Doused In Milk: An LGBTQ History Tour of the Castro

FACT SHEET

**Description of Tour:** Doused In Milk; This LGBTQ history tour of the Castro was created by Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC) youth interns. The tour focuses on the hirstory. What is hirstory? Hirstory is the marginalized and often invisible history of youth, and communities that are gender variant, transgender, lesbian, and people of color in the Castro. The tour includes discussions of African American queer communities, lesbian spaces and activism, LGBTQ homeless youth, queer activism, Harvey Milk, and racial profiling.

The project was created by high school students who participated in LYRIC’s 8-week Sequoia Leadership Internship. Interns researched histories and tour stops, authored tour narratives, conceptualized the tour title and materials, coordinated marketing and outreach, and led tours. The project was supervised by Anthony Acosta, LYRIC Program Coordinator and Mia Tu Much, LYRIC Program Assistant.

You can learn more about LYRIC at [http://lyric.org/](http://lyric.org/).


**Times:** All tours are scheduled for 11am

**Target Audience:**
- High school students
- Up to 30 students, teachers, or support staff total for each tour
- Gay-Straight Alliance Students, or enrolled in social studies, American history, ethnic studies, or interested classes

**Logistics:**
- Space is limited - Contact Anthony Acosta, LYRIC Program Coordinator ([anthony@lyric.org](mailto:anthony@lyric.org)) to secure a spot.
- Students need to submit a signed SFUSD field trip permission form with parent/caregiver consent. Respect sensitivity when completing field trip description (i.e. “Neighborhood history tour” or “history tour”) for some students.
- Groups must arrange their own transportation
- The tour meets in front of Lavender Youth Recreation and Information center (LYRIC), 127 Collingwood St, San Francisco CA 94114
- Groups should arrive at LYRIC 5-10 minutes early for the tour.
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OPTIONAL LESSON

Objectives—Students will be able to:
  o Increase awareness of the multiple histories in the Castro District
  o Think about issues of social justice and equity within their communities

Materials:
  o Paper
  o Pencils
  o Crayons

Classroom Procedures:

1.) Pre-Tour Brainstorm:
  o What is LGBTQ history?
  o Why is the Castro known as the “gay neighborhood”?
  o Read excerpt from History of the Castro/Upper Market by Pauline Scholten
    • Read the article as a group.
    • Ask students what are two things they learned

2.) Post-Tour Pamphlet Activity: After the tour, encourage students to create their own Castro histrory pamphlet targeted toward students at their school. The pamphlets can be used to highlight what they have learned on the tour, and/or as a recruitment tool for Gay-Straight Alliance.
  • Page 1: Create a beautiful graphic that will grab the eye. Think of a title or phrase that will make someone want to read more, and that invites them to learn more about LGBTQ history in the Castro.
  • Page 2: Include three quotes from classmates’ thoughts on why learning LGBTQ history is important; include the first name of the person who said the quote. Examples: "LGBTQ history is everybody’s history” or “The best history lesson of my life”
  • Page 3: A description, in your own words, answering the question: “What is LGBTQ history?”
  • Page 4: Write a paragraph describing some of the things that a student might learn from LGBTQ history. You may include more quotes here, if desired.
  • Page 5: Where a student could go to get this information (ex. Gay-Straight Alliance, LYRIC, LGBTQ liaison, history class, etc.)
  • Page 6: Biography of the writer; location, day, and time of the class/group

Art and color everywhere!!

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<td>What is LGBTQ history?</td>
<td>What are examples of what a student might learn from LGBTQ history?</td>
<td>What resources a student could go to access this information?</td>
<td>Three quotes from classmates on LGBTQ history.</td>
<td>Biography of the writer; location, day, and time of the class/group</td>
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<td>Title or phrase that invites students to read the pamphlet. Beautiful graphic included.</td>
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The Working Class (1900 through 1960s)

In the first decades of the 20th century, Eureka Valley’s popularity with Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish immigrants earned it the nickname “Little Scandinavia.” Businesses and amenities catered to the Scandinavian community, including the Norse Cove restaurant, Finnila’s Finnish Baths, the Scandinavian Seamen’s Union Hall, and bakeries specializing in coffee cakes, cardamom buns, rye bread and other specialities.

