


Fall 2017

LGBTQ+ History in Maine: A Documentary History Reader

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LGBTQ+ History in Maine: A Documentary History Reader

Compiled by Honors 101 Students



Annette Dragon Collection, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity, University of Southern Maine Special Collections

Timeline of the LGBTQ+ Rights Movement in Maine

- 1969** Stonewall Inn riots in NYC- opened floodgates for gay rights movement
- 1973** Wilde-Stein - “Maine’s first formal gay organization”
- 1973** Roland’s Tavern - the first bar in Maine specifically catering for gay customers
- 1974** Maine Gay Task Force and Mainely Gay newsletters
- 1975** Maine’s first human rights bill draft
- 1975** Matlovich Society - meetings in the public library that created community for LGBTQ+ individuals
- 1976** Bicentennial Freedom Train event
- 1979** John Preston’s arrival in Portland
- 1979** group that founded MGTF became defunct
- 1980** Mainely Gay folded
- 1980** Northern Lambda Nord founded
- 1982** the term “heterosexuality” appeared in a medical journal in the U.S.
- 1983** Gay health Action Committee prepared for oncoming AIDs crisis
- 1983** *Our Paper* began publishing-first issue reassured readers that Maine had a much more integrated gay community than other places
- 1984** first AIDS case in Maine
- 1984** Charlie Howard’s Death
- 1985** Telephone hotline created
- 1986** Telephone hotline developed to AIDS project
- 1987** Barb Wood-first openly gay person elected to public office
- 1987** Peter O’Donnell-first gay mayor
- 1987** June 6 first Gay Pride parade
- 1990s** gay people became Maine’s most visible minority
- 1991** John Preston named “local hero” by Maine Sunday Telegram
- 1992** Portland’s gay rights ordinance was upheld in attempt to be overturned
- 1994** John Preston Died
- 1995** Apex ceased publishing
- 1995** Maine Gay Net
- 1995** Maine Won’t Discriminate (MWD) wins referendum opposing anti-gay groups
- 1996** MLGPA opened a state headquarters-acknowledging that Portland was the center of Maine’s gay population
- 1998** Frances Peabody led the Southern Maine Pride Parade
- 1999** Community pride reporter stopped publishing
- 1999** The Matlovich Society and Symposium “folded”
- 2000** “Portland had become one of the most gay-friendly cities in the U.S.”
- 2001** Frances Peabody died

2002 the AIDS Project becomes part of the Frannie Peabody Center

Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat

By
Ashley Towle

Introduction:

Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat was born in Portland, Maine in 1823. As an adult, Mussey Sweat lived in Portland and was a member of Portland's elite social circles. Her husband was a lawyer and served in the Maine House of Representatives. She was active in the Cobweb Club and the Chimney Corner Club, both of which focused on discussing literary and cultural topics of the day. Most importantly, however, Mussey Sweat was an acclaimed journalist, poet, and novelist.

The following excerpt is from Mussey Sweat's most well-known novel, *Ethel's Love-Life: A Novel*, which was published in 1859. Some literary critics consider the novel to be the first American lesbian novel. In the novel, the protagonist writes letters to her fiancé detailing her previous relationships with men, as well as close relationships that she had with two women.¹



Ethel's Love-Life: A Novel:

The inconsistencies of women are generally more subtle than those of men, and affect their actions with a more delicate and intangible power. Women often love each other with as much fervor and excitement as they do men. When this is the case, there is generally rare beauty both in the feeling and in its manifestations, great generosity in its intuitions, and the

¹ "Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat Collection, 1834-1907," *Maine Women Writers Collection*, University of New England, accessed Aug. 22, 2017, <http://www.une.edu/mwwc/research/featured-writers/margaret-jane-mussey-sweat-collection-1834-1907>.

mutual intercourse is marked by charming undulations of feeling and expression. The emotions awakened heave and swell through the whole being as the tides swell the ocean. Freed from all the grosser elements of passion, as it exists between the sexes, it retains its energy, its abandonment, its flush, its eagerness, its palpitation, and its rapture but all so refined, so glorified, and made delicious and continuous by an ever-recurring giving and receiving from each to each. The electricity of the one flashes and gleams through the other, to be returned not only in *degree* as between man and woman, but in *kind* as between precisely similar organizations. And these passions are of much more frequent occurrence than the world is aware of-generally they are unknown to all but the parties concerned, and are jealously guarded by them from intrusive comment. "There is a gloom in deep love as in deep water," and silence and mystery help to guard the sacred spot where we go to meet our best-beloved friends. The world sees only the ordinary appearances of an intimate acquaintanceship, and satisfies itself with a few common-place comments thereon-but the joy and beauty of the tie remain in sweet concealment-silent and inexpressive when careless eyes are upon it, but leaping into the sunlight when free from cold and repelling influences.

I have had my passionate attachments among women, which swept like whirlwinds over me, sometimes scorching me with a furnace-blast, but generally only changing and renewing the atmosphere of my life. I have loved so intensely that the daily and nightly communion I have held with my beloved ones has not sufficed to slake my thirst for them, nor the lavishness of their love for me been able to satisfy the demands of my exacting nature. I would "have drunk their soul as 'twere a ray from heaven"-ve lost myself and lived in them-and this too in spite of that trait of non-absorption which you so often tell me I possess. I absorb others, yet am never absorbed by them; but I have longed to be so, have yearned to leave off for a little while this burden of individuality which cuts into the very soul of me as sackcloth grates upon the shrinking flesh. Oh, how I have at times wished to lie down and fall asleep in another's consciousness, and give my panting, quivering vitality a little rest. There have been seasons when this unattainable desire to leave off my own separate existence with its too intense experience, and merge my own heart-life in the less fluctuating and less extensive alternations of another, has exhausted every energy of my soul, and made my inner self rise up before me in gigantic and frightful proportions, seeming like some fearful phantom ever walking by my side and holding me bound fast in strong but invisible bonds.

I loved Claudia thus-loved ?-nay, I worshipped her, I poured out at her feet all the wealth of my young girlish heart ; and what a glorious life I led with her strong high soul, which took me into such lofty companionship-so far above me as she was- and yet the greatness of my love lifted me to her. My soul sought and found in her every emotion which passed over it, and my confidence flowed forth in one unswerving, unfaltering trust to her. The proof of the grandeur and truth of this love of mine was not only in the length of time it continued, but still more in the fact that it grew up side by side with another grand passion which devastated my nature, and destroyed for a while in me the very fountain of my inner life. Had not Claudia been the truest

and most loving of friends, my heart would have withered and died out in the struggles of that time.

