Kentucky LGBTQ Historic Context Narrative
2016

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KENTUCKY LGBTQ HERITAGE CONTEXT NARRATIVE

I. INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE, DEFINITIONS, AND TERMS

The Kentucky lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer (LGBTQ) historic context narrative was funded in part by a grant from the National Park Service and the U.S. Real Estate Commission. This study was made possible through the work of the Fairness Campaign, a Louisville-based organization for LGBTQ equality in Kentucky, and the Kentucky Heritage Council, along with the help of committed volunteer leaders such as David Williams. The purpose of this narrative is to provide a broad historical overview of LGBTQ people in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and to provide guidance in identifying potential historic sites and sources relevant to the state's LGBTQ heritage. Since this initiative represents the first such effort to uncover and document Kentucky's heretofore largely invisible LGBTQ past, it should not be viewed as exhaustive, instead serving as a baseline that future researchers can refine, revise, and extend. The collection of stories from LGBTQ Kentuckians' past is the first step toward identifying more LGBTQ historic places and in particular those eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or deserving of other forms of recognition. Due to space constraints, not nearly all of the stories generated in this research project—partial as they still are—could be included. For that, we look to the future.

The 2010 U.S. Census found the population of Kentucky to be 4,339,367. Of those, the number who are LGBTQ can only be estimated since not everyone is

willing or able to self-report that information. The Williams Institute of the University of California Los Angeles School of Law holds the most thoroughly researched and up-to-date demographics on LGBTQ populations, and their 2016 report identifies 132,000 LGBTQ adults in Kentucky (and 7700 same-sex couples). From those figures, it appears that roughly 3 per cent of Kentuckians are LGBTQ. This proportion is far less than the folk wisdom, often put forward by gay-rights activists and authors, that 10 per cent of the population is LGBTQ. Yet this finding is in line with Williams Institute research, which estimates that between 2.2 and 4 per cent of the U.S. population is LGBTQ.[1] LGBTQ Kentuckians are not the only audience for this narrative, but it certainly aims to speak to as well as of them.

This context narrative is intentional in its use of language because language has exercised such great power in defining what it means and has historically meant to be—or to be called—homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Both the terminology and its import have changed dramatically over time. The ancient Greeks observed no strict gender binary for sexual attraction, and for much of the subsequent centuries, sexuality was a largely private affair. Sexual conduct was therefore, especially for women, far less subject to labeling, legislation, or harsh punishment than it became with the increasing modernization and medicalization of American culture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Over the course of

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[1] "Quick Facts: Kentucky," United States Census Bureau, accessed May 9, 2016, http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/21; "LGBT People in Kentucky," The Williams Institute School of Law, no date, http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Kentucky-fact-sheet.pdf; Gary J. Gates, "LGBT Demographics: Comparisons among population-based surveys," The Williams Institute School of Law, October, 2014, http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/lgbt-demogs-sep-2014.pdf.

the nineteenth century, the language describing the basis of same-sex intimacy also evolved from one primarily of religion (i.e., "sin" or "being possessed by the Devil") to one of disease or criminality.[2] Thereafter and until the middle of the twentieth century, an increasing array of penalties and intense social sanctions for homosexuality (especially for men) followed as it became increasingly demonized and subject to public scrutiny and censure.

This is not to suggest that sex with someone of the same gender carried no stigma earlier in U.S. history: quite the contrary, on those relatively uncommon occasions when it was made public. Sodomy laws were in place in the United States since the colonial period, and they were harsh, carrying the death penalty. Yet such laws were enforced rarely and almost never carried the full punishment (in fact, not even once in the case of women). Even the meaning of sodomy was not strictly associated with homosexuality until the late nineteenth century, but referred more broadly to sex acts considered "unnatural"—i.e., non-procreative—and could take place between two men, a person and an animal, or a man and a woman.[3]

The word "homosexual" was coined only in the late nineteenth century (derived from the Greek "same" and the Latin "sex") and progressed after the 1880s as a largely clinical term to describe both men and women who experienced same-sex attraction or sexual contact.[4] With increasing social emphasis on defining what

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[2] John D'Emilio and Estelle Friedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), see esp. 30-31 and 122-23.

[3] *Ibid.*, 122-23. With an exceedingly few exceptions, sex acts between two women were not seen as unnatural because they were not "seen" at all.

[4] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Homosexuality," last modified July 5, 2015, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/homosexuality/. Also, as scholar Jeffrey Jones points out, there are numerous groups and individuals throughout history whose sexual practices could be identified as

constituted "normal" sexuality, the word "lesbian" also came into usage at about this time. The first known mention of "homosexual" in a Kentucky newspaper appeared on July 11, 1926, in a one-page ad for a booklet called, "Health and Hygiene," sponsored by the Kansas-based Haldeman-Julius Company.[5] The term gained wide usage only with the popularization of Freudian psychology in that same era. Except in what one might call clinical references or in quotations, use of the term is for the most part avoided in this narrative because it has been so frequently used pejoratively—as evidenced, for example, in a 1937 newspaper account of the murder of a woman by her husband, a Lexington minister allegedly suffering from a variety of afflictions including so-called "homosexual insanity."[6]

By the 1930s, men attracted to other men began calling themselves "gay," although that word was not understood as such by most others until after World War Two. Thereafter, "gay" became widely used as an umbrella term that also includes lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people, and the word is used as such throughout this narrative, especially in discussions of the 1950s-80s, the period when "gay" identity gained currency. In this era, the term "homophobia" (coined in 1969, the same year that an uprising at the Stonewall Inn in New York City signified

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"homosexual" but who do not identify with the heritage discussed in this narrative, ranging from groups such as the Shakers, whose sexual practices are not known, to married heterosexuals who have sex with others of their gender on the side. See Jeffrey Alan Jones, "Hidden Histories, Proud Communities: Multiple Narratives in the Queer Geographies of Lexington, Kentucky, 1930-1999" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2001), esp. p. 26.

[5] http://courier-journal.newspapers.com/image/107608021. Printout in possession of Kentucky LGBTQ Heritage initiative files, Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research, William Ekstrom Library, University of Louisville. Hereinafter referred to as KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[6] https://www.newspapers.com/image/108119292. "Minister Tried at Lexington for Killing Wife," *The Courier-Journal*, Oct. 26, 1937, n.p. Copy in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files. Newspapers of the era frequently used this phrase as a medical ailment.

the emergence of a gay liberation movement) also came into use, a change that situated not gays but those who scorned them as the problem. During this same early period of upsurge, homosexuality took another significant step toward becoming normalized when the American Psychiatric Association (in 1973) declassified being gay as a mental illness.[7]

By 1990, with the gay movement in full swing, transgender activists began asserting their collective identities alongside and within the movement as an umbrella group of people who—regardless of their sexual orientation— experience and express gender outside widely accepted social norms.[8] Likewise, use of the word "queer" has changed significantly since the growth of the gay rights movement. Once a slur used to denigrate gays and lesbians, the word was reclaimed in the 1980s by anti-AIDS activists as a way to self-identify. "Queer" is widely embraced today as the self-description of choice by younger LGBTQ people to include all of the LGBT groups as well as those who identify as gender-nonconforming or even sexually rebellious generally.

Since it is at present the most inclusive label for the lives described in this context narrative, we have chosen to use the contemporary "LGBTQ" here in most cases, interspersed in a few instances with "queer" or "gay," also used to encompass

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[7] "Psychiatrists Reverse Stands on Homosexuals," *Courier-Journal*, Dec. 16, 1973, n.p. Copy in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files. Gregory M. Herek, "Beyond 'Homophobia': Thinking About Sexual Prejudice and Stigma in the Twenty-First Century," *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 1, no. 2 (April, 2004): 6-24. These changes did not correlate with an end to widespread pejorative use of the word "homosexual," as evidenced by the comments of Mrs. M.R. Robinson, a letter writer to the *Courier-Journal* in 1975—one of scores from this era—stating that "the homosexual can be defined in one word, Sinner." *Courier-Journal*, March 29, 1975, n.p. Copy in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[8] Earlier terms for those within this umbrella group include transsexuals and transvestites. The evolution of those words is discussed later in the narrative but they are no longer widely used.

the subjects of the narrative. We acknowledge that such terms continue to evolve and may need revision by future LGBTQ heritage researchers. We also make generalizations about past LGBTQ Kentuckians only tentatively, aware that the notion of any single "Kentucky LGBTQ heritage" is problematic because within that umbrella are various communities, not all of whom identify with or are even aware of one another. Various groups of LGBTQ people have throughout Kentucky (and U.S.) history experienced life extremely differently depending on a host of other factors besides their sexual orientation or gender identity—most notably their race, gender, socio-economic class, age, religion, or ability. These various forms of social identity are intersectional, as African American feminist scholars have argued since the 1980s—i.e., these identities are experienced simultaneously, not separately.[9] Differential treatment on the basis of race, gender, and ability, for example, have had and continue to have the power to determine quality of life for particular groups of LGBTQ Kentuckians. At the same time, as an earlier scholar of Lexington queer history has observed, many interviewees for his research expressed "a broader sense of kinship, an imagined community of nationhood" (or statehood) even when they viewed their own sub-group (lesbian-feminists or drag performers, for example) as central and in some cases were completely unaware of major LGBTQ events or figures in their own city.[10]

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[9] The pre-eminent writer on the subject of intersectionality is Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-99. Crenshaw has written on intersectionality in many places both before and after this essay, but this example represents her full thinking. Other scholars have written similarly, describing similar phenomena as "a politics of oppression" (Kentucky's bell hooks) or "intersecting oppressions" (Patricia Hill Collins),

[10] Jeffrey Jones, "Hidden Histories," p. 21: Jones explores this idea at some length, esp. on pp.20-25.

II. SCOPE, METHOD, SCHOLARSHIP, AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Because the very idea of coherent "homosexual," or (later) "gay," or (most recently) LGBTQ identities as a distinctive sub-set of American society begins scarcely more than a century ago, a broad understanding of LGBTQ heritage requires tracing the development of those social identities as well as the communities, social movements, and places connected to them, both in Kentucky and in relation to national trends. This narrative contains a few references to eighteenth-century Kentucky and a few more to the nineteenth century, particularly to its final third, once homosexuality and sexual difference entered public conversations. Yet our concentration is on the twentieth century because it was during this period that LGBTQ identities, communities, and politics took shape and became more public, both in Kentucky and more widely.

Until the mid-twentieth century, LGBTQ life in Kentucky was heavily closeted, and some aspects of its past still are cloaked in mystery. The newness of Kentucky's queer history as a field of study requires a fresh and critical reading of official documents such as government reports, newspaper coverage of scandals, letters, diaries, and medical case histories—relatively few of which were available locally to this research team. We can assume from scientific studies of sexuality that queer Kentuckians have lived here (as elsewhere) as long as any people have. Yet this narrative offers more detail and flavor on the World War Two and postwar era because developments associated with wartime migration and socialization became the basis for a central element of LGBTQ history—that is, LGBTQ people's

formations of distinct communities among themselves and their corresponding forging of a social movement for full equality. That movement became visible, in the view of many historians, in June 1969 with the uprisings at New York City's Stonewall Inn, and is still in progress.[11]

Tracking the places associated with all of these developments demands a certain reorientation to the meaning of historic places—a celebration of what was once either denigrated or seen as devoid of meaning, if you will. For much of their history, LGBTQ people in Kentucky and beyond it were castigated, not free to express themselves authentically, and in fact were typically encouraged to conceal, suppress, or alter their true selves. As a result, they often had to meet in secret or face an unpleasant continuum of consequences ranging from ostracism to bullying to harassment, violence, and—for most of the twentieth century—harsh criminal penalties. Sexual behavior is not the only aspect of modern LGBTQ identities, but it is an integral part of them, and such behavior was widely deemed "deviant," "perverted," "immoral," "sinful," and overall threatening. The policing and control of their sexual activities have kept the vast majority of LGBTQ people "in the closet" for much of modern American history. Even in cities such as Louisville and Lexington—both of which have carried regional reputations as "gay-friendly," (and still do)—

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[11] Information in this paragraph is drawn from Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1948); Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1953); and Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). More on the uprisings at the Stonewall Inn as marking the emergence of a gay movement can be found in Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Plume, 1993): Duberman refers to Stonewall as the "emblematic event" in this regard on p. *xvii.* For an account that disputes Stonewall as a turning point, see (among others) John D'Emilio's 1998 epilogue to his *Sexual Communities, Sexual Politics: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 251-62.

that necessary secrecy made safe places for LGBTQ people to love or even to meet each other hard to find throughout much of that community's modern past.[12] Just after the early gay rights movement of the late 1960s and 1970s inspired more and more gay people to "come out of the closet," the idea that they were deviant and therefore a social threat gained new energy in the early 1980s with the emergence of AIDS (acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome) and its initial, nearly exclusive association with gay male sex.

Surveying Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage in relation to historic places is further complicated by the Commonwealth's largely rural character, which has not—especially outside its two primary urban centers of Louisville and Lexington—emphasized the importance of "coming out" (of the closet) as a hallmark of twentieth-century LGBTQ life to the extent true in more urban communities and states.[13] Properly situating Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage thus requires a wider understanding of "historic places" to include not only a wider range of private domestic spaces but also public spaces such as softball fields, parks, and town squares, and—more recently—even broader commercial spaces such as Wal-Mart.[14]

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[12] Numerous sources consulted here, both oral and written, identified both Louisville and Lexington as gay-friendly throughout much of the twentieth century. Lexington, for example, was called the "lesbian mecca of the South," according to Sydney Smith, Lexington LGBTQ History Harvest panel, January 26, 2016. Recording in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files. On recent demographics, see "Louisville 11th in Percentage of Gay Residents," *Courier-Journal,* March 22, 2015.

[13] Historians of sexuality (John D'Emilio and many others) have written on the importance of coming out in the emergence of LGBTQ politics. Interviewees for this project suggest otherwise in Kentucky's LGBTQ landscape: see, for example, Johnny Cummings, interview with Catherine Fosl, Vicco, Kentucky, January 14, 2016, and Shelbiana Rhein, interviews with Catherine Fosl and Wes Cunningham, January 13, 2016, Hindman, Kentucky. Both recordings and transcripts of these interviews are in the KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[14] Mary L. Gray discusses this practice at length in *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America* (New York: NYU Press, 2009). Her research from the early 2000s found that a Wal-Mart in southern rural Kentucky often draws queer youth from the region who dress in drag and promenade there.

LGBTQ history is a relatively new field of inquiry and, as this introduction has suggested, it remains a contested one, due to widespread intolerance and condemnation from the dominant, non-LGBTQ society.[15] In researching this narrative, our team relied heavily on primary sources, supplemented by existing U.S. LGBTQ scholarship that provided a foundational frame of reference.[16]

The bulk of LGBTQ research has been on urban, coastal metropolitan areas better known as LGBTQ havens, such as New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco (areas that have also drawn LGBTQ Kentuckians, whether to visit, reside for a time, or relocate permanently).[17] Recent works have broadened that canvas to include southern LGBTQ histories, which proved useful for this narrative— starting with John Howard's 1997 anthology, *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South* (containing a chapter on Louisville's 1970s Lesbian Feminist Union), and James T. Sears's 2001 *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South,* which includes a chapter on the gay liberation movement in Louisville.[18]

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[15] This is perhaps especially true in states like Kentucky, where little prior research exists on this topic. For two relevant examples, see several essays in *The Politics of Gay Rights*, ed. Craig A. Rimmerman, Kenneth D. Wald, and Clyde Wilcox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). From Appendix B in the Rimmerman *et al.* anthology on pp. 324-46, one can see the array of anti-gay legislation on a state-by-state basis from 1993-99, suggesting the power of anti-gay organizing in Kentucky and nationally.

[16] A full listing of these books can be found throughout in footnotes, but among the most useful were Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (1991) and D'Emilio's *Sexual Communities, Sexual Politics.*

[17] Examples of these histories abound, but two are Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); and George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). See also *Survey LA LGBT Historic Context Statement,* prepared for City of Los Angeles by GPA Consulting (September 2014). Several Kentuckians interviewed for this project mentioned the allure of one or more of these cities: see, for example, Johnny Cummings interview with Fosl.

[18] Howard's subsequent monograph, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) focused on Mississippi but was helpful in thinking about LGBTQ southern rural experiences.

Jeffrey Jones's 2001 University of Kentucky dissertation, "Hidden Histories, Proud Communities: Multiple Narratives in the Queer Geographies of Lexington, Kentucky, 1930-1999," provided critical assistance in identifying historic Lexington places. More recent work such as Mary L. Gray's *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America* (2009) helped to provide a framework for studying LGBTQ rural life.[19] Scholarship on Kentucky LGBTQ history is slim but growing rapidly, especially on Louisville.[20]

This narrative addresses multiple aspects of Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage, but its scope is somewhat limited by a scarcity of sources outside the state's two largest cities. A major collection of primary source materials was the Williams-Nichols Library & Archive for LGBT Studies at the University of Louisville, which is unparalleled in the state for collecting LGBTQ histories, archives, and memorabilia locally, as well as regionally and nationally. We also gathered archival information from a growing, privately held LGBTQ collection in Lexington, the Faulkner-Morgan Archive, the focus of which is Lexington and central Kentucky. Because the primary sponsor of this project is the Louisville-based Fairness Campaign (or FC), the research began with some orientation toward Louisville even as it aimed to cover the entire state and was able to tap into existing statewide networks held by the FC.

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[19] Another somewhat useful background source was Mathias J. Detamore, "Queer Appalachia: Toward Geographies of Possibility" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2010).

[20] Examples include Kathie D. Williams, "Louisville's Lesbian Feminist Union: A Study in Community Building" in *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South*, ed. John Howard (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Catherine Fosl, "'It Could Be Dangerous': Gay Liberation and Gay Marriage in Louisville, Kentucky, 1970," in *Ohio Valley History* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 45-64; Michael Boucai, "Glorious Precedents: When Marriage Was Radical," *Yale Journal of Law and Humanities* (2015): 1-82; Catherine Fosl and Lara Kelland, "'Bring Your Whole Self to the Work': Identity and Intersectional Politics in the Louisville LGBTQ Movement," *Oral History Review* (Winter/Spring 2016) 43,1: 138-52.

To gather more statewide information, the research team also conducted oral history interviews, made use of relevant interviews done by previous researchers in and beyond Kentucky, and, working with the FC, put out wider calls across the state for LGBTQ Kentuckians to submit their memorabilia.[21] An email account expressly for that purpose generated a few very useful stories and items. We then advertised and held several "LGBTQ history harvests" across the state, which encouraged residents to convene on a given date to bring LGBTQ memorabilia, be interviewed, and/or suggest local historic places. The initial three harvests (in Berea, Frankfort, and Bowling Green) yielded virtually no stories dating more than five years old—reflecting perhaps the relatively recent character of Kentucky's Fairness movement in those cities. For the later three history harvests, held in Hindman and Lexington, with a final session held in Louisville, we did more preparatory work, cultivating older residents, identifying a wider range of key contacts well in advance, and pre-arranging local interviews. Those three events produced far more valuable data, but the events outside the state's two urban centers underscored for us the continuing secrecy, or at least a reluctance to discuss sexual or gender identity outside familiar circles, that seems to characterize LGBTQ life for middle-aged to older rural and small-town Kentuckians. For younger LGBTQ Kentuckians outside the two major urban centers, as evidenced by the history harvest session in small-town

[21] In Hindman, Lexington, and Louisville, the KY LGBTQ Heritage Initiative team conducted more than a dozen oral history interviews, the recordings of which are held in the KY LGBTQ Heritage files. We also used existing interviews conducted by David Williams through the Williams-Nichols Collection, as well as a collection of 22 interviews conducted by Catherine Fosl from 2005-2012 on Louisville LGBTQ history, and a few other oral histories shared with us by various Kentucky historians.

Appalachia, holding such a public and open discussion was a welcome and not terribly common opportunity.

The stories captured here reveal some aspects of Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage far better than they do others. There is a lot more material out there than we were able to uncover on Kentucky's LGBTQ African American past, and little to no information was available on newer ethnic immigrant communities.[22] This narrative also conveys more of Lexington's and perhaps particularly Louisville's LGBTQ heritage. While there are far more LGBTQ histories in smaller communities across the state than those conveyed, we would argue, however, that because so many residents across Kentucky have frequent contact with Louisville and/or Lexington, and vice versa, those voices are more incorporated into this account than may initially appear to be the case, laying important groundwork for further research. One example is the Louisville Youth Group, a small nonprofit support and mentoring organization for queer Kentuckians under age 21, which routinely draws attenders who drive a hundred miles to gather.[23] It is perhaps an overgeneralization, yet there is some truth to the notion that LGBTQ Kentuckians often come to Louisville from southern and western parts of the Commonwealth (and vice versa), roughly following the Interstate-65 corridor, while those from

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[22] The research team did not contain any people of color on it, and the lack of success white oral historians encounter in documenting the histories of LGBTQ people of color is common. That phenomenon is discussed in the introduction to *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*, ed. Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramirez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. p. 13.

[23] On p. 23 of *Out in the Country*, author Mary Gray makes this observation about the regional attendance at LYG during her research on rural queer youth in and around Kentucky in 2001-2003.

eastern and central Kentucky more often congregate in or migrate to or from Lexington.[24]

Based especially on what we heard from participants at the history harvest gatherings, our findings have also required us to expand the widely accepted "fifty-year" rule in historic preservation scholarship. We do so in part because so much of what is public about Kentucky's LGBTQ past has taken place in the past 45 years and in fact, a vast amount of it has occurred since 1980. A 2011 study by one young scholar of the state's LGBTQ past drives home a related point, noting that "equality remains just out of reach for many in the Commonwealth of Kentucky."[25] Although the focus of this narrative is on the twentieth century up through the decade of the 1980s, we also refer here to more recent currents that inform Kentucky LGBTQ heritage in major ways.

III. THEMES AND THEMATIC OVERVIEW OF KENTUCKY LGBTQ HERITAGE

Kentucky has figured prominently in modern LGBTQ history nationally, and continues to do so, in both positive and negative ways—ranging from Hindman native Lige Clarke organizing the first openly gay demonstration in Washington D.C. in 1965 (four years before Stonewall), to Louisville's location as site of the first lesbian marriage trial in U.S. history in 1970, to the passage in 2013 of an anti-

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[24] This point is not intended to emphasize that formerly rural Kentuckians reside in Louisville or Lexington—although some do—but that there is a frequent exchange of experiences among those in various parts of the state.

[25] Quote is from Micah Bennett, "Fighting for Fairness: The History of Kentucky's Local Movements to Enact Fairness Ordinances in 1999," Unpublished Western Kentucky University honors thesis, 2011. Copies in possession of Kentucky LGBTQ Heritage Initiative.

LGBTQ discrimination ordinance by Vicco, Kentucky (population 334, making it the smallest town in the United States to do so), to the international outcry prompted by Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis's refusal to authorize gay marriages despite the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* in mid-2015.[26] Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage is also rife with contradictions. While many Kentucky-based fundamentalist Christian churches have successfully mobilized anti-gay constituencies well into the twenty-first century, a publicly cross-dressing, gender-bending African American man nicknamed "Sweet Evening Breeze" could meanwhile become an informal celebrity in mid-twentieth-century, segregated Lexington, where he sometime performed alongside the University of Kentucky cheerleaders—and in cheerleader attire—to kick off university football games.[27]

Historian John Howard has identified three primary themes in southern LGBTQ history that, with some adaptation, also apply to Kentucky: race, religion, and rurality.[28] To capture Kentucky within this thematic framework, we add a fourth "R": regionalism. An additional important theme in Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage is privacy. Each of these five themes unfolds in subsequent sections of the context narrative, so we discuss them only briefly here.

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[26] For more on the Vicco ordinance, see "Gay Mayor Promotes LGBT Fairness in Small-Town Kentucky," *Washington Post,* August 19, 2013: accessed at https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2013/08/19/gay-mayor-promotes-lgbt-fairness-in-kentucky/ on April17, 2016; for more on the Kim Davis story, see, for example, a summary on the September 3, 2015, episode of the program *Democracy Now* : www.democracynow.org/2015/9/3/did_god_tell_you_to_treat: accessed May 10, 2016.

[27] For background, see *The Last Gospel of the Pagan Babies: A Southern Story, Belles, Queens, Punks and Bad Boys, an Outrageous 150 Year Lineage of Underground Culture*, directed by Jean Donohue (2013; Portland, OR: Media Working Group, 2014), DVD.

[28] John Howard, "Carryin' On," p. 5.

Race: Having embraced centrally southern racial practices such as slavery and, later, sharecropping and Jim Crow racial segregation (though not secession from the union during the Civil War), Kentucky reflects southern race relations to a great extent. As a far more majority-white state than those of the former Confederate South, its racial demographics are somewhat different than those farther south, and there is at least somewhat less African American cultural influence on the state's overall culture.[29] Still, racial discrimination and segregation have created systematic inequalities of power relations between white and African American LGBTQ people in everything from residences to employment opportunities to meeting places to the likelihood of criminal prosecution. From a practical standpoint, the "hidden histories" of queer Kentuckians, as scholar Jeffrey Jones has called them, are even more hidden for Black queer Kentuckians, especially prior to the past few decades. Unfortunately, as a result, African Americans appear here—with rare exceptions (Sweet Evening Breeze being one of them)—disproportionately in relation to crimes of which they were accused. As stories in the narrative demonstrate, African American Kentuckians have faced harsh and selective punishment in relation to practices such as sodomy or cross-dressing that were probably far more common among whites if only due to their sheer numbers.