[...]

From the 1930s through the 1960s, Eureka Valley was also known as a working class, Irish-American enclave. The Irish were a powerful presence in the city, involved in all levels of politics from precinct worker up, and the neighborhood was home to many laborers, firemen, policemen, and other city workers. The district produced a number of city’s Irish-American police chiefs.

[...]

Housewives walked to the stores along Castro and 18th streets. A good bakery sold Beehive Cakes next to the Castro Theatre, which had been built on Castro in 1922. Across the street was Safeway, where everyone did their grocery shopping. Cliff’s Variety Store carried everything you couldn’t find elsewhere. And for the workingmen, there were lots of neighborhood bars.

Most of the Catholic kids went to the Holy Redeemer grammar school, taught by nuns who lived in the convent next door to it. The public school children walked to Douglass Elementary. All the kids, no matter what school they attended, loved Saturday movie matinees at the Castro Theatre, visiting the small wild animals at the Josephine Randall Junior Museum (http://www.randallmuseum.org) in nearby Corona Heights, and dressing up in costumes for Cliff’s annual Halloween parade.

But as Eureka Valley moved into the 1960s, the neighborhood started to change, look shabby. Victorian homes, the latest thing in 1890, now were outdated on the outside and flawed on the inside. They were hard to heat, didn’t have enough electrical outlets or closets, and their toilets were located on the back porch. Built before automobiles existed many didn’t have garages.

Younger residents left for modern homes with two-car garages and suburban life in the East Bay and in San Mateo and Marin Counties. Safeway, an anchor store for Castro Street, closed after the big new store at Market and Church opened in 1954. In 1964, San Francisco dropped its post-1906 earthquake regulation requiring all police and firemen to live in the city, and more families joined the exodus to new homes in places like Novato.

In 1963, a new tavern at 2348 Market Street joined the ranks of the shot-and-a-beer bars where local men drank. It was called The Missouri Mule, and it catered to gay men.

Source: http://www.castrocbd.org (March 2014)
The New Immigrants (Late 1960’s through 1980)

During the 50s and 60s, gay and lesbian bars, like their patrons, were scattered throughout the city. The artsy crowd favored North Beach, drinking at the Black Cat (which featured shows by drag entertainer Jose Sarria), Ann’s 440, and 12 Adler Place. Polk Street was home to a number of gay and lesbian bohemians; in the 1950s a large group of artists, poets, actors and musicians lived at The Wently residential hotel at Polk and Sutter. The residents and their friends, who included poet Allen Ginsberg, had long, philosophical discussions while nursing their coffee at Foster’s Cafeteria, located on the ground floor.

The Tenderloin area was a favorite haunt of drag queens, who gossiped over coffee at Compton’s Cafeteria and cheered drag artist Charles Pierce’s send-ups of Bette Davis and Mae West at the 181 Club. Those looking for rougher trade patronized waterfront gay bars, such as The Sea Cow and Jacks, and in the 1960s, the new leather bars that emerged in the industrial South of Market area, including The Tool Box, Febe’s and The Stud.

Many homosexuals, terrified of exposure, avoided gay bars because of police raids. “I can’t risk it,” said a gay man interviewed by the San Francisco Chronicle in June 1958. “I have a good job and I don’t want to lose it. So all week long, I’m straight. I talk baseball, and I take girls out for dinner, and maybe even dancing.” When “the masquerade gets to be too much,” he would go to North Beach and “have dinner in one of the gay little restaurants and just look around and realize that I’m not alone.”