Leonora could never have been to me what Claudia has been—the serene loftiness, the entire truthfulness, the unselfish devotion, which made Claudia so perfect in all the relations of friendship, were all wanting in Leonora. But there was a great deal in the feminine beauty, the bewitching grace, the delightful piquancy, and the brilliant intellect of Leonora to fascinate and to subdue. She disarmed judgment by her charming ways, she overpowered coldness by her magnetic attraction. Our intercourse was delightful—there was no repose in it, but the action was of that delicious, self-sustaining sort that never wearied or exhausted either. When I think of the hours we have spent together, a smile, as at the recollection of an intense pleasure, rises to my lips. She acted as a continual spur to my intellectual activity, and was always ready to join me in the race after an intellectual prize. All the demands she made upon me, she made also upon herself; and the amount of brain-work which she exacted from herself to remedy the insufficiency of her early education, was really astonishing. You knew her only as a handsome coquette, a somewhat daring inquirer into men and things, a not over-scrupulous searcher after experience; you could never see her as I have seen her, when all the higher and better parts of her contradictory nature were in full force... [Source: Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat, *Ethel's Love Life: A Novel* (New York: Rudd and Carelton, 1850), 82-86.]

Discussion Questions:

1. Does the protagonist's description of her relationships with women support or contradict Victorian notions of female sexuality?
2. What specific evidence from this passage might literary critics point to as being evidence that this novel is "lesbian erotica?" How would you characterize the writing style?
3. Does *Ethel's Love Life* confirm, complicate, or contradict the argument made by Carol Smith-Rosenberg about female friendships?
4. Do you see similarities between the way that the protagonist speaks about Claudia and the way that Charity wrote to her lovers in *Charity and Sylvia*?
5. Taking Smith-Rosenberg, Cleves, and Mussey Sweats' writings together, what generalizations can we make about same-sex relationships in the nineteenth century?

Northern Lambda Nord

By Emily Theriault and Sydni Coon

Introduction:

The Northern Lambda Nord Club was founded in 1980. This was one of the earliest known support groups for the LGBT community in the state of Maine during the time period. The group was a non-profit organization which was based in Aroostook County, but also had members from New Brunswick. The executive committee consisted of three English and three French members, so each month, the meetings alternated from English to French. They created a calendar of events, as well as a newsletter in both languages. In order to keep the group running, they relied on member dues, donations, and grants. By 1990, there was enough money to hire an executive director.

Northern Lambda Nord started as a support group, where they worked to help individuals support and accept those in rural communities. These communities were not as advanced as large cities, which led the group to focus on state and local levels. They focused on work from other rural support groups from different states such as Wisconsin in order to improve their own group. As time went on, it was also used as a way to educate the community on LGBT acceptance, health, and HIV/AIDS issues. One of the most important projects the group took part in was the Gay-Lesbian Phone Line which has changed to the Maine HIV/AIDS hotline.

Although the group struggled with being discriminated against, they held true to their vision to support members of the LGBT community. It was difficult for them to advertise or hold events, but they were an integral part of Maine's LGBT community. In 2000, the group separated. It is not clear on the reason, but it is thought that due to one of the member's inability to help keep the group up and running, they had to stop the group all together. In 2006, the group reconvened and meet in Mars-Hill Maine.²

Following is one of the monthly publications from the Northern Lambda which includes events the group held, an observation from one of the group members, a newsletter from a Western Community, a magazine article, AIDS awareness, and a Gay/Lesbian guide.

² Northern Lambda Nord Archives, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Collection, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Libraries.

Northern Lambda Nord Communiqué

CP/POB990 Caribou Maine 04736 USA

207/498-2088

VOLUME VII: numéro 7

août/septembre 1986

VOLUME VII: number 7

August/September 1986

This is the second of two summertime issues; monthly publication resumes in October.

The last issue of this newsletter described the "refocusing" of Northern Lambda Nord's direction as an organization. To this end, a calendar of activities has been planned for October through February:

★ PARTIES - (NLN-sponsored)

* October 4 - "Membership enrollment/renewal party" - admission: buy a Lambda membership for 1987 (\$13) and get in for free, or if you choose not to join the group, it's \$6 (local) or \$3 (from away). Invitations to this party will be sent to everyone in the region who is a potential member (and whose mailing address we have), so there will be a big "fold-and-stuff" in early September (see member's calendar). Since the computer which printed the mailing labels was stolen, all envelopes will need to be addressed by hand.

* November 1 - Hallowe'en costume party

* December 27 - Christmas party, with gift exchange

* December 31 - New Year's Eve party

* February 14 - NLN's 7th anniversary party

★ OTHER PARTIES (Individuals who wish may have their parties listed in the NLN calendar - everyone would be invited to attend)

* September 20 - "Welcome party" - to meet a woman who has just moved to Maine from Florida and to welcome her to our community

★ FILMS (NLN-sponsored)

Lambda has planned for film screenings every other month, beginning in September. All films will be shown on a Sunday afternoon, 2:30pm (Maine), 3:30pm (N-B) in Presque Isle. If NLN has to pay to rent the film, the hat will be passed to help defray the cost, otherwise admission will be free. Discussion will follow the film.

* September 14 - "As Is" - Made-for-TV version of the highly-acclaimed 1985 Broadway play about the relationship between Rich, a New York City writer with AIDS, and his ex-lover, Saul. Starring Robert Carradine and Jonathan Hadary, with Colleen Dewhurst.

Films are scheduled for: *November 9 and *January 11. Lambda will try to obtain: "Pink Triangles", an historical discussion of the gay/lesbian movement; includes explanation of historical use of the pink triangle to identify homosexuals in Nazi Germany.

"Choosing Children" - women discuss their choice to be a parent, and their children discuss being the son/daughter of a lesbian.

"Before Stonewall" - When drag queens clashed with police at the Stonewall Bar in New York City, June 1969, the modern gay/lesbian rights movement was born. But what was life like for gay people before Stonewall?

★ FILMS (continued)

A member of Lambda who has a very large private collection of films will be hosting a monthly screening, open to anyone who is interested. Films will be shown on the third Friday evening of each month, and the exact films may be determined by those people present. Two films will be shown each evening.

★ DISCUSSIONS

* October 18 - Election day in Maine is November 4. Where do the candidates stand on those issue important to our community? Dale McCormick, President of the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance will tell us.

- * December - Exact date and subject pending.

★ PLEASE NOTE: YOUR NLN MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1986!! Renewals may be paid by mail, using the form attached to the members' calendar (to: POB 990, Caribou 04736) or you may pay at the October 4th party. Membership: \$13.00 U.S. and Canadian funds are accepted at par, Membership fee may be paid in regular installments; arrange for this method of payment with the treasurer, Phil.

2

AN OBSERVATION by Roger T.

Seven years ago a group of men got together to form a gay organization in Aroostook County. It took a great effort on the part of a few people that had the guts to start such a group in such a very narrow-minded environment, but that didn't prevent them from going ahead with organizing Northern Lambda Nord. As one of the original members of Lambda, I see the group sort of falling apart. The reasons are quite clear and easy to understand.