In more recent Kentucky LGBTQ history, race is also a theme of a slightly different order. The African American civil rights and Black liberation movements of the early 1960s became the prototype for all of the identity-based movements

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[29] On racial proportions in Kentucky compared to the eleven ex-Confederate southern states, see U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census QuickFacts: accessed at https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/21 on July 7, 2016.

that were to follow them. "Gay liberation," which began in 1970 in Kentucky, was no exception. This kinship with earlier movements was true in terms of the rhetoric of "liberation" as well as in both tactics (sit-ins, legal challenges, for example) and personnel (Lynn Pfuhl, for example, one of two whites who joined African American high school students in downtown Louisville protests of racial segregation in 1961, went on to co-found the Louisville Gay Liberation Front, or LGLF, in mid-1970). But from the relative whiteness of the LGLF, which apparently had only one Black member, to more recent LGBTQ social movements of the later twentieth century, racial segregation has often separated LGBTQ Kentuckians even in the movements they forged to fight for equality—a dynamic that is also the case in many parts of the U.S., in part due to racial disparities both within the larger society and within social movement organizations.

Still, Louisville's Fairness Campaign stands apart from many 1990s local gay-rights organizations as an early example nationally in its work to adopt a more intersectional approach and to build successful, lasting alliances with other social movements, especially with the African American civil rights community, in Louisville. Those alliances made it easier to combat successfully the "gay rights as special rights" campaign that national anti-gay religious leaders launched in Black churches in the 1990s as a way of keeping LGBTQ discriminatory policies in place.[30]

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[30] Religious opponents of gay rights used this slogan widely in the 1990s, especially in campaigns directed at African American churches, to suggest that analogies with the African American civil rights movement were misplaced, that instead gays were affluent and not subject to group discrimination as such and that in fact, gay-rights advocates were cynically advancing a civil rights strategy for additional privileges they sought. LGBTQ advocacy organizations were often poorly equipped to combat this approach because they were so predominantly white-led and singularly focused on concerns of most interest to middle-class gay supporters. This issue is explored fully in

Religion: Both the "gay rights as special rights" discourse and the fight against it are connected to religion as well as to race. Kentucky has a relatively high rate of church attendance, with Christian Protestantism and Catholicism (especially in Louisville) carrying significant power in shaping popular opinion. Popularly known as part of the "Bible Belt," Kentucky has strong currents of Protestant fundamentalism associated with the Religious Right, which starting in the early 1980s organized largely through a network of fundamentalist churches and media outlets. Many followers of this strain of Christianity identify all behavior considered "homosexual" as an atrocious sin to be "cured" of or stamped out. The Religious Right has in recent decades used gay rights as a "wedge" political issue to achieve other conservative measures. Yet the importance of religion in Kentucky is a two-way street. The Metropolitan Community Church, for example, a Christian church established expressly for LGBTQ people and their allies in Los Angeles in 1968, soon began organizing followers in Louisville (1972), and it has been an ongoing vital part of the LGBTQ community and social movement ever since.[31] Religious Leaders for Fairness became an early force in the 1990s in Louisville's passage of an anti-LGBTQ-discrimination "fairness" city ordinance. In Lexington's debate leading to adoption of its fairness ordinance in 1999, ministers weighed in heavily on both sides of the matter.[32]

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several essays in *Dangerous Liaisons: Blacks, Gays, and the Struggle for Equality*, ed. Eric Brandt (New York: New Press, 1999).

[31] MCC congregations also later formed elsewhere in Kentucky, but none remain extant, to our knowledge.

[32] Bennett, "Fighting for Fairness," 51.

Rurality/Regionalism: The experiences of LGBTQ Kentuckians both expand and challenge national LGBTQ history, which has primarily been told through the lens of migration from the countryside—or the nation's interior— to larger coastal cities in search of greater acceptance. That pattern of rural-to-urban migration holds somewhat true for Kentucky, as examples here will illustrate, but the story is far more complicated. Kentucky's history reflects in part the major narrative flow of U.S. gay history: a vibrant, yet overshadowed, network of LGBTQ folks who, in the wake of and taking inspiration from Black, women's, and Vietnamese liberation movements, begin to stake a claim in their local communities, enjoy more openly queer spaces, and live increasingly "out" lives. Of course, in any "grand narrative" account lie many gray areas, and those gray areas loom especially large in Kentucky.

This is true in part because regionally, Kentucky's border location connects it to the South, North, and the Midwest—a region (unlike the South, which is often seen as "different") often depicted by demographers and pollsters as a "heartland," the ultimate representative of Americanness.[33] Kentucky's historic river commerce and its border status result in a blend of southern, northern, and Midwestern currents. Which of these currents predominate regarding LGBTQ or other issues varies depending on which area of the state is in question, since the Commonwealth is divided into seven distinct geographic regions comprising different economic and cultural dynamics.

A most striking characteristic of Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage is the influence of regionalism and a presumed urban/rural divide. Kentucky has been and remains

[33] John Howard, "Carryin' On," p. 4.

a rural state, and even its urban centers of Louisville and Lexington have more rural elements than many residents would like to admit, especially if New York, Los Angeles, or even Atlanta are the standards. Both Louisville and Lexington often demonstrate a clear sense of LGBTQ (and wider) identity formed, in part, by strong assertions of not being like the rest of Kentucky (i.e., rural) and by not being like "that other city in Kentucky" (i.e., each other). Louisville and Lexington share more in common than most of their residents might like to think insofar as their respective queer communities are both greatly shaped by rural Kentuckians. Despite the vibrancy and size of those two LGBTQ centers, Kentucky's LGBTQ history is not primarily an urban one, and that is one of both its strengths and its sources of importance to national LGBTQ heritage. Rural Kentucky, as our research team found, has sheltered vibrant queer communities and individuals of its own. Some left their rural homes, perhaps to campaign for freedom on state or national levels, more often to find tolerance through the kind of anonymity and diversity that urban settings afford. Those who remained (or returned) did so out of their strong commitment to home. Aided by the tolerance for eccentricity that has historically characterized small southern communities, rural queer Kentuckians have worked, either directly or indirectly, in more face-to-face ways to make their communities more hospitable places for themselves and for other LGBTQ people. Such dynamics are evident in comments like this one from Johnny Cummings, the mayor of Vicco, Kentucky (which became in 2013 the smallest town in the United States to pass an

LGBTQ anti-discrimination, or "fairness" ordinance): "We are so small that everyone comes to terms with everybody whether they agree or disagree."[34]

Privacy: The state's ethos has traditionally held a protectiveness toward individual privacy over governmental intrusion that is also incorporated into its legal policies and documents. In matters of ordinary life, the high value many Kentuckians place on privacy may be part of the reserve with which many LGBTQ people, especially those outside the two larger urban centers, speak of their sexuality. That same respect for privacy also seems to be an important factor in the acceptance of individual LGBTQ people by their neighbors in small-town and rural communities, where the lack of a visible local gay movement never fully normalized "coming out of the closet" to the extent that it did elsewhere.

Legally, Kentucky established rights to privacy before the federal government did.[35] The extent of those privacy rights has since been central in two of the Commonwealth's most important legal challenges surrounding LGBTQ equality. In the 1970 *Jones v. Hallahan* lesbian marriage case in Louisville, the first of its kind in U.S. history, the plaintiffs' attorneys called on the First, Eighth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution to argue a range of violations

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[34] Cummings interview with Fosl, January 14, 2016.

[35] According to Constitutional law scholar Carolyn Bratt, "Kentucky's longstanding protection for a right of privacy that predates federal and most other states' protection . . . comes from a series of cases decided by Kentucky's highest court recognizing and protecting such a right from legislative interference." These cases "began as early as 1909 (*Commonwealth v. Campbell*, 117 SW 383)(holding that the state constitution cannot prohibit citizens of Kentucky from having liquor for their own use); continu[ed] through such cases as *Hershberg v. City of Barbourville*, 133 SW 985(1911)(holding that a state regulating cigarette smoking in one's home violated the right to privacy); and culminat[ed] in *Commonwealth v. Wasson*, 842 SW2d 487 (1992)(holding that a state statute criminalizing consensual sex between a same-sex couple in their home violated their right of privacy)." Email correspondence, Carolyn Bratt to Catherine Fosl, July 21, 2016, copy in Fosl's possession.

of their right to privacy the two women experienced by being denied a marriage license. Although Margie Jones and Tracy Knight did not win their case, their arguments laid all the "threads," according to a constitutional law scholar, that would become standard doctrine in gay marriage advocacy in the decades to come.[36] Similarly, in *Wasson v. Commonwealth* (1992) — a case six years in the making— the Kentucky Supreme Court struck down the state's consensual sodomy laws, making Kentucky the first state in the nation to do so since 1982, when the advent of AIDS silenced critique of sodomy laws for a time. The Kentucky case began a wave of challenges to sodomy laws (including Tennessee, Georgia, and Arkansas) using much of the legal language and logic of the *Wasson* case. The most important of these was *Lawrence v. Texas*, which made its way to the United States Supreme Court. In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court found consensual sodomy laws unconstitutional on the same grounds as argued in Kentucky's *Wasson* case, namely that consensual sodomy laws violated gays' equal protection under the law and their inherent constitutional right to privacy.[37]

IV. CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW PRIOR TO 1965

Pre-colonial and colonial era: The earliest glimpses of what may be the LGBTQ history of Kentucky are little more than vague, tantalizing folktales and wisps of references, leaving us with an ambiguity that reflects the fluidity and privacy that

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[36] Sam Marcosson quoted in Fosl, "'It Could Be Dangerous,'" p. 58.

[37] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 72-78. More detail on privacy rights in the Commonwealth as pertaining to LGBTQ relations can be found by reading Judge Liebson's opinion in the *Wasson* decision, available as of July 27, 2016, at http://www.leagle.com/decision/19921329842SW2d487_11327/COM.%20v.%20WASSON.

characterized sexuality throughout most of American history. The first people in Kentucky's LGBTQ past may well have been among the pre-colonial Cherokee, Shawnee, or Iroquois, who named this place "Kanta-ke," meaning "land of the meadows," presaging perhaps the enduring rural character of the state that was to take shape. Although Native sexuality was in many cases less rigidly defined than among European pioneers, including those tribes most prevalent in what would become Kentucky, not much is known of homoeroticism among pre-colonial Kentucky peoples. A few accounts by eighteenth-century European travelers tell of encounters with Native Americans, more often men, who took on the attire and practices of the opposite gender and were accorded unique status within their communities.[38] We know too of wider cross-dressing practices in the eighteenth-century but little else— from the warrior women among the tribes of Kentucky to the well-documented donning of male attire by early frontierswomen such as Jemima Boone, undertaken at least in part to escape capture.[39]

For that first generation of pioneers who settled what was then the western frontier of Virginia, it took an adventurous spirit to leave familiarity behind and cross the forbidding Appalachian mountains. One might speculate that among some of those early immigrants may have been at least a few women who dressed as men

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[38] One such reminiscence was recorded in 1825 by a lone white traveler who encountered a group of Cherokee. Although some anthropologists and gay historian Jonathan Katz link the "berdache" figure with LGBTQ sexuality, the difficulty in making meaning of the observation cited here as regards modern LGBTQ studies is discussed in Gregory Smithers, "Cherokee 'Two Spirits': Gender, Ritual, and Sexuality in the Native South," in *Early American Studies* (Fall 2014): 626-651.

[39] Craig Thompson Friend, "Nonhelema Hokolesqua, Jemima Boone Callaway, and Matilda Lewis Threlkeld (1718-1786; 1762-1829; 1799-c.1885): Searching for Kentucky's Female Frontier," in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Melissa McEuen *et al* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015), pp. 8-32.

for more than mere protection, as well as others of both genders with non-conforming sexual or gender experiences or yearnings.

Silences about sexuality pervade nearly all social histories prior to 1900, yet historians have found some oral accounts, as well as a few written sources, containing whispers and oblique references that reveal romance among those of the same sex. Because marriage was for most of history the primary economic institution that signified stability, those who never married have historically been viewed by others with reactions ranging from sarcastic humor (the "old maids" card game, for example) to puzzlement, suspicion, and speculation about their sexuality. The latter is in part the basis of early uses of the word "queer."

Craddock and Tardiveau: One of the most intriguing snippets of what may be some of Kentucky's earliest gay history concerns the lives of two Revolutionary War comrades who never married and who lived major parts of their adult lives together. They were Capt. Robert Craddock, a Virginian of Scottish roots, and Peter or Pierre Tardiveau, one of the many French volunteers who enlisted in the colonial army. Like many, these two veterans acquired numerous land grants after the war in the Kentucky wilderness, which was at that time still part of the nation's western frontier. Neither Craddock or Tardiveau ever married, and a biographer, writing about them decades later in 1922, described them as "that rare type of congenial spirits that form beautiful friendships like that of Damon and Pythias . . . that persist from the day of meeting until the day of death." The two, both ardent republicans, organized the "Political Club" in Danville in 1786, and both engaged in plenty of land speculation as the new state took shape. By 1798, Craddock, a slaveholder, had

retired to a farm in Warren County, nine miles west of Bowling Green. In 1800 or soon afterwards, Tardiveau—whose speculations and fiery political engagements had left him virtually penniless—joined Craddock there, and the "two lived together at the Hermitage until parted by death." "Tradition says they were queer," notes their biographer, who at the time of his research in the 1920s was also superintendent of Bowling Green Public Schools. During their years on the farm, the men allegedly built a log schoolhouse for their slaves, and Tardiveau broke the law by teaching them to read. The two were buried side by side, and Craddock's 1837 will emancipated all of his fourteen slaves and dedicated the bulk of his considerable wealth to the education of underprivileged children at a time when there were no free schools in Warren County. The men's graves were jointly moved from their former farm in the early twentieth century, and in 1922 a monument was erected to the pair in Bowling Green's Fairview Cemetery that pays tribute to Craddock's contributions to local public education, and identifies the two as "comrade[s]-in-arms and friend[s]."[40]

Sue Mundy: Obliqueness in the public record regarding sexuality requires some reading between the lines to infer much about Kentucky's LGBTQ history throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. One account that stands out is that of the Confederate soldier Jerome Marcellus Clarke, a Simpson County native (born in or around 1845) who sported shoulder-length hair and possessed what one Kentucky historian has called an "almost feminine beauty." Clarke rode

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[40] All information in this paragraph derives from Thomas Crittenden Cherry, "Robert Craddock and Peter Tardiveau: Two Revolutionary Soldiers of Warren County, Kentucky," *Filson Club History Quarterly,* v.4 (1925): 78-90.

with Lexington's John Hunt Morgan's raiders and is widely believed to have inspired the character of Sue Mundy—reportedly his *nom de guerre*—a cross-dressing "she devil in pantaloons" who terrorized the Union Army of Kentucky. In 1865, Clarke was hanged in Louisville before a crowd of thousands who came to witness the demise of the infamous Sue Mundy.[41]

Mary E. Walker: On the other side from Mundy in several respects was Mary E. Walker, an early woman physician and New York native who lived part of her life in Kentucky. Walker defied the wearing of women's clothing in multiple ways throughout her lifetime. The most dramatic of these took place when she was hired as the first woman physician by the U.S. Army during the Civil war, and donned male attire to cross enemy lines and spy on the Confederate Army. Caught and imprisoned in Richmond, Virginia, Walker continued to refuse to wear women's clothing and pressed on in her work for dress reform after the war. She became the first woman to receive the U.S. Medal of Honor and requested and received a post as surgeon at a women's prison in Louisville. While Walker was married for a time and may have been heterosexual, she was also frequently accused of lesbianism and at a minimum was, according to her biographer, "female-identified" in the sense that she preferred female companionship.[42] It is also fair to speculate that, had she lived in a later period of history, Walker may well have embraced a transgender or gender-

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[41] The physical descriptions of Clarke are from Richard Taylor, "Clarke, Jerome Marcellus," entry, *The Kentucky Encyclopedia,* ed. John E. Kleber (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, third edition, 1992), 198-99; Thomas Shelby Watson, *Confederate Guerrilla Sue Mundy: A Biography of Kentucky Soldier Jerome Clark* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007). For a discussion on the impact of Sue Mundy's legacy on the Lexington LGBTQ community, see Jean Donahue, *Last Gospel of the Pagan Babies* (2013, Media Working Group) DVD.

[42] S.M. Harris, *Dr. Mary E. Walker: An American Radical, 1832-1919* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), quote is from p. 64.

queer identity, so great was her consistency and determination in defying norms of female dress.[43]

Belle Brezing: A nineteenth-century figure who continues to inspire LGBTQ legend in central Kentucky is Belle Brezing (1860-1940), Lexington's most notorious and successful sexual outlaw, a madam who achieved local prominence and a large income through her famous Lexington brothels, the best known of which (and where she lived until her death) was located at what is now 153 North Eastern Avenue. Another of her former houses (now called "Row House") lies on the campus of Transylvania University adjacent to the John Hall athletic field on North Upper Street, and is widely known as such by students and professors there.[44] Oral sources hint that Brezing herself may have had queer tendencies. Although no romantic motive was ever recorded, she and a young woman named Mollie Canton attempted to commit suicide together as part of a pact they made with each other in 1879 as teens.[45] It was also rumored that Belle's "girls" performed sex acts with one another for their male patrons. One unnamed Lexington madam of the period reported that Brezing and the prostitutes in her employ were all "perverts," but what the madam meant by the term remains unclear.[46] Regardless of what is myth and what is fact, Brezing's story has animated Lexington LGBTQ life into the twenty-first century, with architectural items from her brothel—which were auctioned off

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[43] *Ibid.*
[44] https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/lexington/preservation.htm. Accessed April 2, 2016.
[45] Maryjean Wall, *Madam Belle: Sex, Money, and Influence in a Southern Brothel* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 42. According to Wall, Brezing was also the prototype for the madam in the best-selling 1936 *Gone with the Wind*, who was also named Belle [Watling].
[46] *Report of the Vice Commission of Lexington, KY* (Lexington, KY: Privately Printed, 1915).

at generous prices after her death—continuing to adorn the homes of gay Lexingtonians and the city's gay bars. Reportedly, to this day a gay couple tends her grave in Lexington's Catholic Cemetery.[47]

Romantic friendships and women reformers: Other than the sort of brazenness that rare figures such as Belle Brezing displayed, female sexuality has tended to command less public attention prior to the twentieth century. Through nineteenth-century letters and diaries, historians have identified a lively but private Victorian-era tradition of "romantic friendships" between women that persisted into the twentieth century. Such practices included referring to each other as "darling" and speaking openly of physical desire and longing.[48] Once the marriage rate among white, middle-class women began to drop with the rise in higher education in the latter part of the 1800s, romance between women generated slightly more public alarm, especially when more opted never to marry and to live together in groups or in long-term couplings. Of the women reformers who led a largely female settlement house movement in many parts of the United States at the turn of the century, there are plenty of oral histories that hint of romance and marital-like relations between women at the various settlement houses around the Commonwealth.[49] Nationally, such women reformers often had strong ideas about women's equality, and it was widely rumored that they did not like men, although settlement houses served both male and female constituencies. Many settlement

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[47] Taken from *Last Gospel of the Pagan Babies*.

[48] See Carol Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[49] One example is Shelbiana Rhein, interview with Catherine Fosl, January 13, 2016, Hindman, Kentucky, recording in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

house leaders never married and they often lived for years with a particular female partner. While the quality of the intimacy among such women is not well documented, some historians of female sexuality have described them as "female-identified" or "women-identified" women.[50]

Women such as Katherine Pettit of Lexington, for example, who established the Hindman Settlement School in 1902, and Louise Marshall, who founded the Cabbage Patch Settlement House in Louisville in 1910, chose reform work over marriage. In the case of Marshall, late in life she characterized her settlement work as "one long love affair."[51] In Pettit's case, she teamed up with May Stone, originally from Louisville, and two other women in their initiative to bring a settlement house to the mountains. In 1913 Stone, along with Ethel de Long, then founded the Pine Mountain Settlement School nearby.[52] A 1923 novel titled *The Quare Women: A Story of the Kentucky Mountains* described the Appalachian settlement house women in local dialect as "queer," and that description stuck. Yet the meaning at that time seems to have applied not so much to sexual orientation as to a broader labeling of them as strange and unfamiliar.[53] Some Hindman residents still refer to

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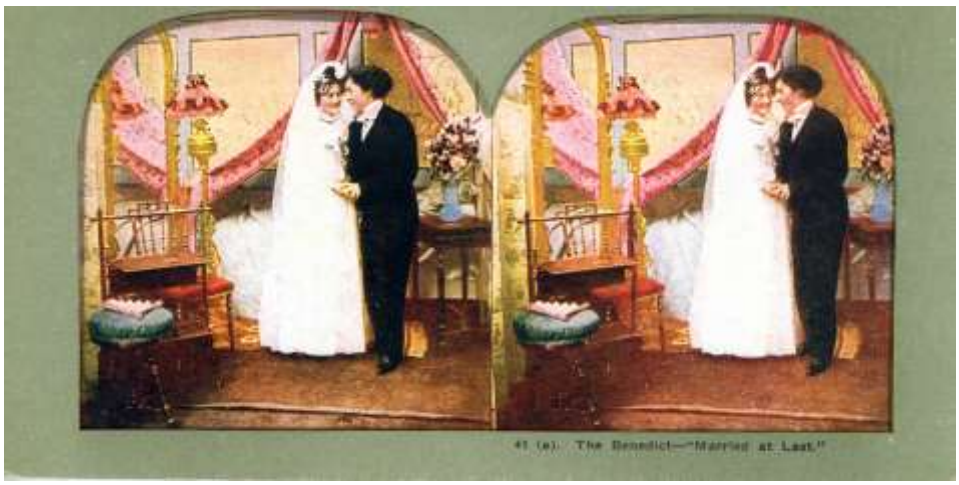
[50] Harris's biography of Mary E. Walker is one example, but there are many others.

[51] Quote is from the Cabbage Patch website. Its inclusion is not intended to suggest that Marshall or any of these particular women were lesbian, only that Marshall's life passion was with a women-led and women-centered enterprise.

[52] Sarah Case, "Katherine Pettit (1868-1936) and May Stone (1867-1946): The Cultural Politics of Mountain Reform," in *Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Melissa McEuen *et al*. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015), pp. 168-95.

[53] Lucy Furman, *The Quare Women: A Story of the Kentucky Mountains* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1923). Contemporary Appalachian LGBTQ writers have reclaimed that term, and sometimes refer to themselves and other LGBTQ people in their region as "quare." See, for example, Julia Watts, "Quare Theory: Some Thoughts on LGBT Appalachian Writing," in *Walk Till the Dogs Get Mean: Meditations on the Forbidden from Contemporary Appalachia* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press,2015), p. 108.

the women from Hindman Settlement School that way as well, along with emphasizing their positive impact on several generations.[54] Female-headed institutions such as these persisted well into the twentieth century, as in the example of Kentucky's Frontier Nursing Service (FNS), established by Mary Breckinridge in 1924. According to one scholar of the FNS, there is little firm evidence of lesbianism among FNS nurses, yet many displayed a deep devotion to each other, moved from one project to another together, or retired together.[55]



Stereoscopic card of an all-female marriage, early 1900s, found in Georgetown, KY. Photo courtesy of Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

Oscar Wilde and medicalization: As the twentieth century approached, the increasing medicalization of same-sex attraction and its labeling as "homosexual" gave it increased visibility. More science brought greater scrutiny and greater definition of sexual norms applied to both genders. These dynamics, ironically,

[54] The Hindman reports are from various conversations with Catherine Fosl, Hindman LGBTQ history harvest, Hindman, KY, January 13, 2016. This comment is not meant to gloss over the class and rural-urban tensions that sometimes occurred when middle-class female moral reformers sought to impose their standards onto mountain people, as Sarah Case discusses.

[55] Email correspondence from Melanie Goan to Catherine Fosl, April 8, 2016, copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

helped to propel the as-yet-unobtrusive growth of gay subcultures, especially in cities.[56] A hint of the heightening moral panic mixed with fascination that surrounded the emergence of what would soon become a small gay male subculture in Louisville is evident in the 1882 visit to the city by the provocative Irish intellectual and aestheticist, Oscar Wilde. The *Courier-Journal* covered Wilde's highly publicized American tour almost daily throughout 1882 and, like much of the American press, was critical even as its writers seemed captivated by what many commentators viewed as Wilde's excesses as he toured U.S. centers of culture. The paper editorialized frequently and often sarcastically about his showy, effete style, which included long hair, knee breeches, and often velvet attire. Wilde spoke in Louisville on February 21, 1882, at the Masonic Temple. His lecture was well-attended, with an audience the *Courier-Journal* described as "large…beautiful…and composed in a great degree of the fashion and culture of Louisville."[57] Yet further reflection from the *Courier* lamented Wilde's seemingly undue influence on local young men's style and referred to his fans as the "Sunflower Brigade" (Wilde often wore or carried a sunflower or a green carnation). Two days later the paper editorialized cryptically that "if Mr. Oscar Wilde will return to this locality about sheep-shearing time he will hear something to his advantage." A reported visit to Paducah soon thereafter was canceled.[58]

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[56] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, p.11.

[57] The review appears online at http://www.oscarwildeinamerica.org/lectures-1882/february/0221-louisville.html. Accessed April 4, 2016.

