

Spring 2020

History Project receives foundation grant

The History Project just received another grant for \$15,000 from the Schlegel-Deibler Charitable Foundation. The grant is helping fund the new traveling exhibit, *With Open Heart and Open Arms: LGBTQ Cuban Refugees and the LGBTQ Community's Response to the Mariel Boatlift*. Some funds will also be used for general and administrative support for the History Project.

The Schlegel-Deibler Charitable Foundation has been very generous to the History Project, providing several grants over the past few years. The family foundation was set up by Richard Schlegel, central PA's first gay activist, to fund LGBTQ organizations and causes.

New traveling history exhibit set to debut

In January 2019, the William Way LGBT Community Center in Philadelphia mounted an exhibit on the LGBTQ Cuban refugees who came to the United States as part of the Mariel Boatlift in 1980. Many of the refugees came to Fort Indiantown Gap, one of just a few processing centers set up to resettle the Cuban immigrants.

This groundbreaking exhibit, *With Open Heart and Open Arms: LGBTQ Cuban Refugees and the LGBTQ Community's Response to the Mariel Boatlift*, is now being adapted to become the next traveling exhibit in a collaborative effort with our History Project through the PA LGBT History Network.



Patsy Lynch, photographer, Cuban refugees at Fort Indiantown Gap, 1980

The exhibit will be similar in format to our current traveling exhibit, *The Long Road to LGBTQ+ Equality in Pennsylvania*, and will debut this year which is the 40th anniversary of the start of the Mariel Boatlift. Plans include showing the exhibit in selected venues in about 8 cities in central and

eastern PA before making it available to other venues throughout the state upon request. Please note that because of the onset of the global pandemic of the COVID-19 corona virus, the displays of this exhibit are delayed. The most current information on the schedule of the dates and venues for the exhibit will be posted to our web page, www.centralpalgbtcenter.org/withopenheart.

Out in Central Pennsylvania

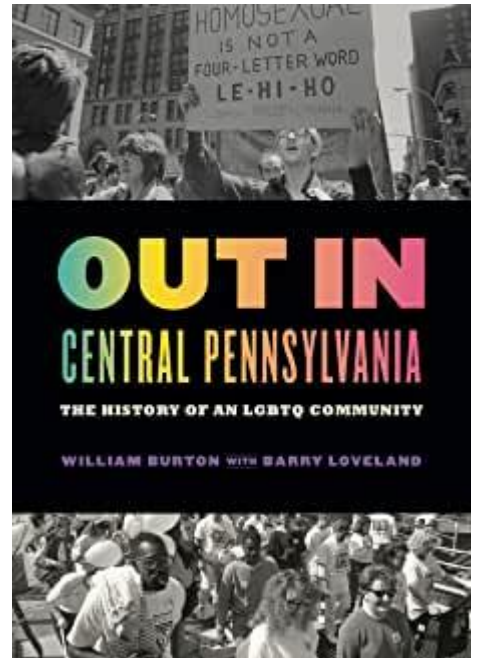
Our book *Out in Central Pennsylvania: The History of an LGBTQ Community*, by William Burton with Barry Loveland is now scheduled for release in June 2020 by Penn State University Press. Pre-orders are now being taken on the web sites of Amazon, Barnes and Noble and Books A Million.

A special book launch event is in the planning stages for the last week in June at the LGBT Center in Harrisburg subject to developments in the COVID-19 corona virus pandemic.

The book includes a Foreword by Dr. Brent D. Glass, former director of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Previous to that position, he served as executive director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Two nationally-known gay authors have written very favorable advance reviews of the book and their endorsement “blurbs” will be featured on the back cover of the book.

The book explores the early years of gay life in central Pennsylvania in the 1950’s and 1960’s with the appearance of the first gay and mixed gay/straight bars. It discusses the development of the first gay and lesbian organizations and first activists and leaders in several small cities in PA, and the beginning of campus organizing at Penn State. It chronicles efforts by Governor Milton Shapp to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity for state employees and in the policies and programs of all state agencies. It is through this effort that many of the early leaders and



Cover design.



First gay rights demonstration held in Harrisburg, protesting anti-gay legislation introduced into the Pennsylvania legislature, 1977; photo by Bari Weaver

activists came together to form the PA Rural Gay Caucus, which led to the first gay lobby days, the first statewide gay conferences and the first gay protest marches in the state outside of Philadelphia. The book covers the local response to the HIV/AIDS crisis, the work for passing local non-discrimination ordinances, the lesbian movement, the rise of Pride celebrations, providing safe space for LGBTQ youth, the transgender movement, election of local LGBTQ politicians, the development of the LGBT Center and many other topics.

