



LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER NATIONAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

## Everyone is Welcome

BY GWYNNETH C. MALIN

Documenting the lives and experiences of the LGBT community.

The LGBT Community Center National History Archive collects and preserves the history of the LGBT community and makes its collections accessible to researchers. Located on the fourth floor of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center, known as The Center, at 208 W. 13 St. in Manhattan, the archives contains nearly 150 manuscript collections including photographs, posters, video and other materials.

The archives traces its origins to 1989 when Richard Burns, then Executive Director of the Center, formed a committee to explore the establishment of an LGBT archives and

museum. The committee identified a need for an archives that documents and preserves the history of the LGBT community and its contributions to public health, the arts, humanities, and culture, both within The Center and the city, as well as nationally and internationally. The archives was founded in 1990, when the New York City LGBT community was responding to the AIDS epidemic. Collections come to the archives from individual donors mainly by word of mouth. The collecting policy includes “anything LGBT,” in terms of subject or creator of the records. Today, the overall size of the holdings is approx-

imately 2,000 cubic feet of material, including the manuscript collection and the Center records. Archives director and founder Rich Wandel oversees the acquisition, arrangement, description, and preservation of the collections.

Manuscript collections include the records of the Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York, Gay Comix, Heritage of Pride, the New York Memorial Quilt, and the Records of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1979. The Michael Callen Papers document the New York City AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, especially the work of the People With

AIDS Coalition, which Callen co-founded in 1985. The Emerald City Tapes are sixty-one videotapes of a community access cable TV show created by three gay men in the 1970s, which addressed political activism and social spaces within the gay community, including rare footage of interiors of gay bars at the time. The records of the Lesbian Switchboard of New York City, Inc., a telephone service that provided peer counseling and referrals to both the general public and the lesbian community from 1972-1997, include handbooks, by-laws, hand-written call logs, and financial records for this organization. The majority of the archives' collections are from the 1960s forward, with some ephemera, journals, and diaries, dating back to the 1940s.

The Frank Hallam Papers document the daily life of one gay man, Franklin T. Hallam Jr. (1925-2012), in remarkable detail. The collection is comprised of Hallam's correspondence, journals, photographs, scrapbooks, slides, and unpublished writings. Most notable are the twelve cubic feet of daily journals beginning in 1935, which describe Hallam's life from his early years in Indianapolis, to his military service during World War II in Japan and the Philippines, to his life in New York City from 1958 to 2012. While the earlier journals avoid referencing homosexuality, a second set of journals called "Gemini" reveal Hallam's gay

social life. His photographs portray the street life of New York City and include such iconic gay social locations as the Piers, Fire Island, the Gay Pride Parade, and Bastille Day celebrations at the legendary French diner, Florent.

Researchers, including academics, filmmakers, and students, discover the holdings through the Center's website, which includes finding aids to the collections. The archives hosts over 100 researchers per year from across North America and Europe. Everyone is welcome. Recently, an eighth grader studying the 1969 Stonewall Riot came to the archive to interview Wandel, a gay rights activist himself, to learn about this famous moment in the struggle for gay rights. The archives often hosts high school and undergraduate classes focused on LGBT history.

Visitors to the archives are greeted by volunteer staff and encouraged to browse the floor-to-ceiling rows of books held by the Pat Parker/Vito Russo Center Library, to view the rotating exhibit in the gallery space, or to learn more about the archival collections. The archives hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons by appointment. The library hours are from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Tuesday to Thursday, and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. The archives website is <https://gaycenter.org/archives>. To make an appointment or to donate materials, contact [archive@gaycenter.org](mailto:archive@gaycenter.org) ■

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Above: Archives collections document, among other things, protests and demonstrations important to the history of the LGBT community, like this 1970 demonstration at Bellevue Hospital in New York City.

Below: Researchers are welcome at the archives by appointment.



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