

History is Gay Podcast

Episode 32: Stealing Horses & Hearts: Trans Vagabonds of the Wild West

Leigh: Hello and welcome to History is Gay: a podcast that examines the underappreciated and overlooked queer ladies, gents, and gentle-enbies that have always been there in the unexplored corners of history, because history has never been as straight as you think.

♪[Theme music plays]♪

Hello, folks, again, welcome to September. It's our September episode. It's hot as balls in California because global warming, but I'm here in your ear holes again. Hello. I'm Leigh. I have a special guest with me today, someone who is rootin' and tootin' and perfect for the topic we are talking about today, which is Wild West, trans, wonderful folks. Please say hi to my lovely guest host for today: Ashten Hope. Hi!

Ashten: Hi! I'm so happy to be here. Howdy, y'all. And yes, it's- you probably said it's perfect because I'm from Texas.

Leigh: Yes, exactly. How are you enjoying the, uh, the Battle of Lake Travis? [laughter] Or as I like to call it, the Battle of Lake Travesty.

Ashten: It's honestly a beautiful day when you get to wake up and see that a bunch of Trump boats have sunk into the water.

Leigh: Yeah, it's a good day-

Ashten: Yeah.

Leigh: -it's a good day when that happens.

Ashten: My fiance sent me the news article, and I was very excited. I was like, 'Oh, yes. Good morning. Oh, there are boats at the bottom of the lake? Fantastic.'

Leigh: I love it when nature just showcases how anti-fascist it is.

Ashten: Oh, abso- all the time.

Leigh: [laughter] Uh, so, before we get into things, please tell our wonderful audience a little bit about yourself.

Ashten: Uh, so, let's see... I'm from Texas, as I already said. I am a teacher. I teach high school. I'm an English teacher. It's like 95% of my life. In case you don't know, teachers are very busy. Especially now with the apocalypse happening. And... let's see, what else do I do? I like to read books. I'm in a queer book club. I have many, many animals. And that's just, I guess, a little bit about me. I like to march around in Texas when the Republicans make our life hard. Which is all the time [laughter].

Leigh: Which is all the time, yeah. Well, thank you. Ashten uses, uh, they/them pronouns.

Ashten: Oh, yes, that's important. I'm nonbinary. [laughter]

Leigh: [laughter] Yes, two enbies here up in this uh, intro.

In this episode, we are going to be talking about the history of gender nonconformity on the Wild West frontier. Content warnings for this episode: there's going to be kind of several peppered throughout, there's going to be discussion of suicide, substance abuse, general like... Wild West violence, there's going to be kind of era specific/era typical transphobia and homophobia, police harassment - although there is not, like, specific police brutality.

And we also wanted to give a little bit of a disclaimer on pronouns and birth names in this episode. We will be, for the most part, in quotes, changing the pronouns to better align with the way that these folks would have wanted to be addressed. But in some things like newspaper headlines, we will retain those pronouns. We'll let you know ahead of time when we're changing something. For some of these folks, we will be telling you their birth names because it's really difficult to find them in scholarship otherwise, so we'll let you know when that happens.

Ashten: And we want you guys to be able to, like, go on and do your own research and find out more about these wonderful gender defying folks in the Wild Wild West.

Leigh: So today is going to be a blend of a people versus concept focused episode. We're going to throw a whole bunch of context at you and then give you a whole bunch of people to talk about which is wonderful. And as usual, we will end the podcast with "How Gay Were They?" Our personal ranking about how likely it is that they weren't straight. Ashten.

Ashten: Yes.

Leigh: Are you ready to get into our main topic?

Ashten: Absolutely. I'm so excited.

Leigh: Are you ready to talk about Stealing Horses and Hearts: Trans Vagabonds of the Wild West?

Ashten: Yes. Let's get started.

Leigh: Ashten is responsible for that title, folks, and I give credit where credit is due. Ashten gave a wonderful giant list of potential puns for, uh, title topics. So... it was beautiful

Ashten: And hard to decide, hard to pick one. But anyways-

Leigh: Yes, the process is laborious.

Ashten: It is, let's get started. So before we can talk about all our, as you said, dashing trans vagabonds, we need to know what the Wild West/American frontier was like. So what was it? It's called by many names: the Old West, the Wild West, the American frontier. And it was a time period generally considered by historians of expansion, um, colonialism west of the Mississippi beginning in, at the earliest, in the late 1700s, with English colonial settlements, ramping up in the 1800s, specifically following the Louisiana Purchase, and ending around 1920 with the Mexican Revolution, with its heyday from the 1860s to the 1910s.

The American frontier was a period of immense, fast paced change and, due to, as I said earlier, some colonialist bullshit, Manifest Destiny emerged as a philosophy of discovering and, quote-unquote, "civilizing" untamed lands. As early 20th century historian Frederick Johnson Turner noted, "the frontier" was a process that transformed Europeans into new people: the Americans. Whose values focused on equality, democracy and optimism, as well as individualism, self reliance, and even violence.

Leigh: Thanks, Frontier. This reminds me of that meme between angel and Gods, like, 'Look at this, I've made, uh, I've made a man.' 'You fucked up a perfectly good monkey.' This is like the American West. 'I have made a frontier.' Everyone else: 'You fucked up a perfectly good country is what you did. Look at it. It's got individualism and violence.' Hahaha, JK. America was never good. It was always racist and colonial and awful, weeeee!

[Harmonies: Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck colonialism.]

Uh, so in the late 1850s, the railroad actually reached the West Coast and kind of ushered in a new modern era, which effectively ended many aspects of, like, true frontier life. The frontier was transformed into less of, like, a physical one, and more of an economic one. We have a quote here,

"It was the place on the edge, where risks were high, but the opportunities promised rich rewards."

It was a time of urbanization, danger and excitement: the perfect environment for dashing trans vagabonds we're about to dive into. So, why do we think they're gay? A little bit of queer context around the American frontier... So, we hear about homosexuality in the West, why don't we hear so much about trans folks? Why have they been forgotten? One of these days, we'll be doing a full on 'Homos on the Range' episode talking about queer cowboys and same gender attraction in the West, but today, we're gonna focus on gender nonconformity. We wanted to give a little bit of context, however, for the circumstances that allowed queerness to exist, and perhaps even flourish, in some ways, in the Wild West.

