

**Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project
General Meeting at the Roanoke Public Library
January 28, 2016**

10 people in attendance.

AGENDA

(5:30-6pm): gathering, food & drink, set-up
(6-6:05pm): Check-ins
(6:05-6:25pm): ARCHIVES
(6:25-6:40pm): ORAL HISTORIES
(6:40-6:55pm): WALKING TOUR
(6:55-7:10pm): DIGITAL EXHIBITION
(7:10-7:30pm): SEPTEMBER 2016 PLANS
(7:30-7:45pm): Departure

ARCHIVES

- 1) DIGITAL ARCHIVES: GR provided updates on the Digital Archives initiative (<http://www.sscommons.org/openlibrary/welcome.html#3|collections|7730775||Southwest20Virginia20LGBTQ2B20History20Project||>)
 - a. The digital archives now contains: three test photos; GARV's 1971 Charter; all of Volume 1 of *The Big Lick Gayzette* (1971); plus video from our Pride Week event at The Park in September 2015.
 - b. QUESTION OF WEBSITE VISIBILITY: Project members feel that the links to the contribution form and to the Shared Shelf site are too hidden on the website and hard to find. The Website should be redesigned to make the digital archive easier to find and get to. Perhaps the front page of the website needs to feature such a link?
- 2) PHYSICAL ARCHIVES:
 - a. STATUS OF COLLECTION: Same status as last meeting. No new items donated since December (<http://lgbthistory.pages.roanoke.edu/physical-archives/>).
 - b. OPEN HOUSE EVENT / EXHIBITION at VIRGINIA ROOM: tentatively planned for September 2016 to coincide with Pride Week.
 - c. Roanoke PFLAG is now aware of the Roanoke PFLAG collection (1990s) in the archives.
 - d. ARCHIVES COLLECTION EVENTS: We had a vigorous discussion about whether or not to plan more collection events, or rather to reach out to community partners and ask them how *they* would prefer to donate materials to our collection. A question of 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up' collecting. Here are some of the various ideas we came up with:

- i. “Reunion” event at THE PARK: GR is still working on reaching out to The Park to make this event happen. Perhaps proposed for late February or March?
 - ii. Partner with IP (Intimate Path) group? The suggestion was not to propose a collection event at an IP gathering, but rather to reach out to IP leaders and ask how they would best prefer us to facilitate collecting historical materials among their members.
 - iii. Plan another collection event at the RDC?: there was some support for this. It worked before, why not do it again, on a semi-regular basis?
 - iv. MCC (Metropolitan Community Church) as a collection event location? The suggestion is to coordinate with JC about calling for collections on a given Sunday, and being there at the church to process people’s donations.
 - v. Partner with the UU church? Not as a collection location, but to reach out to their leadership / membership, and ask—as with IP—how we can best facilitate collecting historical materials among their members.
 - e. PROMOTION: Questions about promoting our desire to collect more items for the archives:
 - i. ROANOKE TIMES: What about pitching an article idea to the Times to see if they would write a newspaper article about our project and collection drive, and provide information to the public about how they can best go about donating to our archive?
 - ii. The suggestion was made that all PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS should include the three stated options for how donations can be made: 1) at a collection event; 2) by appt. at the Virginia Room; or 3) by appt. with History Project staff.
 - f. CONTEMPORARY COLLECTING: DG will reach out to current LGBTQ+ publications in Southwest Virginia to ask them to make a practice of donating a copy of every new issue to our archives on a regular basis.
 - g. Concern about use of ORIGINAL COPIES: GR will talk to Virginia Room archivist about project members’ concerns regarding ways to minimize use-damage to original copies of fragile items (ex. *The Big Lick Gayzette* issues).
- 3) Policy on THREE-DIMENSIONAL OBJECTS: We did not have time to discuss. We will place this item on the agenda for February for discussion.
- 4) RURAL OUTREACH: This initiative has been put on hold.

ORAL HISTORIES

- 1) IRB forms have been submitted. It should take one week to hear the IRB’s response.

- 2) RECRUITMENT of INTERVIEW SUBJECTS:
 - a. We came into the meeting with 15 confirmed interview subjects: ten gay cisgender men; four lesbian cisgender women; and one transgender woman. All of our interview subjects are white. We succeeded in recruiting a sizable, yet manageable, number of interview subjects. (Our original goal was to recruit 8-16 interview subjects.) The question of diversity and representation still remains.
 - b. TRANSGENDER REPRESENTATION: VL brought up the issue of the lack of transgender representation among our interview subjects. We discussed the importance of increasing the visibility of transgender folks in all aspects of our project. Also that one does not have to identify as “transgender” or as any other identity within the LGBTQ acronym-paradigm in order to be considered for this oral history project. We are interested in interviewing any and everyone who wants to tell the story of their experiences with gender identity and/or sexual identity, no matter what terms they use to define (or not define) their identity.
 - i. We are happy to report that we left the meeting with two new confirmed subjects for our oral history initiative, bringing the total to 17.
- 3) ORAL HISTORY TRAINING PROGRAM: EH, a freshman at Roanoke College, is participating, and will be trained to conduct oral history interviews for the project.
- 4) DOCUMENTING the ORAL HISTORY PROJECT: Project members suggested it might be a good idea to document the oral history project as either a press piece, or as an instructional video for future use. This may take the form of contracting a videographer to make a short mini-documentary about our oral history project. Or perhaps some other form. Not sure who to contact re: who would be willing to do this, to help document our project.

