

January 2020



Looking Backward, Looking Forward: Reflecting on the GLBT Historical Society's Progress in 2019

by Terry Beswick

As we all begin — gulp! — working on our New Year's resolutions for 2020, I'm also pausing for a moment to reflect on all that we at the GLBT Historical Society accomplished during an eventful 2019, and planning for what promises to be an equally exciting year forging ahead in our efforts to preserve and share LGBTQ history.

With popular exhibitions and engaging monthly programs, the GLBT Historical Society Museum remains an international destination and a local gathering place. The year began with an [exhibition](#) celebrating the 20th anniversary of [Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits](#). Two exhibitions in February and May documented the famous [nightlife](#) and [leather/kink subcultures](#) of the SoMa neighborhood.

Over the summer, our board chair Tina Valentin Aguirre curated “[Chosen Familias](#),” a loving exploration of how LGBTQ Latinx people in the Bay Area have redefined notions of family and kinship. Finally, in November the society opened “[Performance, Protest and Politics](#),” which considers the less well-known dimensions of rainbow-flag creator Gilbert Baker’s life and draws on a number of our archival collections.

A Global Presence

Throughout the year, we worked to make our extensive archival holdings more easily discoverable and accessible. Our archives staff overhauled our [catalog search](#) function and unveiled three new, topical research guides to our holdings related to [religion and spirituality](#); [people with disabilities](#); and [transgender, nonbinary, intersex and Two-Spirit people](#). We uploaded several [online collections](#) focusing on the Bay Area’s response to the AIDS crisis, and have made over 4,000 digital images available from four of our most frequently used photographic collections. All told, over 350 researchers used the archives this year, and we accessioned over 50 new collections.

We presented our archival holdings globally, sharing precious artifacts with institutions across the Bay and around the world. In 2019 we lent objects and photographs to the Newseum in Washington, D.C., the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, Germany, and closer to home, to the Oakland Museum of California and the SFO Museum to inaugurate Harvey Milk Terminal 1 at San Francisco International Airport.

The society maintained a significant presence at two landmark queer history conferences that took place during Pride month. First, we cohosted Queer History Conference 2019 in San Francisco, along with the American Historical Association’s Committee on LGBT History. We also presented at the Queering Memory international LGBTQ archives, libraries, museums and special collections conference in Berlin.

Historic Preservation Victories

On the home front, our historic and cultural preservation efforts resulted in several significant victories. In June, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors formally created the [Castro LGBTQ Cultural District](#), the city’s seventh officially designated cultural district and the third that is LGBTQ-related. The same month, the board declared the Paper Doll, a former restaurant and historic LGBTQ gathering place in the North Beach neighborhood, as the city’s first landmark recognizing pre-1965 LGBTQ history.

I’d like to especially acknowledge the loads of love and unflinching support of the incomparable [Juanita MORE!](#) during 2019. In April the society received a unique piece of artwork depicting Miss MORE! painted by anonymous San Francisco artist BiP. She went on to make the society the beneficiary of her legendary annual Pride party in June, hosted our annual gala in October and helped us develop new sponsorships and partnerships, all with her customary style and grace.

We're so grateful to you, our supporters, enthusiasts and members, who have made our continuing growth possible. We are evolving into the institution our community deserves and we expect to make significant progress in the coming year towards our goal of establishing a full-scale LGBTQ Museum and Research Center in San Francisco — the first of its kind in the United States, and only the second in the world.

As we look ahead to our 35th year, stay tuned for several exciting upcoming exhibitions and archival projects, as well as wonderful new collaborations. Thank you for joining us as we look forward to the future!

Terry Beswick is executive director of the GLBT Historical Society.

From the Staff

Investing in the Future of Our History



by Andrew Shaffer

In October, I joined the staff as the new director of development and communications. I get to spend most of my time sharing information about the great work the GLBT Historical Society is doing, and talking to people who are excited to help us grow.

