capitol Avenue (now the site of The Sophia/B Street Theater) in 1989.²³⁶ Susan Strong was its executive director during these early years. In 1996, the center moved from its cramped original location to a vacant bank building at 1500 21st Street (extant).²³⁷



Figure 31. Golden Rules Services founder, Clarmundo Sullivan. Source: Golden Rule Services.

The AIDS epidemic exacted an unfathomable physical, emotional, psychological, cultural, and political toll on the LGBTQ+ community. Although the disease was most often associated with the white gay male population in the media, the broader African American and Hispanic communities were among the hardest hit, with disproportionate impacts toward LGBTQ+ individuals within those ethnicities. According to CDC statistics released in 1987, African American and Hispanic people accounted for 40 percent of AIDS cases in the United States and were more than three times likely to contract the disease than white people. Of 1,600 women

who had contracted the disease by 1987, 70 percent were Black or Hispanic.²³⁸ Historically, the majority of cases in which women have contracted AIDS resulted from unprotected sex with a male partner, although cases also occurred within lesbian communities and in non-sexual scenarios involving blood transfusions, drug or other needle injections.²³⁹ To respond to the gap in services provided to Sacramento's BIPOC community, local resident and gay Black and Latinx man Clarmundo Sullivan founded Golden Rule Services in 1999. The agency's mission centered around connecting the BIPOC community, including LGBTQ+ members, with "culturally competent services" related to health, education, employment, and criminal justice, as well as AIDS/HIV education and prevention.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 80.

²³⁷ Cynthia Hubert, "Former Midtown Bank Turning into AIDS Center," *Sacramento Bee*, 8 December 1996: B3.

²³⁸ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 53.

²³⁹ HIV and Women (Based on Assigned Sex at Birth). "HIV and Specific Populations," December 11, 2023.

<https://hivinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv/fact-sheets/hiv-and-women-based-assigned-sex-birth>.

²⁴⁰ "Mission/History," Golden Rule Services, accessed June 4, 2024, <https://sacgrs.org/about-us/mission-history/>.

The loss of a large portion of a generation of Sacramento's gay community and many of the most prominent leaders took a long-lasting toll on the community. Some community members remembered that the annual Pride parades, which had previously been occasions of joyful outpouring, began to feel like funeral processions, and they stopped attending.²⁴¹ After growing rapidly after its founding, the membership Sacramento Gay Men's Chorus shrank rapidly as a large proportion of its members were killed by AIDS. People who attended their performances during the peak of the AIDS epidemic remembered that with every performance, it seemed like the size of the choir was cut in half.²⁴² *Mom...Guess What...!* provided an essential public service by publishing the obituaries of those who had died of AIDS, creating a record of the people who had been lost and a comforting space for the community to openly and collectively grieve.²⁴³

By the late 1980s, frustrations at both a local and national scale had mounted around the lack of adequate government response to providing healthcare, support, and research. Despite the growing mortality rate and pressure from the gay community for funding for AIDS research from the State, Governor George Deukmejian repeatedly slashed funding for AIDS, from \$3.9 million to \$2.9 million in 1984, and from \$21.5 million to \$4.9 million in 1985. The lack of support reflected the general public's false perception that AIDS was limited to a small sector of the population and was restricted to the gay community.²⁴⁴ With frustrations growing to a boil, in May 1988, 500 people staged a "die-in" on the State Capitol steps in memory of 5,000 AIDS victims and demanded increased funding for AIDS research and treatments. They also called for an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation and legislation prohibiting discrimination against people with AIDS.²⁴⁵

In 1996, the tides in the war against AIDS began to ebb. That year, several important medical treatments were approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), starting with the first home testing and collection kit in May, followed by the first viral load test that could measure the level of HIV in the blood and the first non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI) drug in June. Introduction of the first NNRTI drug was a major turning point in the fight against AIDS, as it gave patients a chance to survive the disease for the first time and dramatically decreased death rates. After this, the first substantial decline in AIDS deaths occurred in the United States, which fell by 47 percent compared to the previous year.²⁴⁶ The LGBTQ+ community's advocacy led to HIV and AIDS drugs being approved by the CDC faster than the usual timeline. The precedent set by the AIDS

²⁴¹ Conversation between Liz [last name redacted] and Clare Flynn, April 26, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

²⁴² Conversation between Tina Reynolds, Clare Flynn, and Henry Feuss, May 22, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

²⁴³ "Sacramento Oral History Episode 4: Linda Birner and Elizabeth Harrison."

²⁴⁴ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 39.

²⁴⁵ Piona, "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic," 80.

²⁴⁶ HIV.gov, "A Timeline of HIV and AIDS," accessed May 3, 2024, <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/history/hiv-and-aids-timeline#year-1982>.

epidemic became integral in the accelerated approval of COVID-19 vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁴⁷

More than any other event prior to the 1980s and 1990s, the AIDS epidemic united Sacramento's previously fractured LGBTQ+ community and mobilized it to fight for equal rights to protect itself from discrimination and provide essential support, care, and services to its loved ones. The organizations, strategies, and leaders that were forged during the crisis helped pave the way for the progress that was achieved in the following decades and continues to reverberate into the present-day.

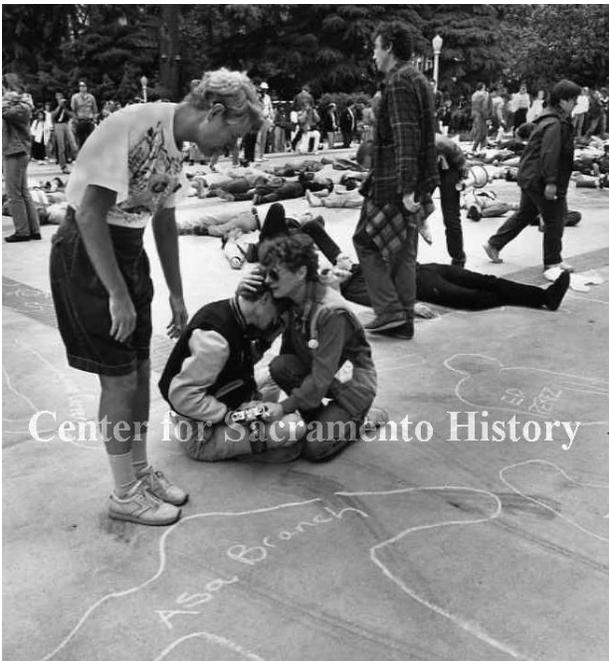


Figure 32. Participants in the die-in at the State Capitol comfort an AIDS victim (1988). Source: Center for Sacramento History.

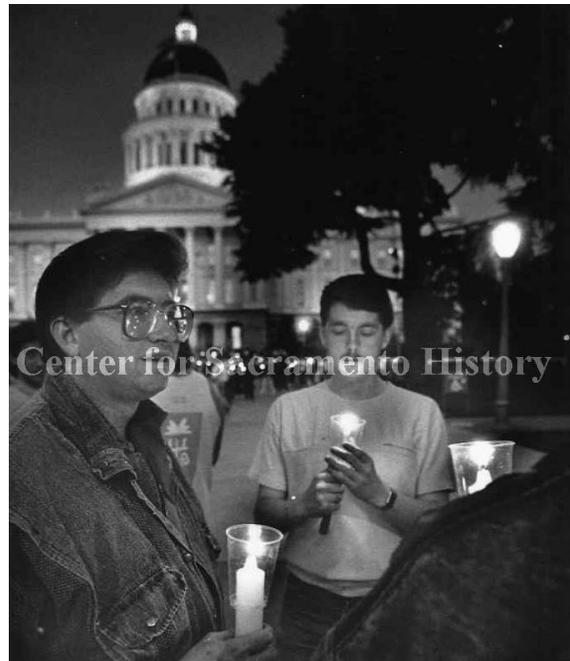


Figure 33. Demonstrators at a candlelight march at the State Capitol in memory of AIDS victims (1989). Source: Center for Sacramento History.

