

GAY RODEO LBTQ+ Primary Source Collection

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Gay rodeo bucked out of the gates near Reno, Nevada, in October 1976. Phil Ragsdale, local “Emperor” of the LGBTQ benevolent association the Imperial Court, planned the first rodeo as a benefit event for charity. The annual rodeo grew quickly, soon reaching over 10,000 attendees. In 1983 Denver hosted a second outpost of a growing consortium of state gay rodeo associations, followed by a Texas rodeo outside Houston in 1984. In California, the Golden State Gay Rodeo Association (GSGRA) hosted its first rodeo in March 1985. By a lasso twist of fate, this GSGRA rodeo landed at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center at the edge of Griffith Park, just around the bend from where the Autry Museum would open its doors three years later. In 2009, the Autry became the home of the International Gay Rodeo Association (IGRA) Institutional Archives, a remarkable record of gay rodeo history from those first scrappy events to the present.

Many participants in the gay rodeos found a unique home in this community. LGBTQ cowboys, cowgirls, and others—perhaps cowfolk is the most inclusive term—challenged gender norms in a broader society but also within LGBTQ subcultures. Those who came from rural or ranching backgrounds found a way to return to their roots in a more accepting arena. Others came for the country dancing and community.

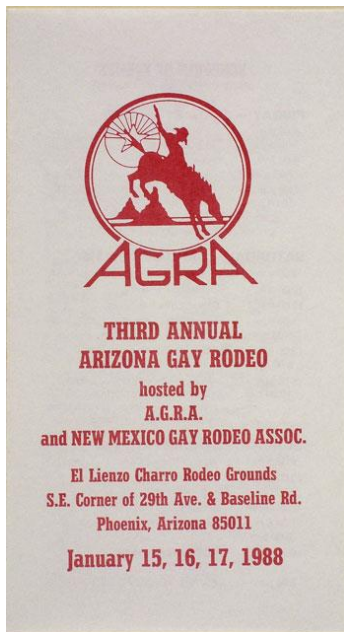
But IGRA also emerged amid a context of legal and social discrimination, and—perhaps most resonant today—to the terror and anguish of the AIDS epidemic, which especially ravaged gay communities in the 1980s and 1990s. As in all disease outbreaks, legal and social inequalities led to unnecessary death and suffering. Some event grounds and livestock owners refused to rent to IGRA chapters, and yet the intrepid cowfolk rode on, hosting rodeos across the American and Canadian Wests and even back east.

For more history of gay rodeo, see the [IGRA’s own history website](#), the [Autry’s finding aid](#) to the collection, and historian Rebecca Scofield’s recent book [Outriders: Rodeo at the Fringes of the American West](#), partially researched in the Autry archives. Scofield, an assistant professor at the University of Idaho, has also led the [Voices of Gay Rodeo](#) oral history project.

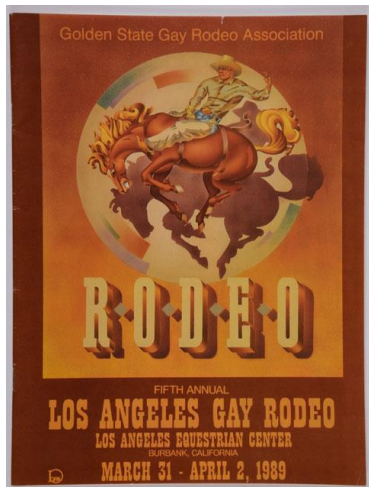
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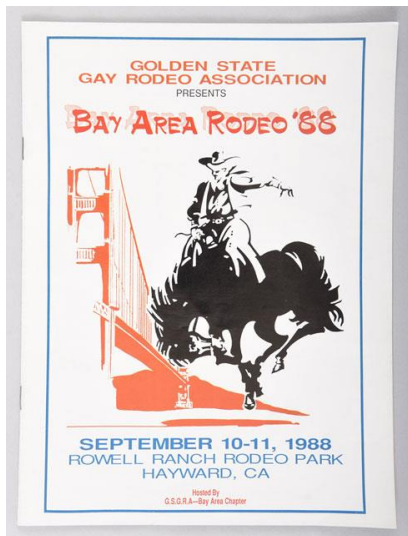


Object Name: brochure
Title: Third Annual Arizona Gay Rodeo
Date: Jan. 1988
Materials: Printed paper
Credit Line: Donated by Mr. Jim Wilke
Object ID: 94.79.50