So the first important thing to note is that in the American frontier, men outnumbered women 14:1. And, as we've discussed previously, like in naval communities, and pirates with *matelotage*, it was not unusual for same-sex relationships, and even things like, quote-unquote, "bachelor" marriages to be prevalent. It was just, something that you did. There's a bunch of dudes around...who you gonna do?

Ashten: Yeah.

Leigh: A bunch of dudes.

Ashten: Exactly. And, I mean, we've all heard of Brokeback Mountain. And if there were gay men in the West-and there were many gay men in the West-then there were certainly just as many queer women and trans folks. And, just like the rest of history, they've been regrettably left out or their queerness has been erased. There are few reasons beyond good old, standard, fashion queer erasure that this has happened.

So, one of the reasons is that there was a prevalence of cross dressing for economic advancement during this time period. Many of the same circumstances that allowed for a prevalence of same gender sexual behavior in the West also made it possible for folks who were of the non cis men variety to dawn masculine clothing. It was not unheard of or uncommon for the few women who populated the Old West to wear men's clothing for a variety of reasons: in order to better protect themselves, because as we mentioned earlier, there are way more men than women, and that was dangerous for them; in order for them to be able to get men's jobs that normally wouldn't have been available to them as women; to be able to join the army; to be able to drive cattle; to drive more safely, etc, etc.

This has led many historians to essentially heterosexualize these folks and basically explain away any questions of trans identity through something called the progress narrative: a term coined by Marjorie Garber, which is to say that historians looked at cross dressers, in particular female-to-male cross dressers, for evidence of women wanting to push out of the patriarchal roles they'd been trapped in, instead of evidence of transness.

Leigh: And we use the word crossdresser.. We'll talk a little bit about language in a little bit, but that was kind of what we found most of the scholars and historians were referring to these folks as- as a whole. The other important thing to note is that there were vastly different standards and consequences for cross dressers who were perceived male-to-female. So folks that were perceived as men dressing like women. As usual, misogyny is the name of the game. So we have a couple of quotes from one of our primary sources from Peter Boag, or [different pronunciation] Boag. We're not sure how to pronounce his name. So apologies Peter, Boag or Boag, if you're listening to this somehow. So we have some really wonderful quotes, we just wanted to let him speak. So we have,

"The effeminacy and apparent same sex sexuality of Western American male-to-female cross dressers represented a more serious problem at the turn of the 20th century. They ran diametrically counter to what the frontier and American west were coming to symbolize. There was no way to transform them into something respectable."

So male-to-female crossdressers had to be eliminated altogether, which is why we don't see a lot of them in the history. It also came with it, especially for male-to-female crossdressers, an element of racialization. Surprise, racism! He says,

"Male-to-female cross dressing and the various facets of femininity it represented became associated especially with non-Anglo races in the late 19th century, stripping efemininicy and same-sex sexuality from Euro-Americans and placing them onto Asians, Mexicans, African Americans, and Indians."

This is his word, uh,

"[These ideas] remove the taint of sexual and gender transgressiveness from the Old West altogether, because in the socially dominant view of the era, such people were not a part of the frontier process. This rendered America's frontier past not only a white male place and time, but also a heterosexual and, quote, "gender normal" place and time as well."

This is really important when we get into one of our figures that we'll be talking about later in the episode.

Ashten: And if you are interested in reading more of the things that he says, there is a book that we use as a source for a lot of the information that we have. And it's called "Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past," and he- it's one of his books that he wrote, and it's real neat. I read most of it.

So another reason why there is a lot of queer erasure, is because the most accessible and widespread sources of news on the American frontier were newspapers. And it was in these papers that gender non-conforming people were made famous in death, or if they were unlucky, infamous in life. Newspapers at this time were scrambling to get a bite of the booming and oversaturated industry. There was a lot of innovation in printing press technology that made it so that papers were being spread from the East Coast to the West Coast. And this mad dash resulted in the development of yellow journalism right around 1890, which is the time when most of our subjects that we're going to talk about were making the headlines. Yellow journalism unfortunately included a lot of phony eyewitness accounts, faked pictures of atrocities, events and people, and also inflated claims.

Leigh: Basically, everything turned into a tabloid. We saw this with the Lizzie Borden trial, in that like the entire reason it became such a huge thing is because the newspapers and the newspaper folks, you know, the journalists were like going to the crime scene and trampling over all of the evidence. So same feel, same mood here is: anything to get the story, even if that story is concocted.

Ashten: Which is really unfortunate, because it makes it super hard to discern what was true about these frontier queers and what wasn't.

Leigh: [sarcastic] Because we have such integrity in our media today, you know. For sure.

Ashten: Yeah, we're- we're super responsible now. We've left all of that in the past.

Leigh: [laughs] Yeah, no.

Ashten: Naturally, these publications, which unfortunately prioritized selling papers over being responsible reporters, lacked the language or understanding of gender that we have today. And they also characterized these folks as having misled and cheated those around them, when really it was these trans folks in the past that were being cheated out of their truth and fair representation.

Many of the numerous words, also, that were used to refer to trans people just simply didn't exist until the Wild West was no more. The outdated term "transvestite" wasn't even created until 1910. And "transgender" wasn't used until the '70s. So lacking appropriate language to talk about these people, they made up less than savory and more than inaccurate terms of their own. Words and phrases like "man-woman", "what-is-it," which is super gross, "crossdresser," "queer," and "vagrant," which we'll come back to.

Leigh: And, oddly enough, this...this inability to accurately reflect the experience of these gender variant folks in language, actually, what I love, showcased the arbitrary nature of binary gender categories themselves. As Boag says,

"In all these ways, late 19th, and early 20th century Western cross dressers helped to erode such sex and gender categories altogether, exposing them as anything but stable."