[58] An index of 818 references to Wilde from the *Courier-Journal,* the vast majority of which date from the 1880s-90s, along with printed copies of a good number of them, can be found in the Oscar Wilde Folder, Williams-Nichols LGBT Archives. Except when otherwise noted, all of the references here are drawn from that collection. The "Sunflower Brigade" is mentioned on several dates: more recent commentators have suggested that the prominent featuring of the sunflower by Wilde and his

By 1895 Wilde—married and with greater literary fame but also a greater willingness to flout social conventions— would be at the center of a scandal in London that made public his sexual relations with men and gave a more public face generally to homosexuality. For Wilde, the result was a sensationalized trial that landed him two years' imprisonment, convicted of "gross indecency with men." The Louisville newspapers discreetly refrained from printing the term applied to him in Britain—"sodomnite."[59]

Sodomy: As quiet gay subcultures formed in turn-of-the-century Kentucky, there were increased references in public discussions to such practices. Kentucky has an unusual history with laws penalizing sodomy, or what was called in colonial times "crimes against nature."[60] Differences between the prosecution of same-sex couplings can be charted along racial as well as gendered lines.

It is often the case all throughout U.S. history that African Americans have faced harsh punishment in relation to a behavior that is enforced only selectively. As some historians have pointed out, prosecution for sodomy was no exception.[61] *Commonwealth v. Poindexter* is a case in point from early twentieth-century Kentucky.[62] Until that time, Kentucky's 1860 sodomy law did not specify what

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adherents bears some resemblance to the modern carrying of rainbow flags. In his entry on "Gay Men," in *Encyclopedia of Louisville* (p. 332), David Williams makes the same point about the symbolism of young men sporting green carnations. The quote about sheep shearing is from the *Courier-Journal,* Feb. 23, 1882, also found in the Oscar Wilde folder.

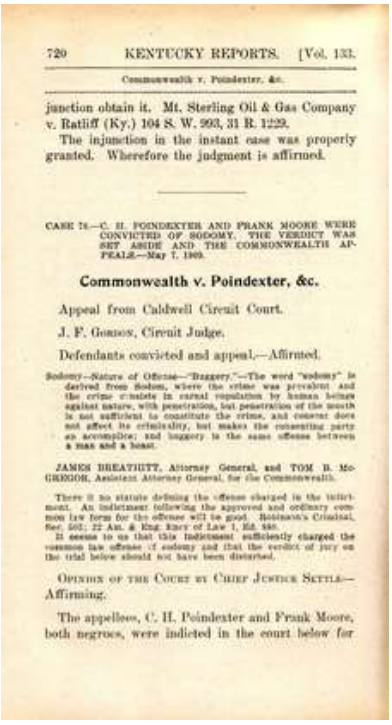
[59] Oscar Wilde Folder, Williams-Nichols LGBT Archives.

[60] According to Jeffrey Jones (p. 92), the 1800 census lists two Kentucky prisoners convicted of "crimes against nature." Another synonym was "buggery," though this was commonly understood to mean a man having sex with an animal.

[61] Jones discusses this disproportionality, as does John Howard in *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 199), 143 and 229.

[62] The case is discussed at some length in Jones, "Hidden Histories." For a copy of the trial records, see

activities constituted sodomy, but this case resulted in the crime being explicitly discussed for the first time. In 1909, two African American men, C.H. Poindexter and Frank Moore, were arrested in Caldwell County and charged with sodomy when they were caught having oral sex. How or where they were apprehended is not known.[63] Initially convicted and sentenced to two years when they admitted being lovers, the pair—on the advice of their attorney—later appealed on the grounds that no anal contact had occurred and as such, they had not committed sodomy.



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junction obtain it. Mt. Sterling Oil & Gas Company v. Ratliff (Ky.) 104 S. W. 993, 31 R. 1229.

The injunction in the instant case was properly granted. Wherefore the judgment is affirmed.

CASE 78.—C. H. POINDEXTER AND FRANK MOORE WERE CONVICTED OF SODOMY. THE VERDICT WAS SET ASIDE AND THE COMMONWEALTH APPEALS.—May 7, 1909.

Commonwealth v. Poindexter, &c.

Appeal from Caldwell Circuit Court.

J. F. Gordon, Circuit Judge.

Defendants convicted and appeal.—Affirmed.

Sodomy—Nature of Offense—"Buggery."—The word "sodomy" is derived from Sodom, where the crime was prevalent and the crime consists in carnal copulation by human beings against nature, with penetration, but penetration of the mouth is not sufficient to constitute the crime, and consent does not affect its criminality, but makes the consenting party an accomplice; and buggery is the same offense between a man and a beast.

JAMES BREATHITT, Attorney General, and TOM B. McGREGOR, Assistant Attorney General, for the Commonwealth.

There is no statute defining the offense charged in the indictment. An indictment following the approved and ordinary common law form for the offense will be good. Bishop's Criminal, Sec. 502; 22 Am. & Eng. Ency of Law 1, Ed. 885.

It seems to us that this indictment sufficiently charged the common law offense of sodomy and that the verdict of jury on the trial below should not have been disturbed.

OPINION OF THE COURT BY CHIEF JUSTICE SETTLE—Affirming.

The appellees, C. H. Poindexter and Frank Moore, both negroes, were indicted in the court below for

Although the Circuit Court judge excoriated homosexuality at length and called for the immediate illegalization of oral sex, he ultimately overturned the men's conviction when he concluded that only penile-anal penetration constituted sodomy according to legal expertise used widely at the time.[64]

In this 1909 case two African American men in Caldwell County, Kentucky, were charged with sodomy but successfully challenged what that crime consisted of under existing Kentucky law. Photo courtesy of University of Kentucky Law Library.

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http://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=0&article=1001&context=black_history_month_2015&type=additional. Accessed online April 4, 2016.

[63] Caldwell County is in the far western part of Kentucky in the heart of tobacco country. This incident followed closely on the heels of the notorious 1906-1908 "Black Patch Wars" in that county, in which farmers trying to organize for a decent price on their tobacco crops were terrorized by night riders. Especially because these raids did have racial dimensions, harshly targeting Black farmers, it would be interesting to know if either Poindexter or Moore were tobacco farmers and if their arrests came as some form of retribution.

[64] As noted in the appeal affirmation (available online: see n. 62 for address), the judge relied primarily on the discussion of sodomy in *Bishops New Criminal Law, Vol.2*, Sections 1191 and 1194—as well as additional law expertise commonly used at the time, including *20 American and English Encyclopedia of Law, New Edition,* Section 1146, and other similar sources. For the twenty-first century reader, the appeal affirmation contains interesting reflections on sodomy, buggery, and crimes against nature.

That inclusion of oral sex as sodomy did not come until the state's penal code was amended in 1974—leaving sex between two women technically legal here until then.

Louisville Vice Commission: The early twentieth century and the upsurges around World War One coincided with the convening of a citywide Vice Commission in Louisville in 1915 to survey local "moral conditions" and control what "city fathers" saw as "social evil," in particular prostitution.[65] The Louisville Vice Commission parallels similar campaigns in other American cities (including Lexington) at this time. In an era of social changes related to rapid urbanization, industrialization, immigration, and internal migrations, the Commission's report reveals a high level of social anxiety not only about prostitution but of a wider "moral decline." The report's authors referred only obliquely to the matter of same-sex liaisons, and the word "homosexual" was not employed. Instead, a section entitled "Perversion" commented with alarm that "unnatural means of sexual satisfaction" between prostitutes, once a "rarity," were by 1915 an "increasing practice." Investigators attributed female prostitutes' avoidance of sex with men to a desire to limit pregnancy and control venereal disease, but noted it as a "terrible toll" on the community.[66] Gay men received no comment as such, but the report found "evidence of immorality" in public parks, especially after 11 p.m., which almost certainly included gay male liaisons.[67] Other portions acknowledged that

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[65] "Report of The Vice Commission: Louisville, Kentucky," (Louisville, KY: Smith and Dugan, 1915), p. 7: copy in possession of Kentucky LGBTQ Heritage files.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 65.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 71. No particular parks were named.

men as well as women became prostitutes, often "young . . . coming from strange cities or rural districts, looking to find accommodations" and then drawn into a life of vice.[68]

Meeting places: As "sexual deviance" began to be seen as more of a social threat in the early twentieth century, distinct urban subcultures of gay men, lesbians, and other gender or sexual non-conformists also crystallized, especially in larger U.S. cities but also in smaller ones such as Louisville and Lexington. One gay Louisvillian born in the 1890s, for example, allegedly told a younger friend that at the age of 18 he had discovered a highly secret, but "organized, consciously gay society" to which he was introduced through a theatre usher.[69]

Meeting places in those years were often private spaces, but especially gay men began to identify a network of public places they could meet for companionship and sex. Certain city parks—as the vice commissioners had alluded—became such meeting spots, including Woodland and Shillito Parks in Lexington, for example. In Louisville, the Hogan's Fountain area of Cherokee Park, Old Louisville's Central Park, and indeed all along Fourth Street between Central Park and downtown also began to be sites of what would later be called "cruising." Semi-private places, like restrooms, became notorious cruising grounds, and this trend grew once public restrooms became commonplace in the 1930s (and, with the growth of interstate highways after World War Two, rest areas). Restrooms in the Louisville bus station

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[68] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[69] Charles Dewees, interview with John D'Emilio, January 24, 1979, interview notes shared with Lara Kelland and Catherine Fosl, April 21, 2016, notes in KY LGBTQ Heritage files. Quote is from interview notes, so it may be D'Emilio's words, not those of Dewees.

became well-known in this regard. In Lexington, restrooms that were frequented by gay men included those at Union Station, the Phoenix Hotel, the Drake Hotel, and the Greyhound Bus Station—often referred to as "The Circuit."[70] Gay men began at some point, perhaps the 1930s, to refer to such popular enclosed yet public or semi-public restrooms as "tearooms."[71] Many of these spots were available solely or largely to whites, of course, since such places were strictly racially segregated and therefore dangerous for Blacks to enter. LGBTQ African American men had their own meeting spots but it will take further research to identify them from early twentieth-century Kentucky history.

Two men and two women, unidentified Kentuckians, from early 1900s, courtesy of Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

[70] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 221.
[71] *Ibid.*, 209.

Gender variance: Another related change around the turn of the century concerned what medical and psychiatric professionals now began to call "transvestitism."[72] Cross-dressing men, and a few women, had been a staple of the Victorian vaudeville circuit, but such behavior now also got the attention of police. Once again, among the first in Kentucky to be singled out and detained were African Americans. In June of 1889, at about 1 A.M. on Louisville's Green Street (now Liberty) between Sixth and Seventh, in the heart of the African American commercial district, John Phillips and Hiram Belt were "dressed in women's clothes, wore wigs, bustles, pads and all the numberless unmentionables, which they considered 'attractive' in their characters of 'female impersonators.'" The two were arrested but no more about their crime or their fate is known.[73]

A quarter century later, in 1922, the newspaper featured another Louisville case of what by mid-century would come to be called "transsexualism." A "Mrs. Amanda Norton Gray, residing at 1027 South Second Street in Louisville. . .daughter of J.J. Norton" apparently masqueraded as "Gene Metcalfe," a man, and "toured the country on the B.F. Keith circuit." It is not clear from subsequent reporting if Gray was a woman disguised as a man who went on stage as a woman, but one account referred to Gray as a "female impersonator," noting that "several women fell in love with him."[74] These fragments suggest an early cross-dressing performance

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[72] Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 15.

[73] Clipping from *Courier-Journal,* June 7, 1889, p. 2, found in "Female Impersonation and Female Impersonators" folder, Williams-Nichols Collection.

[74] The clips are *Courier-Journal*, August 2, 1922, p. 1, and August 21, 1922, p. 8. Same folder as above.

community, which we know attracted both white and African American performers, but no further detail sheds light on its size, shape, or constituency.

By the 1930s, Woodland Park Auditorium in Lexington held all-African-American-male shows called the "Negro Review," in which Black men commonly adorned "drag" even though these Vaudeville-style shows also represented a form of minstrel. Courtesy of Faulkner-Morgan Archive. Thanks also to A Pictorial History: African American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Persons in Kentucky, curated by Reinette Jones and available at http://uknowledge.uky.edu/ black_history_month_2015/#.

Not all who experienced or engaged in gender variance were performers, of course. In 1903, for example, the death of a Muhlenberg County farmer known as "Aaron Bark" made public the fact that he was actually a woman named "Mrs. Fred Green," who reportedly had shared that fact only with one neighbor and claimed to have lived as a man in order to earn a better living.[75] In the years prior to the emergence of gay liberation, gender-nonconforming people often had little outlet for expressing their true selves, and consequently we have few records on their lives except when the outcomes were shocking or tragic. In March 1929, for example, one Stanley Rhorer, a Lexington native, committed suicide at only age 19 in St. Louis after living there for some eight months as a woman identified in the press only as "Mrs. Dickburn," whose male anatomy was discovered only after her death.[76]

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[75] Clipping from Hopkinsville newspaper April 28, 1903: copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[76] Jones, "Hidden Histories," p. 92. Clarification provided by *Lexington Herald* news clipping, March 8, 1929, copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

Henrietta Bingham: By the 1920s, Freudian psychology had begun to influence ideas about same-sex relationships, especially among the elite, and the medical establishment debated whether homosexuality was "curable." These new debates did not, however, reduce the stigma of queerness, at least not outside of a few gay and "free love" enclaves in artistic and bohemian subcultures in major urban centers outside Kentucky.[77] A case in point is the bisexual Louisville heiress, Henrietta Bingham, born in 1901, daughter of the illustrious "Judge" Robert Worth Bingham—judge, onetime mayor of Louisville, diplomat, and *Courier-Journal* mogul. As a young student at the elite all-female Smith College (once castigated by President Calvin Coolidge for promoting "morbid tendencies" among its students since they married at less than "normal" rates), Bingham became lovers with one of her professors in the early 1920s.[78] They traveled together to London, where Henrietta bewitched Bloomsbury male and female artists even as she struggled through psychoanalysis aimed at "curing" her of lesbianism. She was close to her family but rarely seemed at ease in Kentucky even though her father advanced numerous ideas destined to bring her home.

One such endeavor was the Wilderness Road Bookshop, which Henrietta suggested and her father financed. Henrietta Bingham's partner in this venture was Edie Callahan, a childhood friend four years her senior who was lesbian and a

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[77] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 16-17.
[78] Emily Bingham, *Irrepressible: The Jazz Age Life of Henrietta Bingham* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2015), p 47. Much of the detail in this paragraph and those surrounding it is drawn from this biography of Henrietta Bingham. A description of the Wilderness Road Bookshop is on p. 107.

member of another wealthy local family.[79] The store opened in downtown Louisville in 1923 near the offices of the *Courier-Journal* in the 600 block of Fourth Street between Chestnut and Broadway. It shortly thereafter moved into the Brown Hotel. Henrietta and her brother Barry ran the store briefly, but Edie, who would run the shop until it changed hands in 1933, managed it more consistently.

Both Bingham and Callahan were sexual rebels, and that situates their shop as a place of LGBTQ historic significance in early twentieth-century Kentucky. In fact, opening and managing such a store was quite an extraordinary undertaking for any young single woman of this era, wealth or sexuality aside. The shop carried avant-garde and risqué titles not otherwise available in Louisville and although it held Bingham's interest only briefly, it was a gathering spot for alternative-minded Louisvillians and visitors that probably included many LGBTQ locals. From there, Edie Callahan moved on to become a longtime manager of the St. Matthews Book Shop at 3920 Westport Road, which also likely attracted many LGBTQ patrons through Callahan's gregariousness.

Ever adventurous and non-conformist, Henrietta Bingham traveled often between Kentucky and London, where her father held a diplomatic post from 1933-37. She had numerous lovers of both genders, and lived openly in London with the pioneering U.S. female tennis pro Helen Hull Jacobs in the 1930s. But the pair found themselves far more constrained once they returned to the United States in 1936 to

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[79] Edie Callahan's father was Patrick Henry Callahan, and he may have also aided in the shop's financing, according to Nick Domeck, who assisted Edie Callahan later in life and managed her estate. Nick Domeck, telephone conversation with Catherine Fosl, April 25, 2016, notes in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

purchase and settle on the 450-acre Harmony Landing Farm outside Louisville in Goshen (their former home is now the clubhouse at Harmony Landing Country Club). Especially without the protection of Henrietta's father, who died in late 1937, the couple were often isolated and made deeply aware of their "otherness," generating at best what one observer remembered as "tremendous curiosity."[80] Their relationship could not withstand the propriety and the pretense of platonism that rigidly heterosexual Louisville society required at the time. Bingham stayed on at Harmony Landing raising horses and hemp until 1950. The rest of her life was punctuated by a series of lovers, male and female, as well as forays to New York or London for the sustenance of LGBTQ and bohemian community.

Troubled, isolated, and dependent on painkillers, Henrietta Bingham did not live long enough to welcome in the era of gay liberation that came with the arrival of the 1970s. She died in 1968 at her apartment in New York City, having spent considerable parts of her latter years at Melcombe, her family home just outside Louisville at 4309 Glenview Avenue in Glenview. Her family's wealth and status had created a bit more wiggle room for her sexual difference, especially in her youth, than most queers of her generation knew, rescuing her from a couple of brushes with the law and causing some to look the other way from what they may have seen as her misbehavior or maladjustment. Yet in the long run, not even that privilege could shield her from the tragic outcome experienced by many LGBTQ people of that era due to the social condemnation and self-loathing associated with sexual "deviance." Henrietta Bingham's biographer recalled in 2015 the "disgust" the mere

[80] Bingham, *Irrepressible*, p. 253.

mention of her subject's name still evoked in many Louisvillians she tried to interview.[81]

Women of distinction and private parties: Part of the problems Henrietta Bingham experienced in Kentucky may have come from her particular kind of sexual unruliness: she was known even within Louisville's closeted LGBTQ subculture as "pretty wild," according to one reminiscence.[82] Among her peers who fared better in those years was Anne Bruce Haldeman, a successful landscape designer from another well-off Louisville family.[83] Haldeman lived discreetly but somewhat openly with her business and life partner, Louise Leland, and their firm achieved local prominence. Leland, a native of Illinois and Smith College graduate who seems to have come to Kentucky to join Haldeman, became the Commonwealth's first female architect and the only woman to be licensed as such in the state from 1938 to 1975. Leland designed their longtime home—which they named "Puye"—in Glenview. Flanked by a brilliantly colored garden Haldeman stocked with orange poppies and blue cornflowers, their former home still stands today at 3613 Glenview Avenue.[84]

Not all of Henrietta Bingham's life in Kentucky was oppressive either. Her Harmony Landing home, the Bingham family mansion at Melcombe, and the nearby

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[81] Emily Bingham, conversation with Catherine Fosl, University of Louisville, Nov. 30, 1915, notes in Fosl's possession.

[82] The description of Henrietta is from Jack Kersey, interview with Emily Bingham, Louisville, October 4, 2007, transcript in author's possession (shared with the Kentucky LGBTQ Heritage project).

[83] Many of Haldeman's landscape designs have statewide and national significance: for examples, see www.filsonhistorical.org/research-doc/haldemannnebruce/. Accessed April 11, 2016.

[84] See www.filsonhistorical.org/louise-leland-kentuckys-first-female-architect. Accessed April 11, 2016. Delinda Buie visited the women in their home sometime circa 1980 and recalled the flowers in a telephone conversation with Catherine Fosl, April 22, 2016, notes in Fosl's possession.

"little house" at 4310 Glenview Avenue (also designed by Leland and occupied for many years by Henrietta's longtime pal Edie Callahan) are remembered fondly by local gays and lesbians of the 1940s-60s as the sites of large, sometimes rowdy private parties. Older LGBTQ Louisvillians recall Glenview from those years as a popular LGBTQ party spot. Edie Callahan—a classically trained musician and flamboyant lesbian (known fondly as "the queen") who loved her champagne, gin, and books and enchanted listeners when she played piano—often hosted and more often attended.[85] Other guests tended to arrive in a form of masquerade. Gay men, as one attender, Jack Kersey, recalled, would typically attend such house parties with their "dates"—women friends they called "lipstick lesbians." Once safely behind closed doors and among kindred spirits, all could drop the pretense and mingle with whom they pleased.[86] Many "marriages of convenience" took place between Louisville's gay men and lesbians in these years, according to Kersey, who also observed the commonality of similar arrangements in the military in the years surrounding World War Two.

The size and positive memories associated with such parties and with the lesbian community at Glenview suggest a blooming LGBTQ subculture in Louisville in the World War Two and postwar era, however closeted. Oral sources reveal the growth of similar patterns of LGBTQ socializing in Lexington in the early to mid-

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[85] Edie Callahan is an interesting figure who likely merits further study. Having covered the Treaty of Versailles for the *Catholic Record* as a very young woman and written a book on that experience in 1920, she appears as a striking figure in the margins of several interviews with LGBTQ Louisvillians in discussions of the post-World War Two era. Callahan lived later in life at Glenview, but until her father's death, she lived with her parents at the family home at the corner of Lexington and Alta Vista Roads. That site is now the president's residence for the Louisville Southern Baptist Seminary.

[86] This description and others flavoring the paragraph are from Jack Kersey, interview with Catherine Fosl, Fort Lauderdale, FL, January 15, 2006, recording and transcript in Fosl's possession.

twentieth century. A lively circuit of lesbian house parties thrived there too as places to find sex, love, and companionship. Lexington's gay men congregated in private homes as well, sometimes throwing large parties where public sex acts were not uncommon, such as those hosted by Kimbrel Underwood in the January House, an early 1800s mansion at 437 West Second Street.[87] The popularity of such private spaces for LGBTQ gatherings emphasizes that the majority of queer Kentuckians, regardless of their race, class, or gender, felt the need to keep their sexuality under wraps and away from the wider culture, or face persecution or worse.

Sweet Evening Breeze: Twentieth-century southern culture is infamous, however, for its ability to tolerate, even to mythologize, a few colorfully eccentric individuals whose experiences are not typical of others like them. One such figure is the "town queer," a phenomenon that is not so widespread to be common but nor is it pure fiction.[88] In Lexington, which for some of the twentieth century still carried the aura of a small town, such a figure was James Herndon, an African American man known locally as "Sweet Evening Breeze" or just "Sweets"—his nickname most likely an homage to Belle Brezing, whom he claimed to have nursed in her old age. Sweets was born in the late nineteenth century in Scott County. At a young age he was allegedly abandoned at Lexington's Good Samaritan Hospital, where he more or less dwelled thereafter, taken under the wing of a major hospital donor. Sweets began working at the hospital as a young teen, delivering mail to patients and entertaining

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[87] Robert Morgan, interview with Jonathan Coleman, Lexington, KY., February 8, 2015. Digital recording in the possession of Coleman.
[88] Jones, "Hidden Histories," p. 95.

them with his ukulele. He eventually became head orderly, a lucrative position for a Black man of his era to hold in segregated Lexington. Sometime in the 1940s, Sweets purchased a home in a small Black enclave near the University of Kentucky at 186 Prall Street. Although those who knew him suggest he would likely not have called himself a drag queen, Sweets was known for his effeminate style, often wearing cosmetics and feminizing his clothing with scarves and jewelry.[89] He took regular evening strolls through downtown, sometimes in full drag. His relationship to the Pleasant Green Baptist Church must have been complex, but he was a longtime active member there and left a major portion of his estate to it.[90]

James Herndon, aka Sweet Evening Breeze, likely in his home, circa 1950s. Photo courtesy of Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

Sweets's life could not have been easy, and he was reportedly ridiculed by some in his hometown over the years. Yet, despite being a gender-bending Black man in Jim Crow-era Lexington, Sweets was surprisingly well-tolerated and became a sort of local celebrity, crossing racial lines that were difficult for most African Americans of any persuasion to do in those years without a heavy price. He was especially close

[89] This point was made in a feature on Sweets: see https://artbeatlexington.com/2010/05/03/a-look-at-lexingtons-original-drag-queen/. Accessed July 26, 2016.

[90] This relationship relative to the church's history and its site(s) definitely warrants investigation by future heritage researchers.

to the then-all-white University of Kentucky football team, where he played the part of the bride in an annual mock wedding to that year's quarterback. Indeed, in one of the few surviving photographs of Sweets, taken in 1954 or 1955, he is pictured on a couch, wearing a white dress and seated next to a University of Kentucky football player.[91] Sweets's relationship with players on the team was reported by many alumni to be sexual. Head Football Coach Charlie Bradshaw claimed in 1963 he was fired by the University's administration when he tried to end what he termed this "homosexual cabal."[92] In later decades, as the movement for gay equality began in 1969-70, Sweets allegedly became instrumental in helping to overturn Lexington's ordinance (which was common in many places, including Louisville) requiring people to wear a minimum number of articles of clothing reflecting the gender associated with their sex organs or face arrest.[93]

Womanless weddings: Sweets's mock weddings with UK football players were part of a wider cultural practice that was fairly common across parts of Kentucky and the South during the 1920s-40s known as "womanless weddings." These all-male performances typically took place as benefits to raise money for good causes, usually for churches or other mainstream civic organizations. Womanless weddings

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[91] The photo is part of the Faulkner-Morgan Archive in Lexington, donated anonymously by the daughter of the football player portrayed.

[92]The biographical data on Sweet Evening Breeze is from Jones, *Hidden Histories,* pp. 94-96. The story of Bradshaw is from Shannon Ragland, *The Thin Thirty* (Louisville, KY: Set Shot Press, 2007): a postscript to it is that the UK football team racially desegregated only in 1966, two years after Bradshaw's claims. It is important to note that much of the activity described in this paragraph took place in the post-World War Two era, but Sweets's public drag appears to have begun, and to have been tacitly socially accepted, earlier.