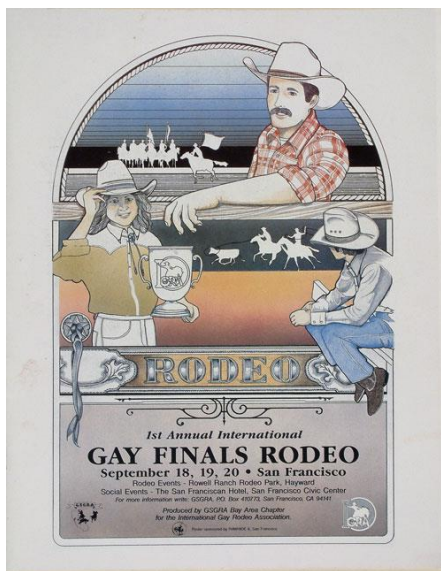


Object Name: program, souvenir
Maker: Golden State Gay Rodeo Association (GSGRA)
Title: Fifth Annual Los Angeles Gay Rodeo program
Date: circa 1989
Materials: Printed paper
Credit Line: Donated by Mr. Jim Wilke
Object ID: 94.79.46

GAY RODEO
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Object Name: pamphlet
Date: September 1988
Materials: paper
Credit Line: Donated by Scott.
Object ID: 2015.1.19



Object Name: program, souvenir
Title: 1st Annual International Gay Finals Rodeo 1987 program
Date: circa 1987
Materials: Printed paper
Credit Line: Donated by Mr. Jim Wilke
Object ID: 94.79.42

GAY RODEO
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Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Ginger, Denver, Colorado

Date: 1989

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.9

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683361;type=102>



Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Bull Riding, Oklahoma City, OK

Date: 1989

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.19

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683371;type=102>

GAY RODEO
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Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Roping Practice, Scott Terry, Phoenix, Arizona

Date: 1989

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.33

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683385;type=102>



Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Wild Drag Race, David Eschelmann and Steve Porier

Date: 1990

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.8

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683360;type=102>

GAY RODEO
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Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: The Prayer, Rick Simmons, San Diego, California

Date: 1991

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.13

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683365;type=102>



Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Bareback Bronc Riding, San Diego, California

Date: 1992

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.17

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683369;type=102>

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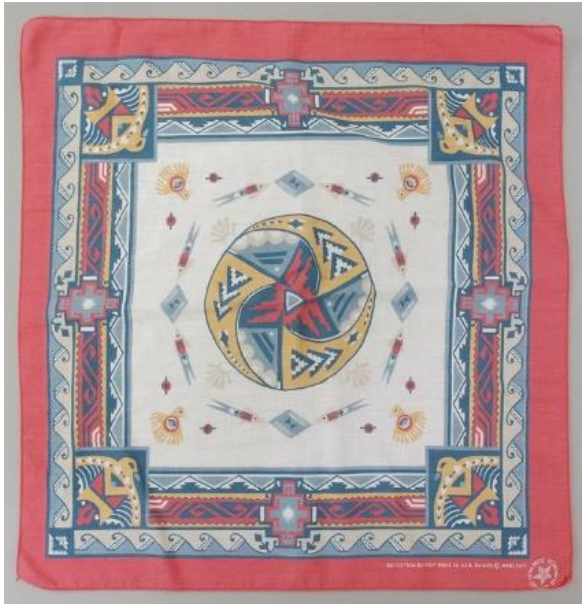


Object Name: sash

Credit Line: Donated by Patricia Nell Warren to the Autry.

Object ID: 2010.12.13

Notes: One grand marshal (person selected to be ceremonial leader of rodeo) sash worn by Patricia Nell Warren while on the gay rodeo circuit.



Object Name: neckerchief

Credit Line: Donated by Patricia Nell Warren to the Autry.

Object ID: 2010.12.14

Notes: One neckerchief worn by Patricia Nell Warren while on the gay rodeo circuit.

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Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Rodeo Bullfighter with His Children, Fort Worth, Texas

Date: 1989

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.4

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683356;type=102>



Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Rodeo Clown, David Pazzuti, San Diego, California

Date: 1990

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.12

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683364;type=102>

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Object Name: shirts

Maker: International Gay Rodeo Association (IGRA)

Title: International Gay Rodeo Association Institutional Archives

Date: 1982-2009

Credit Line: Donated by the International Gay Rodeo Association to the Autry Museum

Object ID: MSA.26

GAY RODEO
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Object Name: shirts

Maker: International Gay Rodeo Association (IGRA)

Title: International Gay Rodeo Association Institutional Archives

Date: 1982-2009

Credit Line: Donated by the International Gay Rodeo Association to the Autry Museum

Object ID: MSA.26

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Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Rodeo Partners Gene Hubert and Rick Ferreira, Sun Valley, California

Date: 1991

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.1

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683353;type=102>



Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Victory Kiss, Oklahoma City, OK

Date: 1989?

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.7

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683359;type=102>

GAY RODEO
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Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Brian Cornell and Alberto Rulloda, Hayward, California

Date: 1989

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.2

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683354;type=102>



Object Name: photograph

Maker: Blake Little

Title: Los Angeles Cowboys, Hollywood, California

Date: 1990

Materials: Archival pigment printed on Epson exhibition fiber paper

Credit Line: Gift of Blake Little

Object ID: 2021.32.3

<https://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M683355;type=102>