Which I love. It's like 'Hah! Gotcha. You don't have language to describe this? It's because it's not a one and a two.' This is also the time that sexology was starting to develop. We've talked a little bit about things like "sex invert" and "inversion" in the past with Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. I would suggest going back and listening to those. We're not going to get into all of that today, because we've got a lot of really cool stories from people. But look into that. That is what was going on at this time period, we had things like, you know...there wasn't really a distinction between like "sexual inversion" or "sex pervert" and- and "sex invert," versus, you know, talking about, like homosexuality versus gender stuff. So look into all of that.

Ashten: It was all one disorder.

Leigh: It was all mixed together. So when you consider [drawn out] all of that, we can understand why historians used to unexpecting a cis-het norm, chose to ignore or erase the queer implications of quote “women” and quote, “men” wearing clothes that seemingly opposed their gender, especially when it came to female-to-male cross dressers. There's a lot of, like Ashton was saying up top, a lot of the progress narrative saying like, ‘Oh, well, we don't really know about these people, so let's just say that they were women and doing this because they had to.’ They had so many excuses to use.

Newspapers, researchers and historians made frontier queers fit into the straight cis narrative that they were more comfortable with. But as you'll see, with the three folks we're gonna highlight for you today. These folks were very much what we would call trans nowadays. So let's...do you want to start off with our first, uh, wonderful baby?

Ashton: I do.

Leigh: Who is my-my husband, my husband-o of the week.

Ashten: [dreamy sigh] I would love to go back in time so he could just break my heart and leave me behind in the dust, in the tumbleweeds, honestly. [laughter]

[music plays]

Ashten: So let's start out with Harry Allen. He was known as the Wild West's most handsome boy, as he was once very aptly nicknamed. So Harry Allen, also known as Harry Livingston, also known as his dead name, Nell Pickerell, to many of the newspapers that followed his escapades across the Wild West and made him an infamous media darling. From the years 1900 to 1922. He was one of the most notorious men in the Pacific Northwest. And though you'd think that Harry Allen would be most well known for his boxing, quote, “bootlegging saloon brawling and horse stealing,” Allen was most well known for being a quote unquote “crossdresser.” Though in the modern era, we would most likely recognize him as being a transgender man.

So let's go into what we know about his life. Not- not much is known about Harry's early life unfortunately, in fact, not much is known about him in general outside of what we have seen in newspapers. What we do know about him outside of newspapers is from the activist Miriam Van Waters who we'll return to her later. He was born in 1822, Around that time. And supposedly grew up in a small village near Seattle. His father was a soldier turned gambler and was a sideshow slash circus ticket to Barker. Which means he basically ran around shouting at people trying to coerce them into buying tickets [laughter] for terrible sideshows. Harry did not get along well with his father, as we will see later, but did appear to be close to his mother who I love even though we don't know her.

Leigh: He was a total mama's boy. In a newspaper article that briefly recounts Harry's life his mother is described as his, like, closest friend, and was basically, like, she was the original Stan. Like she was always getting him out of jail and out of trouble. She called him Harry, instead of his birth name. We stand this supportive mom. The newspaper article actually says, (there were many quotes, but this is the one that we decided to put in) and we've changed the pronouns here,

"Allen again and again finds himself behind iron bars, but he emerges serenely, usually through the efforts of his mother who would sacrifice anything for the strange creature that once nestled at her breast."

Also, though it's not clear if this is the truth or something fabricated by the papers in an attempt to feminize and heterosexualize him, it was said that at the young age of 16, Allen unofficially wed a much older man, had a child, and was subsequently left by said man and then left the child to be raised by his parents. So, we don't really know a lot about that, we don't know if it's true. It might be something the newspapers were like, 'Ah, see? he's really a woman.' We just wanted to put that in there. Toss it in. Papers also liked to speculate that like this particular unsuccessful relationship was the reason Harry Allen traversed about town flirting with many, many women and wore men's clothes that, like, this failed relationship had broken him somehow, which is a real dumb and has, like, absolutely no merit.

Ashten: [sarcastic] Yeah, it's totally not possible that he could have just not enjoyed wearing [wo]men's clothes and enjoyed dating many, many women

and living his life the way he lived for, I don't know, most of his life? No other reason.

Yeah, it was after this [sarcastic] supposedly failed marriage that Harry began to wear men's clothing exclusively and moved away from the village where he grew up to strike out on his own, much like a Pokemon trainer setting out on their journey, except instead of catching Pokemon, he was catching ladies in trouble with the law, ayyyy.

[sound of a gunshot]

Leigh: [faking gun noises] Pew, pew, pew, pew, pew. So yeah, Harry worked all sorts of, like "male associated jobs." I say that in quotes because no jobs aren't male or female. So like bronco busting, bartending, barbering, long shoring, and horse stealing, [sarcastic] which is a totally legit vocation. He was described as a "good singer with a deep voice" and he played piano, violin, guitar and slide trombone. A very talented, dashing handsome boy. Though he was already an infamous local figure for his many run-ins with Seattle Police, 1900 is when we start to see him make it into newspapers across the nation.

Going by the name Harry Livingston or Livingstone at the time. Allen was bartending in a place called Tunnel City, Washington, which was actually nicknamed 'the wickedest spot on earth' where quote, "scum of the earth engaged in every vice known to man." I would like to go to Tunnel City.

Ashten: And also, just like thinking about this, like imagine all the shit that people were doing out in the Wild West, like there are people who literally held whole entire trains hostage and ruined hundreds of people's livelihoods and murdered tons of people-

Leigh: But God forbid you wear pants.

Ashten: But yeah, 'But you wear pants? Oh, no, you're the scum of the earth.' [laughter] Like what?

Leigh: I know.

Ashten: Like the least of all the quote unquote "evils" that were happening.

Leigh: Oh, Gosh. So the Philadelphia Times actually put out an article titled "Woman by Nature, Man by Choice." Which I can't tell if I love or hate. So again, we've changed the pronouns in this article, but here's a quote from it.

"Seattle boasts of probably the strangest young woman in the United States, if not the world. The Miss is Nelly Pickerell, known better as Harry Livingstone, as he wears male attire constantly. Nell dons the bifurcated garments, [trousers], because he is convinced that nature ran off on a tangent when he was born."