[93] The best source for this account on Lexington is Jones, "Hidden Histories," pp. 86-87: that arrest involved a drag performer known as Leigh Angelique, who seems to have been a significant figure in Lexington's LGBTQ heritage, one of many who are not included here due to limits of time, space, and sources.

appeared as such sometime after World War One, and they may have been especially popular in Kentucky because they were "invented" by the Bardstown-based Sympson-Levy Company, which produced and marketed their scripts.[94] Women mostly organized these events, and they seem to have been common folk traditions among both whites and Blacks. Cross-dressing was central to the womanless wedding, and its organizing principle was inversion: male became female, white became Black, adult became child, small became large. In the earlier twentieth century, blackface was often a part of these ceremonies, which often included stock characters such as a jilted sweetheart, a hysterical mother, a crying baby, and a mammy—with the latter played by a white man. It was also common that the smallest available man play the role of groom, with a very large man playing the bride, who often wore an extravagant, even revealing wedding gown.

As reported without comment or critique in the daily newspaper, and including a photo of him in a formal white wedding gown with a veil and a long train, Sweets himself performed as a bride in at least three womanless weddings in Lexington—two in 1936 and one in 1944.[95] All of these events were fundraisers for local churches—including his own Pleasant Green. Interestingly, reporters covering these performances referred to each of them as "rainbow weddings." Although the rainbow flag only became a gay pride symbol much later, in 1978, its usage to

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[94] Quote and much of material in this paragraph are from Jane Harris Woodside, "Womanless weddings" entry in *New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, Vol. 14: Folklore*, ed. Glenn Hinson and William Ferris (general editor Charles Reagan Wilson), (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2009), 379-382. Quote is from 381.

[95] *Lexington Leader,* April 2, 1944, p. 13 was the article that included the photo. The other two articles appeared, respectively, in the *Lexington Herald* on May 11, 1936, p. 8, and September 21, 1936, p. 10. Copies in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

describe Sweets's cross-dressing performance raises questions about older, deeper, more complex origins of the symbol. In any case, if one LGBTQ Kentuckian stands out as an iconic figure in the Commonwealth's twentieth-century LGBTQ heritage, it is probably Sweet Evening Breeze.

Folklorists suggest that the popularity of the womanless wedding (which persisted in some rural Kentucky communities until the turn of the twenty-first century) had to do with its breaking down customary roles and "bringing normally taboo subjects out into the open."[96] Although homophobia, sexism, and racism were part of the appeal of these folk plays, the layers of meaning they held for LGBTQ people is especially complex because they did sanction public cross-dressing and homoeroticism at a time when these behaviors were largely forbidden or in secret.

Henry Faulkner: For a short time in the 1940s, Sweets housed a young white eastern Kentuckian in his Prall Street home—Henry Faulkner. Born in Simpson County in the southern part of the state and growing up in various foster homes, mostly in eastern Clay County—a community to which he kept coming back as a teen and later revisited in story and visual representation— Faulkner went on to find fame as one of Kentucky's well-known visual artists. Once labeled a "decorative pillar of the gay community," he, too, was also widely acknowledged for his open, often flagrant, gayness. In response, Faulkner faced a great deal of hostility, including beatings and numerous arrests, in Lexington and on at least one occasion in Louisville. He often solicited young men to visit his Lexington home at 462 Third Street, and in 1964 the Lexington Police raided his house, discovering a group of

[96] Woodside, "Womanless weddings," 381.

naked young men waiting to have sex with an older woman in one of Faulkner's upstairs bedrooms. Faulkner was charged with keeping a disorderly house. His persecution, however, seemed to decline with the rise of his reputation as an artist, his sexuality often regarded as part of his "colorful" personality. Faulkner's success as an artist mirrored his success in befriending luminaries of the mid-century American queer scene, including James Herlihy, Vincent Price, and Bette Davis. He was especially close to writer Tennessee Williams, who visited him in Lexington.[97]

Henry Faulkner in drag, 1940s (L) and posing with two unknown sailors, circa late 1940s. Photos courtesy of Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

[97] Most of the detail in this paragraph is from Charles House, *The Outrageous Life of Henry Faulkner* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988). The "decorative pillar" comment is from the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, April 19, 2014. Accessed online at www.kentucky.com/entertainment/visual-arts/article44485761.html on April 8, 2016.

World War Two: The 1940s and World War Two in particular had a profound impact on the lives of millions of LGBTQ people in the United States, and of course on thousands in Kentucky. The gender segregation of military service, huge internal migration to cities for wartime employment, and the foregrounding of human rights as an international concern in the face of fascism led LGBTQ people to think about themselves in new ways. The introduction of psychiatric screening as a prerequisite for entry into the military was a new form of invasion that exemplifies the increasing public concern about homosexuality. Although the most ostentatiously gay men (including Henry Faulkner) were turned away, most screening for sexual "normalcy" proved—as historian John D'Emilio has noted—"relatively ineffective" at "weed[ing] out the unfit."[98] Intense single-gender environments for those in the military created new forms of community for gay people. For women, this dynamic was particularly crucial in the formation of lesbian communities associated with the first widespread introduction of women into the military upon the creation of the Women's Army Corps (and corresponding units in other branches of the military). Such spaces proved safer for expressions of lesbian sexuality than many other arenas open to women. Beyond actual enlistment, the war also generated enormous internal migration, especially into cities, for employment in wartime industries, many of which were now open to women—including African-American women—for the first time. A 1950 novel by

[98] Faulkner was "quickly 4-F'ed" due to his appearance as a "wild, blond, mincing faggot," according to correspondence from Thomas Painter to Alfred Kinsey, 28 August 1954, Thomas N. Painter Collection, box 1, series II, C.1., vol. 11 at the Kinsey Institute, Morrison Hall 302, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. Much of the material in this paragraph is drawn from D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, chapters 1 &2. The D'Emilio quote is from p. 24.

Margaret Long, titled *Louisville Saturday,* depicted the romantic experiences of Kentucky women in World War Two, especially as related to wartime centers such as Fort Knox and Bowman Field. The book appears to have been the first novel about Kentucky to hint even mildly at lesbian themes, which it did in the form of characters Gladys and Cora.[99]

However quiet gays and lesbians had to keep their sexual selves while in uniform or at work, the mere fact of belonging, of finding others like themselves, alleviated feelings of shame and isolation while also creating opportunities for friendships, love, sexual exploration, affirmation, and organizing. Relationships forged during and after the war proved crucial in creating and sustaining gay communities. They also established a basis for social activism. Once informal social networks of gay men and lesbians developed, campaigns aimed at securing improved social and political status lay only a short step beyond.[100]

Such networks brought greater community and greater visibility, but they also brought new scrutiny. Although World War Two, in the words of historian John D'Emilio, "created something of a nationwide coming out experience," it also contributed to more widespread identification of homosexuality as a social problem.[101] The U.S. armed forces, for example, classified homosexuality as a mental illness, a view rooted in Western medical practices. The same perspective extended into mainstream culture. Increasingly, it seemed, many Americans viewed

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[99] Margaret Long, *Louisville Saturday* (New York: Random House, 1950).
[100] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, chap. 2. See also Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: A History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Vicki L. Eaklor, *Queer America: A GLBT History of the 20th Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 67-72.
[101] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 24.

gays and lesbians as perverts, deviants, and sick—a social problem demanding treatment, punishment, or both. The visibility that developed during the war years thus represented something of a double-edged sword.[102]

Gay bar culture and new arenas for socializing: The most pronounced effects of World War Two included the development of gay communities in cities nationwide, expanding the subcultures that had already begun to flourish in places like Louisville and Lexington. By the 1920s-30s, bars catering to or tolerant of gay patrons had begun to appear in the largest U.S. cities.[103] Lexington's Mayfair Bar, located at 224 East Main Street, opened in 1939: it appears to have evolved at some point into an early example of the "gay-friendly" bars that would soon pop up in Kentucky's two largest cities. The Mayfair Bar became a notorious bookie joint, but also allowed "all sorts," and "certain types."[104] In the decade of the 1940s, in the wake of wartime ferment, many more gay-friendly or exclusively gay bars began opening across American cities, including Louisville and Lexington. Many often had a dual clientele—heterosexual earlier in the evening, and growing more gay as the night wore on. Because these early gay bars often led to encounters that were necessarily clandestine, many of them were located in hotel lounges. Among the earliest such bars in postwar Kentucky opened in 1947: the Beaux Arts Lounge in Louisville's Henry Clay Hotel at the corner of Third and Chestnut Streets.[105] In Lexington, the Zebra Lounge, located at 121 North Limestone Street, opened a year

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[102] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, *Sexual Communities*, chaps. 1 and 2; Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*; Eaklor, *Queer America*, 67-72.

[103] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics,* 12-13.

[104] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 212-13.

[105] This property is a National Register listing as the Elks Atheletic Club.

later, in 1948, and is remembered as "gay-friendly." The Mayfair Bar was replaced in 1953 by the Southern Cocktail Lounge, which one of its patrons of the 1950s recalled as "cruise-y" and "gay-friendly."[106] Establishments such as these welcomed gay patrons as long as they "behaved themselves," according to one reminiscence, and that experience was likely replicated in other small and medium-sized towns across the Commonwealth.[107]

The gay-friendly Beaux Arts Lounge opened in downtown Louisville in 1947 and was among the first such bars in Kentucky. Images courtesy of the Williams-Nichols Collection, University of Louisville.

By the early 1950s, even as cruising also grew in many of the same parks and public restrooms in which it had begun decades before, gay men in most U.S. cities had little difficulty finding gay bars and thus making contact with other men. Gay bars became fundamental to development of gay communities and increased openness, albeit not in ways that directly challenged social norms. These early gay

[106] Harold Mann, telephone interview with Catherine Fosl, January 29, 2016, recording held by Kentucky LGBTQ Heritage files. For more details, see also Jones, "Hidden Histories," 241.
[107] The quote is from Jones, "Hidden Histories," 241.

bars provided an all-gay environment where patrons could "shed their heterosexual camouflage" and socialize freely on their own. "Mixed bars," (another name for gay-friendly) meaning those that catered to both heterosexual and gay patrons, served similar roles. The visibility of gay bars in turn fostered the growth of gay communities since the growing prevalence of gay and mixed bars served to encourage solidarity and new forms of activity. For many, such establishments meant the difference between lives of loneliness and isolation and feelings of acceptance and belonging.[108]

By the 1960s, gay bars were a fixture in both Lexington and Louisville. Patrons tended to be mostly male and almost exclusively white: women and African American LGBTQ people developed their own socializing spaces for the most part. What had begun as the Mayfair on Lexington's East Main Street changed hands several times and opened in 1963 as the "Gilded Cage." The bar/restaurant was operated by a gay couple from Chicago named John Hill and Estel Wilson. It was among the earliest if not the earliest exclusively gay bar(s) in Kentucky, and in spite of several changes of name and ownership, has persisted ever since as an LGBTQ space. The Gilded Cage soon earned repute as one of movie star Rock Hudson's favorite spots during his frequent visits to Lexington. One police officer remembered an incident when, upon walking inside the bar, he found men dancing with men and women with women. The officer asked one male couple, "Who is the

[108] On the significance of gay bars, see especially Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 171-173; Francis Mondimore, *Natural History of Homosexuality* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press), 235; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 32-33;

man and who is the woman?" One man replied, "This week I'm her."[109] For a time the space literally had a gilded cage suspended on the building's front façade. After 1967 the bar became "the Living Room," and it was in this era that a new owner introduced drag shows, advertising the venue as "the gayest spot in town."[110] Known by several names over the coming years, the bar became The Bar Complex in 1980, and remained as such, still a very popular LGBTQ space, as of 2016.

In Louisville, gay and gay-friendly bars tended to be less enduring throughout the 1950s and sixties. In addition to the Beaux Arts, "a 1950 gay bar guide," according to one source, listed two others: "the Plantation Room in the Kentucky Hotel and Gordon's" at 637 South Fourth Street.[111] The closest analog to Lexington's Bar Complex was The Downtowner, which appears to have been Louisville's first bar dedicated to gay patrons. What became The Downtowner opened in 1954 as a "gay friendly" establishment—Nolan's Cocktail Lounge, then became Sam Meyer's Downtowner (1957) and eventually just The Downtowner (1969). This bar was first located at 320 West Chestnut—at the time, not far from the Beaux Arts and Gordon's, which formed a kind of circuit for gay men making the rounds.[112] At some point in the late 1950s it evolved from "gay-friendly" to

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[109] Tim Scully, Interview with Jonathan Coleman, Lexington, June 22, 2015. Transcript notes in the possession of Coleman.

[110] Jon Coleman, "The Bar Complex Timeline," unpublished document in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files. A matchbook with that ad is part of the Faulkner-Morgan Archive in Lexington.

[111] David Williams, "Gay Men," in *The Encyclopedia of Louisville*, ed. John E. Kleber (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 332. The Louisville City Directory lists Gordon's at 637 South Fourth Street from 1951-1959 and at 635 South Fourth Street from 1962-1966 (there was no city directory found for 1960 and 1961. Gordon's became known as Gordon's Golden Horse and later as simply the Golden Horse.

[112] David Williams, interview with Howard Richard Angel, Spring 2011, transcript in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

predominantly or exclusively gay. By the time younger gays and lesbians began to come out at the end of the 1960s, many knew The Downtowner as the city's premier gay bar.[113]

Gay bars in Kentucky in the 1960s were for the most part racially segregated. Many early gay bars were also predominantly but not exclusively male. They were sometimes frequented by lesbians, many of whom were the "lipstick lesbians" that Jack Kersey has recalled. Yet for the most part, lesbians had their own avenues for finding one another. In many communities across the Commonwealth, they met through women's softball or volleyball leagues that played in places like Louisville's Cherokee Park or Lexington's Woodland Park. Of 1950s Louisville, one lesbian has also recalled a heavily closeted but lively and sizeable subculture of teachers in the public school system who socialized heartily and often among themselves and at private parties, sometimes with gay men.[114] This interviewee emphasized the sociability but also the extreme threat that disclosure could mean: loss of job, livelihood, and reputation. A similar story was told of Harlan and other counties in that area of eastern Kentucky.[115] The earliest known lesbian (or lesbian-friendly) bar in Kentucky was an unassuming spot called "Aunt Nora's," which opened in the late 1950s on the outskirts of Louisville at 4806 Cane Run Road in the Pleasure

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[113] Lynn Pfuhl, interview with Catherine Fosl, Louisville, Sept. 21, 2005. Recording in Fosl's possession.

[114] Anonymous, telephone interview with Catherine Fosl, Dec. 6, 2005, notes in Fosl's possession.

[115] This information was shared by Jonathan Coleman, curator of the Faulkner-Morgan Archive, at the Lexington History Harvest, January 26, 2016, recording in KY LGBTQ Heritage files. Coleman, a native of eastern Kentucky, has conducted numerous oral history interviews in the course of building that archive.

Ridge Park neighborhood.[116] According to lore, the bar had two distinct identities. Its front was a "roughneck" men's bar, while in the back was a small late-night lounge that catered to all women.[117]

Bars were not the only gathering places for queer Kentuckians in the post-World War Two era. In Lexington, the University of Kentucky was particularly important in cultivating a more open LGBTQ community within the city. Some young LGBTQ Kentuckians had long found community on campus. Henry Faulkner claimed to have learned the art of drag in the 1940s from a group of UK queens.[118] Certain campus bathrooms, especially in the Fine Arts Building, acquired a reputation as busy cruising grounds. But the campus was also fraught with danger. An art professor named Dord Fitz was arrested in 1951 when caught in his car with another man. Within a week, Fitz had quietly resigned his teaching post and left the state.[119] That same year, when Harold Mann arrived to UK as a student, he met "no lesbians and only a few gay men," making only a few "closeted friends." Already identifying as gay, Mann found the cruising and bar scenes in the city to offer more

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[116] Although Aunt Nora's did not appear in the Louisville City Directory until 1958 (documenting 1957), a reference in the *Courier-Journal* of Aug. 30, 1949, p. 23, raises questions as to what preceded it there. An ad on p. 25 advertised concord grapes for sale "on Cane Run Road, across from Aunt Nora's Beer Garden."

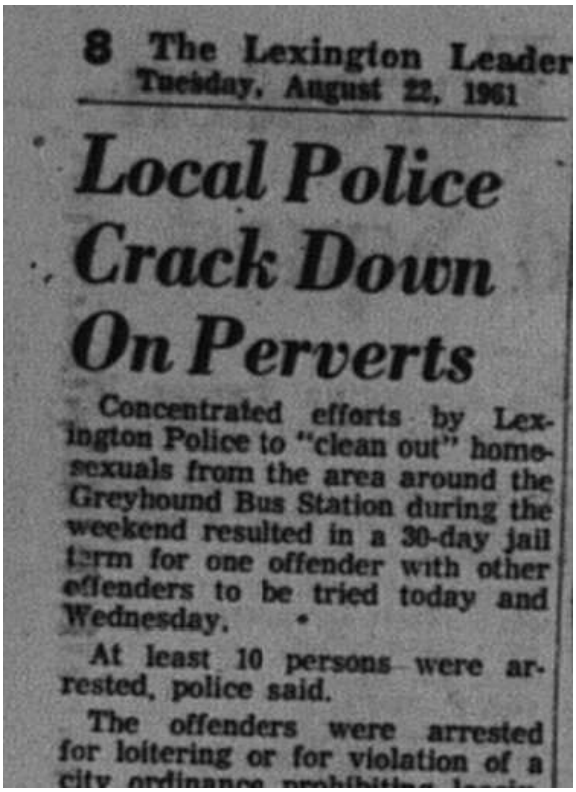
[117]Description taken from David Williams, "A Quick Study of the Beaux Arts Cocktail Lounge, Louisville, Kentucky, 1947-55," in "Bars" Folder, Williams-Nichols Collection. This description has been verified by other interviewees, including Angel 2011 interview with David Williams. In a 1996 interview Williams conducted with Louisville lesbian elder Marge Farley (transcript in Catherine Fosl's possession), Farley suggested that the front of the bar was actually a VFW hall, separated by a curtain. No other sources clarify her recollections. Since the City Directory shows that address occupied by Mill Creek Post 5421, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) as of 1967, there may indeed have been a period of overlap between the VFW hall and Aunt Nora's.

[118] House, 47.

[119] Brewster Fitz telephone interview with Jonathan Coleman, Feb. 13, 2016. Copies of recording held in the Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

outlets for his sexuality, but he also recalls police raids on such places and "knives at my throat" on more than one occasion.[120]

A few years later, in August of 1961, the men's room at Lexington's Greyhound Bus Station (238 East Short Street) became the site of another "police crackdown on perverts," where ten men were arrested for soliciting an undercover policeman. One of those men—Vernon Ishmael, a music teacher at Shackleton's Music Store on Main Street—committed suicide the day after his arrest. Ishmael's brother, an artist named Woodi Ishmael who lived in New York, sued the Lexington Police over his brother's entrapment and suicide. It remains unclear how or if the lawsuit was resolved.[121] These forms of harassment were not uncommon; in fact, they were the norm throughout mid-twentieth century Kentucky and well into the 1980s, and as numerous interviews for this narrative illustrated, most patrons leaving gay bars or gay gathering spots knew to be on the lookout for harassment or entrapment.



8 The Lexington Leader
Tuesday, August 22, 1961

Local Police Crack Down On Perverts

Concentrated efforts by Lexington Police to "clean out" homosexuals from the area around the Greyhound Bus Station during the weekend resulted in a 30-day jail term for one offender with other offenders to be tried today and Wednesday.

At least 10 persons were arrested, police said.

The offenders were arrested for loitering or for violation of a

From Lexington Leader, August 22, 1961. Image courtesy of Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

[120] Mann telephone interview.
[121] "Local Police Crackdown on Perverts," *Lexington Leader*, August 27, 1961, 8.

Postwar Contradictions—the Kinsey Reports and the "Lavender Scare": The greater openness suggested by the spread of gay bar culture, contrasted with the commonplace persecution exemplified in the case of Vernon Ishmael, demonstrate the hugely contradictory forces in American culture in the postwar period regarding gays.

Following closely on the heels of World War Two, probably nothing altered American perceptions of sexuality overall as much as did the publication of Indiana University zoologist-turned-sexologist Alfred Kinsey's path-breaking *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948. We have no statistics of its Kentucky readership, but Kentuckians likely read or read of it widely since the book— despite its 804-page length—became an immediate runaway national bestseller. Kinsey and his team followed with an equally revealing *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1953.

Based on more than 10,000 face-to-face interviews with men and women (all of them white, by the way), Kinsey's reports are significant in LGBTQ history in several ways, providing—as D'Emilio writes—"scientific evidence" on sexual behavior that prompted a "reevaluation of conventional moral attitudes." Kinsey's research included sweeping revelations on the preponderance of underage sexual activity, masturbation, female sexual desire, contraception, abortion, and various forms of recreational sexual activity. Most notably perhaps, half of Kinsey's male respondents and 28 per cent of women interviewed reported erotic responses to their own gender, and many interviewees reported fluid sexual orientations,

contradicting the widespread scientific holding at the time that adults were permanently fixed as either heterosexual or homosexual. [122]

At the same time, by 1950 a Cold War with the Soviet Union over the threat of communism was in full swing, triggering a widespread domestic fear of any kind of dissent or any deviation from what the new medium of television promoted as social norms. A "Red Scare" resulted in the arrests of many suspected of Communism or any form of socialism, but the hysteria did not stop there. There was also a fiercely anti-gay dimension to the Cold War that some historians have called a "Lavender Scare" because of the level of intimidation and harassment it provoked.[123] Jack Kersey, for example, relocated to Louisville in 1954 with his partner Charles Gruenberger, a native of Belleview, Kentucky (just south of Cincinnati) who had attended dentistry school at the University of Louisville. The pair found in Louisville a sense of relief from the intense fear that gripped gays in Kersey's hometown of Washington D.C., where the two had met. "People were scared to death" in those years, Kersey has recalled of Washington's gay community, especially since most were government employees. "If you went to a party, you'd make sure there was a back door you could get out of, just in case. I've never seen people quite so frightened." Because Gruenberger worked for two years in the early fifties as a dentist for the Pentagon, his living arrangements with another (considerably younger) man (Kersey) were investigated and both felt sure he would be fired. But

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[122] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics,* 33-35. Quoted passages are taken from these pages.

[123] David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

the investigation abruptly halted, and the two left for Louisville as soon as Gruenberger's assignment ended. Gruenberger established what became a longstanding dentistry practice in the Highlands at 1328 Bardstown Road, and the two resided in Old Louisville, where Kersey went into real estate and became a leader in shaping what remains Louisville's leading gay-friendly neighborhood.[124]

Prelude to a movement: It was in this inhospitable context that a new chapter in LGBTQ history opened with the formation of the nation's first organization for "homosexual emancipation," as its historian has described it. In 1951, activists in Los Angeles formed the Mattachine Society, an organization that advocated for the rights of gays and lesbians and challenged the image of them as sick and criminal. Within two years the group had as many as 2,000 members. The name derived from a French Renaissance secret society of unmarried men. The Mattachine Society adopted a decentralized organization, struggled to establish a focus, and although its aims were radical for its time, its activities were modest, such as sponsoring socials, lectures, and discussion groups and, after 1953, publishing its pioneering *ONE* magazine. In 1957, the Mattachine Society moved its national offices to San Francisco. By that time, local chapters had taken root in larger cities such as Boston, Denver, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia.[125]

No known Kentucky chapters existed, but there were members and subscribers in cities such as Louisville.[126] Charles Dewees [*sic*], a Louisville expatriate who became active in the New York City Mattachine Society and was

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[124] Kersey interview with Fosl.

[125] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, *Sexual Communities*, chaps. 4-7; Ealkor, *Queer America*, 96-97.

[126] Jack Kersey, in his 2006 interview with Fosl, spoke of reading Mattachine publications.

Mattachine national president by the early sixties, recalled being introduced to the organization in the mid-fifties by a friend who shared a copy of *ONE* with him while they were students at the University of Louisville.[127] Another Kentuckian associated with Mattachine was Dick Leitsch, a Louisville native born in 1935. Although he spent his early adulthood in Louisville and found it to be a "party city" that was an amenable place to be gay, Leitsch likewise relocated to New York and by the mid-1960s he was president of the New York Mattachine chapter. There he instigated new forms of social activism in 1966 by leading a "sip-in" at several New York bars and restaurants, where he and a few friends, accompanied by a group of reporters, identified themselves as homosexuals and asked to be served. Even New York City was not yet ready for this level of LGBTQ militancy, and the *New York Times* coverage of the group's civil disobedience headlined with "3 Deviates Invite Exclusion by Bars."[128]

In 1955, eight women formed the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in San Francisco, a lesbian counterpart to the Mattachine Society. The name came from Pierre Louys's *Songs of Bilitis*, a collection of erotic poetry published in 1894. From the beginning, the DOB had strong social and political aims. It sponsored lectures and discussions and in 1956 began publishing *The Ladder*, a magazine focused on lesbian concerns. In some cases, the DOB worked cooperatively with the Mattachine

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[127] Dewees interview with D'Emilio, January 24, 1979, from interview notes.

[128] Dick Leitsch, telephone interview with Catherine Fosl, July 11, 2016, recording in KY LGBTQ Heritage files. For more on Leitsch, see James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 28. For more on the sip-in, see http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/21/nyregion/before-the-stonewall-riots-there-was-the-sip-in.html?_r=1. Accessed July 11, 2016.