One of the best parts of my job is reading the comments people leave when they send donations, and I pulled a few of my recent favorites to share:

- *"I'm not well-off financially but I wanted to contribute. You teach such important history that needs to survive and flourish in times like today. I'm proud to support such an amazing group of people."*
- *"The older I get, the more important I realize LGBTQ history is! I lived through the AIDS crisis, and have seen much progress for our rights. HISTORY will provide perspective for young people to appreciate all that came before them."*
- *"I continue to support the GLBT Historical Society because we need a permanent and larger home for the museum and to continue to tell our story in all its glory and diversity."*

Every donation is an investment in the future of our history and enables us to preserve and share our vast queer past. I want to thank every single person who has already donated to our Vision 2020 campaign, and to ask all our supporters and fellow queer history enthusiasts to contribute what you can. **Donations made before midnight on December 31 will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$50,000.**

Join us on our journey to build the first full-scale LGBTQ museum and research center in the U.S. by visiting glbthistory.org/donate today!

In the Archives

Into the Briar Patch of the Ephemera Collection



by Gerald Zientara

Have you ever saved a matchbook from a favorite bar? Or the program from the memorial of a beloved friend? Maybe a dance club card with a picture of a sexy guy? If so, then you've been a collector of ephemera, and in saving these materials, you've preserved a bit of our LGBTQ cultural heritage.

"Ephemera" is a fifty-cent word from the Greek *hemeros*, meaning "day"; it crops up in such words as "hemerocallis," the daylily, for instance. In archival lingo, ephemera are materials, usually printed, that advertise, commemorate or otherwise call attention to a location or an event. Ticket stubs, matchbooks, programs, bills, flyers, want ads, posters and other such items are usually discarded soon after their short-term usefulness.

Precious Mementos

For those of us who collect souvenirs, however, these odd bits are precious mementos. Because the LGBTQ community existed underground or in the shadows for so many years, in many cases, the rare ephemera that have survived are among the only records we have of the existence of long-gone queer people, activities, businesses and enterprises. Beyond their intrinsic charm, they are historically valuable.

When I started my stint as a volunteer at the GLBT Historical Society's archives, about two-and-a-half years ago, I was asked if I might like to work with the society's expansive ephemera collection. "Toss me into that briar patch!" I said, since I am a lifelong saver of such bits and bobs. Over the months, I have worked with programs, film posters, buttons, banners, postcards — many inscribed with poignant, loving messages — and a plethora of objects, all reflecting a variety of formats and cultural enterprises. Some are familiar, but many are new to me and are surprising.

Luckily, our archives are a home for this material. You can view some examples in the exhibitions on display at the museum, where you might catch yourself saying, "I have one of those!" We have limited space to display our huge ephemera collection, but it is our hope that when the GLBT Historical Society establishes its new LGBTQ Museum and Research Center, we'll be able to share much more with the public.

Meanwhile, don't throw anything away — we might need it some time down the road.

Gerald Zientara is a volunteer at the archives of the GLBT Historical Society.

Upcoming Events

Workshop

Beyond the Rainbow: Building Queer Symbolologies



Thursday, January 2

7:00–9:00 p.m.

The GLBT Historical Society Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5 | Free for [members](#)

This presentation and workshop explores the symbols that have represented the LGBTQ community before and after Gilbert Baker's iconic, globally adopted rainbow flag.

Participants will learn about the history and evolution of queer symbols, including the flags that have been inspired by and developed since the rainbow flag debuted in 1978. In addition, participants will have an opportunity to invent and design their own flags and symbols using paper, textiles and other materials. This program takes place in conjunction with the exhibition "[Performance, Protest and Politics: The Art of Gilbert Baker](#)," currently on display at the GLBT Historical Society Museum. Tickets are available online [here](#).

Illustrated Talk

Bohemian Rhapsody? Archiving Czech Queer History



Thursday, January 23

7:00–9:00 p.m.

The GLBT Historical Society Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5 | Free for [members](#)

In autumn 2019, the Czech Republic celebrated the 30th anniversary of the 1989 Velvet Revolution, which ended four decades of communist rule in the former Czechoslovakia.