²⁴⁷ Thomas Calder et al., "Leveraging Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic for HIV," *Communications Medicine* 2 (2022), accessed May 21, 2023, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9423691>.

**POLITICAL ACTIVISM & THE FIGHT FOR LGBTQ+ RIGHTS
IN CALIFORNIA'S STATE CAPITAL**
1969-2000

THEME 5. POLITICAL ACTIVISM & THE FIGHT FOR LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN CALIFORNIA'S STATE CAPITAL, 1969-2000

As discussed under earlier themes in this document, in the late 1960s, a potent mix of forces and the coming-of-age of the Baby Boom generation combined to push back against traditions, norms, policies, and prejudices that had restricted much of America's diverse population. Out of this mix, a more inclusive society was forged which brought members of the gay, lesbian, and transgender communities out of the closet for the first time.

The Baby Boom generation, the largest generation in the United States in the 20th century, entered adulthood in the 1960s. More Americans than ever attended college, producing a highly educated generation of young people that were exposed to different perspectives and ways of life and were ready to reshape society according to their vision. Long-festering discontent and frustration with the unequal treatment of African Americans and women, as well as opposition to the Vietnam War, spread across the United States, coalescing in the civil rights movement, women's movement, and anti-war movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. All three movements supported and spread the idea that individuals should have control over their own bodies, rather than the government.²⁴⁸

The civil rights movement introduced strategies and methods that were adopted by other activist groups, including sit-ins, protests, marches, and more militant approaches to force political action. Black activist and gay man Bayard Rustin was a key organizer for Martin Luther King, Jr. and the principal planner for the March on Washington in 1963.²⁴⁹ Greater sexual freedom and the free love hippie movement challenged conventional gender expressions, as young men and women began wearing clothing of either gender or dressed in unisex styles. The approval of the birth control pill in 1960, meanwhile, gave women greater freedom to delay or avoid pregnancy entirely, allowing greater numbers to work outside the home and forge new paths for themselves outside of marriage and motherhood. The pill also undermined traditional thinking that sexual relationships were only for procreation, and therefore, should only occur between a man and a woman. At the same time, escalating opposition to the Vietnam War increased distrust of the government, bubbling up in massive anti-war demonstrations, and encouraged more people to question institutions and figures of authority.²⁵⁰ These powerful, nationwide grassroots activist movements reshaped the history of the United States and laid the foundation for similar activist movements among other minority groups, including the gay, lesbian, and gender non-conforming community.

²⁴⁸ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 76.

²⁴⁹ Bonnie J. Morris, "A Brief History of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Social Movements," March 16, 2023, American Psychological Association, accessed April 25, 2024, <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/history>.

²⁵⁰ Mark Thompson, *Long Road to Freedom: The Advocate History of the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York City: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 18.

The visibility and increasingly radical strategies of these movements—such as the Black Power movement and radical feminism—inspired gay, lesbian, and transgender activists to shift away from the polite, assimilationist methods espoused by the earlier homophile groups toward a more direct and confrontational approach in the late 1960s.²⁵¹ Inspired by the slogan of the Black Power movement “Black is Beautiful,” gay rights activist Frank Kameny coined the slogan, “Gay is Good” at a national convention of homophile organizations in 1968.²⁵²

The Gay Liberation Movement in Sacramento

Out of this charged environment emerged the Gay Liberation Movement. Sparked by the police raid of the Stonewall Inn in New York City and following days of protests in June 1969, a new revolution emerged that inspired a more visible and direct era of political organizing. In the aftermath of the Stonewall riots, numerous national gay rights activism groups with a more radical approach formed. Unlike the cryptic names and missions of the earlier homophile groups, the names of these groups were more explicit and clearly expressed their advocacy for gay, lesbian, and transgender rights, including the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), Gay Activists Alliance, Street Transvestite Action Revolution (STAR), and National Gay Task Force. Inspired by these pioneering national organizations, activists founded local chapters and similar groups in smaller cities across the country.

In December 1969, a group of teachers and students who were influenced by the Stonewall riots and militant race rights groups, such as Black Panthers and Sacramento’s own Royal Chicano Air Force, formed a gay activist group at Sacramento State College. The group’s first meeting was held at the home of Dr. Martin (“Marty”) Rogers, an assistant professor of psychology who first conceived of forming such a group after helping a similar student group form at UC Davis.²⁵³ Titled the Society for Homosexual Freedom (SHF), the group’s mission was to “further self-understanding among the members and to promote better understanding of homosexuality in the community.”²⁵⁴ In addition to Dr. Rogers, founding members included student body president and executive coordinator Steve Whitmore, executive director Bill Cross, and George Raya, who was also active in the local Chicano movement.²⁵⁵ SHF created a speakers bureau to organize speaking events at local schools and organizations to increase education and understanding of homosexuality among the general

²⁵¹ Thompson, *Long Road to Freedom*, xviii; Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 77.

²⁵² Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 77; Megan Gambino, “Remembering Gay Rights Activist Frank Kameny (1925-2011),” *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 14, 2011, accessed May 22, 2024, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/remembering-gay-rights-activist-frank-kameny-1925-2011-105187020/>.

²⁵³ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 163.

²⁵⁴ Pat Jones, “Society for Homosexual Freedom Seeks Recognition on SSC Campus,” *Sacramento Bee*, 1 March 1970: 16.

²⁵⁵ Jones, “Society for Homosexual Freedom Seeks Recognition on SSC Campus.”

population. The group also created a 24-hour crisis hotline to help gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals find professional psychiatric, medical, and legal aid.²⁵⁶

By March 1970, SHF had approximately 50 members, which included both gay and heterosexual individuals. With its membership growing, the group applied to Sacramento State College for formal recognition. Although similar groups had already formed at other college campuses in California without causing any serious disturbance to campus life, college president Otto Butz denied the request, stating that "California and most American jurisdictions today hold homosexual behavior to be a crime, and generally an offense of serious dimensions."²⁵⁷ He substantiated his refusal by citing fears that formal recognition of such a group would "seem to endorse, or to promote homosexual behavior, to attract homosexuals to campus, and to expose minors to homosexual advocacy and practices."²⁵⁸

In response, Raya, who also headed the college's committee that approved the charters of student organizations, filed a lawsuit challenging Butz's decision. SCC alumnus and attorney John M. Powell represented the case for SHF. During preparation for the trial, the group met at the Ruhstaller Building on 9th and J streets. During the trial, Butz and his replacement, Bernard Hylink, admitted that SHF's intentions were not inherently illegal or dangerous and that their concerns were based on