The narrative includes Profiles of some of the leaders and heroes of the local movement with

much of the content in their own words based on their oral history interviews. The text is supported by 86 historical photos and other images of historical documents and artifacts.

Digital exhibits now online

Three digital exhibits for the History Project have now been completed and are on our new companion web site at www.centralpalgbthistory.org. This site will host all of our digital exhibit content for the History Project and will be linked to and from our main web site at www.centralpalgbtcenter.org/lgbt-history-project.

The exhibits available so far include *Duty, Honor, Pride: Military Experiences of LGBTQ+ Service Members of Central PA*, *We Believe: LGBTQ+ Religious Experiences in Central PA*, and A digital version of our traveling exhibit, *The Long Road to LGBTQ+ Equality in Pennsylvania*.

Two more exhibits focusing on the local response to the HIV/AIDS crisis, and stories of discrimination, should be on the web site soon. Another digital exhibit on the history of central PA's LGBTQ bars is in development. Some of this is still "under construction" but come back often to see our improvements and additions to these stories.



Duty, Honor, Pride exhibit includes a photo of Sam Edmiston in Navy uniform, from the 1960's; he was discharged for being gay.

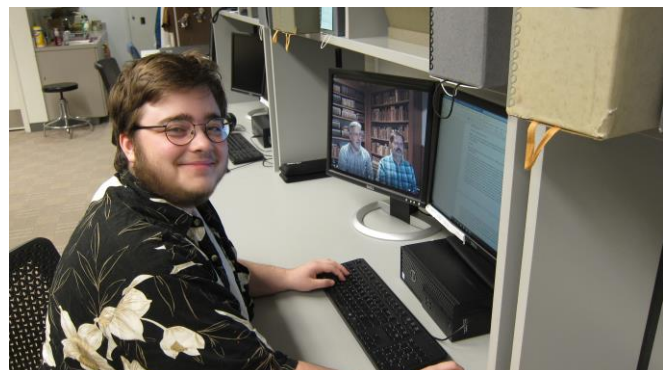
Tour of Harrisburg LGBTQ+ History Sites

A tour guidebook and map of Harrisburg LGBTQ+ History Sites has been developed and a companion phone app is in final stages of development. The guidebook is now available as a downloadable PDF on our web site at <https://centralpalgbtcenter.org/mapping-our-history>. We plan to have printed copies of the guidebook available at various locations around Harrisburg in the future.

The guide includes three tours in different categories of historic sites including Bars, Organizations, and Pioneers & Activism. Nearly 30 sites are included and feature some historical information and in most cases historical photos.

Work study student helps Project

The History Project is being assisted this spring with a work study program student employee of the Dickinson College Archives. James van Kuilenburg is a sophomore with a double major in History and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. He also works for Dickinson's Office of LGBTQ Services and is active with the Queer Student Union. His work has been unfortunately cut short with the closing of the Dickinson College Archives due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



James van Kuilenburg

Progress continues

We continue to make progress on many fronts with the History Project. We currently have oral history interviews completed with 152 individuals (and transcriptions completed for all but four interviews). We have more than 100 linear feet of artifact and archival collections.

Visit our web pages at www.centralpalgbtcenter.org/lgbt-history-project which features links to the full transcripts to our oral history interview collection, descriptive guides to the artifact and archival collection, a Flickr album with nearly 400 photos of artifacts, documents and historical photos in our collection and a Google map showing hundreds of locations of LGBTQ+ historic sites in central Pennsylvania.

Cleaning out your closets, drawers, etc.?

Many of us are stuck at home during the COVID-19 pandemic and starting to do those little projects around the house of cleaning out our closets, drawers, cabinets, basements and attics to get rid of stuff we have accumulated but no longer need or want. We are always looking for historical materials pertaining to **local** LGBT history and many of you probably have such items buried in closets, attics, basements and in drawers you rarely look through. Please take some time to check for any items like organization newsletters, flyers, photographs, videos, newspaper clippings, t-shirts, buttons and other documents and artifacts that you may have that relate to LGBT organizations, events or other aspects of the life of the LGBT community here in central Pennsylvania. We are also always looking for people who would like to be interviewed for our oral history collection. Contact us to donate these materials or sign up for an oral history interview at history@centralpalgbtcenter.org. Thank you!

LGBT Center of Central PA History Project

Founded in 2012, celebrating our 8th anniversary!

Winner of the 2014 J. Franklin Jameson Award from the Society of American Archivists

history@centralpalgbtcenter.org; 717-920-9534

<http://www.centralpalgbtcenter.org/lgbt-history-project>

[facebook.com/LGBTcentralpa](https://www.facebook.com/LGBTcentralpa)

Working in partnership with the Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/lgbt>