Also like, mood. [laughter]

"Since nature so unjustly deserted him at the crucial moment, he has determined never to close the breach, but to be a man as nearly as possible."

So he- he basically had been repeatedly arrested ostensibly for creating a disturbance of the peace, but really, for wearing the wrong clothes.

Ashten: And even though stories about women wearing men's clothing weren't all that rare, what was rare was someone being perceived as a woman, refusing to take them off, even when the police asked them to, refusing to apologize for being indecent and insisting that they were a man, which he was. Allen was a loud, handsome, cigar-smoking, bartending, bar brawling, unrepentant, inexplicable phenomenon and I want to date him. [laughter]

He garnered attention from both the papers and police just by living his life getting constantly arrested for doing so. And no matter the crime, he was always suspected due to his dress, even if he was just, you know, hanging around, like getting a drink after a long day of horse stealing and heart stealing. [giggles] He had been in and out of jails up and down the West Coast for quote, "any number of offenses wholly Western in nature," which just I love that, "wholly Western in nature" as Boag states, including horse stealing, saloon brawling, and [sigh] oh, oh, Harry selling bootleg liquor to Native Americans. And also highway robbery, though, it's unsure of how

much of this is fabrication by the newspapers because they love to make up wild tales about him.

Leigh: Uh, if you go to the Wikipedia page for Harry Allen, it's like two paragraphs and then the rest of everything is just a list of a- a bunch of headlines. So there were no less than 30 newspaper articles written about him. Probably more. We found at least 30. Newspapers claimed at one point that he was, quote,

"known to all of the police west of the Mississippi,"

Which is most likely inflammatory, exaggerated nonsense, but he made papers just by traveling. A title of a brief article from 1907 just reads, "The Notorious Nell Pickerell in town," which basically just says he arrived, he was followed around to make sure he didn't cause trouble, and he left, quote, "unmolested by police." So, [laughter] we figured we'd just let the newspaper headlines do the talking, because they're so good to just show you like how much scandalizing went into the public image of Harry Allen and- and again, there's going to be a lot of dead names in here and we have not changed the pronouns in these headlines. So we're reading them as they are.

Ashten: Mostly so you guys can also go read them yourself because they are a hoot, a holler and a holler and a half [laughter], like they are something else. Several of them just say, "Nell Pickerell in Jail Again." Just, 'just going behind bars! Time to put it in the news.'

Leigh: We've got, "This Girl Refuses to Wear skirts. Nellie Pickerell Acts, Talks and Dresses like a Man and Says She Ought to Have Been One." from the Boston Post in 1900.

Ashten: Or "In Male Attire, Harry Livingston Says She Will Wear Them: A Masquerading Girl Gave The Police a Good Run Last Night May Go to home. [Correction: Nome]" Like 'Okay, you're gonna go home? Like you gave a good run, but you get to go home.' And that's from 1900 from the Seattle Daily Times,

Leigh: "Nell Pickerell in Court. Her Trial for Throwing a Spittoon at a Saloon Man is Continued." (Seattle Daily Times, 1902).

Ashten: Or, "Nell Pickerel Again." Just...here he is again in Seattle.
[laughter]

Leigh: Nell Pickerell Again

Ashten: Seattle Daily Times July 10th 1904.

Leigh: Yeah, this is like such a tabloid, like so many of these are from the Seattle Daily Times. "Woman Declines to Act as Stool Pigeon. Police Officers Arrest Nell Pickerell Because She Will not Inform on Criminals," Seattle Daily Times 1906.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about this one because it's important to note in this one specifically, the admission by the newspaper itself that Allen was frequently arrested on trumped up charges. Though he was considered to be like cozy with gang leaders, this article notes that it was most likely fabrication. It actually reads,

"As a sort of revenge, it is charged that the police have arrested him numerous times on the old and very convenient charge of disorderly person which, under the city ordinances, covers about every crime on the calendar from grand larceny down."

To this we say, all cops are bastards. Nothing new.

Ashten: Though I would like to add to this, is that on this particular occasion, I think it was the reason he was pulled in, is because an infamous train robber had died. And in that infamous train- which I can't remember his name, I'll have to go find it later. But apparently he had a picture of Harry in his pocket. Which, I don't know, that sounds pretty gay to me.

Leigh: Pretty gay. [laughter]

Ashten: Pretty gay. All right, let's see, back- back to the newspaper headlines! Now. "Nell Pickerell Fell in Toil Again, Notorious Character Who

Parades in Man's Attire Arrested at Ritzville for Stealing a Grip," Seattle Daily Times March 23 1907.

Leigh: And then, "NO MORE TROUSERS." And if you look at this article, that's like the biggest text ever. Just, "NO MORE TROUSERS." "Prosecuting Attorney Throws Down the Gauntlet and Arrests Nell Pickerell in Effort to Force Her to Return to Petticoats," Seattle Star. [heavy sigh]

Ashten: So, yeah, he was fighting with the cops and literally everybody else, if someone came at him he was throwing a punch. Many of the articles note that Harry, upon being arrested, would always-I mean I would-put up a fight and was generally a pain in the ass to the police which...go him. In addition to having what one article called, quote, a "decidedly pugilistic nature," which is great. [laughter] And here are some of our favorite antidotes and quotes from these various newspaper articles.

Leigh: We change the pronouns on all of these.

"He wears men's clothing and is equally at home in a saloon brawl or fistfight, has never failed to hold his own with the toughest men in the Pacific Northwest."

Also in 1902, he got drunk and punched a cop, sending him to the jailhouse, which makes me happy. [laughter]

Ashten: Then in an article in 1917, it says,

"Has furnished the police department with any number of thrills."

Leigh: In the "Nell Pickerel Again" article,

"Patrolman Banik ordered him to cease his noise, but he commenced to fight the officer."

Ashten: [laughter] On April 22nd 1912, in the article, "Woman Jailed,"

"On his way to the city jail, in a streetcar he gave patrolman JW Rose a bad half hour kicking out of a windowpane in the car and plucking

the officer's star which he threw away. The star has not yet been found."