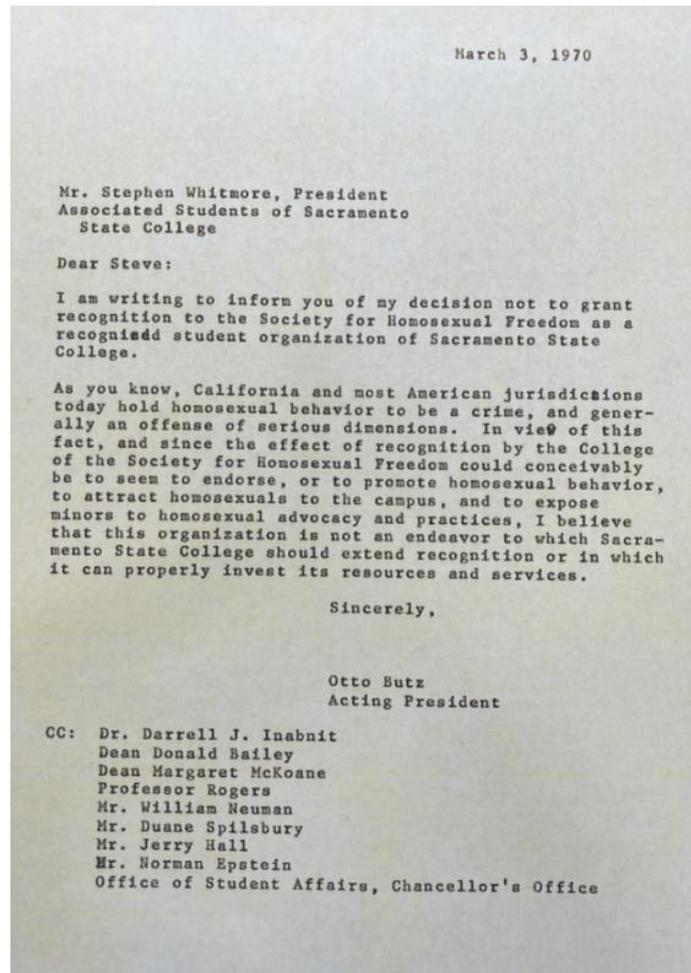


Figure 34. Letter from SCC president Otto Butz denying recognition of SHF as a recognized student organization (1970). Source: Personal collection of George Raya.

²⁵⁶ Jones, "Society for Homosexual Freedom Seeks Recognition on SSC Campus."

²⁵⁷ Letter from Otto Butz to Stephen Whitmore, March 3, 1970, personal collection of George Raya.

²⁵⁸ Letter from Otto Butz to Stephen Whitmore, March 3, 1970, personal collection of George Raya; "George Raya: A Sac State LGBT Pioneer," April 26, 2023, accessed April 25, 2024, <https://hornethistories.com/2023/04/george-raya-a-sac-state-lgbt-pioneer/>.



Figure 35. Marchers in the 1971 "March for Sexual Freedom" to Sacramento. Source: Skip Shuman for the *Sacramento Bee*.

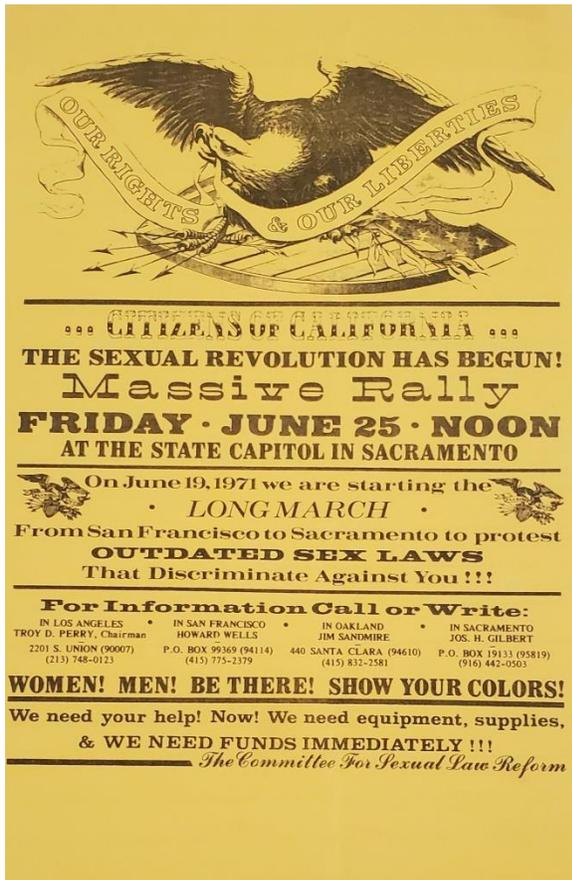


Figure 36. Poster for the 1971 "March for Sexual Freedom." Source: GLBT Historical Society Museum Archives.

personal suspicions that the group would become dangerous or encourage other students to engage in homosexual behavior. The presiding judge, William Gallagher, decided that the college could not suppress student free speech unless there was a clear and present danger, and since by their own admission they had denied recognizing SHF out of "mere suspicion, disgust, unpopularity, and fear of what might occur," the college had violated the student's rights by denying SHF. Following the decision, the college formally recognized SHF in February 1971.

Although SHF was not the first gay student group in California, the lawsuit set a legal precedent for recognizing other similar student groups around the country and kicked off a particularly active period for organizing among Sacramento's gay community.²⁵⁹ After the decision, an increasing number of students and faculty at SCC came out, and a Gay Studies Department and a speakers bureau to connect gay and lesbian students with other gay student groups in California were established at the college.

In April 1971, the SHF, renamed the Gay Liberation Front of Sacramento State College, held a Gay Symposium in Sacramento that featured prominent national speakers, including Allen Ginsberg, MCC founder Reverend Troy Perry, and Daughters of Bilitis founders Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. Later that year, Perry and national gay rights groups such as the GLF organized a march of 300 people from Los Angeles to the State Capitol in Sacramento to bring attention to efforts to pass a bill authored by State Assemblyman Willie Brown, Jr. to end

²⁵⁹ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 165-166.

California's state sodomy laws, which had been languishing in the state legislature. Although the number of marchers dwindled to around a dozen the day before the planned rally in Sacramento, approximately 200 people ultimately attended a rally on the steps of the Capitol.²⁶⁰ While the march did not have the immediate effect of pushing Brown's bill through, it increased public awareness and inspired other marches and activists. A local chapter of the MCC was founded in Sacramento the year after the march.²⁶¹

Political Advocacy & The Push for Legislative Change

GAY RIGHTS POLICIES & LEGISLATION

Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community was perfectly placed to have an outsized impact on politics on all levels because of its proximity to the State Capitol, where state legislation was debated and passed, and proximity to the powerful and outspoken LGBTQ+ community in San Francisco. The Capitol was the marquee destination for grassroots marches, protests, and rallies, and attracted scores of legislators, lobbyists, and their staff to Sacramento every day. Exposure to political dealings at the state level gave Sacramento residents—many of whom were themselves State employees—greater access to politicians and an up-close education on political tactics that could also be used at the municipal level. Members of the local LGBTQ+ community used these factors to their advantage.

