

List I

HIU34089/90 LGBTQ Histories Since 1865 (Gill Frank)



In 1889, G. Frank Lydston, a Chicago doctor made the bold assertion: “There is in every community of any size a colony of male sexual perverts; they are usually known to each other and are likely to congregate together and characterized by effeminacy in voice, dress and manner.” Lydston’s observation raises a number of questions that are at the heart of this module: When and why did the sexual behaviours Lydston documented come to be seen as perverse? And how did doctors such as Lydston contribute to that stigmatization? How did these so-called “sexual perverts” self-identify? Were they “gay,” “homosexual,” or something else entirely? What was the significance of gender variance and play to this “colony” of men? And what does the existence of such colonies (and such observations about them) reveal about sexual communities, sexual identities, and sexual politics?

This List 1 module focuses on the history of same-sex sexuality and gender variance in the United States from 1865 - 1990. We consider the changing meanings of same-sex desires, acts, identities, and relationships; the social definitions and regulations of same-sex sexuality and gender variance; the emergence of sexual subcultures, identities, and social movements; and sexual medicine and science. We will further explore how racial, geographic, class and gender identities informed same-sex sexuality and gender variance in the United States. By focusing on same-sex sexuality and gender variance, we examine social struggles, regulation and resistance and in so doing rethink the histories of identities, desires and politics.