Imagine saying, 'You know what? You don't deserve to be a police officer. I'm going to take your badge and chuck it out the window never to be seen again.'

Leigh: I just love that the end of that is just "the star has not yet been found." I love it. Here's another one: "In Man's Clothes, Officer Tries to Arrest Her; Both Fall Over Precipice Into the Mud." That's the title of the article.

"He broke away from the officer and ran through the mud for three blocks and finally fell over the clay bank which separates First Avenue from Western. As he went over the brink Officer Man followed and both landed in a pool of mud. He was sent to headquarters in the patrol wagon and will be tried as a vagrant."

Ashten: And then the best headline out of all of them which sent us on a mad search to go find as many as we could is-and y'all aren't ready for this-"Trousered Woman Bites Policeman" - [laughter] Seattle Daily Times, July 22nd 1915. It is the best headline ever.

Leigh: Also, like, mood? Also me. [laughter] There's an actual quote from it -we had to track down this article.

Ashten: We had to. We had to.

Leigh: So, the quote is:

"The woman was captured by motorcycle policeman JJ Kush-"

Honestly, like the only bad Kush.

"-after a chase of several blocks, and even after being captured, fought fiercely, biting the officer severely on the hand before he was subdued."

Ashten: So yeah, many, many headlines, but unfortunately, not all of them were about his many run-ins with police or whatever shenanigans he got up to. Some of them were about much sadder things because, as you guys are about to learn, Harry Allen was a literal Heartbreaker. Which I would just like to input a content warning here for suicide because there is several mentions of suicide from here on out. What really brought him fame, and lifelong trouble, was a series of relationships with women and their unfortunate deaths that were blamed entirely on him. In 1901, a waitress named Dolly Quappe, who had been dating Harry Allen at the time, found out that he had been fooling around with another woman named Mabel Tracker. [Correction: Lacke) This resulted in a fight, estrangement and then Dolly unfortunately committed suicide on Christmas Day by drinking carbolic acid. We have a quote:

"The discovery that her affection was unrequited and that defeat that her deceitful enamorita, loved another girl, led Dolly Quappe to end her life."

Leigh: Yeah, and there's also like questions about whether or not she found out Harry's assigned sex and that was one of the things, and...there was a lot of sensation around it. In 1902, so a year later, a second girl named Hazel Walters throws herself onto the jagged rocks on the shoreline. And in 1903, a third girl named Pearl Waldron allegedly shot herself in the chest and survived, though it's debated whether or not this third attempted suicide was, like, totally fabricated by the papers or not because 'Hey, you know, why-why stop at two?'

With all the media attention these deaths garnered, one thing at the very least was certain: Harry Allen loved the ladies and the ladies loved him back... a little bit too much. It seems like it seems like there was a lot of unrequited -He's like 'Alright, cool. Yes, I'm done with you. Now onto the next lady in my life.' Men. [laughter] [derogatory]Men. Why are men?

Ashten: [laughter] Yeah, The Washington Times described Allen at the time as, quote,

"clever in the art of lovemaking to women,"

Leigh: Beautiful

Ashten: Which, I mean, go-go you. In his efforts to woo the ladies, Harry would employ the typical hallmarks of romance. He would boldly declare his intentions and would engage in petting. Which then was showing obvious favoritism, and or affection or, uh, you know, caressing someone sensually.

Leigh: [dragged out] Sensually...

Ashten: [laughter] Ew, uh, All of his flirting skills combined with his pretty boy looks-
Which, he is pretty, y'all should look at pictures because he's-he's a pretty boy. So those combined with his bad boy persona made him a one hot commodity. Lola G. Baldwin, the superintendent of the Portland Police Department's Women's Protection Division, explained in several of her reports that Harry Allen had, quote,

"An almost insane mania for making love to girls when dressed in men's clothing."

Leigh: Can that please be somebody's memoir?

Ashten: It'd make a good title.

Leigh: "An Almost Insane Mania For Making Love to Girls When Dressed in Men's Clothing"

Ashten: ":A Memoir."

Leigh: A memoir. There's a 1901 article that describes a time when a woman called the police station while he was in a jail cell asking after Harry and she requested that they deliver to him a letter that she had written. And what's really interesting about this one is that we didn't change any of the pronouns here, and this is a newspaper article-one of the very few-that actually used masculine pronouns for Harry throughout. And it really shows how some of the folks were interacting with Harry at the time other than most of the sensationalized things we see.

"In that letter, no word of evil was written. It was merely the pure outpouring of a woman's heart for the man she loved. She begged Harry to turn from his evil ways. She assured him earnestly of her love. She recalled the many times they had been together, of his pleas of affection, of his promises and vows. She promised to stand between him and her father. She beseeched him to renounce his evil companions. She ended by saying she would be ready when he called her."

Awh! And I can't believe the newspaper like wrote it like that!

Ashten: It's great. It's beautiful. And it just really shows like how, I guess genuine the relationships he had-Well, genuine-as genuine as a playboy like him could have of with other women.

Leigh: Right, yeah.

So in in 1912, he actually garnered headlines and was arrested and thrown in jail for one of his more well known things, which was, he was

"travelling across state lines with a sex worker named Isabel Maxwell posing as her husband."

Since he had crossed over state lines with Miss Maxwell for supposedly, quote, "immoral purposes," His action violated something called the "MANN Act," and Portland Police sentenced him to 90 days in jail for something called "vagrancy." Which brings us to our word or words of the week.

♪[Word of the Week intro music]

Word of the week.

Gay word of history♪

Leigh: So today, we're gonna bring a couple of words to you that were used in the Wild West and are still used now in different contexts. So we're going to talk about "vagrant/vagrancy" and "punk," which I was really surprised to find out about.

So with "vagrant", we don't have any like specific sources to show, but we just wanted to point out that if you are looking for queerness kind of in between the lines in history, one of the things you really want to look for is the use of the term "vagrant" or "vagrancy." Most of the time these folks, mostly people perceived as- as men, would be arrested for vagrancy as kind of a catch-all for various queer acts that were deemed immoral.