The proximity and exchange of ideas, resources, and expertise between the LGBTQ+ communities of Sacramento and San Francisco also proved to be a powerful tool, with the communities often working hand-in-hand to enact political change. A potent example of the collaboration between people in Sacramento and San Francisco emerged during the years of efforts to repeal California's state anti-sodomy laws, which had led to arrests and harassment of gay and lesbian people for more than 100 years. The bill to repeal these laws, known as AB 437, was authored and sponsored by State Assemblyman Willie Brown, Jr. of San Francisco. George Raya, who had moved to San Francisco to work as a lobbyist, was hired by the Society for Individual Rights (SIR) to work as the first full-time lobbyist to work on the bill. On June 20, 1971, the San Francisco MCC congregation marched from Oakland to the State Capitol for a statewide rally to support the bill's passage. Rick Stokes, founder of the Americans for Responsible Citizenship in Sacramento, who had also subsequently moved to San Francisco, drummed up endorsements. In May 1975, State Senator George Moscone and Assemblyman Brown led efforts to pass AB 437 in both houses of the state legislature, and it was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown, Jr. shortly after.²⁶² The repeal of California's anti-sodomy

²⁶⁰ Max Miller, "Sex Freedom March," *Sacramento Bee*, 24 June 1971: 21; "'Gay Power' Group Treks to Capitol," *Sacramento Bee*, 25 June 1971: 26.

²⁶¹ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 166.

²⁶² Graves and Watson, "Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco," 227-228.

laws was a sea change in LGBTQ+ history, as it allowed gay people to openly express their sexual identities without fear of arrest or incarceration.

The gay rights movement made similar gains in states across the country in the early 1970s. The first anti-discrimination ordinances were passed in Seattle, Washington, Washington, D.C., and Alfred, New York between 1973 and 1974. In California, Harvey Milk became the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in the state when he was elected to serve as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977. The same year, the National Gay Task Force (now the National LGBTQ Task Force) was formed and invited to the White House to discuss policy issues that affected the gay community, the first group of openly gay lobbyists to receive such an invitation. Sacramento gay rights activist George Raya was chosen to participate in the task force as a representative from Northern California. The task force's efforts led to funding for hepatitis research and laid the groundwork for later efforts to study the transmission of AIDS in the early 1980s.²⁶³



Figure 37. George Raya (far right) with members of the National Gay Task Force during their visit to the White House (1977). Source: ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, University of Southern California Libraries.

²⁶³ Cody Drabble, "LGBTQ Civil Rights Pioneer George Raya Looks Back on 50 Years of Progress," Capitol Public Radio, June 27, 2019, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://www.capradio.org/news/insight/2019/06/27/lgbtq-civil-rights-pioneer-george-raya-looks-back-on-50-years-of-progress>.

As public and government support grew, a corresponding anti-gay movement emerged, led by conservative Christian congregations and the religious right. In response to an anti-discrimination law passed in Dade County, Florida, also in 1977, popular singer and orange juice spokeswoman Anita Bryant launched a campaign to repeal the law and founded the anti-gay organization Save Our Children. Bryant's highly publicized campaign initiated a nationwide anti-gay political effort that spread to the California State Capitol. In 1978, conservative California State legislator John Briggs, of Orange County, introduced Proposition 6, known as the Briggs Initiative, to the California State Senate. The proposition proposed to ban gay people from teaching in the state's public schools.²⁶⁴ When Linda Birner founded the newspaper *Mom...Guess What...!* that same year, one of its initial missions was to spread information about the Briggs Initiative to members of the gay community encourage them to take action. The newspaper's first issue was published on November 1, 1978 and included letters of support from Sacramento Mayor Phillip L. Isenberg and District Three Supervisor Sandra R. Smolley, both of whom were outspoken supporters of the gay community.²⁶⁵ Public support from City officials in the 1970s showed the growing clout of Sacramento's LGBTQ+ community as a political force. The Briggs Initiative was defeated on November 7, 1978 by 58 percent of California voters.²⁶⁶

On November 27, 1978, Harvey Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone, a vocal advocate for gay rights, were assassinated by fellow Supervisor Dan White. In response, *Mom...Guess What...!* published an "In Memoriam" piece honoring Milk and Moscone. The piece contained the following call to the community to use their loss to fuel increased political advocacy:

We have to accept the loss, but we do not have to accept the attitude that caused the loss – the feeling that violence and bloodshed will solve our problems. Now more than ever, all people must join forces and work to end misunderstanding and prejudice, the conditions that cause and perpetuate them, and the violent, outrageous results of them. A fitting memorial for Harvey Milk and George Moscone will not be any statue or plaque, or even a political or charitable fund. No, their fitting monument will be redoubled efforts to achieve goals they worked for – the triumph of human rights and human dignity over ignorance, prejudice, oppression, and hate.²⁶⁷

One event, however, finally pushed the State Legislature and local government to take up the issue of gay rights. In 1981, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported the first cases of AIDS in

²⁶⁴ Ferentinos, *Interpreting LGBTQ History*, 84-85.

²⁶⁵ *Mom...Guess What...!*, November 1978.

²⁶⁶ "LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History," Teaching LGBTQ History, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://lgbtqhistory.org/lgbt-rights-timeline-in-american-history/>.

²⁶⁷ James K. Graham, editor, "In Memoriam," *Mom...Guess What...!*, December 1978.

the United States. The AIDS epidemic and Sacramento community's response are covered in greater detail in Chapter 4, but it is important to highlight here the significant role it played in the political landscape and broader fight for equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community. Some of the first debates in the State Legislature around gay issues centered around the issue of providing funding for AIDS research.²⁶⁸ Discrimination prevented LGBTQ+ couples—who were unable to legally marry—from being able to provide health insurance and necessary health care to their sick and dying loved ones. In some cases, lesbian women married gay men in order to provide them with health insurance.²⁶⁹ Others risked losing their jobs if they contracted the disease. AIDS revealed in the most stark and tragic ways imaginable how little legal protection the LGBTQ+ community had against discrimination in health care, employment, housing, and other sectors of everyday life. It mobilized the LGBTQ+ community to become politically active more than any other previous issue. The AIDS epidemic also set community progress in the battle for equal rights back by a decade, as much of the previous generation of leaders was killed by the disease, and all of the community's energy and attention was redirected toward fighting the disease and supporting its loved ones and away from efforts to get LGBTQ+ people elected to political office.²⁷⁰

As a result, political support through officially elected channels continued to come from allies at the state and local levels for much of the 1980s and 1990s. In addition to Mayor Isenberg and Supervisor Smolley, another prominent ally who effected positive policy changes for the local LGBTQ+ community was Anne Rudin. A registered nurse by profession, Rudin was elected to City Council in 1971. She became motivated to publicly express her support for gay rights following the passage of the national Equal Rights Amendment in 1972 and subsequently earned a reputation as a vocal advocate for gay rights over the course of her career. In 1983, she ran for election to become the city's mayor. Rudin was endorsed by *Mom...Guess What...!*. She won the election and served three terms, stepping down in 1992.²⁷¹ In 1986, Mayor Rudin created the Mayor's AIDS Task Force to address AIDS in Sacramento. Among its recommendations was passage of an anti-discrimination ordinance to protect gay people from banned discrimination against homosexual people in employment, housing, commerce, real estate, education, and city services. Later that year, Mayor Rudin and the Sacramento City Council approved the city's first anti-discrimination ordinance by a 7-2 vote.²⁷² In 1992, Rudin spearheaded passage of the City of Sacramento's domestic partnership ordinance. The ordinance allowed any two people, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, to register with the city as domestic partners. The ordinance required employers to grant unpaid leave

²⁶⁸ Stan F. Carlsen, "Out on the Inside: A Case Study of the Political Transformation of the LGBTQ Community in California" (masters thesis), California State University, Sacramento, 2006, 23.