Society. In other instances, the group charted its own course, committed to bringing respect to lesbians nationwide. Together, the DOB and Mattachine Society took significant strides toward fostering greater awareness of gays and lesbians and giving same-sex relationships a more human, less clinical face. By challenging pervasive harassment and violence and presenting gays and lesbians as loving, caring human beings, both groups took steps toward securing their acceptance.[129]

Despite the accomplishments of these organizations, it is important not to overstate the influence of this early pre-movement phase of gay political activity—which the Mattachine and the DOB described as "homophile" ("loving the same") to emphasize the humanity of gays and lesbians and to contest the imagery of sick and diseased homosexuals. Although these groups initiated what would grow into a social movement, neither the Mattachine nor the DOB stirred popular consciousness in ways that fundamentally reshaped other Americans' views of gays and lesbians. In general, American society remained intolerant and unaccepting. D'Emilio notes that "silence, invisibility, and isolation" remained dominant themes in gay culture, and that was certainly echoed in every Kentucky interview on this period. Lesbians and gays could have good lives, but only when they kept a very low profile, sexually. During the 1950s, McCarthyism, the conformity of Cold War culture, and tendencies to conflate communism with homosexuality militated against greater tolerance, let alone acceptance.

The 1960s provided inspiration in the form of the civil rights movement and other movements that followed it—along with a corresponding groundswell of

[129] D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, *Sexual Communities*, 101-125.

countercultural activism that promoted more relaxed sexual expression and loosened what one Mattachine Society leader recalled as a "profoundly repressive climate on sex in general and homosexuality in particular."[130] Even so, gays and lesbians remained besieged minorities, possessed of new self-awareness and solidarity but subjected to constant discrimination and harassment and burdened by a loathsome public image. Building a gay equality movement was a daunting task in that context.

Yet although they were not always open about their sexuality or gender expression, LGBTQ Kentuckians participated in the decade's defining social change movements, all of which laid the groundwork for the emergence of a gay movement. In the second half of the 1960s, Kentuckians were among those who both planted seeds for and harvested the "gay liberation!" call that burst forth in street protests outside the Stonewall Inn in New York in June of 1969. The movement they launched would persist in varying forms through the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

V. CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW FROM 1965 TO THE 1990S

By the mid-1960s, a vibrant gay subculture existed in parts of Kentucky, especially in Louisville and Lexington. It remained closeted, however, and to the extent that it was associated with particular spaces, they mostly took the form of an increasing number of gay and gay-friendly bars, along with some single-sex sports gatherings (especially softball) and clandestine meeting spots in public parks, rest

[130] Quote is from Franklin Kameny in Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit,* ix.

areas, and restrooms. Although patrons of gay bars valued and depended on them, one motive of the more political push of LGBTQ life in the second half of the 1960s was to broaden the horizons of acceptance beyond the kind of shadowy lives that these limited gay subcultures—lively though they could be—had offered up to that time.[131]

Lige Clarke: A young eastern Kentuckian named Elijah Hadyn (or "Lige) Clarke holds a prominent place in the Commonwealth's LGBTQ heritage when it comes to igniting the gay liberation movement and advancing explicitly gay journalism. Starting in 1965, Clarke—a graduate of Eastern Kentucky University who left the state to join the U.S. Army—was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the gay liberation movement that burst forth at the tail end of the 1960s with the mass uprisings of June 1969 that followed what might have seemed initially like one more police raid of New York City's Stonewall Inn in June of 1969. The meaning of that emblematic moment known today as "Stonewall" meant little to most Kentuckians when it happened hundreds of miles away, but in the months and years to follow, "gay liberation" would sweep Kentucky as it did the rest of the nation.[132]

Four years before Stonewall, Lige Clarke—who worked at the Pentagon in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff— became part of a small band of Washington D.C. Mattachine Society activists who staged the first openly gay picket in front of the White House on April 17, 1965—at a time when, as one of their peers put it,

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[131] Jeffrey Jones makes this point in "Hidden Histories," pp. 119-20.

[132] Not all Kentucky newspapers were searched, but a full search of the daily Louisville newspapers turned up no coverage until an Associated Press article a few days after the protests, and even then it was in an inside page and ran only in the less widely read afternoon newspaper: *Louisville Times*, 30 June 1969, B6, "N.Y. Crowd Protests Police Treatment of Homosexuals."

"picketing was still *the* extreme expression of dissent."[133] Clarke allegedly hand-lettered nine of the ten picket signs himself, some of which read "Gay is good!"—which in those mid-sixties years became a kind of rallying cry to combat the guilt and shame heaped on gay people by the larger society.[134] Clarke and his partner Jack Nichols—who met and became a couple in 1964—were instrumental in moving the beleaguered and semi-secret Mattachine forward on the east coast. They organized pickets at the State Department, helped to form new chapters, and instigated a regional coalition called ECHO, or the East Coast Homophile Organization. Young and influenced by the more open climate of the 1960s, the pair led a contingent of the Mattachine that broke with its more modest tactics and embraced greater militancy, openly combating the notion that being gay was a sickness.[135]

As the sixties unfolded, Clarke and Nichols—who were young, adventurous, and increasingly open about their sexuality—went on to become icons of the early gay movement and pioneering figures in gay journalism. They first wrote together for Franklin Kameny's *Homosexual Citizen* newspaper in Washington. After they moved to New York City together in 1968, they started a "New York Notes" column for the monthly [*Los Angeles] Advocate*, which was on its way to becoming the nation's leading LGBTQ newspaper. Later that year the pair initiated a regular co-

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[133] Kameny quoted in Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit*, page *x.*

[134] Jack Nichols, "Lige Clarke" profile, in *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context* , ed. Vern L. Bullough (New York: Routledge, 2002), 232.

[135] Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit*, Chapter 3; see also J. Louis Campbell III, *Jack Nichols, Gay Pioneer: Have you Heard My Message?* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2007), esp. pp. 81-92 on their work in countering the idea of homosexuality as an illness.

authored column, also titled "The Homosexual Citizen," in *Screw*, a new, sexually explicit magazine. Theirs was the first such column—signed with simply "Lige and Jack," no surnames—to be published in a non-gay magazine. Clarke's and Nichol's consistent focus, like that of many gay authors of that era, was on combatting negative stereotyping by showing the positive side of being gay.[136]

The following year, their column posed the first post-Stonewall "call to arms" for gay liberation and in fact for human and sexual liberation generally. In their commentary on Stonewall, which Clarke and Nichols characterized as "time to take a stand," their journalistic voices helped, as one historian of gay journalism has written, to "transform a moment into a movement."[137]

The "homosexual revolution," Clarke and Nichols wrote presciently in 1969, "is really a revolution of love."[138] This comment was consistent with what became Clarke's central journalistic message that sexual liberation, important as it was, needed to recognize that gay, or any, sexuality was only one part of what made up a human being. In 1970, the couple started the nation's first gay weekly publication, entitled *GAY*, which, unlike most such ventures, was not affiliated with any one activist organization. *GAY* found immediate commercial success.[139] As the pair gained wider readership and a fan base, they also embarked on a memoir of their

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[136] Roger Streittmater, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber, 1995), especially Chapters 4-5.
[137] *Ibid.* Quote is from p. 116.
[138] Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit*, 29.
[139] Streittmater, 121-23.

turbulent but beloved lives together: the book, titled, *I Have More Fun with You than Anybody,* appeared in 1972.[140]

Despite his writings and the vivid memories friends and family have shared of him, the duality of Lige Clarke's personal history illustrates some of the paradoxes in Kentucky's modern LGBTQ history. Born in 1942 in Cave Branch, a hollow in Knott County just outside the town of Hindman, Lige Clarke had deep roots in eastern Kentucky as the grandson of lawyer-educator George Clarke on his father's side and store owner Elijah Hicks on his mother's.[141] Always known by his family and friends as creative and a "free spirit" who as a child was theatrical, collected dolls, and created "fashions" that included skirts, Clarke was popular growing up in Hindman. The youngest of three and easily recognizable with long, nearly-white blond hair, he spent his early years dividing his time between a little white house on Cave Branch and a residence above his grandfather's (Hicks's) store at "the forks of Troublesome Creek," as his older sister has recalled. Clarke's father was a Merchant Marine in World War Two who, upon returning home when the boy was seven, built a large building on the main street of Hindman, where he operated a general store and moved the family into a downstairs apartment. An aspiring actor who spent summers as a teen at Bard's Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia, Clarke thrived at Knott County High School (now the Kentucky School of Craft, 58 Education Lane, Hindman

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[140] Lige Clarke and Jack Nichols, *I Have More Fun with You than Anybody* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972); the two also later co-authored *Roommates Can't Always Be Lovers: An Intimate Guide to Male-Male Relationships* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974).

[141] A highway marker in the center of Hindman on Highway 80 marks the significance of George Clarke to that community. Lige Clarke's childhood home in town is only a few hundred feet away, also on Highway 550.

41822). He was also a religious youth who was involved with the Ivis Bible Church, now Hindman First Methodist Church.[142]

After college, Clarke seems to have taken his mother's expansive advice to "trust your wings and fly away."[143] While there is no indication that he became politically active prior to teaming up with Nichols (who was an inveterate homophile activist), Clarke traveled extensively both in and out of the military. By the mid-sixties, in addition to writing, he sometimes modeled and taught yoga. Although he never again resided in Kentucky for more than a month at a time—one of which was to recover from hepatitis in 1968— Clarke remained very close to his family, particularly to his only sister, and to his mother prior to her death. Despite his "hippie" attire and long flowing locks by the late sixties, Clarke seems to have felt loved and affirmed in his home community, where he had been since childhood and remained, according to his sister, "everyone's favorite."[144] He returned frequently to Hindman and often wrote and spoke affectionately of it. His memories reflect a warmth and an attachment to the place and people of his upbringing, but also an ambivalence— in part, perhaps, due to the economic decline he witnessed in eastern Kentucky in those years, which fueled his outrage at any injustice.[145]

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[142] Shelbiana Rhein, interview with Catherine Fosl, Hindman, Kentucky, January 13, 2016; also email correspondence from Shelbiana Rhein to Fosl, March 20, 2016, copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[143] Shelbiana Rhein, quoted in Raj Ayyar, "Lige Clark: Body and Soul—An Interview with Shelbiana Rhein and Jack Nichols, *Gay Today.Com*, December 1, 2002: http://www.gaytoday.com/interview/120102in.asp. Accessed April 22, 2016.

[144] Email correspondence from Shelbiana Rhein to Fosl, March 20, 2016.

[145] These impressions are a blend of Clarke's comments in his and Nichol's shared memoir, *I Have More Fun,* supplemented with various reminiscences by others and comments drawn from Clarke's letters quoted or paraphrased in many sources, including the Raj Ayyar interview; Campbell's *Jack Nichols;* Sears's *Rebels, Rubyfruit*; and others.

As Clarke became more drawn to 1960s counterculture and the emerging gay liberation movement, he embraced a more fluid view of human sexuality that may have prompted him to write of his youth that while adults were in church, "we young'uns had automobile orgies outside in the parking lot…both heterosexually and homosexually."[146] Even amid his humor and affection, Clarke at times found his home region stifling and felt it made young people old quickly.[147] Although he and Jack Nichols were increasingly public about their sexuality in New York, Clarke's Kentucky relatives and friends knew nothing of his prominence in gay journalism, only that he wrote columns of some sort.[148] Family members realized that Lige was "different" in more ways than one, and even though they sometimes quizzed him about why he never married, they must have known on some level that he was attracted to men.

Jack Nichols accompanied Clarke to Hindman several times after 1965, yet Clarke did not fully come out to most members of his family. The exception was his sister, Shelbiana, to whom he was extremely close, and who with her young son and daughter had visited their "Uncle Lige" and "Uncle Jack" in their East Village apartment. And even with Shelbi, Clarke waited until the 1970s, long after she had inferred his sexual path, to make it plain. Afterwards, he told her that he would not be surprised if her twelve-year-old son Eric also turned out to be gay, and in fact, Lige's reputed clairvoyance appeared to be validated in that case. As a young adult, Eric Rhein later became among the nation's first visual artists to come out publicly

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[146] Clarke quoted by Ayyar in his "Lige Clark: Body and Soul" interview.
[147] This characterization is drawn from the portrait of Clarke in *Before Stonewall*, 232-34.
[148] Shelbiana Rhein interview with Catherine Fosl.

as being HIV-positive (in 1987). Although Eric Rhein never lived in Hindman, he spent part of most summers there throughout his childhood and claimed his Kentucky background proudly, most especially the mentorship provided by his uncle.[149]

Lige Clarke in Hindman as a boy (L), and in New York (2nd from L) with partner Jack Nichols (3rd from L) and other gay liberationists, circa 1970. Photos courtesy of Shelbiana Rhein.

By the mid-seventies, Lige Clarke was working on a book about men's liberation. It is unclear how his openness with his family of origin, his journalism, his stormy relationship with Nichols, or his involvement with the gay movement would have unfolded had he lived longer. Tragically, however, Lige Clarke died young. On February 11, 1975, a few days before his thirty-third birthday, Clarke was murdered under very mysterious circumstances while traveling near Vera Cruz,

[149] Eric Rhein, interview with Catherine Fosl, Hindman, Kentucky, January 14, 2016, recording in KY LGBTQ Heritage files. See also Eric Rhein, "The Gathering," *AofU Magazine,* December 2014, p. 34 (copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files).

Mexico, with two gay friends.[150] His father and siblings, with the help of Kentucky U.S. Rep. Carl Perkins (also a Hindman native), had Clarke's body flown home to Hindman, and Jack Nichols joined them there at the family's church for the funeral, where he was treated as if he were a family member.[151] Lige Clarke is buried in the Hicks Family Cemetery, which lies on a shaded hillside overlooking Highway 550 just east of the Hindman city limits.

***Jones v. Hallahan*:** While Lige Clarke was chronicling from New York the tidal wave of gay liberation activism that erupted following the Stonewall uprisings, the enormous ripple effect of those events manifested itself more directly in the Commonwealth when Louisville became the site in 1970 of what appears to have been the first lesbian marriage trial in U.S. history.[152] Inspired by the events at Stonewall, about which they had read in the city's alternative newspaper, *Free Press of Louisville*, two women going by the pseudonyms Tracy Knight and Marjorie Jones went to the Jefferson County clerk's office seeking a marriage license on July 6, 1970.[153]

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[150] There are several theories about the murder, which is detailed more fully in Campbell, *Jack Nichols*, 141-44.

[151] Shelbiana Rhein, interview with Fosl.

[152] *Jones v. Hallahan*, 501 S.W. 2d 588 (Ky. Ct. App. 1973). For fuller accounts of Jones v. Hallahan see also Catherine Fosl, "'It Could be Dangerous:' Gay Liberation and Gay Marriage in Louisville, Kentucky, 1970," *Ohio Valley History* 12, 1 (Spring 2012): 45-64; and Michael Boucai, "Glorious Precedents: When Gay Marriage was Radical." *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* – 27,1 (2015).

[153] These were the names used in the marriage license application and the subsequent trial, but they were not the women's legal names—a fact that no newspaper coverage, trial testimony, or even early LGBTQ historiography revealed. Marjorie Jones [pseudonym], interview with Catherine Fosl, Louisville, January 16, 2012 (recording and transcript in Fosl's possession). Note: Earlier sources have sometimes mistaken the date of the women's visit to the clerk's office but the correct date is July 6, 1970: see "2 Louisville Women File for Marriage License," *Louisville Times,* July 7, 1970, B1.

Jones explained years later that while the two were genuinely in love, their motive for seeking marriage was to "get a gay liberation movement going," and it appears Jones's lawyer may have recruited them as a test case.[154] Margo Jones remembered the cultural climate for being gay at that time as "so rough, so hostile… you were afraid to go out sometimes."[155] In that context, it is no wonder the pair were unwilling to use their actual names. Jones, who owned and operated the LAM Reducing Salon (formerly called Margo's Wig Boutique) at 901 East Jefferson Street, identified her work as "sales." Knight—who in actuality worked part-time as a go-go dancer at a heterosexual night club and part-time as a male impersonator at a gay bar—identified herself for the clerk as a "nurse," a field in which she had indeed trained.[156]

When their license was denied, the couple filed suit for the right to marry, and in a turn of events that surprised local experts for years to come, their complaint received a full hearing on November 11, 1970, in Louisville. Commentators and reporters pronounced the case "bizarre," merely a "curiosity," and both the judge and the prosecutor showed obvious revulsion toward an overtly lesbian couple, especially one that violated other social norms as did these women. Yet the couple's two-hour-long hearing became one of a handful of gay marriage campaigns nationally in the early 1970s that went that far, posing what the local

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[154] Jones, interview with Fosl. In that interview, Jones did not indicate clearly the lawyers having initiated the license drive, but legal scholar Boucai has concluded it from interviews with others in the LGLF.

[155] Fosl, "'It Could Be Dangerous,'" esp. 46 and 56.

[156] Boucai, "Glorious Precedents," 30-31.

newspaper pronounced as "one of the most unusual trials in Kentucky history."[157] Same-sex marriage was a minor thrust of the more revolutionary, idealistic, countercultural currents of much of the 1970s gay liberation movement.[158] Yet when Jones and Knight stepped forward to request a license to marry, their bold move called new attention locally to the question of homosexuality.[159]

This case is significant in LGBTQ history for many reasons, not the least of which is as one of many milestones or "firsts" in the long battle for gay and lesbian marriage equality. Yet several other reasons also stand out as regards its importance in Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage. First, while the women could not hope to win their lawsuit in the apocryphal climate they faced in that courtroom at that time, the arguments that came out in the trial proved important in laying out a framework that circulated new and original ideas into the public dialogue in Kentucky. While they initially generated mostly "revulsion and apprehension," these concepts become standard fabric of the gay movement as it developed, both legally and rhetorically.[160] Enduring the humiliation of Judge Landon Schmid— who

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[157] "Two Women Tell Court Why They Would Marry," *Courier-Journal,* 12 November 1970, p. A14. Boucai's "Glorious Precedents" offers a full examination of the first three such legal challenges in the early seventies, including this one.

[158] In that era of women's and gay liberation, the institution of marriage was under fire on many fronts, and many even within the gay movement opposed gay marriage as a valid point of struggle. This point is made in Terence Kissack, "Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York's Gay Liberation Front, 1969-71," *Radical History Review* 62: 104-34 (1995); and in Marc Stein, "Birthplace of the Nation: Imagining Lesbian and Gay Communities in Philadelphia," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Community Histories,* ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Routledge, 1997), esp. 266-75.

[159] Between the license denial and the hearing, Knight and Jones—like many countercultural peers in the gay liberation era— also held an extralegal "gay liberation wedding" of their own with friends at the Living Room bar in Lexington. Jones interview with Fosl; Knight also mentions the ceremony briefly on p. 36 of the *Jones v. Hallahan* trial transcript: copy in Williams-Nichols Collection.

[160] Fosl, "'It Could Be Dangerous,'" 56.

suggested she was a "he-she" and then banished her from the packed courtroom until she exchanged her pantsuit for a dress— Tracy Knight, for example, gave listeners a primer on the benefits of same-sex marriage and the basics of lesbian love and sexuality. Knight put forth arguments for marriage equality that would gather steam in the coming decades as she explained in detail the greater companionship but also the greater economic security marrying would allow the couple, citing savings on tax and insurance. Asked about lesbian sex roles, she replied, "It seems as though what really the public knows about homosexuality has been learned from dirty books. . . . The public is confused. The only real identity that a woman plays in a lesbian role is a woman who loves a woman."[161] She calmly countered the stereotype of lesbians as "man-hating," and offered clarification of then-unfamiliar and sensationalized terms—including at one point defining the difference between "lesbian" and "transvestite" for the judge.[162]

In what they acknowledged was a "case of first impression in Kentucky," the couple's attorneys, David Kaplan and Stuart Lyon, argued that because the Kentucky marriage statute did not stipulate one man and one woman, Knight and Jones should not be prohibited from wedding.[163] But the lawyers also laid out all of the legal bases (especially as regards the rights to privacy, as discussed on pp. 20-21) that would become standard doctrine in gay marriage advocacy as it took shape in the

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[161] *Jones v. Hallahan*, trial transcript, pp. 36-37.
[162] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[163] The Kentucky Constitution was amended so that it did stipulate "one man and one woman" as a result of a state referendum in 2004.

decades to come.[164] Yet unsurprisingly, the judge ruled against the couple in February 1971, declaring that the Kentucky marriage statute had never been intended to allow two members of the same sex to marry. His denial of the plaintiffs' petition railed that "there is no reason why we should condone and abet… what is accepted as perverted lust." In November of 1973, the Kentucky Supreme Court agreed, summarily rejecting the women's appeal.

The *Jones* case also illustrates poignantly the conflict that would arise repeatedly, in Kentucky and beyond, between the quiet that had traditionally surrounded gay sexuality and the new imperative to "come out!" that was, as one scholar has put it, an "essential element. . .differentiating…gay liberation from the earlier homophile movement"— namely an "open declaration of identity and… militance" that no longer emphasized respectability.[165] Outside of a few major metropolitan centers, that clash extracted harsh costs from early gay-liberation pioneers. Jones is a case in point: as a divorced mother of three at the time of the lawsuit, she was laced down by County Attorney Bruce Miller and threatened so menacingly with the loss of her minor child that she sent him to live temporarily out of state.[166] Although she stayed on in Louisville and lived quietly as a lesbian, Jones remained so shaken by the experience that she still would not reveal her real name

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[164] Jones's lawyers quoted the case as such on p. 4 of Court of Appeals of KY, W-232-71, 9 November 1973, Plaintiff appeal brief. This characterization of the arguments is from Constitutional law professor Sam Marcossen, recorded informal conversation with Catherine Fosl, Louisville, January 3, 2012, recording in Fosl's possession.

[165] John Howard, quoted in Boucai, "Glorious Precedents," 10-11.

[166] County attorney J. Bruce Miller quoted in *Louisville Times*, July 10, 1970, A14, "Louisville Gets Its Own 'Gay Liberation Front." Also, Jones interview with Fosl. Also, J.Bruce Miller, interview with Catherine Fosl, Louisville, December 27, 2011. Recordings in Fosl's possession. Note: sodomy charges were not a threat (and the word was barely mentioned in the trial transcript) since sex between two women remained legal in Kentucky until 1974.

in an interview more than 40 years later.[167] The outcry the women's quest to marry caused illustrates the scope of the challenge that the gay equality movement faced.

In Kentucky, that tension between coming out publicly and winning tolerance more obliquely and privately has played out again and again since that sensationalized trial. In the Commonwealth and nationally, Margo Jones and Tracy Knight were gay marriage pioneers, and it would take the larger society around them a long while to catch up.[168]

Gay Liberation in Kentucky: Perhaps the most immediate significance of Jones and Knight's quest to marry was that it became the launchpad for the formation that same summer of what appears to have been the state's first-ever political organization of and for gays. On July 9, 1970, only three days after Jones and Knight filed for a marriage license, they joined a group of thirteen women and two men who gathered in a ground-floor apartment at 420 Belgravia Court in Old Louisville to establish the Louisville Gay Liberation Front (or LGLF). The group's meeting place was the home of its two primary co-founders, Lynn Pfuhl and Mike Randall. Randall was a hairdresser who performed in drag shows at local bars.

Pfuhl, a 25-year-old lesbian and writer who worked as a prostitute, had been politically active since she became at age 16 one of only two whites to join young African American high school students in sit-ins to desegregate Louisville in 1961.[169]

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[167] When she was located and interviewed in 2012, Jones still resided in the home she had owned in the Highlands at the time of the lawsuit. Her residence is in the neighborhood across from Bowman Field, but its exact address is withheld here at her request.
[168] For more details on these ruling and the significance of the case, see Fosl, "'It Could Be Dangerous,'" especially pp. 60-62.
[169] Pfuhl interview with Fosl.

An apartment in this building at 420 Belgravia Court, owned by Jack Kersey and rented by Lynn Pfuhl and Mike Randall, became in July 1970 the first meeting place of the Louisville Gay Liberation Front, which appears to have been the first ever openly gay advocacy group in Kentucky.

The LGLF was one of dozens of local groups with that name that sprang up in response to the formation of New York's Gay Liberation Front in late 1969. Local founders remember this one as "homegrown," a spontaneous initiative that took the GLF name in honor of earlier liberation fronts connected to African Americans, women, and Vietnam.[170] The group was admittedly "leftist-identified," but its first comment to the press suggested its specific mission to legitimize gay sexuality and gay people: "We are human beings. We are a legitimate segment of society and we want the same opportunity for happiness enjoyed by everyone else."[171] Besides dedicating itself to supporting Knight's and Jones's campaign to wed (and showing up *en masse* at their trial that fall), the LGLF set about demystifying gay identity to the local public by sending members to give talks at local schools and other venues willing to host them. Their approach was one that was also used in the Black and women's liberation movements:

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[170] *Ibid.*

[171] The quote is from an article co-founder Lynn Pfuhl authored in *Free Press of Louisville*, a radical weekly newspaper, quoted in Fosl, "'It Could Be Dangerous,'" 50.

"consciousness-raising," which depended on small-group dialogues to discuss issues that had previously been thought personal.

In the fall of 1970, Lynn Pfuhl, who held a Master's degree in English from the University of Louisville, succeeded in getting UofL to offer a "gay studies" class as part of its "Free University," a noncredit evening enrichment program featuring a wide array of topics not available in the university's student curriculum."[172] A young faculty member in Anthropology, Edwin Segal, agreed to act as faculty sponsor for the course.[173] The weekly class was very informal and drew an average of 30 attendees, ranging from professional female impersonators to "a football player [who] came to the first class to see a real, live queer."[174] This class would place the University of Louisville in a controversial position.[175] Even though University President Woodrow Strickler acknowledged that "I'm confident I'll have trouble," he allowed the course to continue as the LGLF sought to improve the local public's state of understanding of gay identity, which was "we know damned little about it."[176] While the creation of a gay studies class brought to the forefront a topic that was widely misunderstood and scorned, it could make only a small start at eliciting wider change in overall community attitudes.

