

Wanderground: Archiving Lesbian Legacies, Words, Creativity in Rhode Island

Research Summary – Installment #4

Blog Post – February 25, 2022

Sisters Are Doing It for Themselves

What did we create here in Rhode Island? Introducing RI authors, musicians, and some others...

As early as the 1960s, Lesbians began to more openly express their feelings and life experiences in poetry, stories, and essays. The [Women in Print Movement](#) (1970s through the 1990s,) emerged as Lesbian-focused writers, publishers, and bookstores positively shaped and affirmed Lesbian thought and writing. Despite adversity, those vibrant spaces and voices encouraged Lesbians to discover and affirm their own identities, claim their own strength and power, and gain support and a sense of well-being. The publications had a profound effect on Lesbians struggling to come out. As Lesbians came to an awareness of themselves as Lesbians, they found each other and formed alliances and communities.

In addition to this this movement in writing, Feminist/Lesbian bookstores also carried a wide selection of other Lesbian-created materials: music, crafts, artwork, jewelry, cards, and so on. The broader Lesbian cultural scene also featured concerts and performances (music, dance, theater, spoken word), festivals, gallery exhibits, craft fairs, and street demonstrations.

I was not living in Rhode Island during those days, so I wanted to discover and know more about what Lesbians had been creating since 1970. Those who completed the survey had much to offer.

Periodicals

There has not been a specifically Lesbian publication in Rhode Island though many Lesbians have contributed to creating periodicals that did include content relevant to Lesbians. Chronologically, these publications include:

Feminist Yellow Pages: A Directory of Services for Women (1982 and 1988)

Produced by the Women’s Liberation Union of RI / Feminist Resources Unlimited. (Available in the [Jodi L. Glass Papers](#) archived in the John Hay Special Collections at Brown University And the [RI LGBTQ+ Community Archive](#) / Providence Public Library.)

Options (1982 – present)

Since 1982, *Options Magazine* has provided news, resources, and events for the Rhode Island area’s LGBTQ+ community. (Archive issues available at the [RI LGBTQ+ Community Archive](#) / Providence Public Library)

- **Ink, Inc.**, a Lesbian owned printing press, produced Options in its early years.

The Third Wave (1993-1997)

A voice for RI's Feminist Women, this monthly newspaper (10,000 distribution) was published by Feminist Resources Unlimited (FRU). (Available in the [Jodi L. Glass Papers](#) archived in the John Hay Special Collections as Brown University.)

GET Magazine (2011-2017)

GET RI Magazine claimed to be Rhode Island's premier GLBT, gay, lesbian, queer, indie, artist, and alternative lifestyles magazine with a monthly distribution

ZINE: Scream Queens Magazine (Issue 1, Vo. 1, 2016)

Features a discussion between Public Bath (Katrina Clark) and Jane Harms discussing their music and performing experiences. It includes a brief mention of performing at Deville's in Providence. (Available from the [Malana Krongleb Zine Collection](#) archived in the John Hay Special Collections as Brown University.)

Books

For titles with (**), more details about them can be found in the [Wanderground Book Collection](#).

Pre-2000

- Anne Fausto-Sterling
 - *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women & Men*, (1992). Academic.
 - *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, (2000). Academic.
- Barbara Zanotti, editor, *A Faith of One's Own: Explorations by Catholic Lesbians*, (1986). Non-Fiction Anthology. (**)
This anthology is not really from RI but one of the contributors, Mev Miller, founder of Wanderground who currently lives in RI, tells of her experience as a Catholic at Yale Divinity School in "She's a Witch, Burn Her."
- Dana R. Shugar, *Separatism and the Women's Community*, (1995). Non-Fiction. (**)
- Linda Handel, *Now That You're Out Of The Closet, What About The Rest Of The House?*, (1997). Non-Fiction.

Titles published since 2000 / Post-Women-in-Print "Heyday"

- A.K. Summers, *Pregnant Butch: Nine Long Months Spent in Drag*, (2014). Graphic Novel. (**)
- Christina Crosby, *A Body, Undone*, (2017). Memoir. (**)
- Dorothy Devine, *Patchwork: Fifty Years of Poetry*, (2019). Poetry. (**)

- Elda Dawber, *Wait Until I'm Dead! A Novel of Family Secrets*, (2014). Fiction. (**)
- Emily Danforth (**)
 - *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, (2012). Fiction.
 - *Plain Bad Heroines*, (2020). Fiction.
- Linda Skibski, *Forever, Joanne: A Story of Love, Loss, and Leaps of Faith*, (2021). Memoir. (**)
- Mari SanGiovanni (**)
 - *Greetings from Jamaica, Wish You Were Queer*, (2006). Fiction.
 - *Camptown Ladies*, (2011). Fiction.
- Mariellen Langworthy, *All the Way Home*, (2017). Fiction. (**)
 - *Soul Sister* (2017) is her other book but it doesn't have Lesbian content
- Mary Cappello
 - *Called Back: My Reply to Cancer, My Return to Life*, (2009 / Re-issued 2021). Memoir.
 - "Gone Fishing" in *Telling Moments: Autobiographical Lesbian Short Stories*, (2003). Memoir. (**)
 - *Night Bloom: An Italian-American Life*, (1998). Memoir.
 - And several other titles that are not specifically Lesbian content
- Mev Miller (**)
 - *At Home with Old Lesbians in Rhode Island: A Photo Album in Progress*, (2020). Photography.
 - *Our Stories, Ourselves: The EmBODYment of Women's Learning in Literacy*. (2011). Education Anthology.
 NOTE: This book is an edited volume in which Mev has a chapter that addresses Lesbian experience, "Four Directions to the Center of Embodiment: Vignette 4 – West: Water and Emotion – Making Sexuality and gender Relevant." The co-editor of this volume, Kathleen P. King, also a Lesbian, was born and raised in Rhode Island.
- Paula Vogel – Playwright
 Paula has written numbers of plays, though few of them have directly Lesbian content. As of now, they are not yet in the Wanderground collection. A longtime teacher, Vogel spent the bulk of her academic career – from 1984 to 2008 – at Brown University, where she served as Adele Kellenberg Seaver Professor in Creative Writing, oversaw its playwriting program, and helped found the Brown/Trinity Rep Consortium.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paula_Vogel

- Susan Joyce (author) & Thea Ernest (illustrator), *Billy the Rescue Dog*, (2021). Children's book. (**)

Musicians / Performers

Several musicians and performers were also mentioned by those who completed the survey. Those with ties to Rhode Island include:

- Becky Chace Band
- Clarice LaVerne Thompson, Composer and Conductor (Director of RPM Voices)
- Kim Trusty (Singer-Songwriter)
- Mary Ann Rossoni (Singer-Songwriter)
- Mary Day Band
- Poppy Champlin (Comedian)

Lesbian Cultural Workers in Rhode Island

Let us know who you think we should add to our list of Lesbians based in RI who make art!

Do you know of Lesbians in Rhode Island who create cultural expressions that affirm Lesbian life or portray Lesbian life experiences? Please let us know who they are so we may add their works to the Wanderground archives.

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sv/fsWJJdl/LesbianCulturalWorkers>

During the Month of March

An exhibit of many of these materials and other Wanderground items will be on display...

[Cranston Public Library Central Branch](#) – Community Display

140 Sockanosset Cross Rd / Cranston, RI 02920

Next Week

Be sure to come back next week for Installment #5: Who Needs Archives (and why the name Wanderground)?