²⁶⁹ Conversation between Liz [last name redacted] and Clare Flynn, April 26, 2024, Sacramento, CA.

²⁷⁰ Carlsen, "Out on the Inside: A Case Study of the Political Transformation of the LGBTQ Community in California," 27-30.

²⁷¹ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 177-178.

²⁷² Jim Sanders, "Gay Rights Ordinance Backed After Heated Council Session," *Sacramento Bee*, 26 March 1986: 1.

to domestic partners for situations such as bereavement, required hospitals to grant the same visitation rights to domestic partners as married couples, and declared that domestic partners must be treated as family in any lease or rental agreement.²⁷³ It was not until 2012 that Sacramento's first openly gay elected official, City Councilman Steve Hansen, was sworn in to office.²⁷⁴

POLITICAL ADVOCACY GROUPS

Political advocacy groups, specifically aimed at influencing policy changes relevant to the gay community, formed in Sacramento during this volatile period. In 1975, a local chapter of the Eleanor Roosevelt Democratic Club was established in Sacramento. The group, whose name referenced Roosevelt's reputation for defending the rights of minorities, worked within the established political systems to influence lawmakers to support legislation that improved gay rights and freedoms. Members met at the local MCC facilities. A liaison for the group attended State legislative sessions and kept track of bills that were entered into or up for a vote in committees. Bills related to or that might impact the gay community were reported back to the club, after which letters were sent to committees to inform them of the club's stance on the issues.²⁷⁵

Following the defeat of the Briggs Initiative in November 1978, *Mom...Guess What...!* issued a call for the community to redouble its efforts to educate the public and support local advocacy groups working to pass gay rights legislation. Among the groups mentioned were the Gay Speakers Bureau, which was organized by Way Station founder Clay Shipway and planned speaking engagements in the Sacramento area for gay rights activists and prominent figures, as well as the Sacramento chapter of the California Human Rights Advocates (CHRA). The CHRA had a full-time lobbyist named Steve Badeau based in Sacramento who worked to get gay rights legislation passed by the State Legislature. In late 1978, Badeau's focus was on passage of Assemblyman Art Agnos's Gay Employment Rights Bill (AB 1). The organization opened a local office at 1107 9th Street in December 1978. Other local advocacy events around the same time included a statewide meeting of the Gay Caucus of the California Democratic Council in January 1979.²⁷⁶

Another political advocacy group, the Capitol Political Action Committee (CAP-PAC) was formed in 1981 by former State Assemblyman Dennis ("Denny") Mangers. Mangers was born in Inglewood, California and studied singing and education administration as a young man at the University of Southern California (USC). After serving in the Navy, he worked as a teacher at inner-city schools in Long Beach and became one of the youngest principals in the state of California. In 1976, Mangers

²⁷³ Dan Bernstein, "City Extends Some Benefits to Domestic Partners," *Sacramento Bee*, 14 October 1992: A1.

²⁷⁴ "Meet Steve," Steve Hansen for Sacramento Mayor, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://www.steve4sacramento.com/meet-steve>.

²⁷⁵ Untitled article in Good News (Roseville) newspaper, 4 June 1976, George Raya collection.

²⁷⁶ Greg Loe, "Under the Dome," *Mom...Guess What...!*, December 1978.



Figure 38. Dennis Mangers when he served as State Assemblyman for Orange County. Source: *Sacramento Bee*.

ran for and won election to serve as the State Assembly representative for Orange County. He lost his seat in 1980. Shortly after leaving the state legislature, Mangers was outed as a gay man.²⁷⁷ Though no longer himself a member of the legislature, Mangers used his experience, connections, and compassion for the gay community to continue to fight for gay rights. He contributed articles on politics to *Mom...Guess What...!* to raise awareness about policies that would impact the community. His work with CAP-PAC furthered his mission to encourage the local gay community to get involved in political decisions that affected them. CAP-PAC was a bi-partisan group and held secret meetings with legislative staffers employed by the Senate Majority Leader and Governor George Deukmejian, many of whom were closeted gays. Liberal members of the group later formed the River City Democratic Club. Though the group folded in 1992, its remaining members formed a local chapter of the Stonewall Democratic Club in 2000. The Sacramento Stonewall Club became the largest chapter in the nation and had over 300 members in 2006.²⁷⁸

The same year CAP-PAC formed, the Gay/Lesbian Sacramento Political Action Caucus was created. Led by chairman Steve Schwichow, the group worked to support non-discriminatory laws in employment and house and increase political representation by getting LGBTQ+ people and their allies elected to political office.²⁷⁹

In 1988, Boyce Hinman—an out gay man, Carmichael resident, and employee of the State Employment Development Department—created the Lambda Letters Project. The grassroots advocacy effort created a coalition of residents from districts across the spectrum of political parties to write letters to their elected officials, encouraging them to support LGBTQ+ policies and issues.²⁸⁰ The project published a monthly newsletter and, later, a comprehensive listing and status of bills before the State Legislature that were of importance to the LGBTQ+ community. Each month, Hinman provided members with sample letters (or emails), which they could sign and return to their legislators as-is, or use them to model their own messages.²⁸¹ By 1997, the project was sending

²⁷⁷ Matt Coker, "The Gay Godfather," *Sacramento News & Review*, 8 May, 2008.

²⁷⁸ Carlsen, "Out on the Inside: A Case Study of the Political Transformation of the LGBTQ Community in California," 26.

²⁷⁹ "Gay Group Forms," *Sacramento Bee*, June 7, 1981.

²⁸⁰ Robert D. Davila, "Gay Rights Movement Now at Standstill in Capital, Many Say," *Sacramento Bee*, 23 November 1997.

²⁸¹ "Lambda Letters History til 2004," 2004, private collection of George Raya.

40,000 pieces of mail to legislators annually. The number grew to 353,000 letters and emails per year by 2006.²⁸²

GAY RIGHTS MARCHES

This direct engagement with politicians was supported by marches organized by local and statewide advocacy groups that demonstrated mass public support for equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community. In 1979, over 100,000 people gathered in Washington, DC for the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights to show their support. That May, California Governor Jerry Brown, Jr. signed an executive order, prohibiting discrimination against State employees on the basis of sexual preference. Shortly afterward, a group of gay State employees called the Advocates for Gay State Employees (AGSE) formed to provide input to the State Personnel Board about implementation of the executive order. The AGSE met monthly at Incredible Edible Place on Alhambra Boulevard and N Street (extant) and formed a coalition with a similar group from Los Angeles and the state of Pennsylvania.²⁸³

The following year, in January 1980, the statewide gay rights organization the California Human Rights Advocates (HCRA) organized a march to the State Capitol, called the March on Sacramento for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Three-thousand people participated in the march, despite a large storm the day before that had threatened to dampen attendance. The march provided a model for future marches and increased Sacramento's visibility as the hub of political action in California.²⁸⁴



Figure 39. Participants in the 1980 March on Sacramento for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Source: San José State University Special Collections & Archives.

²⁸² Davila, "Gay Rights Movement Now at Standstill in Capital," Carlsen, "Out on the Inside: A Case Study of the Political Transformation of the LGBTQ Community in California," 31.