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[172] *Ibid.*, 53.

[173] Edwin Segal interview with Wes Cunningham, Louisville, November 11, 2015. Copies held by KY LGBTQ Heritage files. Note: Segal also testified on the plaintiffs' behalf in the *Jones v. Hallahan* trial that fall.

[174] David McGinty, "Gay Liberation?...U of L worried on possible reaction to class on homosexuality," *The Louisville Times*, October 16, 1970, 1.

[175] *Ibid.*

[176] *Ibid.*

Getting the word out about its activities mainly through leafleting, word-of-mouth, and an occasional newsletter titled "Trash," probably the state's first gay publication, the LGLF also pioneered a call-in phone line for gays, likely Kentucky's first.[177] In what appears to have been the first dedicated non-bar LGBTQ space in Kentucky history, group members also opened a "Gay Lib" House at 1919 Bonnycastle Avenue in the Highlands neighborhood.[178] The house sheltered both men and women, young and old. Predominantly white, it also harbored one Black resident, although he faced racial harassment from a female resident's parents. The LGLF supported other social movement activities of the early seventies by joining their rallies and marches, lettering signs that lent an openly gay and lesbian presence to issues such as welfare rights, women's liberation, and opposition to the Vietnam War.[179]

Ironically, not all gays and lesbians supported the LGLF's efforts, finding it too radical. Some gay bars banned the group from distributing leaflets. The reasoning was, in part, "if people could go anywhere they wanted freely, then perhaps they wouldn't choose to come to gay bars anymore."[180] Even though LGLF members recall The Downtowner—the city's leading gay bar at the time, still located at 320 West Chestnut— as an important gathering spot, staff at the bar also

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[177] Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit,* pp. 59-65.

[178] This privately-owned home still stands today, much as it appeared in the early seventies.

[179] Pfuhl interview.

[180] *Ibid.*; David Williams, Interview with Micky Schickel in preparation for an article in *The Letter*, a GLBT newspaper, August 2001, transcript held in Williams-Nichols Collection.

once hosed them down when the LGLF staged a picket there protesting the ban on cross-dressing by non-performers.[181]

Militant, rowdy, and radical both politically and culturally, the LGLF related most successfully to those who were already in the counterculture or involved in social movements. It soon ran up against local authorities. In late 1971, police raided the "Gay Lib" house and made thirty arrests when they found both minors and marijuana on the premises.[182] Although many of the charges were ultimately dropped or sentences suspended, the raid was the LGLF's "killing blow," as Lynn Pfuhl remembered it. By early 1972, many LGLF members (including Jim Thompson, brother to gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson) departed Louisville for places as far away as California or as near as Lexington, where some then inaugurated a new Gay Liberation Front.[183]

At least two members of the Louisville GLF were instrumental in starting the Lexington GLF (or LxGLF) in 1971-72.[184] Bruce Kraus and Ginny Shelton seem to have moved there in 1971, perhaps with just that project in mind. While only Kraus actually attended the University of Kentucky, they focused their organizing that fall on the UK campus, where they sought to build a "visible and healthier alternative to bar life."[185] The LxGLF attracted a handful of student and community supporters by

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[181] Nelson interview with Williams.

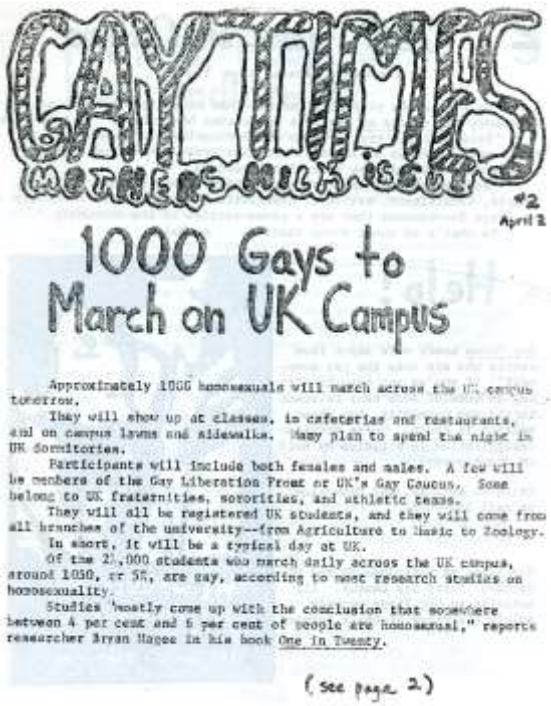
[182] *Advocate*, January 5, 1972, Vol. 76, 13. Copy of the article is located in the Williams-Nichols Collection, Ekstrom Library, Louisville, KY.

[183] Williams interview with Micky Schickel.

[184] James Sears and many interviewees call the group the Lexington Gay Liberation Front, but it was identified in *Courier-Journal* coverage of the group's struggles as the "Gay Liberation Alliance," suggesting the name may have changed by 1972: see "Homosexuals Are Seeking Rights, Recognition at UK," *Courier-Journal,* April 24, 1972, p. A1.

[185] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 121.

offering a class in a Free University program similar to the one at UofL. One of their recruits was Edwin Hackney, a gay civil rights and anti-war activist. Hackney, like Shelton, was an "outside agitator" on campus, as he put it, although he had graduated from UK only a few years previously. Saddened by the marginality of the local gay bar scene (to which he had been introduced by his gay grandfather earlier in the sixties), Hackney was pleased to see gay political organizing arise.[186] The group's initial project seemed harmless: to sponsor a gay dance. But the university administration did not agree, and refused to authorize the LxGLF to operate on the campus. The resulting lawsuit lingered on for several years and ultimately validated the administration's right to refuse such recognition. The very process sapped the young group's energy and it soon faded away, replaced by the Gay Students Coalition, a new organization with some of the same people. The GSC finally held a Valentine's dance in the UK Student Union on February 10, 1975, but doing so still generated considerable controversy.[187]



GAY TIMES

MOTHERS MILK ISSUE

#2
April 2

1000 Gays to March on UK Campus

Approximately 1000 homosexuals will march across the UK campus tomorrow.

They will show up at classes, in cafeterias and restaurants, and on campus lawns and sidewalks. Many plan to spend the night in UK dormitories.

Participants will include both females and males. A few will be members of the Gay Liberation Front or UK's Gay Caucus. Some belong to UK fraternities, sororities, and athletic teams.

They will all be registered UK students, and they will come from all branches of the university--from Agriculture to Music to Zoology.

In short, it will be a typical day at UK.

Of the 23,000 students who march daily across the UK campus, around 1050, or 5%, are gay, according to most research studies on homosexuality.

Studies 'mostly come up with the conclusion that somewhere between 4 per cent and 6 per cent of people are homosexual," reports researcher Bryan Magee in his book One In Twenty.

(see page 2)

The Gay Times, published by University of Kentucky Gay Liberation group, 1972, from the collection of Peter Taylor, courtesy of the Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

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[186] Edwin Hackney, remarks at Lexington History Harvest, January 26, 2016. Recording in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[187] Details in this paragraph come from Jones, "Hidden Histories," 244, and Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit,* 65.

Both GLF groups in Kentucky were short-lived. Their anti-establishment radicalism did not go over well with the majority of Kentuckians, but that liberationist "in your face" approach made visible LGBTQ discrimination for the first time and awakened a movement to end it.

Lesbian Feminism: When the GLF took shape, the women's liberation movement was already raising awareness of sexism, especially among young people of the "Baby Boomer" generation. Although young gay men and lesbians worked together amicably enough in the Louisville GLF, there was a lot of tension between men and women involved in the LxGLF, and that kind of tension was the shape of things to come for gay and lesbian activism in the 1970s, in Kentucky and nationally. The early seventies was an era when social movements were increasingly identity-based. Because people have racial, gender, and sexual identifications, not just any one of them, these dynamics brought increasing racial as well as gender separatism.

As the decade unfolded, more lesbian feminists—finding the gay movement sexist and the women's movement homophobic—began to form their own cultural and political groups. In 1970, a women's collective household on Second Street in Lexington (known as "The Collective") became an early example of lesbian feminists who wanted to organize separately from men as a way of utterly rejecting sexism and, to a lesser extent, heteronormativity.[188] Like much of the LGBTQ movement in Kentucky in these years, these collectives were all or nearly all white. By mid-decade, lesbian feminism was a major strand of both the gay and feminist movements in both Louisville and Lexington. By the later seventies, these currents

[188] Jones, "Hidden Histories, 133.

extended into rural Kentucky, where a group of lesbian feminists established the Spiral Wimmin's Land Co-op in Monticello in Wayne County in the south-central part of the state.[189]

The land co-op, which continued in some form until contemporary times and drew visitors and residents from around and beyond the Commonwealth, manifests one major emphasis of lesbian feminism: the establishment of women-centered, or in many cases women-only, utopian communities. Whether in isolation or within cities, these initiatives usually functioned non-hierarchically and some had a connection to earth-centered spirituality, a form of eco-feminism. Although many lesbian feminists were instrumental in establishing services for women that had not been previously available (like the Rape Crisis Center in Lexington and what became Center for Women and Families in Louisville), not all of their work was political: many were more concerned with creating or lifting up women-centered spaces, cultural practices (especially music and literature), leisure activities, and businesses. Some of these—for example, Louisville's Woman Works, a construction company owned and operated by all women, and located as of 2016 at 980 Schiller Avenue—persisted longer than the currents of lesbian feminism that had given rise to them.

The array of organizations that lesbian feminists started is too numerous to list here, but prominent among them in Louisville was the Louisville Lesbian

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[189] *Ibid.*; the Spiral Wimmin's Land Trust, Inc. (its later name) was still incorporated in Kentucky as of 2016, according to www.kentuckyregistry.com/spiral-wimmins-lad-trust-inc, accessed April 9, 2016.

Feminist Union (1974-78), whose members bought a house in 1976 on Brook Street, offering meeting space, a library, and rooms to rent for local and visiting lesbians.[190] The LFU lasted only through the end of 1978, in part because of internal disputes about how separatist it should be, but through its newsletter and myriad activities, it nurtured a larger and visibly activist community of women who continued to advocate for both lesbian/gay and women's rights.

Cover of Womin Energy, March 1978, a Lexington-based lesbian feminist newsletter. Courtesy Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

Women's Music: In 1976 LFU supporters contributed $100 each to become partners in a women's bar called Mother's Brew. Mother's Brew opened in late 1976 at 204 West Market Street. Praised in a 1977 Gaia's Guide as "an example to other lesbian feminist communities of a bar that embraced the entire community," this inclusive space featured live musical entertainment by women, as well as poetry readings, an early shelter space for battered women, and sponsorship of a local

[190]The precise address on Brook Street has not been located. Some predecessors to the LLFU were the Feminist Cell, the Feminist Lesbians of America, and the Lesbian Task Force of the local National Organization for Women (NOW) chapter, of which LLFU was an offshoot. Much of the material in this paragraph comes from an essay that tells the organizational history of the LFU: Kathie D. Williams, "Louisville's Lesbian Feminist Union,: A Study in Community-Building," in Howard's (ed.) *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South,* 224-40.

women's softball team titled "The Matriarchies," the city's only all-lesbian team.[191] A vital link to the national lesbian feminist movement, Mother's Brew hosted national speakers and performers. Local and regional female musical groups that played often there included the River City Womin and the Reel World String Band. Although it lasted less than three years, Mother's Brew acted as a catalyst for a more enduring women's music scene in Kentucky and regionally. It was one of several lesbian-centered night clubs that opened in Kentucky over the next few years, providing space for women performers. These included (among others) The Country, which opened in 1978 in Lexington (in a strip mall on Lane Allen Road, and later called The Hidden Door) and, a bit later, the Carriage House in Louisville (721 East Market Street).

C-6 Music

Women in limelight in A

Some of the women behind Amber Moon Productions

The Amber Moon Collective in Lexington also contributed significantly to a vibrant lesbian feminist-led women's music and cultural scene in the final quarter of the twentieth century across central and northern Kentucky and beyond.[192]

Clipping from a Lexington newspaper featuring Amber Moon, n.d., circa 1977.

[191] Williams, "Louisville's LFU," 229.

[192] Sydney Smith and various comments, Lexington LGBTQ History Harvest panel, January 26, 2016, recording in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

Started in 1976 as a business to market women's music, Amber Moon was reorganized as a women's performance collective in 1978 when Barbara Dumesnil took it over.[193] Amber Moon persisted until 1987, producing a variety of women-centered musical and cultural events both large and small, and it provided an anchor for expansion of lesbian feminist culture in Lexington and statewide.

The Reel World String Band was another significant cultural institution to emerge from Kentucky's lesbian feminist upsurge of this era. Reel World came together in 1977 after its members had met at Berea College in the early 1970s. The climate on that campus, like many in the 1960s-70s, was full of social protest. Yet students like Sharon Ruble, one of the founding members of Reel World, were acutely aware of a kind of purge that had gone on there earlier in the 1960s, when a faculty member in the Physical Education Department had been fired on the basis of alleged sex with female students, while at least one student had been sent to therapy to "cure" her of same-sex attraction. By 1969, when Ruble arrived there to attend college, Berea had "a strong gay and lesbian community but everybody was very closeted, you had to be," she remembered.[194] She came out as lesbian there in the early seventies, but found little community for quite a long time. A music major, Ruble traveled in 1976 with a friend, Belle Jackson, also a musician, to the first Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, which became a hub nationally for the growth of

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[193] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 131. Amber Moon seems to have had no dedicated space, but operated informally from collective members' homes, according to Sydney Smith, telephone interview with Catherine Fosl, May 3, 2016, notes in Fosl's possessions. As of 2016, Amber Moon Productions was still listed as a corporation in Kentucky, with Barbara Dumesnil listed as director.

[194] Sharon Ruble, telephone interview with Catherine Fosl, March 17, 2016, notes from interview in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

lesbian feminist musical culture. Discovery that there was a women's music movement was an "eye opener" for Ruble, and she and Jackson teamed up with three other friends to perform together at an International Day of the Woman event in Lexington in 1977. Kicking off with a concert produced by Amber Moon at Free Media (located at the corner of Woodland and High Street), the group became Reel World String Band the following year. Reel World was a highly political band that often did benefit concerts and advocated for feminism and gay equality but also for working people, racial justice, and an end to strip mining and war.[195] Performing in bars, concert venues, and on college campuses—most often in the UK Student Union—the group quickly became popular all around the region, especially in central Kentucky (from which many of them hailed), Louisville, the Cincinnati area, and Appalachia.

The Saxe-Powers case: In Lexington, lesbian feminists organized in the mid-1970s along similar lines to those of the LLFU, but their efforts were punctuated by a set of national incidents that had far-reaching consequences for the local lesbian feminist and gay communities and for those active in radical politics generally. In 1974, a young female couple called Lena Paley and May Kelley arrived in Lexington and connected with the fledgling lesbian feminist community there. They moved into a women's collective household and began participating in lesbian feminist groups and activities. Paley worked as a cook at the gay-friendly vegetarian restaurant,

[195] Reel World no longer includes all four original members but the band still performed on occasion as of 2016.

Alfalfa's (557 North Limestone).[196] The pair lived in Lexington for only a few months, but soon after their departure, local acquaintances identified them as Susan Saxe and Katherine Power, who were living under aliases because they were on the run from the FBI for criminal involvement with the radically left Weather Underground. When the FBI discovered that the pair had lived in Lexington, agents harassed the lesbian community for information, threatening to "out" individuals to their families and employers if they refused to talk— and in at least one case, carrying out that threat. Agents infiltrated gay spaces like the Bungalow, a recently opened bar at 121 North Mill Street, where they secretly photographed the patrons.[197] In early 1975, a grand jury convened and issued subpoenas to local lesbians and gays who had known the couple. Five lesbians and one gay man refused to cooperate with the investigation and were arrested and imprisoned in jails across several counties. Five of the six ultimately did testify, but one young Lexington woman, Jill Raymond, a UK senior, remained in prison for fourteen months, the duration of the grand jury, because of her refusal to cooperate. The harassment politicized some gays, lesbians, and feminists connected to the local detainees, who in the language of the times became known as the "Lexington Six." But the incident also frightened many into silence, kept people closeted, split the community over the issue of how much to cooperate with authorities, and "set back

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[196] While it is probably not among the leading LGBTQ historic places in Kentucky, it should be noted that (as Jones points out in "Hidden Histories," p. 211) Alfalfa's, established in 1973, has attracted and employed many LGBTQ people in addition to Paley. In the 1970s-80s, it was a popular queer gathering spot and in 1992, it became the base for the earliest meetings that would lead to the establishment of Lexington Fairness, the organization that led the battle in the 1999 passage of an LGBTQ-non discrimination ordinance.

[197] Some of the detail in this paragraph is drawn from Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit,* Chapter 18.

a growing lesbian political visibility," as one scholar has put it, in Lexington in those years.[198]

Gay religious communities: In addition to currents of feminist spirituality and eco-feminism that many lesbian feminists embraced, others worked with gay men in building various religious communities where their sexuality was no longer shunned or secret, but accepted and celebrated. A primary LGBTQ religious outlet has been the Metropolitan Community Church, a national gay-friendly Christian congregation which was for much of the post-World War Two twentieth century the largest gay organization in the United States.[199] Established in Los Angeles in 1968, a small group of lesbians first tried to form a Louisville MCC congregation in 1972. Initially meeting in private homes, by 1974 the group grew large enough to begin renting space in the city's First Unitarian Church (809 South Fourth Street), which has since that time served consistently as an LGBTQ-friendly space. The brainchild of a gay man, Rev. Troy Perry in Los Angeles, MCC-Louisville grew under a lot of female leadership. Dee Dale, a lesbian originally from Texas, got involved there in 1978 and became its worship coordinator in 1983. Upon receiving her pastoral credentials, Dale became minister in 1986 and served in that capacity until 2011, during which time the congregation moved several times, grew substantially, and

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[198] The quote is from Jones, "Hidden Histories," 117. Saxe was arrested in March of 1975, soon after the testimony of one of those detained in Lexington. Kathy Powers was never captured but turned herself in in 1993. The full story of the Saxe-Powers case and its impact on the Lexington community can be found in Pam E Goldman's "'I Am Kathy Power': Expressions of Radicalism in a Counterculture Community," in *No Middle Ground: Women and Radical Protest*, ed. Kathleen M. Blee (New York: NYU Press, 1999), 19-37. Lexingtonian Jill Raymond, who went on to a career in protecting civil liberties, offers an account of these events and their impact on her life in Bud and Ruth Schultz, *It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in America* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), 289-302.

[199] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 142 and 234.

took root, persisting through this writing.[200] MCC congregations also started later in Lexington, Hopkinsville, Paducah, and Horse Cave (all in 1993), Elizabethtown (1996), and Bowling Green (1997), but none outside Louisville remain extant, to our knowledge.[201]

Many LGBTQ Kentuckians of this era (and beyond) struggled to create a more welcoming environment in a variety of denominations and religious communities. Many of these campaigns took place within churches. One of many such examples is that of Louisville's Central Presbyterian Church, located in the historically gay-friendly Old Louisville neighborhood. In 1983, even before it had any known gay members, that church passed a "More Light" resolution embracing gay attenders. In 1987, soon before Louisville became national Presbyterian Center headquarters, the church ordained an openly gay man, Nick Wilkerson, as a church elder.[202] These religious battles also on occasion entered the legal arena. In 1976, Lexington Theological Seminar refused to grant a theology degree to Otte David Vance on the basis of his being gay, despite the fact that he had fulfilled all of the degree requirements. Lacking legal protections on the basis of his sexuality, Vance filed suit

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[200] The history of MCC-Louisville and its locations likely merits further study that is beyond the scope of this research. After the First Unitarian Church burned in 1985, MCC locations included space in the CommTen Center on Preston Street, a move to 4222 Bank in Portland in 1988, relocation to the former home of Trinity Evangelical Church at 1432 Highland Avenue in 1996 (its longest lasting and most successful locale, at which services drew more than a hundred attenders), and, in 2016, to 5001 Crown Manor Plaza, Suite 206. This information comes from the MCC Church Louisville" folder of the Williams-Nichols Collection. Note: there have been many LGBTQ religious communities and struggles for acceptance within mainstream faith communities beyond those discussed here. Religion is another area in which much more research can fruitfully be done.
[201] *Ibid.;* data on other locations is from Jones, "Hidden Histories," p. 293. According to Jones, after several attempts to start, Lexington MCC began in 1993, initially meeting at the Greenleaf Motel on Nicholasville Road and later locating at first 387 (along with Gay Pride Center) and then 389 Waller Avenue. Some of these dates of establishment for other MCC communities may be approximations.
[202] Neil Miller, *In Search of Gay America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 233-40.

by charging contract violation. He won in trial court, then lost on appeal, yet the suit represented an early showdown between religion and sexuality, the likes of which would mushroom throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.[203]

James Fryer and the Battle against Regarding Gays as Mentally Ill: In Kentucky and nationwide, the forward motion on gay community-building in the 1970s took shape against a backdrop of continued stigma in many walks of life. One such arena was that of medical professionals' diagnosing all gay people as mentally ill. From the earliest days of gay liberation, pioneers like Franklin Kameny and Kentuckian Lige Clarke had begun to challenge that diagnosis. They did so in 1970 and '71 with disruptions at the American Psychiatric Association (APA), with the result that the association established a committee to revisit its policy of designating homosexuality as inherently pathological. The APA of those years also harbored an informal, internal, secretive network of gay psychiatrists who began calling themselves the "GayPA." Such protest climaxed when John Fryer of Winchester, Kentucky, took a bold and decisive action that turned the tide of APA sentiment. Fryer, a 1957 graduate of Transylvania University in Lexington, was a gay psychiatrist who lost a residency and a job early in his career because of his sexual orientation. At the 1972 APA conference in Dallas, Texas, Fryer introduced himself as "H. Anonymous" and donned a wig, a Nixon mask, and voice-distorting equipment

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[203] Ernesto Scorsone, email correspondence to Jonathan Coleman, on behalf of KY LGBTQ Heritage Initiative, November 16, 2016, copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files. See also *Lexington Theological Seminary v. Vance,* 596 S.W.2d 11(KY Ct. of Appeals 1979): accessed on November 27, 2016, at http://www.leagle.com/decision/1979607596SW2d11_1607/LEXINGTON%20THEOLOGICAL%20SEMINARY%20v.%20VANCE.

to deliver a speech in which he poignantly outlined the harm done not only to gay patients but to the profession itself and in particular to gay psychiatrists by the secrecy forced on them by this policy. The head of a task force responsible for updating APA diagnoses was in that audience and in 1973, the APA removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses.[204]

Expansion of gay culture and politics from the 1970s onward: These and other social changes related to gay identity had an impact in Kentucky. Gay artistic expression, for example, became more visible in a variety of ways—as, for example, when Actors' Theatre of Louisville staged *Boys in the Band,* a popular gay play, in 1974. The harsh response to gay liberation activism and conservative reaction to 1960s movements in general muted 1970s gay political action in Kentucky somewhat. In Lexington, for example, the very name of the Gay Services Organization, or GSO, established in 1977 (which in 1986 became the Gay and Lesbian Services Organization, or GLSO), emphasized that its focus was on the provision of social services for gays rather than social advocacy—although in practice it did some of both. What began as the GSO was as of 2016 the oldest, continuous queer group in the city, known by the twenty-first century as Pride Community Services Organization. The GSO opened the Pride Center of the

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[204] On the APA, see Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, x* and 361n3. At the time of his action, Fryer was an untenured assistant professor of psychiatry at Temple University. He went on to become a full professor. By the late 1970s, the former "GayPA" gained official recognition in the APA as the Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists (AGLP), and in 1985 Fryer disclosed that it was he who had spoken as H. Anonymous. Following Fryer's dea th at 65 in 2003, the AGLP endowed an award in his memory. Detail for this account of Fryer was taken from a profile of him in *Transy Treasures* magazine, v. 6, no. 2 (Summer 2013). Available online as of May 15, 2016 at http://outside.transy.edu:2449/about/treasures.htm

Bluegrass in co-operation with the Lexington Congregation of the Metropolitan Community Church (now defunct). The Pride Center, and former MCC meeting, space is located at 387 Waller Avenue.[205] In both Lexington and Louisville, gay activism persisted throughout the seventies, but outside of lesbian feminist activism, it did so—particularly in Louisville—largely "sub-rosa," according to longtime community leader Jack Kersey.[206]

The many new queer spaces and groups that blossomed across both Louisville and Lexington by the mid-1970s and into the 1980s were not exclusively bars. Yet in large part because gay bars were still the only reliably safe LGBTQ community spaces even with the police harassment that surrounded them, bar culture expanded a lot in those years.[207] Bars and discotheques in Covington and Newport (an area known as "Sin City of the South") began appealing directly to a gay clientele.[208] A drag bar named The Regal Queen opened in Louisville in 1972 at 801 East Broadway in Smoketown— the city's oldest African American neighborhood—but to what extent its clientele was racially mixed is not known.[209] Near there, at the

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[205] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 277-279.

[206] Kersey interview with Fosl.

