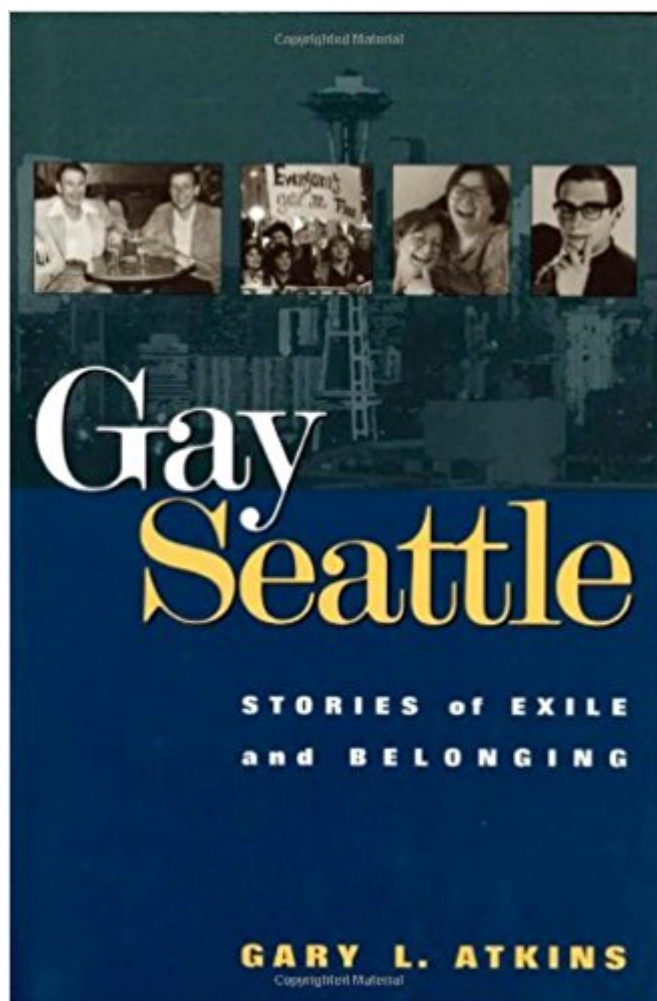




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Gay Seattle



Synopsis

Winner of a 2004 Washington State Book Award
Winner of a 2004 Alpha Sigma Nu (ASN) Jesuit Book Award
In 1893, the Washington State legislature quietly began passing a set of laws that essentially made homosexuality, and eventually even the discussion of homosexuality, a crime. A century later Mike Lowry became the first governor of the state to address the annual lesbian and gay pride rally in Seattle. *Gay Seattle* traces the evolution of Seattle's gay community in those 100 turbulent years, telling through a century of stories how gays and lesbians have sought to achieve a sense of belonging in Seattle. Gary Atkins recounts the demonization of gays by social crusaders around the turn of the century, the earliest prosecutions for sodomy, the official harassment and discrimination through most of the twentieth century, and the medical discrimination and commitment to mental hospitals that continued into the 1970s as homosexuality was diagnosed as a disease that could be "cured." Places of refuge from this imposed social exile were created in underground theater and dance clubs: the Gold Rush-era burlesque shows, modern drag theater, and in mid-century the emergence of openly gay bars, from the Casino to Shelley's Leg. Many of these were subjected to steady exploitation by corrupt police - until bar owner MacIver Wells and two Seattle Times reporters exposed the racket. The increasingly public presence of gays in Seattle was accompanied by the gradual coalescence of social services and self-help organizations such as the Dorian Society, gay businesses and advocacy groups including the Greater Seattle Business Association, and the stormy relationship between the Vatican, Seattle's Catholic hierarchy, and gay worshippers. Atkins' narrative reveals the complex and often frustrating process of claiming a civic life, showing how gays and lesbians have engaged in a multilayered struggle for social acceptance against the forces of state and city politics, the police, the media, and public opinion. The emergence of mainstream political activism in the 1970s, and ultimately the election of Cal Anderson and other openly gay officials to the state legislature and city council, were momentous events, yet shadowed by the devastating rise of AIDS and its effect on the homosexual community as a whole. These stories of exile and belonging draw on numerous original interviews as well as case studies of individuals and organizations that played important roles in the history of Seattle's gay and lesbian community. Collectively, they are a powerful testament to the endurance and fortitude of this minority community, revealing the ways a previously hidden sexual minority "comes out" as a people and establishes a public presence in the face of challenges from within and without. Gary Atkins is associate professor of communication at Seattle University. "Gay Seattle" covers much of the past century, and the post-1950s history in quite useful detail. It offers the first published account of the formation of gay and lesbian political organizations in the city. The city's

gay history is distinctive owing to the port influence and the notorious police protection system that Atkins explores very effectively. This is fine regional history, reflecting extensive archival research, as well as interviews. It also is impressively well written." - Roger Simpson, co-author of *An Evening at the Garden of Allah: A Gay Cabaret in Seattle*