²⁸³ "Gay State Employees Have a Voice," *Mom...Guess What...!*, 1 September 1979.

²⁸⁴ Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 173.

In 1991, after what the LGBTQ+ press characterized as a “ferocious debate,” the California State Assembly passed AB 101, which aimed to ban employment discrimination because of one’s sexual orientation, by a one-vote margin.²⁸⁵ The Lobby for Individual Freedom and Equality was the key proponent of the bill, while Assemblyman John Knowles (R-Placerville) was one of its most vocal opponents. The bill passed the State Senate but was vetoed by Governor Pete Wilson. Governor Wilson’s veto sparked a statewide response from the LGBTQ+ community. In 1991, a march to the Capitol was organized to protest Wilson’s veto of AB 101. The following year, a second march took place to rally support for new anti-discrimination legislation, AB 2601 and AB 3825, that was before the State Legislature.²⁸⁶ Governor Wilson signed AB 2601, which provided protections against employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (though to a more limited degree than AB 101), in September 1992. Wilson took no action on AB 3825, which would have provided a broader slate of anti-discrimination protections.²⁸⁷

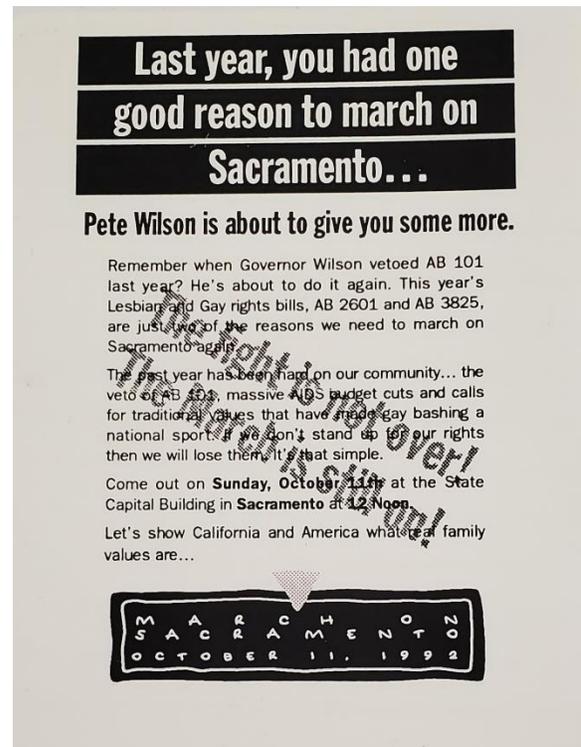


Figure 40. Flyer for the 1992 March on Sacramento.
Source: San Francisco GLBT Historical Museum Archives.

Responses to Continuing Discrimination

Although the LGBTQ+ community in Sacramento was becoming increasingly visible, discrimination continued. In May 1978, the Sacramento Police Department conducted sting operations at adult bookstores that were known cruising spots. Undercover police officers visited the stores, pretending to be customers, and entrapped gay men for soliciting lewd acts in a public place.²⁸⁸ In April 1979, the Upstairs/Downstairs gay disco was raided on two consecutive nights. On the first night, police officers requested identification from all patrons and arrested one for an undisclosed offense. The

²⁸⁵ Chris Nealon, “Calif State Assembly Passes Gay/Lesbian Rights Bill,” *Gay Community News* [Boston], 14-20 July 1991, accessed through Gale Archives of Sexuality online.

²⁸⁶ SF LGBT Groups Ephemera Collection 1950-2010, Collection #GRP EPH, San Francisco GLBT Historical Society Museum Archives.

²⁸⁷ Amy Chance, “Governor Signs Gay Rights Bill,” *Sacramento Bee*, 26 September 1992: A1; Amy Chance, “Wilson Signs Some Civil Rights Measures,” *Sacramento Bee*, 25 September 1992: A5.

²⁸⁸ “Entrapment by Sheriff’s Dept.,” *Mom...Guess What...!*, May 1978.

next night, the officers returned and poured out all of the bar's beer and wine, allegedly looking for hard alcohol, but destroying the bar's entire stock in the process.²⁸⁹ The harassment lessened after the Sacramento Human Rights Commission investigated and Mayor Phil Isenberg and then-Councilwoman Anne Rudin got involved and talked to the police department and officers involved.



Figure 41. Allen Chamberlin and Carolyn Langenkamp in court (1983). Source: Leilani Hu for the *Sacramento Bee*.

In 1982, two separate lawsuits were filed by local gay men to address discrimination by their employers. While working as a flight attendant for Frontier Airlines in 1979, Allen Chamberlin requested discounted airline ticket prices for his partner of nine years, Joe Shields. Although discounted tickets were a benefit regularly awarded to spouses of the airline's employees and their families, the airline denied Chamberlin's request. Chamberlin had filed for a certificate of marriage with the City and County of Denver, where he was stationed at the

time, but that, too, was rejected. In 1982, Chamberlin filed discrimination charges with the California State Department of Fair Employment and Housing, followed by a suit in the Sacramento Superior Court on year later. Chamberlin was represented by the pioneering lesbian-led law firm Metrailer, Langenkamp, and Buscho. In his decision, Judge Roger K. Warren ruled that Chamberlin's complaint must be argued with the Association of Flight Attendants Union, not the courts and ruled that Chamberlin and Shields' marriage was invalid. Chamberlin won the case on appeal in 1986.²⁹⁰

Also in 1982, Boyce Hinman, then a 14-year employee of the State Employment Development Department and later founder of the Lambda Letters Project, filed a similar discrimination lawsuit in the Sacramento County Superior Court against the State Department of Personnel Administration. Hinman was joined in his lawsuit by the Advocates for Gay and Lesbian State Employees on behalf of other gay and lesbian State employees. Hinman charged that the State had refused him his full health benefits when it refused to extend dental benefits to his long-time partner, Larry Stephen Beatty, a standard benefit offered to the spouses of State employees. Hinman was represented by Roberta Achtenberg of the Lesbian Rights Project in San Francisco.²⁹¹ In her arguments, Achtenberg

²⁸⁹ Bill Spiller, "Harassment in Disco Raid," *Mom...Guess What...!*, April 1979.

²⁹⁰ "Small collections from the Sacramento region," Online Archive of California, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8pz5hmj/>.

²⁹¹ Pam Slater, "Gays' Suit Seeks Dental Benefits for Mates," *Sacramento Bee*, 30 December 1982: 6.

stated that even though homosexual couples were untraditional, "they are families nonetheless."²⁹² The Sacramento County Superior ruled against Hinman in 1983, and its decision was upheld by the 3rd District Court of Appeal in 1985. The California Supreme Court refused to hear the case, and Hinman did not seek further appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.²⁹³



Figure 42. Boyce Hinman (1985). Source: *Sacramento Bee*.

The experience and policy wins garnered through the combination of LGBTQ+ political advocacy groups, individual lobbyists, community reporters and media, rallies, marches, and other grassroots efforts from the 1960s to the 1990s laid the foundation for monumental legislative, social, and cultural changes in the 2000s. President Barack Obama repealed the military's "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy in 2010. In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *U.S. v. Windsor* and *Hollingsworth v. Perry* effectively repealed the national Defense Against Marriage Act and California Proposition 8, which had restricted marriage to between a man and a woman. Same-sex marriages were finally legalized by the federal government in 2015 in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which guaranteed the fundamental right to marry to same-sex couples under the Due Process Clause and Equal Protections Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Gracie Bonds, "No Benefits for Gay's Partner Called Indignity," *Sacramento Bee*, 20 February 1985: 19.

