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Sharing Her Stories

LESBIAN ARCHIVE PRESERVES & AMPLIFIES HERSTORIES OF NEW ENGLAND

Mev Miller has been amassing books for decades. It's a passion she inherited, at least in part, from her grandfather, a former university professor who lined a studio in his house with hard-covers. Even when she was a child, having access to all that knowledge made an impression on Miller. "I thought," she says, "it was the most fabulous thing in the world."

By the time she was old enough to turn her own home into a library, though, it was stories by and about women that dominated her shelves. Miller started collecting them during the 10 years she managed an East Haven, Connecticut-based wholesaler of books from indie publishers. In distributing works mainly to literary, leftist and feminist bookshops, Miller found herself a part of a flourishing community of women—scholars, activists and everyday bookworms alike—for whom lesbian identity and the liberation movement were two sides of the very same page.

"Just before COVID, I started thinking about how I was going to retire, and needed to figure out what to do with all this stuff," says Miller, whose collections now include t-shirts, pins and various other ephemera representing lesbian communities. "I realized I wanted to create a lesbian archive. I think a lot of lesbians are unfamiliar with

the things in my collection, and I want to share them."

With that goal in mind, Miller and a small team of volunteer stewards have organized the Wanderground Lesbian Archive/Library, a new nonprofit that is committed to amplifying the collective herstories of lesbians in New England and a still-growing repository of artifacts. In addition to Miller's personal holdings, Wanderground accepts community donations of everything from political pamphlets to personal photo albums, catalogs them, and shares its collection with the public through pop-up showcases and curator talks at libraries, churches, Pride centers and more.

And what a collection it is. Items really run the gamut, from a vintage t-shirt that proudly declares "100% Dyke" to historic records from singer-songwriters popular on the women's music fest circuit. There are countless books too—including, of course, The Wanderground, activist Sally Miller Gearheart's classic separatist feminist novel.

In bringing all these to a broader audience, the goal is simple: to reclaim the importance of L-specific space in a crowded alphabet.

"I've had an archivist say to me, 'We're an LGBTQ library. We have a lot of everything