New freedoms have made it easier for LGBTQ people to live their lives more openly in this Central European country, yet they still face significant challenges. Established in 2014, the Society for Queer Memory is the first Czech queer archives and museum. It now holds more than 1,000 objects. Art historian Ladislav Zikmund-Lender will discuss the work of the organization, providing insight into how the history of queer lives and experiences is being documented and presented in the Czech Republic. His talk will compare and contrast the ways that the path to queer emancipation in Central Europe has been

distinct from the United States. Zikmund-Lender is a professor in the Department of Theories and Histories of Art at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Brno University of Technology in Brno, Czech Republic. Tickets are available online [here](#).

Film Screening

Two-Spirit Powwow: A BAAITS Documentary



Thursday, January 30

7:00–9:00 p.m.

The GLBT Historical Society Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5 | Free for [members](#)

Note: Online tickets for this event have sold out; walk-ins will be accommodated as space allows.

Filmmaker Rick Bacigalui and BAAITS board member Miko Thomas (aka Landa Lakes) will present “Two-Spirit Powwow” (2019), a new documentary that follows the evolution of the annual powwow from its modest inaugural event seven years ago to the huge powwows of recent years held at the Cow Palace and Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. [Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits](#), the sponsor of the powwow, is an organization committed to activism and service for Two-Spirit people and their allies in the San Francisco Bay Area. Attending the powwow is a pioneering act of resistance for the many LGBTQ Native American and Two-Spirit people who still face prejudice and stigma in their communities. The film documents how the powwow’s organizers adapt and transform conservative protocol to celebrate queer-positive identities. The film was produced in association with the GLBT Historical Society.

Current Exhibitions

Community Gallery

[Performance, Protest & Politics: The Art of Gilbert Baker](#)

Open through April 5, 2020

[More information](#)

Main Gallery

[Queer Past Becomes Present](#)

Long-term exhibition

[More information](#)



Pride-Parade 2018 by Nalini Elias

Your New Year's Resolution is Here!

Learn a new skill, meet new people and give back as you help preserve queer history at the GLBT Historical Society.

I want to volunteer!

Visit Us

THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

Exhibitions & Programs

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San Francisco, CA 94114

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www.glbthistory.org/museum

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online by [clicking here](#).

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CREDITS. FEATURE: Clockwise from top left: panelists Stuart Gaffney, John Lewis, Kara Korbel Chinula and Ruth Villaseñor at a panel in February; photo by Nalini Elias. “Chosen Familias” exhibition collaborators Fabian Echevarria, Shane Zaldivar, Prado Gomez, Donna Personna, Rigoberto Marquez, Angel Fabian, Natalia Vigil, Olga Talamante, Lito Sandoval and Mason J. Smith; photo by Fabian Echevarria and Bill Jennings. GLBT Historical Society Executive Director Terry Beswick stands with “Two-Spirit Voices” exhibition collaborators Roger Kuhn, Tina Valentin Aguirre and Ruth Villaseñor; photo by Nalini Elias. Executive Director Terry Beswick and San Francisco Mayor London Breed at the society’s gala; photo by Steven Underhill, used with permission, all rights reserved. The Harvey Milk exhibition in Harvey Milk Terminal 1 at San Francisco International Airport; photo by Mark Sawchuk. **FROM THE STAFF:** Photo of Andrew Shaffer by Echo Brown. **IN THE ARCHIVES:** Materials in the ephemera collection of the GLBT Historical Society’s archives; photo by Mark Sawchuk. **UPCOMING EVENTS:** Workshop: A rainbow flag sewn by Gilbert Baker; photo courtesy of the Gilbert Baker Estate. Illustrated Talk: Detail of advertisement for Casino Restaurant in Prague, an LGBTQ gathering place in the 1930s. Film screening: Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits board member Miko Thomas (aka Landa Lakes) at the Eighth Annual Two-Spirit Powwow at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco in 2019; photo by Rick Bacigalupi.

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