²⁹³ Bonds, "No Benefits for Gay's Partner Called Indignity;" Ricardo Pimentel, "Gay Couple Lose Case on Benefits," *Sacramento Bee*, 1 May 1985: A1; "Gay Couple Denied Dental Care Appeal," *Sacramento Bee*, 16 August 1986: B1.

²⁹⁴ "LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History," accessed May 1, 2024, <https://lgbtqhistory.org/lgbt-rights-timeline-in-american-history/>.

CONCLUSION

[This section will be completed in a later draft]

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Works & Reports

- Elizabeth A. Armstrong. *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950 to 1994*. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Burg, William. *Midtown Sacramento: Creative Soul of the City*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014.
- Burg, William. *Sacramento Renaissance: Art, Music & Activism in California's Capital City*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013.
- Carlsen, Stan F. "Out on the Inside: A Case Study of the Political Transformation of the LGBTQ Community in California." M.A. thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 2006.
- Claussen, Michael Andrew. "Lavender Heights: The Emerging Gay Community in Downtown Sacramento, California." M.A. thesis, California State University, Chico, 1998.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Ferentinos, Susan. *Interpreting LGBTQ History at Museums and Historic Sites*. Lanham, PA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 2014.
- Graves, Donna J., and Shayne E. Watson. "Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco." 2016.
- Hurtado, Albert. *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender and Culture in Old California*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.
- Johnson, Susan Lee. *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold*. New York City: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000.
- National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995.
- Piona, Amber Elena. "How To Create Policy in an Epidemic: Aids in Sacramento, 1981-1989." California State University, Sacramento, 2010.
- Scher, Naomi. "Native Americans and the California Mission System, 1769-1848." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. 2023.
- Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution*. Berkeley, California: Seal Press, 2017.
- Thompson, Mark. *Long Road to Freedom: The Advocate History of the Gay and Lesbian Movement*. New York City: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

Newspapers & Periodicals

"A Comic 'T-shirt.'" *Sacramento Bee*. 7 December 1989.

Akeman, Thom. "Nightlight." *Sacramento Bee*. 22 December 1977.

"Architect Held in Probe of Boy Orgies." *Sacramento Union*. 4 November 1944.

"Assembly Passes Bill Aimed at Long Beach Cases." *Sacramento Bee*. 16 April 1921.

Bernstein, Dan. "City Extends Some Benefits to Domestic Partners." *Sacramento Bee*, 14 October 1992.

Boag, Peter. "The Trouble with Cross Dressers: Researching and Writing the History of Sexual and Gender Transgressiveness in the Nineteenth-Century American West." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 112, No. 3 (Fall 2011): 322–39.

Bonds, Gracie. "No Benefits for Gay's Partner Called Indignity." *Sacramento Bee*. 20 February 1985.

Breton, Marcos. "Men Live, Sing in the Open." *Sacramento Bee*. 10 May 2015.

Calder, Thomas et al. "Leveraging Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic for HI.," *Communications Medicine* 2 (2022). Accessed May 21, 2023, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9423691>.

Campbell, Clayton. "Wide Spread of Debasing Practices Make Punitive Legislation a Necessity." *Sacramento Bee*. 22 December 1914.

Chance, Amy. "Governor Signs Gay Rights Bill." *Sacramento Bee*. 26 September 1992.

Chance, Amy. "Wilson Signs Some Civil Rights Measures." *Sacramento Bee*. 25 September 1992.

"Chief Hallanan Would Go Further in Sterilization." *Sacramento Bee*. 6 January 1934.

Coker, Matt. "The Gay Godfather." *Sacramento News & Review*. 8 May, 2008.

Davila, Robert D. "Gay Rights Movement Now at Standstill in Capital, Many Say." *Sacramento Bee*. 23 November 1997.

---. "Noted AIDS Physician Dead at 44." *Sacramento Bee*. 6 October 1993.

Deas, David. "Metropolitan Church Preaches, 'God Also Loves Homosexuals.'" *Sacramento Bee*. 12 February 1972.

Delsohn, Gary. "For Love of Pretty Buildings." *Sacramento Bee*. 1 January 1989.

"Don F. Dingler." *Sacramento Bee*. 13 December 1989.

Drabble, Cody. "LGBTQ Civil Rights Pioneer George Raya Looks Back on 50 Years of Progress." Capitol Public Radio. June 27, 2019. Accessed May 1, 2024, <https://www.caprado.org/news/insight/2019/06/27/lgbtq-civil-rights-pioneer-george-raya-looks-back-on-50-years-of-progress/>.

"Entrapment by Sheriff's Dept." *Mom...Guess What...!*. May 1978.

"Firebombing Suspected as Massage Parlor Burns." *Sacramento Bee*. 18 October 1976.

"Gay Art Co-Op Has Display Area," *Mom...Guess What...!*, February 1979.

"Gay Couple Denied Dental Care Appeal." *Sacramento Bee*. 16 August 1986.

"Gay Group Forms." *Sacramento Bee*. June 7, 1981.

"Gay Radio Returns." *Mom...Guess What...!*. 1 March 1979.

"'Gay Power' Group Treks to Capitol." *Sacramento Bee*. 25 June 1971.

"Gay State Employees Have a Voice." *Mom...Guess What...!*. 1 September 1979.

"Getting Steamed Up at 3:45am." *Sacramento Bee*. 27 December 1979.

Gilliam, Stanley. "Stan's Sacramento." *Sacramento Bee*, 8 May 1979.

Graham, James K. "In Memoriam." *Mom...Guess What...!*. December 1978.

"Hiring Ban 'Immature.'" *Sacramento Bee*. 31 July 1979.

"History." Sacramento LGBT Community Center. Accessed April 11, 2024, <https://saccenter.org/history>.

Jones, Pat. "Society for Homosexual Freedom Seeks Recognition on SSC Campus." *Sacramento Bee*. 1 March 1970.

Kay, Alfred. "Strategically OK Lesbian Play Fails as Theater." *Sacramento Bee*. 10 September 1979.

Kell, Gretchen. "Volunteers Help to Ease Pain of AIDS." *Sacramento Bee*. 8 February 1987.

"Lease is Signed for Cocktail Bar." *Sacramento Bee*. 24 February 1940.

Lindelof, Bill. "Gay Bars Flourish in Downtown Area As Places to Relax, Find Partners." *Sacramento Bee*. 12 September 1983.

"McCollom, Carl Ray." *Sacramento Bee*. 17 September 1992.

Miller, Max. "Sex Freedom March." *Sacramento Bee*. 24 June 1971.

Mom...Guess What...! July 1979.

Mom...Guess What...! November 1979.

Mom...Guess What...! October 1981.

Nealon, Chris. "Calif State Assembly Passes Gay/Lesbian Rights Bill." *Gay Community News* [Boston]. 14-20 July 1991. Accessed through Gale Archives of Sexuality online.

"Need of State Legislation Against a Horrible Vice." *Sacramento Bee*. 21 December 1914.

"No Inference." *Sacramento Union*. 10 July 1957.

"One Year Later..." *Mom...Guess What...!* November 1979.