WALKING TOUR

- 1) JAN. 24 TEST RUN: GR led the tour and 4 people attended. The tour was hampered by a snowstorm that weekend that hurt attendance and limited our ability to walk on the sidewalks! Lessons learned from this second test-run of the tour: We have too much content for a 2 mile / 2 hour tour. As we continue to learn more through research, we will need to work extra hard to cut material from the script, to keep it under length.
- 2) LAUNCHING the TOUR in SEPTEMBER? GR will touch base with JG about how best to link the tour’s launch with Pride Week events. The general consensus within our project seems to be to schedule the tour for a few consecutive weekends during September.
- 3) LAMINATED IMAGES: SM is working very hard to locate images for the walking tour. We hope to have 15-20 laminated images ready by late April to test out with the tour.

- a. EH suggested we reach out to the *Roanoke Times* photo librarian to see what historic images they have that we can potentially use to illustrate the walking tour.
- 4) COMMENTS on the TOUR SCRIPT? GR will publish the draft tour script, as it is right now, to a Google Doc so that all can read it, comment, and suggest edits/changes.
- 5) POLICE DEPARTMENT-RELATED CONTENT: We got on the topic of police records, and how GR and SM are interested in approaching the police for access to Vice Squad records. Project members suggested the best way to approach the police would be to make contact with LGBTQ+ members of the police force, tell them about our project, and work with them to approach the department for access to files that may be useful for our project. (As for right now, GR and SM are keeping the idea of going after police department records on the back burner, at least until we have first built up History Project initiatives through other avenues of research and data collection.)
- 6) Create an ONLINE AUDIO WALKING TOUR: This came up, and all agreed it is a fabulous idea, worth pursuing. The idea is for a GPS-linked audio tour so that as someone walks around downtown with this 'app' turned on, different LGBTQ+ History content will pop up on their phone. There are many models of apps for designing interactive online walking tours. GR will investigate some of the best models out there, and report back at next meeting about this concept.

DIGITAL EXHIBITION

- 1) We are using an open-source software called Timeline:JS (<https://timeline.knightlab.com>)
- 2) CURATORIAL DECISION to focus on the 1970s: We have decided to restrict our Timeline exhibit to the period 1970-1980, rather than try to cover all of the twentieth century! GR showed off the test Timeline site as of right now, which we are calling "Coming Out: Gay Liberation in Roanoke, Virginia, 1970-1980." SM is searching for images and other content that we can add to the Timeline.
- 3) HISTORY PROJECT BOOTH: The Timeline is scheduled to go public in September 2016 in conjunction with Pride Week. It will live online at our website, but also we want to provide access to our exhibit at our History Project Booth at the Pride festival. GR needs to investigate the costs for two iPads, two iPad mounts, and issues of WiFi, electricity/power, etc. for what it would take to turn our History Project Booth into a little museum where we can show off the digital exhibition. GR will report back at February's meeting.
- 4) LOCAL vs. NATIONAL CONTENT: Many project members suggested that it would be a good idea to add some national content into the Timeline so that viewers can understand, say, the emergence of GARV in relation to

the Stonewall riots; also, for example, to understand how gay liberation intersected with women's liberation, black power, the student movement, anti-war movement, etc., etc.

SEPTEMBER 2016 PLANS

- 1) PRIDE WEEK
 - a. Need to reserve a booth for Pride in the Park
 - b. Need to design a banner (w/ logo?) for our booth and/or the Pride Parade
 - c. Design pamphlets to hand out at Pride about our project?
 - d. Launch the Walking Tour at Pride
 - e. Exhibit at Virginia Room during Pride Week?
 - f. Digital exhibition presented at our Pride in the Park booth
 - g. Schedule a big event / party / workshop to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the History Project, as well as strategize/brainstorm for Year Two.
- 2) ADVERTISING: It was suggested that the History Project plan to buy some advertising in local magazines, etc., in the run-up to Pride to announce all of these initiatives and how people can get involved in the lead-up to Pride in the Park.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

JB made an announcement regarding a planned Day of Action with Equality Virginia to lobby in Richmond against pending anti-LGBT legislation on February 9. It was suggested that the History Project might wish to sign on as a co-sponsor of Equality Virginia's planned "Day of Action." We had a vigorous discussion about whether or not the History Project should take a stand on a political issue. We also debated whether we even have a process in place for making such a decision. It was decided that the History Project, in name, should remain neutral in statewide political issues. But any and all History Project members may, of course, share information about political issues through our listserv and meetings and other means to raise awareness about pressing LGBT-related political issues!

ACTION ITEMS

- 1) Our next meeting will be Thursday, February 18, 5:30 – 7:30 pm @ Parrott Room, Roanoke Public Library.
- 2) Redesign our website (<http://lgbthistory.pages.roanoke.edu>) to make our most important content easier to find and more visible from the front page.

- 3) Move forward with an “all of the above” approach to our ongoing Archives Collection Drive:
 - a. Proposed “Reunion” event at The Park
 - b. Proposed collection event at the RDC
 - c. Proposed collection day at MCC
 - d. Reach out to IP group to see how best to coordinate archives donations from their members
 - e. Reach out to UU church
- 4) Reach out to The Roanoke Times to pitch the idea of doing a story on the LGBTQ+ History Project.
- 5) Reach out to contemporary LGBTQ+ publications to encourage them to make a regular donation of all new issues to our archives.
- 6) Talk to the Virginia Room about minimizing damage/use of original copies of rare items in the archives.
- 7) Reach out to someone with the skills and interest to do a mini-documentary film about the History Project, or at least to help document our oral history initiative.
- 8) Reach out to active LGBTQ+ members of the Roanoke Police Department as a first step towards accessing historic police records?
- 9) Investigate options for creating an online audio walking tour to accompany or build upon the physical walking tour.
- 10) Love one another, and have fun. ☺