

# Digital History Reviews

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Contributing Editor

The *Journal of American History*, in collaboration with the Web site *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu>, publishes regular reviews of digital history projects. The reviews appear both in the printed journal and at *History Matters*. *History Matters* provides an annotated guide to more than one thousand projects for teaching U.S. history. The goal is to offer a gateway to the works in digital history and to summarize their strengths and weaknesses with particular attention to their utility for teachers.

The digital history reviews are edited by Jeffrey McClurken. Please contact him at [jmclclurk@umw.edu](mailto:jmclclurk@umw.edu) if you would like to suggest a digital history project for review or write a review. We also welcome comments on our review guidelines, which are available at <http://jah.oah.org/submit/digital-history-reviews/>.

NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, <http://www.nyclgbtsites.org/>. Created and maintained by Andrew Dolkart, Ken Lustbader, and Jay Shockley. Reviewed March–Sept. 2018.

Launched in 2015, the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project maps and records present and possible future lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) historic sites in New York City. Using the tag line “Making an Invisible History Visible,” the project draws on the narrative that most LGBT historic sites have long been “unknown or underappreciated.” As of late 2018, the Web site already includes over two hundred historic sites, each with a brief scholarly record, images, location, and other information. The project fills a hole and promotes other scholarly queer history of New York City. Only a few academic monographs have been published on the city’s LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) history to date (George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* [1994]; Mignon R. Moore’s *Invisible Families* [2011]; Christina A. Hanhardt’s *Safe*

*Space* [2013]), and more work like the project is needed.

The everyday user—especially undergraduate students and LGBTQ people with little access to their history—can glean a vast amount of knowledge from this project in a short of amount of time. Perhaps future funding will allow the project to attach historical documents or draw upon Web sites that already gather massive amounts of LGBTQ history online, such as OutHistory.org and the Digital Transgender Archive. A PDF (portable document format) is available of all sites, but a CSV (comma separated values) file would be useful as well in future iterations.

The authors state that theirs is the first historic site “to uncover these places in all five boroughs” or counties. For those who know New York City geography, this statement implies that the project reflects the racial and economic diversity of the city. Yet, out of the over two hundred locations, only one is an Asian LGBTQ site, and the white gay male experience is disproportionately represented over any other race, gender, or sexuality. There are no indigenous or native LGBTQ sites, and the history

of colonialism is not tackled by beginning at the city's seventeenth-century "founding." The structural inequalities of racism, colonialism, and the political economies and realities they create means that the people who could afford to be out were often white.

The authors also do not state why the *Q* for "queer" was not included in the site's name, particularly as it was adopted in the National Park Service's *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History* (2016). This study is a series of essays used by state and federal preservationists to determine what constitutes an LGBTQ site. While this project succeeds in diversifying the LGBTQ history of New York City more than other projects before it, there are many directions in which it needs to grow. The site welcomes public opinion and advocacy by encouraging suggestions for sites and volunteer support on any level, and more could be done to target people of color for their stories.

The sites project is incredibly useful to scholars, instructors, and popular historians alike for the content it provides. The site is beautifully designed and easy to navigate, simple while also smart. The careful, thorough tagging of each historic site by period, region, key individuals and groups, identity types, and other criteria, makes it possible for users to build connections across sites with a click on any tag. Photos bring each site to life, and the project makes a noticeable attempt to represent the gender, sexual, and racial diversity of LGBTQ people in these images; however, the images skew to represent cisgender men and white people. A clear how-to guide walks users through the site, and curated, themed tours assist both novice and expert on wandering the city. I was struck by the impressive amount of work to conduct the research and build and maintain this information in a digestible form on the site. More so, I was absolutely inspired by the terrific effort the project makes to publicly share this history across social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook)—with images and text posted multiple times a day!—a staggering and laudable achievement. Three directors and one administrator make up the engine behind the project, drawing on their over twenty-five years of experience in architecture, preservation, and activism.

Even with its shortfalls, the site is clear, and the authors are keen to work further toward diversity in representation and preservation. I, as a historical geographer of contemporary New York City, spent hours learning about LGBTQ spaces and history that I had never heard of. In my delighted digital meanderings, I was also left with questions. I encourage the project to clearly problematize the project of defining "history," especially for such a marginalized group. What does it mean to map New York City's LGBT history in making an invisible population visible? Who is still left out? Finally, in a short video made about the project, the authors write that "LGBT history is American history." Given that New York City LGBT history often dominates the tales of American LGBT history, how does the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project fit in broader gender and sexual histories? That said, as projects of queer history go, this one is coming up rainbows.

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*Refusing to Forget*, <https://refusingtoforget.org/>. Created and maintained by Monica Muñoz Martinez, Trinidad Gonzalez, Sonia Hernández, Benjamin Johnson, and John Morán Gonzáles. Reviewed Oct.–Nov. 2018.

Racial violence is a common topic in U.S. history, and lynching especially has drawn the attention of the general public. However, only in the last ten years has racial violence against Mexican-descent people in the United States garnered significant attention. A few years ago a team of historians, among them Monica Muñoz Martinez, Trinidad Gonzalez, Sonia Hernández, as well as the literary scholar John Morán Gonzáles, established the Web site *Refusing to Forget* about a particular era and place. The site focuses on a major period of violence against Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Texas from 1910 to 1920.

The site is divided into three substantive parts: "History," "Projects," and "Resources." The "History" section addresses the era. However, it needs to offer a little more post-1848