[207] The bars named in this section are not intended as a comprehensive list. Also, although gay bar raids by police were still common at this time in many parts of the United States, this research revealed relatively little evidence of them in Kentucky, and less so by the mid-seventies. More typical was the harassment patrons faced beyond the confines of the bar. Numerous interviewees from both Louisville and Lexington told of entrapment they had experienced upon departing gay bars. Reva Devereaux, for example, spoke of police marking tires of those parked in front of The Downtowner with yellow paint to pull them over later. As an African American cross-dressing performer, Devereaux may well have been a special target due to racialized as well as homophobic violence. Reva Devereaux, in-person conversation with Catherine Fosl, Louisville, Kentucky, March 16, 2016. Notes of conversation are in Fosl's possession.

[208]Covington Folder, Williams-Nichols Collection. *Los Angeles Times,* November 27, 1989, "A Once Rollicking City Cleans Up While Some Disgruntled Bar Owners Say It's a Sin." Accessed online April 25, 2016 at http://articles.latimes.com/1989-11-27/news/mn-100_1_sin-city.

[209] Michael Lindenberger, "The Vanishing Terrain of Gay America," *The New Republic*, June 23, 2015. Accessed online April 19, 2016 at https://newrepublic.com/article/122089/vanishing-terrain-gay-

corner of Finzer and Logan Streets, had been since 1965 a low-key lesbian bar, known ironically perhaps as the Falls City Businessman's Association. The racial composition of that bar's clientele is unknown but it was reborn as the Queen Bee in 1973 and became a popular lesbian gathering spot featuring drag shows that attracted gay men too and probably included at least a few Black as well as white patrons.[210]

Cawthon's, an informal African American gay bar, is said to have operated for many years in Louisville. Photo circa 1998, courtesy of University of Louisville Archives and Special Collections.

The Badlands, located at 116 East Main Street in Louisville, opened on Derby Eve of 1973. It became the city's first modern gay disco, and offered extravagant drag shows that for a short time eclipsed those that had been premiered in the city a few years earlier by The Downtowner. When The Downtowner burned under

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america. According to Lindenberger, the building housing The Regal Queen had formerly housed a bordello. Patrons such as David Williams recall Regal Queen as patronized by all or mostly whites. The only definitively African American gay bar in Louisville that this research identified was Cawthon's, or the Cawthon Inn, situated somewhere on Cawthon Street at the northwest corner of Sixth and Cawthon at the western edge of Old Louisville on a site that as of 2016 was a vacant lot. This bar may have opened considerably later than the 1970s-80s: according to several remembrances, it remained open for more than a decade, yet it could not be placed in city directories and may have operated formally as a different sort of business with a different name, or it may not have operated formally at all.

[210]The date of establishment of the Falls City Businessmen's Association was drawn from the Louisville City Directory of 1965. Additional data on this site taken from N. David Williams, "Gay and Lesbian Bars in Louisville as Mentioned in the Pages of the Louisville Courier-Journal,1947-1983," unpublished 2016 report in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

mysterious circumstances in 1974, it reopened a year later within a block of the Badlands as The New Downtowner (the adjective did not really stick). The Downtowner operated at 105 West Main for the next fourteen years, during which time it became Louisville's most inclusive and popular gay bar, with drag shows, multiple floors, and nooks that attracted women as well as men and Black (though in small numbers) as well as white.[211] When owner George Stinson closed it there in 1989, he reopened at 120 South Floyd Street as The Connection, which remained among Louisville's premier LGBTQ party spots until its closure in August of 2016.

105 W. Main Street in Louisville just after the closing of the Downtowner, 1989. Photo courtesy of University of Louisville Archives and Special Collections.

Bars also began catering to LGBTQ Kentuckians in smaller communities across the Commonwealth. Such locations included, for example, a tiny gay-friendly bar that welcomed both gay men and lesbians and operated for some years in Perry County called the Brown Derby, as well as several that came along in larger towns like Bowling Green, such as Ellis

[211] Pfuhl interview with Fosl; Reva Devereaux, conversation with Fosl, Louisville, notes in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

Place.[212]

Cruising in public parks, rest areas, and particular spots also expanded in those years as more gay men came out publicly. This included longtime urban spots such as the oval in front of the downtown Louisville Free Public Library as well as more rural locales such as Freeman Lake near Elizabethtown, the spillway near the dam in Perry County in eastern Kentucky, and many other similar locations that remain anonymous.[213] Yet police harassment as well as homophobic violence remained common. Gay bars thus were a sort of "bubble," as one patron recalled—though it was necessary to "look left and look right" upon leaving because harassment or entrapment was always a threat beyond the doors.[214] For many LGBTQ Kentuckians, as recalled by Reva Devereaux, a cross-dressing performer who appeared regularly in the late seventies at The Downtowner and often at other clubs in Lexington and around the region, a gay bar provided a kind of "home and family" they could not find in non-gay spaces. Discovering The Downtowner and the stage it gave her for expressing herself in feminine dress after a lifetime of being harassed for being effeminate, Devereaux recalls, "that's the day I felt like I was born."[215]

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[212] Johnny Cummings discussed the Brown Derby bar in his interview with Fosl; Ellis Place was mentioned by Dora James, interview with Catherine Fosl, Bowling Green, December 14, 2015, recording in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[213] The library oval was mentioned in many sources. Freeman Lake was mentioned in Michael DeLeon, interview with Catherine Fosl, Louisville History Harvest, January 31, 2016, recording in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files. Johnny Cummings mentioned the spillway in his interview with Fosl.

[214] David Williams, quoted in Lindeberger, "Vanishing Terrain."

[215] Reva Devereaux conversation with Fosl.

Lexington's gay bar scene blossomed as well, and functioned similarly as a haven. In 1978 Jezebel's, later called Brezing's, opened at 234 East Short Street.[216] The following year, a discotheque called the Circus, 2240 Richmond Road in Idlehour Shopping Center, opened: while it was not exclusively a gay club, its owner, Mark Wilson III, rented the space out on Sunday nights for gay disco parties, and as the 1980s arrived, the club grew increasingly gay until its closure in 1987.[217]

"Tiffany" and Sweet Evening Breeze on stairs of the Living Room Bar, Lexington, circa 1971. Photo courtesy of Faulkner-Morgan Archive.

What had been the Living Room also transformed in 1978 into a two-story, New-York-styled disco named Johnny Angel's, where Grace Jones performed on opening night.[218] That space at 224 East Main Street, beginning with the Gilded Cage, became a central, shared point of queer identity, not only in Lexington but in Kentucky as a whole. Although the establishment has changed its name and ownership several times, 224 East Main Street—enlarged in the 1970s to include 226 East Main Street—has remained a gay bar since the Gilded

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[216] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 217.

[217] In "Hidden Histories," pp. 220, Jones offers more detail on the Circus. The club suffered negative publicity after the 1986 murder of Michael Turpin when it was revealed that his wife Elizabeth and her reported lover, Karen Brown, a performer at the Circus, had been partying there earlier that night. The case was quite a scandal, and the pair were convicted of Turpin's murder.

[218] John Davis, interview with Jonathan Coleman, Lexington, KY., December 8, 2015. Conversation transcripts in the possession of Coleman. Jones, "Hidden Histories," 214, discusses the

Cage opened, making it one of the oldest continuously gay spaces in the nation. In 1968, when it was known as the Living Room, this was the place where Jim Meade and Luke Barlowe met. Forty-seven years later, the couple sued Gov. Steve Brashear as part of the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* lawsuit that legalized same-sex marriage in the United States.[219] The gay liberation wedding of Tracy Knight and Marjorie Jones also took place in the Living Room in 1970, the same year those two became the first lesbian couple to challenge the prohibition against same-sex marriage legally, bringing only the second same-sex marriage lawsuit in the United States.

One of the most significant events in Kentucky's LGBTQ heritage to occur on the site was the 1986 arrest of a twenty-three-year-old nursing student, Jeffery Wasson, a native of Powell County. Having been approached by an undercover officer as part of a sting operation at the well-known outdoor wall beside what was by then known as The Bar Complex, Wasson was the only one of several men arrested for solicitation of sodomy who opted to challenge the law. He did so at great personal cost: the publicity caused him to lose two jobs and suffer ostracism from his family. A team of local trial lawyers who donated their time to represent Wasson included State Rep. Ernesto Scorsone, UK Law Professor Carolyn Bratt, and private practitioners Shirley Wiegand, Pam Goldman, and Dean Bucalos.[220]

The legal strategy for *Wasson* took shape as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against gay-rights advocates to uphold same-sex sodomy statutes at the federal level

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[219] *Lexington Herald-Leader*, April 29, 2015.

[220] Much of the material in this paragraph comes from Ernesto Scorsone, email correspondence to Jonathan Coleman, on behalf of KY LGBTQ Heritage Initiative, November 16, 2016, copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

(*Bowers v. Hardwick*, a Georgia case). As a result. the Wasson team challenged instead the Kentucky Constitution, Section 2 that stated, as Scorsone recalled later, that "absolute power over the lives, liberty, and property of freemen exists nowhere in a republic, not even in the largest majority." The attorneys intentionally planned a homegrown legal strategy, with witnesses who represented many different disciplines and perspectives but all of whom--except for one sociologist from the Kensey Institute in Indiana—called Kentucky home. Wasson won at the trial level, and his lawyers then petitioned for the case to go directly to the Kentucky Supreme Court. Scorsone presented oral arguments there to a packed courtroom amid extra security ordered to contend with a vocal opposition.[221]

The suit took almost seven years from start to finish, but in September 1992, the Kentucky Supreme Court, in *Wasson v. Commonwealth of Kentucky*, struck down the state's consensual sodomy laws, making Kentucky the first state in the country to do so since 1982, when the advent of AIDS silenced any critique of anti-sodomy legislation. The Kentucky case was monumental insofar as it ushered in a new wave of challenges to sodomy laws (including Tennessee, Georgia, and Arkansas). These challenges used much of the legal language and logic of the Wasson case. The most important of them was *Lawrence v. Texas*, which made its way to the United States Supreme Court. In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court found consensual sodomy laws unconstitutional on the same grounds as argued in the Wasson case, namely that

[221] *Ibid.*

consensual sodomy laws violated homosexuals' equal protection under the law and their inherent Constitutional right to privacy.[222]

Anita Bryant and the Anti-Gay Movement: As gay people became more visible throughout the 1970s, the movement against gay discrimination slowly gained steam in Kentucky. A profile of Kelly King, "Miss Gay Kentucky," in the magazine of the *Louisville Times* daily newspaper, followed shortly by the public coming out of realtor and gay activist Jack Kersey in the spring of 1978 on a Louisville WLKY-TV spot called "What's so gay about Louisville?" were two moments that signified greater public tolerance.[223] But the latter part of the decade also saw the birth of a fiercely anti-gay movement led by Anita Bryant, a former beauty queen and Christian singer who became a household name in the 1960s-70s for her TV ads promoting Florida orange juice. Bryant's "Save Our Children" Crusade got its start in 1977 in Miami when she campaigned against a human rights ordinance that would have added "affectional and sexual preference" to its list of protected groups. Soon Bryant was campaigning against gay rights nationally. In late 1978 she came to Louisville to sing (not speak) at the Kentucky Farm Bureau convention, and a group of lesbians organized a rowdy protest of about 50 women and a handful of men who withstood the pouring rain outside the former Executive Inn West near the airport.[224]

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[222] Jones, 72-78.

[223] For details of Kersey's public announcement, see "Spotlight Jack Kersey: Providing Leadership to Louisville's Gay Community," *The Advocate*, December 10, 1985, 36-37 (copy in "Louisville General File," Williams-Nichols Collection. It should also be noted that the Kelly King feature generated a great deal of hostile reader response, which in fact provided the basis for the TV feature to follow.

[224] David Williams, "The Day Anita Bryant Came to Town," *The Letter* (May 1991): p. 6.

Bryant was the popular face of anti-gay crusading, but she was hardly alone. As the seventies wound into the 1980s, more anti-gay activists emerged, including quite a few based in Kentucky and often connected to national conservative organizations that actively opposed gay equality—such as, for example, the Moral Majority and the Family Foundation. Among the most prominent Kentucky anti-gay crusaders was Frank Simon, a Louisville physician and longtime anti-abortion activist who co-headed Moral Majority of Kentucky and the American Family Association. Simon's medical credentials proved useful in his tactics of spreading fear—especially after the advent of AIDS— and he lobbied, organized pickets, circulated literature, and wrote numerous inflammatory anti-gay opinion columns in Louisville and beyond starting in the 1980s and on into the twenty-first century. Simon's literature with its depictions of gay perversion was in fact so graphic that it won him enemies as well as converts. Another leading opponent was Paul Cameron, a psychologist who had taught at the University of Louisville in the early seventies. Cameron, although no longer in Kentucky by the 1980s, became a major national campaigner to help defeat any laws protecting gays, including several returns to Louisville in the 1980s-90s to stir up AIDS hysteria. In his questionable research tactics and particularly in his calls to quarantine or mark with an actual "A" the body of every individual suspected of having the virus, Cameron became so controversial that he was first censured (1982) and then expelled (1983) from the American Psychological Association. Lexington native Kent Ostrander established the Family Foundation of Kentucky in 1989, which became a leading opponent of gay rights as well as of abortion both in Lexington and statewide. These three figures and other

leaders of Religious Right organizations with Kentucky bases or networks increasingly made their influence felt in many local and legislative battles over gay rights in the Commonwealth over the remainder of the twentieth century and beyond.[225]

A movement comes of age in the 1980s: The anti-gay movement mobilized new opposition in an increasingly conservative national political and economic climate that characterized the end of the 1970s. Yet that opposition also functioned as a "kick in the gut," according to one gay activist in Louisville—one that spurred many more LGBTQ people to come out of the closet and to organize against discrimination in an atmosphere that was becoming more polarized.[226] In Lexington, for example, at the very same time Bryant mobilized to overturn gay protection law in Miami, Roger Ware campaigned for mayor as an openly gay man.[227] On October 14, 1979, more than 100,000 people from across the United States participated in the first-ever National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Among them was a group of about 25 Kentuckians, most of them mobilized by the lesbian feminist community in Lexington.[228]

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[225] Information on these men and other anti-gay leaders in Kentucky is available from many sources, but the data on Simon and Cameron is drawn from David Williams, "A Study of Two Tabloids Disseminated b y Freedom's Heritage Forum During the 1993 Primary and General Election Campaigns in Louisville, Kentucky," privately published report, March 7, 1994, pp. 13-36: copy in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files. On Ostander and the Family Foundation, see Jones, "Hidden Histories," 145.

[226] Kersey interview with Fosl. Nationally, Bryant also spurred gay organizing, as evidenced by a boycott of Florida orange juice that caused the Florida Citrus Commission not to renew her contract. More on the conservatism of the 1980s is available from many sources: see especially Sara Diamond, *Not By Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: Guilford, 1998).

[227] "Lexington Mayor: Personality May Dominate," *Courier-Journal,* May 22, 1977, p. 80; see also Scorsone, email correspondence to Coleman, copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[228] This number of Kentucky attenders comes from Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit*, p. 299. An announcement in what appears to be the Lexington-based *Womin Energy* newsletter from 1979

LGBTQ Kentuckians entered the 1980s having secured some modest advancements in quality of life and, in the state's two largest cities, armed with an array of small service and advocacy groups, and having held at least one Gay Pride event (a picnic in Louisville in 1978 that appears to have been purely social). Yet outside of their own bars, ball fields, and private meeting places, true Gay Pride seemed a long way off in Kentucky. Even well into the eighties, police harassment remained common. This kind of entrapment was evidenced by several sweeps in 1984-86 of notoriously gay meeting spots such as rest areas along I-75 in Florence and Covington, Kentucky.[229] In Louisville, twenty-four men were arrested in Cherokee Park in September of 1986 after plainclothes officers posing as gay solicited them for sex.[230] According to Lexington sources, police there often employed attractive male criminal justice students from Eastern Kentucky University to entrap gay bar patrons.[231] Also, private acts of violence were still quite a serious danger—as, for example, the murder of former Covington city commissioner Sandy Cohen, a gay man, in 1986, eight years after the killing of

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(scanned at Lexington History Harvest, January 26, 2016 and in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files) is the basis of the claim here about who were Kentucky's lead organizers. This claim was also suggested in unrelated correspondence by David Williams, who knew of no Louisville recruiting that went on for the trip.

[229] *Louisville Times*, Aug. 15, 1985, "12 arrested on sex charges at rest stops," includes the point that "24 people were arrested on charges of prostitution and homosexual activity at the rest stops in 1984." *Courier-Journal,* Nov. 25, 1986, reports that "13 people are arrested in probe of prostitution at I-75 rest stops," adding that of that number, five men are charged with solicitation to commit sodomy.

[230] *Courier-Journal,* October 4, 1986, "Homosexual activity leads to crackdown, 24 arrests in Cherokee."

[231] Jones, "Hidden Histories," p. 74.

Harvey Milk in San Francisco.[232]

The eighties was a conservative decade in many ways, opening with the rise of Reaganomics and the antigay backlash. Even within LGBTQ communities, there were continuing divisions between men and women, Black and white, so deep they often seemed insurmountable. For much of the decade, a great deal of silence, stigma, and harassment continued to plague LGBTQ Kentuckians. Yet by the end of the 1980s, they had the makings of a large scale social movement intimately connected to its national counterpart. It is no overstatement to say that gay life in Kentucky underwent a profound sea change in the 1980s in terms of both visibility and collective action for change.

The kind of gay advocacy that flowered in the early eighties involved more than just seeking policy changes. In the 1980s, Louisville became home to more than a dozen LGBTQ bars, and the number of bars expanded considerably in Lexington as well, with some opening now elsewhere in the state. Some gay people responded to increasing freedoms and the growth of bar culture, set against the growth of antigay sentiment in the larger society, by immersing themselves in partying and decadence: an example of this was Crossings, a gay club for Lexington's leather, bear, and biker community, along with its basement area where public sex was allowed.[233] Others combined performance and community-building, as in the Imperial Court of Kentucky. Established in 1982 in Lexington, this highly

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[232] *Cincinnati Enquirer,* November 13, 1986, "Prostitute feared he had killed victim, girlfriend testifies." It is not clear from available research if Cohen's murderer was involved with him, or if it was a case of solicitation for sex that reaped a violent response.

[233] Terry Mullins and Bill Chandler, interview with Jonathan Coleman, Lexington, KY., February 14, 2016. Digital recording in the possession of Coleman.

stylized organization consists mainly of hosting drag shows to raise money for LGBTQ causes and is part of an international LGBTQ charity and social support network that dates to 1965 in San Francisco. The Kentucky affiliate, which started after two Lexingtonians encountered the Imperial Court on the west coast, became the first branch to be established east of the Mississippi River.[234]

Lesbian feminists, meanwhile, continued to build wider cultural options for women, especially in Louisville and Lexington. They created new groups such as, for one example, A Woman's Place in Louisville. This group promoted women's poetry, theatre, and advocacy, as well as continuing to advance women's music locally through the formation of new all-female bands such as Yer Girlfriend.[235] Many lesbian feminists also engaged in political activism, much of it aimed at promoting wider options for women, especially in health care and violence prevention.

Ironically, one of the most gay/lesbian friendly workplaces in Louisville at the dawn of the 1980s was the Creative Employment Project, a social services program of the YWCA that was housed at 604 Third Street—the same building that

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[234] Jones, "Hidden Histories," pp. 12-13 and 280-85. The two Lexingtonians who started the Court here are Greg Butler and Marlon Austin: Marlon Austin, interview with Catherine Fosl, Lexington, January 26, 2016, recording in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files. There is some discrepancy in the organization's debut in Lexington: Jones places it in 1982, while Austin recalls it as 1983. The organization's first show, according to Jones, took place at the Circus Disco on April 28, 1982, for the first coronation of a monarch in the formal establishment of what was then called the Imperial Court of the Bluegrass Empire.

[235] Many interviewees in both the Louisville and Lexington history harvests emphasized this feminist cultural flowering, and it was explained in detail by Pam McMichael, interview with Catherine Fosl, Sept. 21, 2005, Prospect, Kentucky. Interview was off the record, but notes from it are in Fosl's possession. A Woman's Place was not an actual place, but met mostly in participants' homes and for a time at First Unitarian Church. Yer Girlfriend performed in many kinds of spaces, among them the Carriage House, a 1980s lesbian bar. Louisville lesbian feminists also connected with like-minded groups statewide, regionally, and nationally, according to McMichael and other interviewees.

had been home decades earlier to the Beaux Arts Lounge, the city's first gay bar.[236]

The Sam Dorr case and GLUE: That supportive workplace was far from indicative of the employment situation facing many LGBTQ Kentuckians. Early in the eighties, an egregious act of discrimination against a prominent gay religious leader became a launchpad for new gay political activity in Louisville. Sam Dorr had worked at the First National Bank for almost twenty years and in 1981 he was a well-respected vice president and branch manager at the Bardstown Road location.[237] Dorr had by that time been living as a gay man for several years and was a founder of a local chapter of Integrity, a pro-gay advocacy group of the Episcopal Church. When Integrity joined forces with Dignity, its Catholic organizational counterpart, the newly merged organization elected Dorr as its president. Aware that the increased notoriety he would gain as spokesperson would "out" him publicly, Dorr opted to take preemptive action by coming out to his boss and informing him of his new community role. Ten days later, on November 20, 1981, Dorr was presented with an ultimatum; either resign from his position with Dignity/Integrity and remain closeted, or resign from the bank. Dorr chose the latter: his supervisors had made clear that their offer to "find him something else" would isolate him from customers. Dorr hired a "bulldog" attorney named Oliver Barber. Since there were no anti-

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[236] Pam McMichael, telephone interview with Catherine Fosl, March 16, 2016. Notes in possession of the KY LGBTQ Heritage files. McMichael worked at Creative Employment Project from 1981-1990 and went on to become a co-founder of GLHRC, the Fairness Campaign, and a regional lesbian organization called Southerners on New Ground (SONG). She also became the first staffer for the Kentucky Fairness Alliance. Another interviewee for the project who worked at creative Employment Projects and spoke of it as a supportive workplace was Barbara Howe, interview with Catherine Fosl, Louisville, January 31, 2016, recording in possession of KY LGBTQ Heritage files.

[237] The location was at 2123 Bardstown Road at the intersection with Douglass Boulevard but that site was occupied by a different bank by 2016 as well as several others in the interim years.

discrimination laws covering sexual orientation, they filed suit on the basis of religious discrimination, arguing that Integrity was an established Episcopal religious organization, as shown in the Church's "red book" that listed all of its organizational arms. When the case finally went to trial in 1983, it took just two days for the court to find in favor of the bank. Dorr won on appeal, but when the case went to district court, the bank settled with him before receiving any further rulings.[238]

Sam Dorr's case brought much wider public attention to the reality of LGBTQ employment discrimination, and it followed another very troubling incident that had occurred months earlier, in March 1981: the destruction by fire of a local gay bar, Harlow's, (the city's first suburban gay bar, located at 4010 Dupont Circle). Those rough realizations triggered action. In early 1982, Dorr—for whom termination also spurred new levels of activism— met with a group of other local lesbian and gay leaders. Together they formed Gays and Lesbians United for Equality (GLUE), "which served as an umbrella organization for all Louisville-area nonprofit groups that were supportive of gay rights."[239] In the wake of the publicity surrounding Dorr's case and amid the formation of GLUE, other new advocacy and support initiatives sprang up that very year, in Louisville and across the state. Student organizations finally won recognition at both UK and U of L in 1982. After

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[238] Most information in this paragraph is from Sam Dorr, oral history interview with Wes Cunningham, Louisville, Kentucky, November 20, 2015. Copies held by KY LGBTQ Heritage files. Some of the specifics that were not mentioned directly in the interview are from David Williams, "Gay Men" entry, *Encyclopedia of Louisville*, ed. John E. Kleber (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 332-333.

[239] Marilyn Mote-Yale, "Lesbians," in *the Encyclopedia of Louisville*, 508.

trying unsuccessfully to negotiate a specifically gay crisis hot line with Louisville social service agencies, Dorr and other longtime leaders started their own, which operated with all-volunteer labor for a time out of Jack Kersey's office in a basement apartment of The Plaza, a building he owned at 1481-83 St. James Court.[240] New local publications such as the lesbian feminist-led *Lavender Letter* and the *Lambda Louisville News* (put out by Lambda Louisville, a gay men's social group) also premiered in 1982, and a GLUE-sponsored gay and lesbian cable television show, "All Together Now," soon followed in mid-1984.[241]

Initially organized to promote cohesiveness among many kinds of smaller LGBTQ groups, GLUE resolutely resisted mounting pressure to get more political as a local anti-gay opposition crystallized and as gay communities around the world faced a major new crisis.[242]

AIDS: Steady pro-gay progress kept pace with heightened opposition in an increasingly politically conservative decade until an epidemic began in the early eighties that both devastated and politicized LGBTQ life. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome—the retroviral disease that came to be known as AIDS—brought widespread illness, terror, and death to gay men even as it triggered a new and hysterical public homophobic reaction both in and far beyond Kentucky once researchers linked it to sexual contact and identified gay men as its primary

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[240] Kersey 2006 interview with Fosl. Kersey identified the hotline's first home as such: "It was an office when we bought the building and so I was grandfathered in before they became on the National Register . . . so I could have an office there as long as . . . I didn't have any signs." Kersey also provided, funded, and frequently answered the initial phone line himself.

[241] Williams, "Gay Men," 332-333.