As a member, I got quite involved in making the organization a success, to have something for the gay people in Aroostook County. But after much effort it seems the gays in the area don't feel they need such an outlet -- a place to go to be themselves for one or two evenings a month. They have sort of chosen their friends -- to quote, "WHO THEY WANT". That is very sad because being in a small community everyone should be friends, or at least accept the other person for being different from themselves. Friends are very special, because as one gets older you need friends to go to, because you then get too old for bars, or even cruising. You then become labeled or categorized as an "OLD TROLL". I personally dislike the phrase. We don't always stay young and gorgeous; age creeps up fast on you and someday you could also be called an "OLD TROLL": how would you like it!? Think about this!!

In the last four years of the group I've come to understand that people were coming to functions not to support Lambda but to find out who was there in order to start their little gay group of friends: that is exactly what is happening now! Especially with the Loring Air Force Base personnel. They are all young and free spirits; of course anyone over 30 years old is much too old for them to associate with. But they should be thankful to have such an organization as Lambda in this isolated part of northern Maine. Without a gay bar, at least they have a group to go to, but yet they just don't seem to care. Of course not, they are only here for a short period of duty, and then off they go. We have to live here. I'm not labeling all the Loring personnel the same; there are only a few, and of course they certainly can do a lot of harm to the group we tried so hard to form.

Local gays are not much help also because they have now started their personal gatherings of so-called "friends only". This is fine -- I don't object to that. You have your freedom to do as you please, but at least you should use a little more tact in doing so.

At one time I used to enjoy the NLN functions because throughout the years I have made a lot of friends, good friends. I have been very grateful to have a gay group to go to and be myself. Now you can't even do that anymore without being laughed at or ridiculed.

Being on the Symposium Committee was an eye-opener for me, I'm sure, and I know that I made a lot of enemies from the Symposium. When the idea of the Symposium was first talked about, a lot of NLN members showed interest and were glad to see that it was going to be held in Aroostook County for the first time ever, a plus for the gays in the area. Also a lot were not in favor, but they never had the guts to come and express their feelings; they bitched in the background.

Fortunately, we didn't get any problems from the so-called "straights"; we didn't have any problems with the outsiders coming to the Symposium; the problems we got were from our own NLN members who thought the Symposium was a free-for-all party! Some of them never did a stitch of work and they were the biggest complainers. Some of them committed themselves for the Symposium to do some work and never stood up to their commitments. At the last minute everyone was afraid of the four letter word "WORK".

about - sept. 86 Communiqué

I attended the Maine Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance outing August 2 in New Sweden. I got there Saturday, expecting to try again to start anew and not feel so negative about the group of people and forget the past. I wasn't there for more than one hour when this lesbian got mad at me for taking her place on the couch when she got up. She said, I quote, "Who the hell are you?!", in a very butch way. We all gathered outside for the meeting. I sat in a chair, then was told to get out of the chair; it was hers and she had a lot of problems fitting the chair in her car; she didn't use too good diplomacy. I then said to myself, who the hell are they trying to impress, in being so masculine, yet they hate the men who are feminine. After being there two hours or more, I decided to leave; I wasn't interested in listening to lesbians argue, or some of their views.

This article is not meant for anyone or directed to anyone. Those that don't know me yet, I am sure you will have me labeled after reading this article, but I am not a two-faced person; I tell it as it is, and hopefully not hurt anyone's feelings but just make them realize what has been happening with the organization in the last couple of years.

Moreover, don't any of you forget, without Dick & Phil's outstanding devotion and effort in keeping this group together it would have fallen apart a long time ago. They have suffered a lot of pains for all of us in order to get something for the gay people in Aroostook County; we should be proud to have two gentlemen so devoted to gays in the area.

Your comments and reactions to this and all articles in Communiqué are encouraged.

LETTER FROM THE WEST by Walter/Raoul

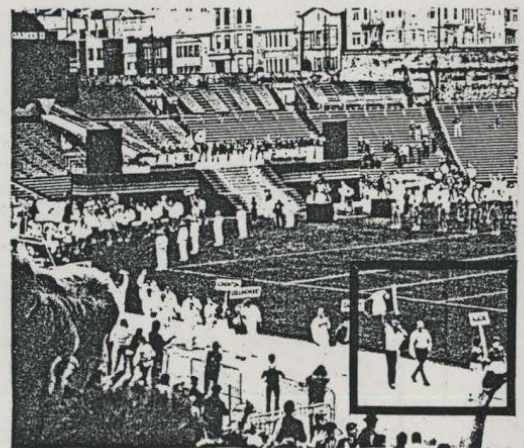
(San Francisco, August 10, 1986) Gay Games II opened yesterday with a four-hour production, about 10,000 spectators and over 3,000 athletes. With the mayor of San Francisco giving a welcome, gay pride was intense. For me, the emotional high came when the various Canadian teams entered, carrying their identifying flags. I fully expected to see the Quebec flag, which was the only provincial one present, but I was especially moved when the Acadian flag came into the stadium. My friends tried to tell me that it was "just" the French flag, but when I explained the special meaning of the *maris stella*, they realized the uniqueness of the Acadian people and shared my enthusiasm. By the way, one of the few U.S. states that was not represented was Maine. Get your jockstraps on, folks, and start practicing. You have four years till the next Games.

Gay humor was evident throughout the festivities. For example, the Minnesota Marching Band used the theme song from "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" to musically represent their home state.

We feel very close to the Games because, with extra room in our flat, we are hosting an athlete and are getting a detailed report of the inside story. He's from New York and plays volleyball, which is taken very seriously. They have a tightly-organized team, which is part of one of several leagues.

Elsewhere on the local lesbian/gay scene, my friend, Wayne, and I have taken a training course from the San Francisco AIDS Foundation so that we are now telephone volunteers on the AIDS Hotline. After three hours on the phone, you're really tired. There are lots of calls from people who are truly ill and need medical attention, other calls from the "worried well" who just want more information, and of course, calls from people with vivid imaginations who create the most outrageous scenarios: What if an ant goes from one person's toothbrush to mine?

Basically what we tell people is that AIDS is not a contagious disease, like the flu.



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BEING GAY AND ELDERLY (from MS. magazine)

Marilyn and Ellen have lived together as lovers for 37 years. Although they are now both in their late sixties and retired from professional jobs, they have yet to disclose their lesbian lifestyle and fear a future in which illness could separate them, or where death will push one of them into the exile of silent, secret grief. To help ease such fears, Marilyn and Ellen joined New York City's SAGE - Senior Action in a Gay Environment. Founded in 1977, SAGE is this nation's first comprehensive social service agency serving the special problems of aging gays and lesbians.