Ashten: Like, traditionally, at the time, it was used for the crime of being homeless being- or staying in a city without having a bed to sleep on, a slur for homeless people or homelessness. But yes, it did end up being a catch-all even in these people that were homeless also, coincidentally, a lot of the time happened to be queer.

Leigh: Yeah, it's almost as if these things intersect.

Ashten: Who would have thought?

Leigh: Yeah, so search for "vagrancy." "Vagrant degenerate," is another one that comes up a lot. We also wanted to bring up something that we came up against in our research, is the word "punk". So this is kind of more associated with kind of queer cowboy male-male relationships, but we figured it was worth bringing up. It is essentially the equivalent of "street kid," quote, unquote, in the 1850s to 1910s.

Ashten: And regards to the word "punk," I think it's important to talk about where it comes from. It actually is a lot older than the 1800s and 1900s. We find its origins in Shakespeare's play. It's supposedly one of the many, many words that Shakespeare added to the English language and it was a slur for prostitute or a sex worker.

Leigh: And then later, it kind of expanded into hobo quote unquote "hobo lingo", and expanded from there to being used among cowboy and farmhand culture. So the kind of hobo connection is there was a relationship between what were called "jockers" and "punks." So the "punk" was the kind of teenage boy road kid, usually the partner to an older man riding the rails, who was called a "jocker"-a little bit of a trigger warning here, and current use, it's mostly found as prison jargon among very hyper masculine

incarceration environments-punks are the male inmates who are forced into the submissive role.

You know, you've heard of, you know, quote-unquote, a "prison bitch" or something like that. That's-that's kind of the same kind of thing. "Punk" is, you know, somewhat of a derisive term but I think it's really interesting that we have kind of these intersections nowadays with things like gutter punks, street punks, and the intersection between that and a lot of queer experience and that, that goes back pretty far.

So, a little brief word of the week this episode, but we wanted to put that in there. And now back to Harry Allen.

♪[Word of the Week outro music]♪

Ashten: And back to prison, unfortunately for Harry Allen, and it was during this brief period of incarceration that he met anthropologist, prison reformer and activist Miriam Van Waters who was working on her doctoral thesis. As a quote,

"Budding social reformer and women's rights advocate and lesbian herself, Waters was quite taken with Allen and used them as evidence in her work."

Waters wanted to study him, and the reason she was studying him is because she had this theory that the only reason women ended up in jail -quote unquote women because Harry was not a woman- was because they were progressive and wanted to push out of the roles that the men that surrounded them on the frontier put them in, and that, it was- they were only incarcerated due to an unfair society, and not necessarily because they were actual criminals.

And Waters was convinced, despite noting Allen's overtly masculine characteristics, that Allen was a quote-unquote "normal woman" who, as I said, only had a criminal record due to discrimination and an unfair and unaccepting society. Although Waters, through her research, does note that Allen persistently leaned towards the masculine from a young age. She refers to Harry Allen as "Case One and H.A.", and attempted to cis-normalize

him, unfortunately, positing that his crossdressing was it- due to trying to earn a better wage.

And I think something important to remember here is that Harry Allen was just trying to live a normal life. And we have to think about how much he would have wanted to reveal to someone who was interviewing him and using him for a study, because he could have, like, not given her all of the information, which is something that Boag talks about in his book.

Leigh: So by 1917, Harry had sort of attempted to abandon his like "petty crime" ways, quote-unquote, and was working as a police informer after Washington State introduced Prohibition. Although there is one article that talks about how police tried to actually stiff him out of pay. So it was like, 'Wow, cool. I am partnering with the cops and they're big assholes. I cannot catch a break.'

So yeah, we mentioned that he did not have a good relationship with his father. In 1916, there was an article that came out about an incident where he had gotten into a fight with his father and his father actually stabbed him. He stabbed him in his lungs. And miraculously enough, he survived. Harry Allen was- here's another trigger warning for substance abuse- he was addicted to opium, as many people in that day were, and he used a lot of that substance. And he ended up dying of syphilitic meningitis in 1922 at the young age- although I guess, you know, at that time, like pretty good- age of 40.

Ashten: No, that's still pretty young.

Leigh: Not that great.

Ashten: He should have lived forever. [laughter]

Leigh: Yeah, so he... he died, unfortunately, at the age of 40 of syphilitic meningitis and the story of Harry Allen came to an end, but not for us!

Ashten: But not for us. And the last newspaper article ever written about him was, of course, his obituary, in which despite going by the name of Harry Allen or Harry for a good 25 years, he is still dead-named. And the

article is titled "Woman Who Masqueraded as a Man is Now Dead." It is from the Seattle Daily Times December 28th.

"Nell Pickerell, who masqueraded as a man for 20 years and who was a familiar figure in Seattle's underworld during that time, died last night at a hospital here, bringing to a close one of the most remarkable careers and the police annals of the city. When not in the hands of the police, he was arrested for about everything from disorderly conduct to highway robbery. Nell drove a truck, worked in a pool room, tended bars and engaged in other masculine pursuits. The body will be cremated Saturday after a funeral service at a local mortuary."

Leigh: Before we close out with Harry Allen and move on to our other folks, we really wanted to talk a little bit about the way he was described as dressing. Here's a few quotes that describe how you'd usually find Harry Allen dressed, usually in his jail cell.

"What a beautiful, dashing dandy. I-I want to dress like Harry Allen"

So he was described as, quote,

"Attired in a stylish cut suit of men's clothes with a new Panama hat on his head and a large diamond in his shirt front. Nell Pickerell paid another visit to police headquarters last night."

Giant diamond, just a giant diamond. From the article on spittoon throwing, Harry comes off as such a petulant badass who's like 'okay been there done that, that we had to include this again.' As with all of these, the pronouns have been changed.

"Nell appeared in court as sweet as ever. He was dressed as usual in boys clothing of a dark green pattern. He wore a red and white soft shirt with a turned down collar. A pink carnation was in his buttonhole and he daintily swung a little cane. Girl-like, he innocently chewed gum through the process of his trial."