[242] This point about GLUE was advanced in Williams, "Two Tabloids," 40.

carriers.[243] It is not entirely clear when AIDS came to Kentucky, but by 1982 the first AIDS case seems to have appeared in Louisville, and the following year the first AIDS death was documented in Lexington.[244] By late 1982 or early 1983, as several Louisville interviewees recalled, gay leaders got serious about combatting the disease once calls about it began to come in on the gay crisis line. [245] As in most U.S. communities, good support and medical services for AIDS patients were nonexistent. In fact, AIDS sufferers had a hard time getting treatment at all because of intense ignorance and stigma surrounding the virus. Developing AIDS services thus required a struggle in the face of government inaction and extreme fear from the larger society and even from within the gay men's community itself.

As a result, it was HIV-AIDS, probably more than anything else, that prompted the sea changes in LGBTQ life in the 1980s by politicizing LGBTQ people, especially gay men, since they were contracting the disease in such great numbers.[246] In Kentucky and nationally, assisting those with HIV-AIDS required various kinds of advocacy—combatting popular hysteria and lobbying government

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[243] Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control first wrote of AIDS (initially known as Gay-Related Immunodeficiency, or GRID) in 1981. At that time its origins were uncertain, it was not definitively linked to gay men or to sexual contact, nor was it clear that the disease would become the epidemic that it did. The appearance of HIV-AIDS seems to have begun much earlier, but by the end of 1981, 270 U.S. cases of the illness had been documented among gay men, 121 of whom died of it. This information is drawn from www.avert.org/professionals/history-hiv-aids/overview, accessed May 16, 2016. There is no full history of AIDS in Kentucky, and this is a particularly rich area for further historical research. The topic receives some attention in Jones, "Hidden Histories," and in Michael Lindenberger, "The Vanishing Terrain of Gay America," in *New Republic*, June 23, 2015, accessed online July 9, 2016, at https://newrepublic.com/article/122089/vanishing-terrain-gay-america.

[244] Jones, "Hidden Histories," pinpoints this 1982 date on p. 250, and David Williams identifies the first Kentucky AIDS death as 1983 in "Gay men" entry, *Encyclopedia of Louisville*, p. 333.

[245] Kersey interview with Fosl; David Williams, interview with Catherine Fosl, Louisville, Sept. 19, 2005, copy of recording and transcript in Fosl's possession.

[246] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 141-42. Jones quotes one lesbian as reminiscing that prior to AIDS, gay men "were disco-ing and we were marching."

and the medical establishment, which resisted taking action—as well as the creation of informal networks of social and health care support. Those networks first took shape in Louisville, site of the first confirmed case of AIDS in the state.[247] By 1983 activist Jack Kersey, receiving early calls from AIDS sufferers via the crisis line, traveled to New York City to get information and training from the networks there led by AIDS activist Larry Kramer. Louisville soon adopted New York's "buddy system," and for help Kersey and other gay men turned to local lesbians who had experience with health care advocacy through the women's movement. These "blood sisters," as Kersey called them, provided the first blood for transfusions needed by AIDS patients. Laying the groundwork for the much broader LGBTQ movement that was to come by the end of the 1980s, that cooperation brought gay men and lesbians into far closer alliance in both Louisville and Lexington than had previously been the case—a phenomenon that also took place nationally.[248]

FREE

The Lavender Letter

"Blood Sisters" In Louisville

Gay Men and Lesbians, 55 and Older

"Safe Sex" Workshop

Craftswomyn Wanted

THANK YOU, SUPPORTERS OF THE LAVENDER LETTER!

The AIDS crisis, while devastating, also united gay men with lesbians who had been active in the women's health movement, as this 1985 issue of Louisville's Lavender Letter depicts. Courtesy of the Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research.

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[247] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 233.

[248] Kersey interview with Fosl provided much of the material in this paragraph not otherwise cited. Kersey emphasized the value of lesbians as partners in fighting AIDS, especially initially.

With these new alliances came far broader community-building efforts such as that represented by the establishment in Louisville of the CommTen Center in a building donated by Jack Kersey in 1984 at 1321 S. Preston Street. From the CommTen Center operated such services as the gay crisis line and diverse educational and cultural programs for LGBTQ people, as well as the earliest local gay-initiated meetings with elected officials and those campaigning for office.[249]

Once educated by community leaders, some Louisville officials were supportive on the issue of AIDS, and Mayor Harvey Sloan proclaimed November 1983 "AIDS Memorial and Public Awareness Month" in the city. The first AIDS organization in Kentucky, Community Health Trust, started in Louisville in 1985 under the leadership of a handful of activists spearheaded by Jack Kersey, Stuart Bass, and Downtowner owner George Stinson, who had lost an employee to AIDS early on. Community Health Trust opened with the help of thousands of dollars of funding provided by Lexingtonians in a drive spearheaded by the Imperial Court of Kentucky.[250] As a result, by 1986, many more LGBTQ Kentuckians had become active in the fight against AIDS. That year, Glade House, a residential community for HIV-AIDS sufferers, opened at Sixth and Zane.[251] Jack Kersey donated the building

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[249] The CommTen Center was named from the informal adage that LGBTQ people constitute ten percent of the population. It lasted until sometime in 1988 and during that time experienced both widespread gay support as well as considerable opposition and vandalism. This institution and location may well merit further study since—judging from interviews Catherine Fosl did with Kersey, Williams, and McMichael— it appears to have been a very meaningful space at the time, in part because it played a pivotal role in Louisville's LGBTQ community getting more politically involved as such in the 1980s.

[250] *Ibid*; Jones, "Hidden Histories," 250.

[251] Kersey interview with Fosl: in his interview Kersey recalled it as located at Sixth and Zane. In 2016 Glade House, located at 1022 South Sixth Street, still operated as such as part of House of Ruth.

for that purpose, and the house provided new and vital shelter, treatment, and support services to gay men of all races from across the Commonwealth.

Elsewhere in the state the disease also took a deadly toll as public ignorance and government indifference stymied the sort of public health response that was needed. By 1985, according to the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, twenty AIDS cases had been documented in Kentucky, fifteen of them resulting in death—figures that are likely vastly low since they depended in part on willingness to self-report and ability to get appropriate treatment.[252] That same year, a Lexington activist reported that the queer community there was "disorganized and unprepared" for the magnitude of the crisis.[253] In 1986, the Fayette County Health Department responded by hiring its first HIV/AIDS coordinator, Greg Lee, also a leader of the Imperial Court of Kentucky.[254]

Farther east, tiny Belfrey, Kentucky, experienced fallout in 1987 from an *Oprah* television segment that had been filmed just a couple of miles away, across the West Virginia border in the small town of Williamson, profiling rural Americans' hysteria over the risk of AIDS. The show focused on Mike Sisco, a gay man who had returned to his native Williamson for family support after contracting AIDS in Dallas. Sisco had inflamed local fears by taking a swim at the local public pool, which the mayor promptly closed, despite reassurances from state health officials that Sisco's presence there posed no risk of infecting others. The TV spot reinforced negative stereotypes of Appalachians as backward and reactionary, but in fact AIDS

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[252] The article was cited in Jones, "Hidden Histories," 250.
[253] Steve Abrams quoted in Jones, "Hidden Histories," 251.
[254] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 252.

patients experienced similar reactions all over the United States in those years. That point came to light when Oprah Winfrey returned to the town in 2010 for a retrospective, only to find that most locals were by then far more moderate and informed in their responses, with many regretful about their treatment of Sisco (who had subsequently left his hometown and died in 1994 among family members in California).[255]

During the second half of the 1980s, community organizations sprang up in both Louisville and Lexington to cope with the mounting crisis of AIDS not only for locals but also for others from across Kentucky. A study of its own could easily be devoted to AIDS-related historic places in the Commonwealth. In 1988, for example—the same year that Congress finally banned discrimination against those with AIDS—Lexington's Gay and Lesbian Service Organization, GLSO, established AIDS Volunteers of Lexington, or AVOL, to provide care and information on the illness.[256] Yet by the end of that year, there were 128 confirmed AIDS deaths in Kentucky, three of them teens.[257] LGBTQ Kentuckians had to create their own spaces

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[255] Both the 1987 and the 2010 *Oprah* television segments on Mike Sisco's AIDS experience were accessed as of July 27, 2017, at http://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/AIDS-Comes-to-a-Small-Town.

[256] Jones, "Hidden Histories," 212. Along with other AIDS-related advocacy sites, this organization merits further study with regards to LGBTQ historic places. Initially meeting in the offices of a larger health care provider, Comprehensive Care (through the efforts of Edwin Hackney, a Comprehensive care employee), AVOL soon secured its own space "near Central Baptist Hospital in an office complex." From 1990-96, it was located at 214 W. Maxwell Street, from 1996-2000 at 152 W. Zandale drive, Suite 201, and from 2006 until the time of this writing at 263 North Limestone Street. AVOL was also instrumental in establishing Solomon House in 1989, a residential facility in Lexington for advanced-stage AIDS patients. It too had several locations and encountered both widespread support and opposition: see Jones, "Hidden Histories," p. 240 for more details on the various locations and sponsors of Solomon House. Other Kentucky communities may also have initiated AIDS treatment programs and residential facilities, but no information about others emerged in the data-gathering for this report.

[257] The statistic is from Lindenberger, "Vanishing Terrain."

to address the mounting crisis for both general and specialized clienteles. Ebony Male (E-Male), for example, was one of many such groups. Established in the 1990s by Lexington HIV prevention specialists as a social and educational space for African American men, for five years the group provided programs and financial contributions to both LGBTQ organizations and the Fayette County Health Department AIDS Medication Fund.

With the decline of public hysteria, the institutionalization of services the gay community fought hard to build, the realization that AIDS was not exclusively a "gay disease," and the development of drugs to slow HIV's progress and reduce AIDS deaths, the HIV-AIDS epidemic defined LGBTQ life far less by the end of the twentieth century, both in Kentucky and nationally.[258] But as dire as the illness and its consequences were, especially in the 1980s, those conditions also provided the dramatic spark to create a more united LGBTQ community and thus ignite an LGBTQ mass social movement that moved far beyond AIDS treatment advocacy by demanding extensive political change on the eve of a new century.

Local anti-discrimination laws: As the gay rights movement grew in Kentucky throughout the 1980s and fought the stigma of AIDS, there was increasing momentum for protective legislation in the face of obvious discrimination such as that which Sam Dorr's case had brought to light. By the mid-eighties, politically

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[258] It should be noted that although Louisville's public reaction to AIDS in the 1980s was no more hyperbolic than that of most other U.S. communities like it, a motion in late 1988 by the Louisville-Jefferson County Health Board for the city to ban discrimination against anyone infected with the virus prompted quite a dramatic negative reaction on the part of anti-gay residents when then-Alderwoman Melissa Mershon proposed it. See, for example, Leslie Scanlon, "Banning AIDS-Linked Bias is Devil's Work, Foes Say," *Courier-Journal,* July 25, 1989. The measure eventually passed, however.

active gays in Louisville turned to the need for local anti-discrimination laws, just as several dozen local communities across the nation had done over the preceding decade. The climate they faced is evident from the way the small group there that coalesced around that idea chose its name: debating calling themselves "Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Coalition," they chose that acronym (GLHRC) but settled on a more generic, and less threatening, name: Greater Louisville Human Rights Coalition.[259] GLHRC met mostly in its members' homes and so is not associated with any particular place. Its primary activity was a study of local anti-gay prejudices and discriminatory policies, published in booklet form in 1985 and circulated to local officials and media.[260]

GLHRC leaders focused on joining hands with the city's longstanding civil rights community.[261] On March 13, 1986, the Louisville-Jefferson County Human Relations Commission endorsed by a vote of 15-6 a resolution that urged the city to extend its exil civil rights laws to include sexual orientation.[262] That resounding win came through leadership such as that offered by Commission board member Lyman Johnson, a retired teacher who had long headed the local NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and who had in 1949 desegregated the University of Kentucky. That endorsement would take more than

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[259] David Lott, interview with Catherine Fosl, Louisville, September 25, 2006. Transcript in Fosl's possession.
[260] Greater Louisville Human Rights Coalition, "'And Justice For All': A Call to Affirm Civil Rights for Lesbians and Gay Men" (September 1985), self-published booklet in possession of Catherine Fosl.
[261] From various interviews, it appears these leaders included (among others) David Lott, Dona Meers, Paul Soreff, Laura Haller, Nick Wilkerson, and Pam McMichael (who in the 1990s would become the first statewide lobbyist for LGBTQ equality on behalf of the Kentucky Fairness Alliance).
[262] David Williams 2006 interview with Fosl.

ten years and a much larger cohort of supporters to become law in Louisville-Jefferson County, and shortly thereafter in other communities across the Commonwealth. Yet it carried powerful symbolic value in laying out the framework for LGBTQ organizing in Louisville and across the Commonwealth in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century by forging strong alliances with people active in other social causes—most especially racial justice—locally, statewide, regionally, and nationally.[263]

This far more explicitly political movement shifted the locations of Kentucky's LGBTQ historic places increasingly into municipal chambers and government offices, as well in massive street protests in front of such spaces. The first of these was a "March for Justice," which took place on June 27, 1987. This event constituted the state's first Gay Pride march, organized by local lesbians Pam McMichael and Carla Wallace. The march's calls for justice included rights for LGBTQ people, racial justice, less funding for militarism, and more funding to fight AIDS. Although some wore big hats or sunglasses to avoid being identified in the media, one hundred supporters braved numerous death threats and pleas from local officials to cancel in the name of safety, in order to march down Louisville's Jefferson Street to City Hall. Included in that group were volunteer peacekeepers from the

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[263] That is not an easy affinity when it comes to LGBTQ rights and racial justice. The conflicts that have erupted when gay leaders and causes have tried to "lay claim" to the legacy of the African American freedom movement are familiar to scholars and commentators. Gay rights are civil rights, some insist: no, they are special rights and gay rights-advocates are mis-appropriating the southern civil rights legacy, according to those opposed to linking the two movements. Leading figures from the African American freedom movement can be found on both sides of this debate, which as of 2016 still creates tensions and blocks alliances. For more, see various essays in in *Dangerous Liaisons: Blacks, Gays, and the Struggle for Equality,* ed. Eric Brandt, especially Henry Louis Gates, "Blacklash?" pp. 25-30.

Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression such as Bob Cunningham and Howard Owens, who provided additional security and as African American men, identified as among the movement's early "straight" allies.[264]

The fear and loathing that march exposed in the city convinced Wallace, McMichael, and other LGBTQ leaders of the need to push harder, and they kept meeting, hosting public conversations and annual Marches for Justice, and growing their numbers over the coming few years. Their efforts crystallized on June 29, 1991, when they gathered with others on the steps of the Jefferson County courthouse during the fifth annual March for Justice to announce the launch of a new, more political LGBTQ organization co-led by Carla Wallace and Ken Herndon and known as the Fairness Campaign. The resulting coalition-oriented "Fairness" movement encountered plenty of opposition, yet it spread through Louisville and out across the Commonwealth in the 1990s. Emphasizing a broader vision of social justice than simply "gay rights" and locating LGBTQ people as one part of a much larger group of Kentuckians of various sorts who had historically experienced group discrimination, the Fairness Campaign secured within its first six months the passage of a stronger hate-crime ordinance in Louisville that added sexual orientation to the categories protected by law.

Capping a six-year court battle, the following year saw a major statewide victory for LGBTQ Kentuckians—and one with national significance—when in 1992 the Kentucky Supreme Court overturned state sodomy laws in *Commonwealth of*

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[264] Ethan Smith, "Fifteen Years of Pride," *Leo Weekly*, June 17, 2015, 9-10.

Kentucky v. Jeffrey Wasson, which (as discussed earlier) started a new wave of activism across the nation to end all sodomy laws.

As the Supreme Court deliberated, the momentum surrounding this case also gave rise that same year to the Kentucky Fairness Alliance, which sought to lobby elected officials in Frankfort and establish a statewide presence to advocate for LGBTQ-friendly policies. That group became instrumental in helping to sustain movements across the Commonwealth to guard against new anti-LGBTQ legislation.[265]

On January 12, 1999, supporters gathered in Louisville's City Hall to witness the reintroduction of the Fairness ordinance before the Board of Aldermen. The ordinance passed that night after more than seven years of organizing. FC co-founders Carla Wallace and Pam McMichael are at far right in photo. Courtesy of the Fairness Campaign.

An expanding base of Fairness supporters in Louisville persisted through three major defeats over the next several years before securing a citywide LGBTQ anti-discrimination ordinance in January 1999—one of the first protective laws in the nation to include gender identity as well as sexual orientation. That victory inspired similar citizen momentum in Kentucky for local LGBTQ-equality laws later that same year, first in Lexington-Fayette County (July), Henderson (October 5, although the

[265] According to Chris Hartman (email correspondence to Catherine Fosl, November 4, 2016, copy in KY LGBTQ Heritage files), after more than 20 years in operation, the Kentucky Fairness Alliance merged into the Fairness Campaign in 2013, broadening the campaign's focus outside of Jefferson County to lead in statewide LGBTQ advocacy.

latter was repealed in 2001), then Jefferson County (October 12), as well as the first brief upsurge of movement in Bowling Green for a protective law for LGBTQ people.

The victories of 1999 sustained the movement through several setbacks as a new century dawned, when it would face an increasingly vocal opposition even as LGBTQ Kentuckians willing to speak out became far more numerous. By the early 2000s, Fairness organizations focused increasing attention on the state legislature, which had become a battleground with a 1998 bill that would have prohibited same-gender marriage. A statewide Fairness law was first introduced in 2000 by Rep. Mary Lou Marzian of Louisville and Rep. Kathy Stein of Lexington, the same year that State Senator Ernesto Scorsone of Lexington introduced a successful measure to add sexual orientation protection to Kentucky's Hate Crimes law. In 2003, amid increasing LGBTQ-equality momentum, Scorsone came out publicly, making him the state's first openly gay legislator. Soon thereafter, with increasing pressure from supporters, Gov. Paul Patton signed an executive order that protects state workers from sexual orientation and gender-identity discrimination.

Yet in 2004, Kentucky's LGBTQ residents faced one of their greatest setbacks with the passage of a referendum amending the state Constitution to limit marriage to "one man and one woman"—one of eleven states that year to do so. Although the amendment passed by about three to one, more than 400,000 Kentuckians voted against it and new coalitions were formed in the heated battle against it that expanded the battle for LGBTQ equality significantly over the following few years. . In that process, the Fairness Campaign became an important and enduring voice in Louisville, statewide, and national politics, and was joined by countless local,

statewide, campus, and community groups connected to many kinds of LGBTQ interests. Headed since 2009 by Chris Hartman, the Fairness Campaign was as of 2016 located at its longtime headquarters at 2263 Frankfort Avenue in Louisville, and has continued to expand its statewide reach since the establishment in 2008 of a statewide Fairness Coalition.

By the time of this writing, LGBTQ anti-discrimination (or "Fairness," as it became known statewide) protection was law in six more Kentucky communities (Covington in 2003; Vicco, Frankfort, and Morehead in 2013; Danville, 2014; and Midway, 2015) and the subject of ongoing pressure in several more. Perhaps the most publicized of them was the tiny Appalachian coal community of Vicco, population 334, which became in late 2013 the smallest town in the United States to enact LGBTQ discrimination protection. It did so after several years of Fairness organizing in eastern Kentucky and with the leadership of Vicco's openly gay mayor, Johnny Cummings, who as a result was featured in both the *New York Times* and in a popular comedic TV news show, *The Colbert Report*.

On March 5, 2014, fifty years to the day since the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. led the historic civil rights march on Frankfort—largest demonstration in Kentucky's history—the Statewide Fairness law received its first hearing ever in the Kentucky state House; yet as of the time of this writing, it has still not become law.[266]

[266]Chris Hartman, email correspondence to Fosl, November 4, 2016.

VI. EPILOGUE

The saga of turn-of-the-century LGBTQ Kentucky social changes involved many hundreds, sometimes thousands, of Kentuckians. Those changes are part of a still-unfinished odyssey toward acceptance and equality that richly deserves a fuller treatment than the brief summary provided here, but a full discussion of the past two decades of LGBTQ Kentucky is beyond the scope of this heritage study.

That story is not merely political, but the political currents summarized above both derived from and spurred wider social changes that altered the landscape for LGBTQ Kentuckians by the second decade of the twenty-first century. In a relatively few years' time, the work of the Fairness Campaign and scores of other organizations like it helped to usher in a profound transformation of the legal and social status and marriage rights of LGBTQ people across the United States. For Kentucky and the nation, the extent of these changes is evident in the dramatic shift merely in the eleven years from 2004—the year three-quarters of Kentucky voters amended the state's Constitution to limit marriage to one man and one women—until 2015, the year the U.S. Supreme Court swept aside all of those limitations and legalized gay marriage throughout the United States in its landmark decision, *Obergefell v. Hodges.* Kentuckians were prominent in the national marriage debate in multiple ways: six Kentucky couples were among the *Obergefell* plaintiffs, and a resistant Rowan County clerk named Kim Davis won momentary media fame when she refused to issue marriage licenses to same-gender local couples even after the

U.S. Supreme Court had granted them the right to marry.[267] Extraordinary moments in the interim years included the opening of the first LGBT Center at a Kentucky public university at the University of Louisville in 2007 and the strikingly uncontroversial election of Jim Gray, an openly gay man, as mayor of Lexington in 2010.[268]

This study has constituted only the first step toward a much larger project of recovering an important but previously hidden part of Kentucky's public history. As the pioneering places and people in this report reveal, the Commonwealth of Kentucky has a rich LGBTQ heritage that has played both a cutting-edge and under-examined role in the LGBTQ history of the United States.

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[267] *Ibid.* Davis was sued by several of the couples whose licenses she refused. The Kentucky General Assemby approved in 2016 an amended marriage form that allows users to check a box for "bride," groom," or "spouse," thus ending the marriage license debate in Kentucky and the various lawsuits involving Davis.

[268] In 2016, Gray mounted a spirited yet unsuccessful campaign for Republican Rand Paul's U.S. Senate seat.

Appendix A: Inventory of Properties Significant in Kentucky LGBTQ History

The following sites are associated with events and people discussed in the foregoing historic context. Research conducted for the context sought to determine the current form and condition of these sites in order to identify possible candidates for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and other forms of recognition. The sites listed here are organized geographically and according to National Register status.

Glenview

House associated with Edie Callahan on Melcombe Estate. May be significant for role in life of prominent figure in mid twentieth-century gay and lesbian circles in Louisville. Significance and integrity need further investigation. House was substantially rebuilt after circa 1970 fire; raises important questions about integrity.

Louisville

Properties Worthy of Further Investigation

1919 Bonnycastle Avenue. House used by Gay Liberation Front for meetings. Raided by police in 1971. Research needed to determine integrity. Property likely to qualify for listing under Criterion A for significance in local LGBTQ rights movement.

Falls City Businessman's Association, 730 Logan Street. Several gay bars occupied this building from 1965 into the late 1970s. The first, the Falls City Businessmen's Association opened in 1965 and remained in operation until 1972. The "Queen Bee" followed. Significance undetermined, integrity questionable.

Potential Amendments to Listed Properties

420 Belgravia Court. House where activists formed the Louisville Gay Liberation Front in June 1970. Listed in National Register as contributing resource to Old Louisville Historic District. Nomination should be amended to reflect significance of 420 Belgravia Court in LGBTQ history.

Lexington

Properties Worthy of Further Investigation

186 Prall Street. Residence of cross-dressing male, James Herndon, who was widely known as "Sweet Evening Breeze," prominent in Lexington LGBTQ society and culture. Further research needed to determine significance and integrity.

The Bar Complex, 224-226 East Main Street. Property associated with gay bars and nightlife since late 1930s. Center of gay and lesbian culture in Lexington since mid-twentieth century. Strong candidate for listing in the National Register, integrity good.

Potential Amendments to Listed Properties
Judge Matthew Walton House, 462 West Third Street. Nomination should be amended to justify significance of Lexington artist Henry Faulkner, a gay man.

Thomas January House, 437 West Second Street. Individually listed in National Register. Kimbrel Underwood hosted gay parties at house during the mid-twentieth century. Further research needed to determine significance.

Oldham County

Harmony Landing. Horse farm associated with Henrietta Bingham, the subject of Emily Bingham's *Irrepressible: The Jazz Age Life of Henrietta Bingham* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015). Significance and integrity both require investigation. Property may be significant for associations with a prominent figure in gay and lesbian circles during an era when most LGBTQ people remained closeted.

Appendix B: Statement of Property Types Associated with Kentucky LGBTQ Heritage

The following represent what we have identified as the types of properties most commonly identified in this research as significant places in Kentucky LGBTQ heritage. These represent the types of sites on which future researchers may want to focus their efforts.

- "Opportunity Venues": Sites at which LGBTQ Kentuckians frequently interacted during the era when same-sex relationships were strongly censured and generally considered unacceptable. Examples include bathrooms, public parks, and meeting locations where (in particular) gay men met for comfort, companionship, and sexual activity.

- Bars: "mixed bars" and gay bars that became social and cultural anchors of LGBTQ communities during the mid-twentieth century

- Private homes associated with LGBTQ activity: houses owned by gay people that became sites of frequent gay parties, places in which gays and lesbians held strategy sessions, discussed organizing issues, etc.

- Institutions: institutions associated with LGBTQ community-building activities (MCC meeting spots and Glade House, for example).

- Public Memory sites: Miscellaneous places of significance to leading LGBTQ Kentuckians in the Commonwealth's history: could include graves such as those of Lige Clarke or Craddock and Tardiveau, as well as public places associated with key historic moments, such as the launch of the Fairness Campaign at the Jefferson County Courthouse, for example.