In hospitals and nursing homes, medical personnel can be insensitive when a gay partner is ill or dying. Hospital rules limit visits to family and a partner may be barred from visiting when she or he is most needed. The organizers of SAGE seek to serve a variety of their constituency's needs, offering workshops on coping with these situations as well as classes, social activities, and programs for the homebound. In group discussions, participants confront their fears with the help of those who have decided to be open about their chosen lifestyles. "People come to SAGE to share the good memories and the difficult experiences," says Chris Almvig, a social worker and founder of SAGE. For her pioneering work, Almvig received the 1984 Susan B. Anthony Award from the National Organization for Women. "At SAGE, everyone is out (of the closet), and we feel safe," she explains. "I feel joyous in belonging and being with so many people of the same ilk. At long last, we have a place to find ourselves." Eighteen such resource centers have now been established across the country. For more information, write SAGE, 208 West 13th Street, New York City 10011.

GOING TO MOSCOW?

The Soviet capital boasts this nation's only gay bar, sitting inconspicuously on a side street near the Kremlin. The *Washington Post* reports that about 60-70 men plus a few women, aged from late teens to early 50s, sit in twos or fours at simple tables lit by large wrought-iron lamps. There is a clubhouse atmosphere, with patrons table-hopping and chatting freely with the all-woman staff. After warming up to an American guest, the customers talk in cryptic terms about their "free life" and regular meetings in the bar, which, they say, has been open for several years. They don't often use the word "gay". Other Soviets refer to gays as *golugoi*, Russian for "light blue".



PROTECT YOURSELF! - Practice Safe and Sensible Sex!

SAFE

Massage
Hugging
Mutual masturbation
Social kissing (dry)
Body-to-body rubbing
(frottage)
Light S&M (no bruising
or bleeding)

POSSIBLY SAFE

French kissing (wet)
Anal sex with a condom
Sucking - stop before climax
Watersports - external only
RISK INCREASES WITH MULTIPLE
PARTNERS!!!

UNSAFE - Rimming, Fisting, Blood contact, Sharing sex toys, Semen or urine in the mouth, Anal sex without a condom. RISK INCREASES WITH MULTIPLE PARTNERS!!!

AIDS symptoms may include: Persistent fevers or nights sweats - Unexplained weight loss - Enlarged, hardened, or painful lymph nodes - Recently appearing new growths on top of or beneath the skin or on the mucous membranes (inside mouth, anus, nasal passages, or underneath eyelids) - Dry cough not related to cold or flu - Persistent diarrhea - Thrush, a whitish, thick, persistent coating on tongue or in throat - Easy bruisability or unexplained bleeding. CHECK WITH THE LAMBDA LIBRARY FOR LITERATURE ON AIDS AND STAYING HEALTHY.



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Gay/Lesbian GUIDE Lesbienne/Gai

- ★ **NORTHERN MAINE & NEW BRUNSWICK:** Northern Lambda Nord (NLN), CP/POB 990, Caribou, Maine 04736-0990 USA. Gay-Lesbian Phoneline/Télégai, 207/498-2088, Wednesdays/mercredi, 7-9pm (Eastern time/heure de l'est)
- **FREDERICTON:** Fredericton Lesbians and Gays (FLAG), POB 1556, Station A, E3B 5G2 - FLAGline, 506/457-2156
- **ORONO:** Wilde-Stein Club, Memorial Union, University of Maine 04469 - they meet Sundays, 7pm, South Bangor Lounge, Memorial Union
- **BANGOR:** Bangor Area Gay-Lesbian-Straight Coalition (BAGLS), POB 1805, 04401 - meets the second Tuesday of each month, 7pm, at 87 Sunset Strip, Brewer - 989-3306
- **BANGOR:** Interweave, Inc., POB 8008, 04401 - Meets 2nd and 4th Saturdays, 8pm at University College Center, Texas Avenue, Bangor - Dance and coffee house every Saturday, 9pm-1am at University College Center - \$3.00 - Information: 884-7079
- **QUEBEC:** Centre homophile d'aide et de libération (CHAL), 175, Prince-Edouard, G1K 2M2, 418/523-4997
- **QUEBEC:** Groupe gai de l'Université Laval (GGUL) et Groupe des femmes gaies de l'Université Laval (GFGUL), CP 2500, Pavillon Lemieux, Cité Universitaire, Ste-Foy, G1K7P4
- **SAINT JOHN:** Lesbian and Gay Organization in Saint John (LAGO/SJ), POB 6496, Station A, E2L 4R9 - Gayline, 506/633-1256
- **MONCTON:** Gais et Lesbiennes de Moncton/Gays and Lesbians of Moncton (GLM), CP/POB 7102, Riverview E1B 1V0
- **PORTLAND:** Gay/Lesbian Alliance, University of Southern Maine, 92 Bedford Street, 04102, 207/780-4085
- **PORTLAND:** Harbor Masters, Inc., leather-levi group, POB 4044, 04104
- **HALIFAX:** Gay Alliance for Equality (GAE), Box 3611, South Postal Station, B3J 3K6, 902/429-6969
- **NEWFOUNDLAND:** Gay Association in Newfoundland (GAIN), Box 1364, Station C, St. John's, A1C 5N5
- **MONTREAL:** Télégai, 514/933-2395
- **ARCHIVES FOR THE PROTECTION OF GAY HISTORY AND LITERATURE:** Box 6368, Station A, Saint John, New Brunswick E2L 4R8
- **OUR PAPER:** A Voice for Lesbians and Gaymen in Maine - monthly newspaper; \$12 for one year subscription, POB 10744, Portland 04104
- **MAINE LESBIAN/GAY POLITICAL ALLIANCE:** POB 108, Yarmouth 04096

AIDS information SIDA

- **AIDS-Line,** information and referral service, 207/775-1267 - 1-800/851-AIDS (-2437)
- **GAY HEALTH ACTION COMMITTEE,** POB 10723, Portland 04104
- **MacAIDS,** the Metro Area Committee on AIDS, POB 1013, Halifax, B3J 2X1

★★★★ **COMMUNIQUE** is published ten times yearly by Northern Lambda Nord, an organization★ serving the Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual community of northern Maine and northwestern New Brunswick. Subscriptions - \$10 per year. NLN Membership - \$13 per year, which includes Communiqué. Low-income people may make arrangements to pay in installments. NLN accepts Canadian and U.S. funds at par. NLN is a non-profit organization; all donations are U.S. tax deductible. Advertising rates in Communiqué are available upon request. Your comments and contributions are welcome.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the benefits of the events that the Northern Lambda hosted. Do you think there were any problems that occurred because of the events? Why?
2. What do you think the reactions were to Roger's observation article?
3. What do you think the purpose of including the letter from the West in the monthly publication was?
4. Did you see any similarities in the magazine Article *Being Old and Elderly*, with Marilyn and Ellen's relationship approach compared to Charity and Sylvia's? Did you see any differences?
5. Explain the importance of the Northern Lambda in Maine's history. Do you think it helped Maine to become more accepting of the LGBT community? Why or why not?

