



Land of 10,000 Loves: A History of Queer Minnesota

Stewart Van Cleve

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For too long, LGBTQ communities—including Minnesota’s—have been maligned, misrepresented, and often outright ignored. Myths regarding the queer experience have grown and become embedded in local and national consciousness. The absence of queer stories over time in local historical and popular writing only served to further this ignorance, but great strides have been made in recent decades to celebrate Minnesota’s vibrant queer history. Add to this rising chorus an enchanting new voice: *Land of 10,000 Loves*, Stewart Van Cleve’s wide-ranging and unprecedented illustrated history of queer life in Minnesota.

Drawing from the renowned Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota—a vast collection of books, photographs, films, and other historical artifacts that Van Cleve calls “one of the most comprehensive accounts of international queer history in the world”—*Land of 10,000 Loves* blends oral history, archival narrative, newspaper accounts, and fascinating illustrations to paint a remarkable picture of Minnesota’s queer history. More than 120 concise historical essays lead readers from the earliest evidences of queer life in Minnesota before the Second World War—for example, Oscar Wilde’s visit to Minnesota and “rumors” at the Alexander Ramsey house—to riverfront vice districts, protest and parade sites, bars, 1970s collectives, institutions, public spaces, and private homes. More than 130 illustrations illuminate these histories with images of pride guides, archival photographs, and advertisements from local queer bars among other extraordinary pieces of ephemera and artifacts. Many of the stories and images are well known, while others have been all but forgotten, until now.

Building on foundational works of regional queer history such as *The Evening Crowd at Kirmser’s* and *Queer Twin Cities*, the historical vignettes of *Land of 10,000 Loves* show us that Minnesota—from its biggest cities to its smallest towns—has been, as Van Cleve notes, “queer, to a certain extent, since the very beginning.” *Land of 10,000 Loves* honors this rich and diverse legacy and is a compelling testament to the sacrifices, scandals, and victories that have affected and continue to affect the lives of queer Minnesotans.

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