In the 1950s, gay activists began speaking up for homosexual rights and filing court challenges. Harry Hay and a group of gay political activists founded the Mattachine Society in 1950 in Los Angeles to fight for gay rights. A San Francisco chapter opened in 1956. In 1955, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, two lesbians living in Eureka Valley, started a social group called Daughters of Bilitis (DOB). Lyon and Martin, realizing lesbians needed more than just a private place to talk and dance, soon broadened the DOB’s mission to include educational and political goals. They began publishing a magazine called The Ladder.

In the late 1960s, gay men began moving into Eureka Valley, attracted as earlier immigrants had been by cheap housing. Renting or buying the old, faded Victorians, and prizing their architectural contrast to the mid-century boxes, the men were the first wave of a movement that would change the neighborhood into a gay village, and give it a new name. Some social historians cite as a driving force 1967’s “Summer of Love,” which brought to San Francisco an estimated 100,000 middle-class youths rebelling against all types of conformity, including sexual stereotypes. Other historians point to the Stonewall rebellion of June 1969, when a police raid on a private gay bar in New York was met with violent resistance and became the catalyst of the modern gay rights movement.

Whatever the catalyst, in the late ’60s and early ’70s both Polk Street and Eureka Valley experienced an upsurge in gay residents as well as businesses catering to them. Initially, Polk Street was considered “the gay downtown.” San Francisco’s first gay parade in 1970, commemorating Stonewall, was a march down Polk Street to City Hall.

Source: http://www.castrocbd.org (March 2014)
Eureka Valley’s cheap Victorians, however, attracted a much higher proportion of gay homeowners. The first wave of gay hippies was followed by more affluent gay professionals, who devoted countless hours to restoring their Queen Annes and Sticks, gentrifying the neighborhood in the process. Gay business owners set up shop along Upper Market, 18th, and Castro Streets. Soon it was possible for a resident to have nearly all his needs met by dozens of gay merchants: jewelers, florists, accountants, barbers, dry cleaners, clothiers, and more.

One of those new merchants in 1972 was Harvey Milk, a camera store owner whose activism on behalf of his neighbors, gay and straight, soon made him a political force in the neighborhood. Advocating gay political representation, Milk began running for local office in 1973. It would take him four tries to become in 1977 the first openly gay elected official of any large city in the U.S.

Gays were making a transition from hiding in the shadows and the closet to living “out and proud” lives. In the process, Eureka Valley was becoming one of the first gay neighborhoods in the world. The new inhabitants, who came from throughout the United States and beyond, sought not just a place of refuge but somewhere to celebrate gay identity.

They called their neighborhood “The Castro,” after its busiest street and the huge, red neon theater sign illuminating it at night. The handsome young men, showing off their gym-toned bodies in snug 501 jeans and tight T-shirts, many sporting close-cropped hair and moustaches, were dubbed “Castro Clones.” You could easily purchase the wardrobe on Castro Street at the aptly named All American Boy clothing store.

[…]

The ‘70s Castro wasn’t just about sex. The neighborhood seemed energized, a new frontier. Gays and lesbians formed political groups, churches and synagogues. They started newspapers, film festivals, theatre groups, marching bands, and softball leagues. They registered to vote and elected Harvey Milk their city supervisor as soon as at-large elections changed to election by district.

[…]

The Gay Pride Parade, now on Market Street, was bigger and louder every year, led by the roaring motorcycles of hundreds of Dykes on Bikes. Still, the late ‘70s were marred by political threats and painful events: the battle in 1978 to defeat a “Save Our Children” state ballot measure to ban gay teachers from the public schools; the assassination of Harvey Milk and San Francisco’s mayor George Moscone later that year; and the White Night gay riot and subsequent police brutality in The Castro following the light sentence given in 1979 to the murderer of Milk and Moscone.

As the 1980s began, the future seemed bright. The Castro’s gay residents had forged a vibrant community and would use all their political and economic clout to defend it. They did not know their most heartbreaking and costly battle lay just ahead.

Source: [http://www.castrocbd.org](http://www.castrocbd.org) (March 2014)