Wilde-Stein

By Jen Martin and Brittany Morin

Introduction:

The Wilde-Stein Club was started in 1973 by a group of University of Maine students and was the first openly gay student organization in Maine. It was named after British playwright Oscar Wilde and American writer Gertrude Stein, as a representation of the role gays and lesbians can play in society. The organization put out the Stein-Vine, a Newsletter released once a month and which informed its readers of support groups, conferences, and even events for the gay community. Readers were able to send in news, poetry, and short stories that they wished to be featured in the monthly publications.

The following newsletter is from the year 1984 and consist of many different ads, such as local dances and support groups readers could attend. One group mentioned in this issue is M.E.N., or The Men's Educational Network. M.E.N. was committed to breaking through the isolation and changing the way gay men related to each other and other men. It had support groups that provided and comfortable environment for any gay, straight, and bisexual men who wanted to relate and grow together. Groups like M.E.N. were very often written about and mentioned in the Stein-Vine newsletters.

This issue also gives information about many events and activities being held in the Bangor area for the gay community. There were many dances and parties being held, such as a lesbian dance that provided child care for the night and a "chemical-free environment" for those who are averse to drugs and alcohol. Parties and events such as those allowed members of the gay community to interact together in enjoyable and safe environments, which was something that might have been rare to many.

stein-vine

December 1984

The Stein-Vine is a monthly newsletter put out by the Wilde-Stein Club, U.M.O.'s gay and lesbian support group. We are interested not only in news items, but we will also print poetry and short stories contributed to us. We ask people to please send us any items that they want printed.

Our mailing address is: Wilde-Stein Club
Memorial Union
U.M.O. Orono, Me.

04469

MEN'S EDUCATIONAL NETWORK (M.E.N.)

M.E.N. is a group of men committed to breaking through our isolation as men and to changing the ways we relate to each other and women.

Our primary activity is the formation of support groups where straight, gay, and bi-sexual men can relate to each other and their own masculinity and learn to share and grow in a caring, supportive environment.

We have meetings and will have potlucks, socials, and

individuals, acting to support men's growth, the women's movement, and lesbian and gay freedom. Contact Bob or John at P.O. Box 1822, Bangor or 884-8857.

This listing of weekly events occur in the Bangor area. If there are other events, please notify us and we will add or correct this listing.

Sunday	Gay AA meeting. 4:00 p.m. 126 Union St. Bangor
Sunday	Wilde-Stein meeting. 7:00 p.m. South Bangor Lounge. Union building, UMO.
Monday	Bangor Area Gay-Lesbian-Straight Coalition. 7:30 p.m. 126 Union St. Bangor (2nd and 4th Monday)
Tuesday	Steering Committee for Coalition. 5:15 p.m. 126 Union St. Bangor. (1st, 3rd + 5th tuesday)
Wednesday	Wilde-Stein Coming Out Group. 5:30 p.m. Ham Room, Union building, UMO
Thursday	Gay AA meeting. 7:30 p.m. 126 Union St. Bangor.
Saturday	Interweave Potluck Supper. 6:00 p.m. 126 Union St. Bangor. (1st + 3rd Saturday)

DANCE

December 29, 1984 --- The Wilde-Stein Club will be holding a New Years Celebration and Dance at the Damn Yankee, Union building, UMO, at 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$3.50, it's an alcohol free space, and there will be a food table and soda for sale. Also included in your admission is a chance for the door prize, an hour for two at Mason Hill Hot Tubs! Come and Enjoy!

Amethyst Women will be holding a "Letting Go" drug and alcohol free space dance for lesbians who enjoy chemical-free environments on New Year's Eve at the First Church Congregation in Cambridge, Mass. The dance runs from 9:00p.m. until 1:00a.m. and the donation is \$5.00 if you can. Free quality childcare is provided.

Gay People's Alliance is starting Maine's first Lesbian/Gay Pride Celebration. The first meeting to plan this event is on Jan. 31st, 1985 at 6:30p.m. at 92 Bedford St. in the lounge. This is in their place in Portland. Anybody interested in helping out should either be there or contact the office at:

Gay People's Alliance
University of Southern Maine
92 Bedford St.
Portland, Me. 04103

The Archive for the Protection of Gay History and Literature is a new endeavor aimed at collecting, recording, and protecting all aspects of gay and lesbian history and literature. A.P.G.H.L. works on a donation basis and hopes that people will send information about organizations and other information that people may have. The address is:

A.P.G.H.L.
Box 6368, Stn. A
Saint John, N.B. E2L 4R8

The Second Annual Northeast Lesbian and Gay Student Activists Conference will be held on March 8, 9, and 10 at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. The registration fee will be \$15.00 per person before March 1 and \$20.00 for late and on site registrations. A variety of workshops are planned. If you wish more information, write:

Jay Coburn, Conference Coordinator

Gay People at Cornell

207 Willard Straight Hall

Cornell University

Ithaca, New York 14853

Contrary to the ideals of a free society, the civil rights of gay men and lesbians have been, and continue to be, abridged in the United States. Not only do lesbians and gay men experience discrimination in housing and employment, but recent research reveals that violence perpetrated upon gay men and lesbians ranks highest among violence against other sub-cultures. The July 1984 murder of Charles O. Howard, a gay man from Bangor, Maine, certainly exemplifies the inhumanity and bigotry that lesbians and gay men face daily.

The Gay People's Alliance of the University of Southern Maine has established a scholarship in memory of Charlie Howard. The Charles O. Howard Memorial Scholarship will be awarded annually to the writer who best articulates, in essay form, the importance of civil rights for lesbians and gay men. Essays will be written in a manner consistent with accepted university standards. The award essay will be chosen using the following criteria: description of the problem, analysis, support of the issue, creativity, suggestions for change, and quality of writing (organization, style, and grammar). The minimum qualifications are that the student have a grade point average of 2.5 or better, and be a degree candidate carrying at least six

credits. The essays will be judged by three USM faculty members, two GPA staff members, and one Student Activities employee.

Donations are much appreciated. If you would like to contribute to the Charles O. Howard Memorial Scholarship Fund, please make checks payable to the Gay People's Alliance and send them to us at 92 Bedford St., Portland, Maine 04103. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the GPA at 780-4085.

The Wilde-Stein office has moved this past month to a more compatible office here at the University of Maine. We are still located in the Memorial Union. Our address remains the same.