Which I'm just saying, I'm just sitting there like-he's just chewing gum, like 'All right, whatever. Fuck this. I've been here.' He was also described as,

"Nell Pickerell in cowboy outfit, which he wears a great deal."

I would too, if I had a cowboy outfit. And also,

"When seen at the police station this morning, he was dressed in a boy's black suit. Dainty patent leathers adorned his feet, he wore a collared shirt, stand up collar, bright red tie. His jet black hair was cut short and parted in the middle. He carried himself erect and well. He made a most handsome boy."

Which is pretty much the entire reason why we included that quote. And lastly, he also had a lot to say on women's dress at the time, which I had to include this quote because it's just delightful. So in a newspaper article, he's asked,

"What do I think of high heeled shoes? What does any sane person think of them? Just ask a doctor whether or not they are healthy and take his answer as mine. There is one point though on which we differ. The doctor may think high heels look pretty. I don't."

Ashten: Which is, just as you like to say, absolutely delightful.

Leigh: Yeah. So then Ashten, why don't you tell us a little bit about how others talked about Harry not in the newspapers.

Ashten: Yeah, so, not in the newspapers, people seemed to think rather favorably of him. We have a few quotes here. Where -There's one that says he was "just as much like a man as can be," which I think is great, and that he can "fight as good as any man of his size," which is also great. And then we also have a story, which is one of my favorite stories about Harry Allen. I like to call it, "The Jail Matron Who Screamed in the Night" Because that's what it would be called [laughter].

And so in 1912, there was a female jail matron who stated this to a Portland paper that Harry Allen "looks and talks and walks and acts just like a man." And this is a quote from this jail matron.

"Why, every time I go into the room where he is, although I know all about him, I can't help but feeling that there is a man in the room. I went in there in night attire one evening, and he sat there in his street clothes, and I nearly screamed with the feeling that I had blundered into the presence of a man in a dishevel."

Leigh: And again, we changed the pronouns here for that.

Ashten: Oh, good. It's just like 'Yes, female jail matron, you did see a man in dishevel, that's a man right there!

Leigh: I'm just- like reminded of that tag group on Facebook. They're like 'Conservatives Approaching the Point,' like 'Yes, you did. You did see a man in dishevel, good job.

Closing up here, we wanted to bring in you know some of Harry's own words about himself and his experience with his gender and police harassment. Things that we thought were important to note are quote,

"I always played with the boys and wanted to be one of them."

Also,

"I hate furs, laces, ribbon and all those silly things girls like. I never liked them, not even when I was a little girl. I hated to be told that I mustn't run about and play like a boy."

And this one really speaking to the police harassment for his gender,

"They can't leave me alone. Because I choose to wear men's clothing, they follow me down wherever I go. All I ask is to be let alone to earn an honest living, but they won't give me the chance."

And then we have what is possibly the most important quote that we have, and the reason why we have gendered Harry Allen the way that we have.

Ashten: And he says, and this is honestly the largest quote that we have from him on record:

"I did not look like a girl, did not feel like a girl. I seemed to have nothing in common with my own sex. My hair was short and coarse, my shoulders were broad and square, like a man's. The lines of my figure were straight. My hips were a little broader than a man's; that was the only distinguishing feature. So it seemed impossible to make myself a girl and, sick at heart over the thought that I would be an outcast of the feminine gender, I conceived the idea of making myself a man and mingling with men as one of them. I put on men's clothes and have not discarded them since. Though, now I'm almost 24 years old, I will never go back to the conventional style of drags. That would make my life so unbearable that I could not stand it. Better anything than that."

Leigh: So...yeah.

Ashten: Which-So if that doesn't say what we need to know about him-

Leigh: [laughs] If that doesn't say dysphoria, I don't know.

Ashten: Yeah, yeah, historical dysphoria. Hmm.

Leigh: [sigh] So let's, let's all take a breath. Let's take a breather. Whoo! The story of Harry Allen: a shit ton, a lot.

♪ [theme music plays]♪

Now we're gonna go into two other notable trans and gender non-conforming queers on the frontier that we ran into. We also will have a little bonus episode with some shorter stories of all the other people that we couldn't fit into this episode because we decided we weren't going to do a three hour long episode, but we wanted to feature these folks.

So next up, we're going to talk about someone named Mrs. Nash. And we really wanted to highlight this, as you know, starting off with saying, like perhaps one of the best arguments for reasons why trans folks actually existed in the Old West and not just crossdressing for economic

advancement is the evidence of quote male-to-female cross dressers that Peter Boag actually uncovered. He said, quote,

"Further complicating the progress narrative then is the question of why a man would eschew masculine advantage and become a woman. Old Nash's story suggests that something more akin to gender and sex feelings and identities must have been at work in the lives of at least some Western cross dressers."

So we really thought it was important to bring a trans woman to this conversation, and she's actually one of the only instances that we have in the research. So Mrs. Nash was a Mexican laundress and baker who lived in the mid to late 1800s. Not much is known about her life, we don't even really know her first name, she's always referred to as Mrs. Nash or Old Nash. What we do know is that she was an immigrant trans woman of color that was able to make a living on her own, which is really, really badass. She was a well respected figure who drew men to her with her economic stability, charm and baking skills.

Few ill words were actually spoken of her until it was discovered upon her death that her assigned sex was male. So you'll see a lot of differences in the way that people talked about Mrs. Nash when she was alive and after her death, then what we saw in Harry Allen, who was basically hounded by his, you know, assigned sex like throughout his entire life.

Ashten: So let's go into what we know about Mrs. Nash. The first we hear of her is in 1868, ironically, which I love this at the time, she was disguised as a man and was trying to make ends meet through bull driving. And while she was bull driving, a captain came across her, and he worked for Colonel Custer recognized, that she was a woman disguised as a man, which I think is great. Like, 'Oh, I know you, you're actually a woman.' And he was right.