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Customer Reviews

"A detailed study of the evolution of lesbians and gays in Seattle that contributes significantly to the larger historical studies of gender and geography..In his lively narrative based on extensive oral histories and public records, Atkins skillfully weaves national changes and developments into stories of local individuals and movements, making this a study of importance far beyond the borders of the Pacific Northwest..A fast-paced, informative, and entertaining read." •History: Reviews of New Books
"This is one of the best works of regional history to be issued in the past five years or so." •Dan Hays, Salem Statesman Journal
"A groundbreaking new book..[This] story as been told in fragmented fashion in newspapers and on television, but it's never been put together in such dramatic fashion before..[Atkins] has a gift for transforming each story into a page turner..Gay Seattle tells the story of 20th-century Seattle in more compelling detail than any other book." •John Hartl, Special to The Seattle Times
"Atkins' sharp style is a fluid combination of observant, level-headed reportage and you-are-there storytelling. It's the kind of rich, accessible writing that will have you opening the book on any page, intending a quick skim, and finding yourself still reading an hour later..Atkins has accomplished something fine here: an important social document that feels less like dry history and more like life." •Steve Wiecking, Seattle Weekly
"Gary Atkins has given us

a richly textured and wonderfully readable account of the development of gay and lesbian life in one American city..Gay Seattle is a major contribution to gay and lesbian history. It adds significantly to our understanding of the emergence of gay urban communities in the second half of the twentieth century. And its rich tapestry of personal stories makes it a pleasure to read."â •Committee on Gay and Lesbian History Newsletter

"Gay Seattle covers much of the past century, and the post-1950s history in quite useful detail. It offers the first published account of the formation of gay and lesbian political organizations in the city. The cityâ™s gay history is distinctive owing to the port influence and the notorious police protection system that Atkins explores very effectively. This is fine regional history, reflecting extensive archival research, as well as interviews. It also is impressively well written."â •Roger Simpsonco, author of An Evening at the Garden of Allah: A Gay Cabaret in Seattle

The story line develops chronologically and the chapter headings highlight the principal topics as the narrative progresses. Indirectly, the book serves as a readable history of the evolution of the city and the ways in which the gay community locally worked amidst the various crosscurrents to achieve its civic and political goals.

Thanks.

The book Gay Seattle covers the effect gay folks had on Seattle (and the reverse) from the '70's to recent times. It includes names and dates and is a great sourcebook for further study.

Readable but superficial history of Seattle gay life from the anti-sodomy days a century ago to its appeal many decades later. Atkins offers nothing like the sophisticated analysis of George Chauncey's Gay New York or even recent gay and lesbian histories of Portland, Oregon or Buffalo, New York.

I'm just finishing off Gay Seattle, by Gary Atkins, and can't recommend it too highly. The history is local, but the "general" history is good, gripping and valuable, and serves as a microcosm for gay history across the country. I'd forgotten how dreadful the '70's were, and how close we came to losing a lot of very solid gains. The religionists and the conservatives took over, and for a while there it was pretty bleak - quite like now: defeats all over, then slow progress. The political end of the

book is good to read too, and reads like a good discussion of the various "how's" of political/social progress. Well-written, immediate, and hard to put down. Highly recommended. NRB

The journey that I have been led is a difficult one - from the mud flat, a detour to Steilacoom, a small climb up to Denny's knoll, and the courage ascend to the Hills. The tearing, triumphs, grindings of teeth, and the celebrations - as words capture the emotions of the past, they captivate my consciousness and draw out parallel emotions from within myself. The author has told his own story, keeping little distance between himself and his words, creating a close intimacy between story of the past and myself: As Francis Framer was straitjacketed and carried off, it was my own scream for help that I hear. When her eyelid was pulled open and her eyeball stared right into a spearing ice pick, it was my eyes that are forcibly shut. The vaudevillian movements underground come through my ingertips as I touch these words on the pages. And I gyrate my hips on Shelly's Leg. Triumph comes to my face when it was down on 13. Shadow clouds my emotion when it was down on Cal's bill. Reading the book was a difficult journey for me, because, well, it had been a difficult journey indeed for those who had walked the path. But it is a journey well deserving of its travelers. As I look about Seattle, I find the reflections of my past: I hear my own language speaking through the many entrances that I have not entered. I see pictures of myself hung on the walls of places that I have never been. My heart echoes the steps taken by people whose names I have scarcely known. Today, I have, I own a sense a dwelling.

What an interesting history from what I can see online. Especially the information dealing with the now rabidly anti-gay spectre known as Fr. Robert Sirico who is dealt with at length in this book. What is crucial to note is the vacillating, impressionable and unstable picture of Sirico that is painted. Could any reasonable person not see a parallel in his later "conversion" back to reactionary Roman Catholicism?? What a tawdry tale of this man displays, and for historians, one of the most pathetic ambles through complex moral issues possible. Sirico and Seattle's gay history is a very telling and damning matter.

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