WE HOPE EVERYONE HAS A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Wilde-Stein Club

The Gay People's Alliance of the University of Southern Maine has established a scholarship in memory of Charles O. Howard. The Charles O. Howard Memorial Scholarship will be awarded annually to the writer who best articulates, in essay form, the importance of civil rights for lesbians and gay men. Essays will be written in a manner consistent with accepted university standards. The award essay will be chosen using the following criteria: discussion of the problem, analysis, support of the issue, creativity, suggestions for change, and quality of writing (organization, style, and grammar). The minimum qualifications are that the student have a grade point average of 2.5 or better, and be a degree candidate carrying at least six

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the importance of this type of newsletter in the gay community, especially for the younger members?
2. How do you think the gay and lesbian community reacted to these newsletters vs the non-gay community? Why?
3. Do you think these newsletters allowed gay and lesbian students to be more open and feel more accepted in their university community?
4. Do you think the Stein-Vine newsletter created any problems in the community? How so?
5. Considering the time in which these newsletter were put out, how do you think it affected the club's reputation? The University's?

Frances Peabody

By Kayla Horner and Zachary Sides

Introduction:

Frances Wilson Peabody, born April 18, 1903, is an important figure in Maine history. She was married to Millard S Peabody and together had five children. Millard provided for his family by running a shoe manufacturing business after moving to Boston in 1920.

Her grandson, Peter Vom Lehn, died in 1984 from AIDS. Because of the death of her grandson, she went on to help established an AIDS support group; however, she did not stop her work there. From meeting people in the support group, she then established the AIDS hot line in Maine in 1985. The Peabody house, created in 1985, was an assisted living facility for people suffering with advanced stages of HIV, which was the only one in the State of Maine.

Also referred to as Frannie, she was an activist for gay rights. Her work towards gay rights was featured in many news papers such as: *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *McCall's*, and *People Magazine*. Frannie was also recognized by President George Bush with the Daily Points of Light program award, amongst many others including: the Smith College Medal in 1992, the Human Rights Campaign Fund of Boston Special Award, and the 2001 national leadership Award Aids Action Committee. Frannie died June 26, 2001. The following excerpt is a bibliography of Frances Wilson in which contains personal quotes from Frannie herself.

Bibliography

“University of New England.” *Frances Wilson Peabody Papers, 1980-1997* | *Maine Women Writers Collection* | *University of New England in Maine, Tangier and Online*, www.une.edu/mwwc/research/featured-writers/frances-wilson-peabody-papers-1980-1997.

Staff, From Times, and Wire Reports. “Frances Peabody; Activist Against AIDS.” *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 2 July 2001, articles.latimes.com/2001/jul/02/local/me-17884.

FRANCES WILSON PEABODY is 96, a Mayflower descendant and a lifelong Republican -- almost. She had to stop, she says, because "I can't very well be a Republican with all the homosexuals in our family."

These include a gay son, two gay nieces, and a gay grandson who died of AIDS in 1984. It was his death that turned Mrs. Peabody into an activist who started the first AIDS information hotline in Maine, which grew into the AIDS Project, a network of social services. In 1994, amid some opposition, she opened the state's first (and only) AIDS hospice, Peabody House, in the Western Promenade section here.

"I believe being gay runs in families, and that's why it's so cruel when parents are blind and don't want to acknowledge it," she says, sitting in the parlor of the restored 1865 house that has been her home for 25 years. "If a child gets married, that doesn't fix it; it just makes more problems later," she rolls her eyes, "It's pathetic."

Peter Haffenreffer, 62, the chairman of the board of Peabody House, whose financial support made the hospice possible, says, "When we first bought the house, everyone thought we would have gays, drug addicts and needles in the streets."

Mrs. Peabody interjects: "We didn't blame them. Until they're educated, they don't know what's important and what's not. They had homes they loved. And now Peabody House has the prettiest garden on the street."

It's safe to say that Mrs. Peabody -- whom everyone, regardless of age, calls Frannie -- is not the brand of revolutionary that Larry Kramer and company had in mind when they started the Gay Men's Health Crisis. This one wears a cranberry suit and a string of pearls, and her pretty, crocheted slip peeks out above her knees as she climbs up and down the three flights of stairs at Peabody House, now home to six people with AIDS. She expects 22 family members (children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren) for Christmas this year, and she will celebrate her 75th reunion at Smith College next June. When she went out in the rain to vote recently, three different people tracked her down in case she needed help getting home. Maria Santana, 43, a resident of Peabody House, speaks for many when she says, "Frannie is the best thing to have happened to the city of Portland."

Though Mrs. Peabody attends birthday dinners and other events at Peabody House, she lives with a helper in her own three-story house a few blocks away. She became something of an expert on historic preservation during the 15 years she ran Tate House, the town's oldest museum, which dates to 1755. Even on this day, she has a workman in her bathroom restoring the trompe l'oeil ceiling detail hidden under layers of paint.

Sitting in her front parlor, drinking coffee, Mrs. Peabody talks about her own life and the events that prepared her for the unlikely work she now does. When Peabody House first opened, she says, it served predominantly as a place for gay men to die. Since the advent of protease inhibitors and other medicines, however, its residents are mostly women who were intravenous drug users, some with mental illness, many of whom were homeless for most of their adult lives.

As Mrs. Peabody speaks, her china-blue eyes never waver, and even after the phone interrupts her, she picks up exactly where she left off.

"I was born in Washington, D.C., in 1903," she begins. "When I was about 7 years old, my parents went to the territory of New Mexico. My father was sent there by Teddy Roosevelt to help clean up some dirty politics. We lived in Santa Fe, where my father had his law office.

"My parents were broad-minded about everything. My brother and I just didn't know what it meant to be prejudiced. When I look back, I realize that many of the artists and writers in Santa Fe were gay, but my parents just didn't seem to see that."

She majored in government at Smith, and after graduating moved to New York City and worked at Macy's. She met her future husband there -- Millard Peabody, whose family owned a shoe manufacturing factory near Boston. The couple eventually settled in Falmouth, Me., and had five children. One son died of crib death in 1931, and their surviving son and two of their daughters contracted polio.

"I was so careful with everything," Mrs. Peabody says. "Nobody knows where they got it. My oldest daughter, Charlotte, was in bed for two years. I taught her at home, with help from the teacher once a week. I had a baby five months old when that happened."

HOW did she manage? "I gave up all my volunteer work, and I had a wonderful nurse for the children," she says. "I'm not religious, so in a difficult situation it kind of throws you back on your own strength." She sniffs. "So many religious people are so narrow-minded."

Mr. Peabody died of a heart attack in 1962, at 58. "He just didn't wake up one morning." She never remarried. "I wanted to make my own decisions about my children," she says.

