

# Lost transgender memoir from 1921 discovered by Drexel researcher

October 13 2010

---

Dr. Randall Sell, a professor at the Drexel University School of Public Health and director of the LGBT Health Program, announced today that he has discovered significant parts of the long lost third volume of memoirs, entitled “Riddle of the Underworld,” from 1921 by the pseudonymous Earl Lind. With the recent suicides in the LGBT community, the timing of the finding is heightened by Lind’s explicit and emphatic pleas for adults to support “sexual and gender non-conformists” to prevent their suicide.

“Nearly a century ago this author spoke out, urging adults to support young people who display signs of sexual and gender non-conformity, to prevent those youths’ distress and suicide,” said Sell, who is a renowned researcher on LGBT health and founder of [www.gaydata.org](http://www.gaydata.org). “Suicide is a public health concern. While Lind’s memoirs show that we keep repeating our mistakes, they can also serve as guiding light to recognize the needs of society’s diverse communities and help prevent suicides.”

A complete transcription of the fragmented text as rendered by Ted Faigle, manager, Drexel University School of Public Health’s Program for LGBT Health, will be posted on [www.OutHistory.org](http://www.OutHistory.org), the authoritative web site on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history, on Monday, October 11, 2010 in recognition of National Coming Out Day.

The transgender Lind (who also called himself Ralph Werther and Jennie June) published two autobiographical volumes in 1919 and 1922.

The third volume, advertised and much discussed but never printed, remained a mystery to scholars and historians for nearly a century.

“Documents describing the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people from early in the last century are very rare and important,” said Sell. “If we want to understand how we got where we are today we need to understand and appreciate where we came from. Documents like those produced by Lind put his life and livelihood at risk.”

Sell discovered the manuscript in the papers of Dr. Victor Robinson in the Archives of the United States National Library of Medicine. Outhistory.org includes sample photographs of the chapters, a complete transcription of the often difficult-to-read pages, photos of Lind and excerpts from his published autobiographies.

“We at OutHistory.org are delighted to publish this major find in transgender history,” said Jonathan Ned Katz, acclaimed LGBT historian and co-founder of Outhistory.org. “The discovery of three chapters of Lind’s lost memoirs suggests that other missing chapters of this work may also be found, along with additional written works by the author. I hope that someone will eventually discover Lind’s birth name, leading to a fuller understanding of this complex individual and his society.”

The newly found chapters, like Lind’s published memoirs, *The Autobiography of an Androgyne* (1919) and *The Female Impersonators* (1922), provide rare, first person testimony about the early 20th century life and times of a self-described “fairie” or “androgyne,” and an “individual with male genitals,” but whose “psychical constitution” and sexual life “approach the female type.”

In his published autobiography Lind describes “Pareses Hall,” a New York City resort for “androgynes” in the 1890s, and their alleged

formation in 1895 of the Cercle Hermaphroditos “for defense against the world’s bitter persecution” – an organization which, if not apocryphal, is the earliest known homosexual emancipation organization in the United States. No other evidence of the Cercle has been found.

Sell is one the foremost researchers on LGBT health. He has researched and published on the history and best practices of statistical sampling in the context of sexual orientation, has created an assessment of sexual orientation, and was one of the first to estimate the prevalence of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in a probability sample of the United States, United Kingdom and France.

Provided by Drexel University

Citation: Lost transgender memoir from 1921 discovered by Drexel researcher (2010, October 13) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-10-lost-transgender-memoir-1921-drexel.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.