Owens, Erin. "The Lavender Scare: How Fear and Prejudice Impacted a Nation in Crisis." *Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History* 10, No. 2 (November 1, 2020): <https://doi.org/10.20429/aujh.2020.100208>.

"Parole Is Denied to Earl Barnett." *Sacramento Bee*. 15 December 1945.

Pimentel, Ricardo. "Gay Couple Lose Case on Benefits." *Sacramento Bee*. 1 May 1985.

Peterson, Marguaret. "'Mom, Guess What?' Gay Tells of Fear Overcome, Association Started." *Sacramento Bee*. 10 July 1979.

Reed, Ann. "Gay Church." *Sacramento Bee*. 22 September 1974.

Sanders, Jim. "Gay Rights Ordinance Backed After Heated Council Session." *Sacramento Bee*. 26 March 1986.

Slater, Pam. "Gays' Suit Seeks Dental Benefits for Mates." *Sacramento Bee*. 30 December 1982.

Spiller, Bill. "Harassment in Disco Raid." *Mom...Guess What...!* April 1979.

"Stan Hadden; Roberti Aide Influenced AIDS Policy." *Los Angeles Times*. 26 December 1991.

Stanley, Don. "AIDS Nightmare: Puzzling, Deadly – And Spreading." *Sacramento Bee*. 4 January 1983.

"State Suspends License of J Street Tavern." *Sacramento Bee*. 15 April 1957.

"There She Goes Again." *Sacramento Bee*. 9 August 1866.

"Unpleasant Task." *Sacramento Union*. 18 July 1957.

"Where Fault Lies." *Sacramento Union*. 4 July 1957.

Weinerth, David. C. "From the Inside Out." *Mom...Guess What...!*, 1 December 1978.

Wilson, Trista. "Changed Embraces, Changes Embraced? Renouncing the Heterosexist Majority in Favor of a Return to Traditional Two-Spirit Culture." *American Indian Law Review* 36, No. 1 (2011-2012), 161-188.

Witt, John Robin. "The Gospel According to Freda Smith." *Sacramento Bee*. 17 May 1987.

Witt, Robin. "Gays Gain Acceptance, Visibility in Sacramento." *Sacramento Bee*. 12 September 1982.

Womack, Graham. "Community Gathers Issues of Sacramento LGBT Newspaper." *Sacramento Bee*. 2 July 2023.

Archival Records

Private collection of George Raya.

"S.A.C.W.N. Inc. Constitution, Policies and Committee Descriptions." 1989. Lavender Library.

Sacramento Jail Registers, 1866-1940. Center for Sacramento. Accessed online May 9, 2024. Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/search?query=subject%3A%22Prisoners+--+Sacramento+%28Calif.%29+--+Registers%22>.

Sacramento Police Department Mug Books, 1860-1940, Center for Sacramento. Accessed online May 9, 2024. Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/search?query=creator%3A%22Sacramento+Police+Department%22&sort=-date&and%5B%5D=subject%3A%22mug+books%22>.

SF LGBT Groups Ephemera Collection 1950-2010. Collection #GRP EPH. San Francisco GLBT Historical Society Museum Archives.

"Small collections from the Sacramento region." Online Archive of California. Accessed February 9, 2024, <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8pz5hmj/>.

Oral Histories

Conversation between Liz [last name redacted] and Clare Flynn. April 26, 2024. Sacramento, CA.

"Sacramento Oral History Episode 2: Linda Birner and Dennis Mangers." May 30, 2023. Center for Sacramento History. YouTube. Accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8t3BwNfUXk>.

"Sacramento Oral History Episode 4: Linda Birner and Elizabeth Harrison." May 31, 2023. Center for Sacramento History. YouTube. Accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nWsdGrixw>.

"Sacramento Oral History Episode 5: Linda Birner & Frank Lawler." May 31, 2023. Center for Sacramento History. Accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56Y3lmxsLsU>.

Internet Sources

Andrew, Scottie. "Welcome to the 'Gay Games,' An Alternative to the Olympics, Where Activism is Encouraged and Everyone's an Athlete." CNN. July 31, 2021. Accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/31/us/gay-games-lgbtq-olympics-trnd/index.html>.

Blakemore, Erin. "From LGBT to LGBTQIA+: The Evolving Recognition of Identity." National Geographic. October 19, 2021. Accessed May 15, 2024, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/from-lgbt-to-lgbtqia-the-evolving-recognition-of-identity>.

"George Raya: A Sac State LGBT Pioneer." April 26, 2023. Accessed April 25, 2024, <https://hornethistories.com/2023/04/george-raya-a-sac-state-lgbt-pioneer/>

Ghaziani, Amin. "The Reinvention of Heterosexuality." *Gay and Lesbian Review*. May-June 2010. Accessed May 7, 2024, <https://glreview.org/article/the-reinvention-of-heterosexuality/>.

"Glossary of Terms." GLAAD. Accessed April 28, 2024, <https://glaad.org/reference/terms>.

HIV.gov, "A Timeline of HIV and AIDS." Accessed May 3, 2024, <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/history/hiv-and-aids-timeline#year-1982>.

"LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary." UC Davis. Accessed May 11, 2024, <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary#d>.

Loe, Greg. "Under the Dome." *Mom...Guess What...!*. December 1978.

Mapping the Gay Guides. Accessed April 4, 2024, <https://mappingthegayguides.org/>.

McHenry, Sara E. "'Gay Is Good:' History of Homosexuality in the DSM and Modern Psychiatry." *The American Journal of Psychiatry Residents' Journal*. September 8, 2022. Accessed June 4, 2024, <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp-rj.2022.180103>.

"Meet Steve." Steve Hansen for Sacramento Mayor. Accessed May 1, 2024, <https://www.steve4sacramento.com/meet-steve>.

Melba. "Fifty Gay Years In The Greater Sacramento Area: 1950 – 2000." 2007-2020. Accessed April 27, 2024, <https://gayinsacramento.com/index.html>.

"Mission/History." Golden Rule Services. Accessed June 4, 2024, <https://sacgrs.org/about-us/mission-history/>.

Morris, Bonnie J. "A Brief History of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Social Movements." American Psychological Association. March 1, 2023. Accessed May 11, 2024, <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/history>.

Pruden, Harlan and Beverly Gorman. "LGBTQ2 Well-Being Education: Two-Spirit People: Then and Now." February 14, 2014. Accessed March 1, 2024, https://www.ihs.gov/sites/lgbt/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/lgbttwospirithistory.pdf.

Sacramento Native American Health Center. "Land Acknowledgement." Accessed March 1, 2024, <https://snahc.org/land-acknowledgement/>.

"Teaching LGBTQ History: LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History." LGBTQHistory.org. Accessed April 4, 2024, <https://lgbtqhistory.org/lgbt-rights-timeline-in-american-history/>.

Uyeda, Ray Levy. "How LGBTQ+ Activists Got 'Homosexuality' Out of the DSM." May 26, 2021. JSTOR Daily. Accessed June 4, 2024, <https://daily.jstor.org/how-lgbtq-activists-got-homosexuality-out-of-the-dsm/>.

APPENDICES

Preservation Goals & Policies

[This section will be completed in a later draft]

Historic Designation Eligibility Standards and Criteria

[This section will be completed in a later draft]

Lavender Heights Survey

[This section will be completed in a later draft]

Individual Historic Resources Survey & Evaluation

[This section will be completed in a later draft]