The social stigma attached to polio, a highly contagious disease, primed Mrs. Peabody for the fight she encountered when her grandson Peter learned he had AIDS in 1983, a time when real knowledge about the disease and how it was contracted was scarce and hysteria was rampant. "When Peter came down with AIDS, he was living in New York City," she says. "He was gay. We knew that. It didn't make a difference to any of us. He was a very early victim of AIDS, and it's very hard today to understand how people felt then."

After Peter died, she says, "I heard there was a group of young gay men at the Unitarian Church here who were meeting about AIDS, so I asked the minister if they would mind if I joined them." She continued: "We agreed the best thing to do would be to have a hot line because there was so little information. We were all volunteers, trained by the volunteers from the suicide hotlines. We didn't have any money, you know, that was our trouble."

Mrs. Peabody also wrote a brochure for the mothers of people with AIDS who knew nothing about the disease. A friend at the Maine Medical Center distributed it. "The doctors would call and say, 'Frannie, I've got a mother up in the hospital who needs you,' " she says. "That's how we had to do it. Some of those poor kids died not knowing who it was taking care of them. We all had masks and gowns and gloves."

The AIDS Project also sponsored a support group for people with AIDS and their families and friends. "We met every Tuesday, still do," Mrs. Peabody says. "It was safe to talk freely there. And we realized we needed a hospice. I knew it would take money, and I knew Peter Haffenreffer would be able to do this."

She leans forward in her chair. "I get ideas, but I don't do that hard everyday work that holds an organization together," she says urgently. "I don't know what we would have done without Peter. He's very quiet and gets no accolades at all."

Mr. Haffenreffer, whose family owned the eponymously named beer company, looks suitably embarrassed. He directs the attention back to Mrs. Peabody, showing off her key to the city of Portland and a framed letter of commendation from President George Bush.

Mrs. Peabody smiles. "When they called to tell me I was one of the thousand points of lights, they said, 'This is the White House,' and I said: 'I'll bet it is. Goodbye.' I thought somebody was teasing me."

MRS. PEABODY makes an annual appearance in the Portland Gay Pride Parade, swathed in a feather boa, perched on the back of Mr. Haffenreffer's yellow convertible. "Along the way you can see people looking down their noses," she says. "They don't know whether to wave back to me or not."

What does she think of them? She laughs. "I think they're very stupid people," she says. "They miss an awful lot by not knowing people who are gay. They're much more fun than straight people, much more imaginative."

At Peabody House, Mrs. Peabody is embraced by Mary Lake, its executive director, who leads her into the kitchen, where meals are prepared daily by volunteers. The house was also renovated and redecorated by volunteers, including Mr. Haffenreffer's wife, Mallory Marshall, a local

interior designer, and her partner, James Light. They combed through garage sales, flea markets and discount warehouses for furniture (and beautiful fabrics for slipcovers) for residents' rooms as well as a guest room for visiting family members. Residents can cuddle up in an easy chair in the library, or lie on the couch to watch television in the smoking room. And there are pictures of everyone posted on the refrigerator door, just like home. 176

Mrs. Peabody heads down the hall, past her portrait, which hangs on the wall across from a bowl of colored condoms, and climbs two flights to the office, looking for Christmas ornaments. "We're working on it, Frannie," Ms. Lake says nervously, watching her charge the closets.

Two more staff members spot Mrs. Peabody and kiss her. While they do, Ms. Lake talks business. "Maine has had 897 AIDS cases since 1984 and 472 fatalities," she says. "Our annual operating budget is about \$600,000, most of which is spent on direct care.

"The community has been incredibly generous," she continues. "Half our funding comes from individual support."

But that's not enough for Mrs. Peabody. "The government is still blind to AIDS," she says, clearly frustrated. "They don't pour money into research as they should, and I don't know how to convince them. If you have had one case of AIDS in your family, that family changes forever."

Her gaze is unflinching. "When this first started, I couldn't understand why people couldn't understand," she says. "I still can't. So much ignorance makes you wonder." [Source: "Revolutionary with a String of Pearls," *New York Times*, November 25, 1999.]

Discussion Questions:

1. What motivated Frannie to establish the AIDs hotline?
2. What was the Aids Project?
3. Where is this document taking place?
4. How does Frannie feel about gays and gay rights?
5. Does gay rights affect anybody in Frannie's family?
6. What is the Peabody house and who does it help?

John Preston

By Rosie Wolfe and Katie Prior

Introduction: John Preston was a gay man who moved to Portland, Maine in 1979, and soon became Portland's most famous gay rights activist. He was also an author of erotic gay fiction, which he described as pornography. His erotic fiction brought him fame throughout America, notably his S&M novel *Mr. Benson*. He soon became not only Portland's, but America's "best-known gay writer." Preston was a journalist, and wrote a column about gay life in Maine. Much like Frannie Peabody, Preston was an AIDS and safe sex activist, and edited an anthology called *Hot Living* in 1985. Along with that, he was a founder and president of the AIDS Project of Southern Maine. After finding out he was HIV positive in the late 1980s, Preston died of an AIDS related illness in 1994, at the young age of 48. He was a Portland icon.

In *Winter's Light*, Preston describes his emotional journey after discovering that he was HIV positive, and the struggles he faced as a gay man. In this excerpt, Preston describes what brought him to Maine, and the ways that he became the face of gay life in Portland.

Winter's Light

After I graduated from Lake Forest I went on what I call the Grand Tour of the Gay Capitals. I began by moving to Boston. I was so tired of the rigors of sixties gay life--it was a lot of work to live all the time--that I just wanted to find a lover and settle down. I found one, a man so handsome that more than twenty-five years later I can honestly say that he was one of the most gorgeous men I've never been with. We were a stunning couple, both of us over six-feet, both with long, rich hair. We were princes. We so impressed the then secret gay world we were entering that we were often taken on trips by older men. They just wanted to be near us, it seemed, perhaps to hear our delighted moans from behind closed bedroom doors.

But we weren't exempt from the tortures of that pre-activist life. My lover told me he had been waiting for someone to love because it would make all the rest of it okay. I was, he promised me, all he had wanted. But it turned out I wasn't enough to make up for the rest. He committed suicide after telling me that being queer was just too difficult. What is shocking today is that his death was *not* shocking at the time. The men who had taken us on trips weren't surprised at all. Suicide was a standard option for gay men in the sixties, even in a big city like Boston.

I would not accept that. I was unwilling to accept suicide as a way out. I would have to find some people who would help me change the world, that was all there was to it...

There were problems as soon as I got here [Portland, Maine]. I stayed in a motel for the first month I lived in Portland to get the lay of the land while I figured out what neighborhood I wanted to live in, if I wanted to stay here. I remember sprawling on the motel bed and watching a television news report about gay life in Maine. The very existence of the broadcast was a good sign, until the camera showed the only gay man who was willing to come out for the report--and

he would do it only if his face was hidden in silhouette. This wasn't the kind of gay politics I had been used to; this wasn't the way I expected to have changed.

...Then i realized there was no reason for me to hide myself. I could become a face of gay life in this state as easily as I had in Minnesota and the other places I had lived. We all have that option of reinventing ourselves and altering the landscape we inhabit...The idea that this was *it*, this was where we were all going to end up, bolstered my vision. Okay, then, we damned well better make it the best place we could...

I began to write for a new local weekly paper, the *Chronicle*. The pay was wretched, but they needed writers badly and were glad to have me. Max Harshorne, the editor, accepted almost anything I could get to him on deadline, even if that meant publishing yet another review of a new gay novel ("Not *too* often, Preston. Please! He used to say, but he ran them.)

All journalists are media junkies; it's part of the job description. The writers for the daily newspapers and the bigger statewide weekly newspapers read the *Chronicle* every issue and got to know my byline, and my willingness to write about being gay. I began to show up on the television screen now, and not in silhouette. Soon there were other gay men and lesbians willing to be interviewed. We began to give Portland and its lesbian and gay life a human face.

There were repercussions from all that public notice. I had a real shock when a few gay men who had recently propositioned me in the bars in Portland began to ask me not to speak to them on the street. They didn't want my notoriety rubbing off on them. This was another point at which I thought I'd have to leave, To turn away from another gay man, to leave me isolated on the streets of Portland, was a violation of the most essential tenets of the new gay life--that we had to stand together, we had to protect the most vulnerable, I was crushed.

The Matlovich Society was formed in Portland a few years ago, named after Leonard Matlovich, an air force sergeant who fought his discharge for being gay in the mid-1970s. The group intended to create a lecture series of gay and lesbian speakers, with the hope that, in the fine tradition of New England athenaeums, the shared information would create a bond within the gay and lesbian community and would uplift it. [...]

These are people who take their lives seriously, who want to learn about their history and want to change the world they live in. Just being together and not hiding--they most often meet in the auditorium of the Portland Public Library--allows them to create a vision for their life in this small city. It was the Matlovich Society members who first asked why there wasn't a gay civil rights bill in Portland. A municipal ordinance had not been proposed primarily because the major gay rights organizations were focused on a statewide bill. But so many people came to Matlovich meetings, certainly the liberal city council could be approached by some of them. The bill was passed. It immediately provoked a referendum initiated by the religious right, but after a grueling election campaign, the voters of the city upheld the ordinance.

Source: John Preston, *Winter's Light: Reflections of a Yankee Queer* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995).

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think Preston means by claiming he felt as if he had to “lie all the time” in the culture of sixties’ gay life?
2. How do you think that the personal and emotional testimony that Preston gives helped relate to gay readers?
3. How did his lover’s suicide affect and motivate Preston?
4. What were some of the factors that caused Preston to feel alienated as the first and for a time, only, face of the gay community?
5. With everything we’ve read about legislature in the gay rights movement, what kind of events do you predict had to precede the changes Preston talks about at the end of his reflection?

Maine Gay Task Force

By Kara Ellsmore and Charlie Wheeler

Introduction:

In the early days of the Gay movement, and even before there was an official gay movement, people were organizing support groups in their communities. These groups included formal organizations such as Student Homophile League in colleges, and informal settings such as gay bars. Unfortunately, publicity was not a strong point for these various groups. Often, the only way people would have access to a group near them was if someone directly told them about it. Sometimes, gay members of a town wouldn't even know about a support group, because these groups were isolated, private, and very cautious about how they spread the word.

Thankfully, as time moved forward and the Stonewall riots inspired many, these groups were able to increase their public image, producing newsletters and brochures like the Maine Gay Task Force's newsletter "Mainely Gay". The Maine Gay Task Force, started in 1974, was formed for the purpose to inform the gay community of resources, events, and stories that may resonate with readers. This was especially important in more isolated areas of Maine, where information would otherwise have to be obtained through a presumably deficient grape vine.

The Maine Gay Task Force desired to be to be as public and straightforward with their actions as possible. They had produced the first statewide gay publication for the state of Maine, while also protesting effectively for Maine residents. The most successful protests of the Maine Gay Task Force was the picketing of a bar in Ogunquit, which had refused to allow gay people to dance together; inviting the 1976 Bicentennial Freedom Train to Portland; and forcing a local T.V. station to remove a homophobic episode of a well known show, "Marcus Welby." The Maine Gay Task Force incorporated the importance of publicity for a mainly rural state, but also working hard to hold institutions accountable for being outwardly discriminatory to the homosexual community.³

The following is an excerpt from one of their publications:

³ Conforti, Joseph A. *Creating Portland: History and Place in Northern New England*. University of New Hampshire Press, 2007.

THE MAINE GAY TASK FORCE POSITION PAPER

The Maine Gay Task Force, created in 1974, is a coalition of various homosexual organizations in the state. The goals of MGTF are fourfold: political, educational, legal and social.

The purposes of the organization are:

- 1) To serve as a clearinghouse of information for the Maine Gay Community;
- 2) To coordinate statewide action in working for the repeal of discriminatory laws and for the enactment of protective legislation.
- 3) To act as a liaison between member groups and state agencies; and
- 4) To change current social attitudes and to eliminate discrimination and oppression where it exists.

Our goals are as diverse as the individuals working for them. We are Maine residents who feel the time is overdue for this state and its people to recognize the existence of homosexuality and to acknowledge the inherent civil rights belonging to Gay people.

Member Organizations:

Bangor Unitarian Gay Caucus
Box 1046
Bangor 04401

Gay Rights Organization
Box 4542
Portland 04112

Brunswick Gay Womens Group
Brunswick Women's Center
136 Maine St.
Brunswick 04011

Gay Support & Action
c/o Unitarian Parish House
183 Main St
Bangor 04401

Hancock County Gays
Box 275
Ellsworth 04605

The Bridge
Colby College
Box 901-Roberts Union
Waterville 04801

The Wilde-Stein Club
% Memorial Union
University of Maine
Orono 04473

Lambda
7 Nancy Road
Brunswick 04011

Gay Rights Organization
Box 1163
Lewiston 04240

Source: Coalition of Organizations, "Maine Gay Task Force Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 01 (August 1974)" (1974). Maine Gay Task Force Newsletter. 1.
<http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/megtf>

Discussion Questions:

1. How do the Maine Gay Task Force's goals and actions differ from the other organizations previously discussed?
2. What are the possible pros and cons for the Maine Task Force to have several member organizations?
3. Considering what 1970s Maine environment was like, what do you think were the public's reactions to the very direct actions of the Maine Task Force?
4. Do you think that the Maine Task Force could have accomplished the same goals of direct action and open publicity before the Stonewall Riots?