Leigh: It's all of those transphobes who, like, [laughter] go into people's DM's, like go into trans women's DM's and be like, [transphobe voice] 'You'll never be a man!' and it's like, 'Yeah, you're right. Thanks for accidentally validating my gender.'

Ashten: That thing again, like conservatives approaching the point, right?

Leigh: Right. Yeah, very much. Transphobes: not the smartest people.

Ashten: No, not-I mean, no surprise there.

So this this captain who recognized her as the woman that she was decided to hire her on as a laundress at Fort Lincoln, because at the time it was said, like in the different texts I was reading, that there was a desperate need for good laundresses. And how you just couldn't find anybody. So I guess everyone was dirty at this fort until Miss Nash came around. [laughter] And this position of laundress was a demanding yet very profitable job for a woman, which I think is amazing, because it was like almost unheard of, during this time, especially on the frontier, for women to have positions where they could live on their own and be independent, and this was something she was able to do.

And it was in this post that Miss Nash found a home for the remainder of her life. Once she arrived at this fort, it did not take long for her to become popular because, as you will see, she had so many talents. She was a very, very talented woman. Elizabeth Custer, Colonel Custer's wife said of Miss Nash, quote,

"When she brought the linen home, it was fluted and filled so daintily that I considered her a treasure"

Which I think is lovely. They actually, when they met became instant friends and we're very close through the remainder of Mrs. Nash's life.

Leigh: Awh! I love it.

Ashten: Which, I know, it's wonderful. Mrs. Nash's talents lay far beyond the washtub, however, it was said that quote:

"No party was complete without her culinary assistance" and that her "husband grew fat and lazy off of her tamales," which is great, "her baking was in such high demand that she often had to ship it beyond the fort."

[laughter] Which is amazing and it brought her even more wealth. So she was making that money in these frontier times.

Leigh: And these quotes here too, we have not changed the pronouns in these, right, these are all- so you can see the way people were talking. I mean, she was, you know, she was basically stealth while she was alive, but you'll only see changes once it's discovered after her death.

She had also had a flair for decorating and her interior design skills were called on for all fort festivities from dances to weddings. Her home was no exception and was described as

"Shining and ornamented with some beautiful pictures and very tastefully arranged."

Can Mrs. Nash come back from the dead and decorate my house please?

Ashten: Same, same.

Leigh: [laughs] She was also an expert with a needle and thread. She always had bolts of fabric on hand and would sew herself gossamer gowns with scandalously low necklines. And at garrison dances, she was known to be dramatic, with, a quote from Boag:

"Gaining a reputation for changing her lavish garments as many as three times during an evening's entertainment."

You got to make a good entrance, exit and do something in the middle, right?

Ashten: Right?

Leigh: Though she disliked children due to the death of two children she claimed to have birthed and buried in Mexico, she still, quote:

"built her reputation as a dependable midwife and few births occurred at the post without her expert help."

Catherine Gibson, the wife of another officer remarked that quote:

"Mrs. Nash was a very careful midwife, she handled those babies with not only efficiency, but with marked tenderness as well."

Ashten: And then, this is going to sound a little random, but I came across the story in Boag's book that is just amazing to me. So apparently, one of the other things Mrs. Nash was known for was her extensive knowledge of witchcraft, which is super random and wonderful. According to a story from a cavalry man who worked at the fort, he had been having a lot of trouble with card games and had been losing a lot of them. And when he was just chatting with Mrs. Nash, as she was doing his laundry, she said, "Oh, well give them here." And according to him, Mrs. Nash took the cards, murmured something that he couldn't recognize in Spanish over them, and [laughter] then gave the cards back to him and said, "Now you'll win."

And then after that, he supposedly almost never lost a card game and won tons of money from any card game or gambling game he played with those cards. He was very, very grateful towards her, and when he tried to give her some of his winnings every time he won, she refused. She said, "No, you keep it." I'm just like... She's like this beautiful-

Leigh: She's so good.

Ashten: Like, Sailor Moon of the frontier. A Madoka Magica of the frontier. [laughter] She's amazing. I'm just so here for this magical like trans woman of color of history. It's amazing.

Leigh: So we have Pokemon trainer Harry Allen and Madoka Magica, Mrs. Nash. I love it.

Ashten: Yes. Oh my gosh.

Leigh: It's a beautiful anime Wild West.

Ashten: [laughs] That's good. That's very good.

Leigh: So at the fort Mrs. Nash would actually end up having four marriages throughout her life, but unfortunately all ending with tragedy. She drew men in easily but not with her looks. Elizabeth Custer actually said of Mrs. Nash quote:

"She has so coarse and stubborn a beard that her chin had a blue look after shaving in a marked contrast to her swarthy face. She was tall, angular, awkward and seemingly coarse, but I knew her to be tender-hearted."

[wavering] Okay...Eh...

Her attractiveness really had more to do with her talents and her economic prowess. Nothing is known about her first husband, but her second husband, a man by the last name of Clifton, was a soldier. Their marriage was brief and Clifton deserted the army and Nash, taking her life's savings with him. So, Boo.

Ashten: Very much boo. Soon after, in 1872, with the assistance of Elizabeth Custer, she became Mrs. Nash when she married Sergeant James Nash, the personal servant to Libbie Custer's brother in law, Captain Tom Custer, and they were supposedly a very happy couple until just a year after their marriage, when just like her previous two husbands-which what rotten luck that is-Sergeant Nash deserted both her and the army and took Mrs. Nash's savings with him.

Leigh: Continually bankrupting her.

Ashten: Continually, which is just terrible. [Leigh sighs] As tragic and shocking as the repetition of such a betrayal would seem, Mrs. Nash was, quote,

"a woman of unusual fortitude" as Boag describes her, "and soon dolled herself up in her frilly dresses and artificial curls and headed off once again to the soldiers' balls."

Which, you know, you go pick yourself up after all these asshole men abandon you and go get yourself-

Leigh: Girl likes a soldier. Girl likes a man in uniform.

Ashten: Yeah, she has a type [laughter]. She has a type. And then, sure enough, I mean, as a woman of many talents would be able to do less than a year later, she wed John Noonan, a decorated sergeant who was once Custer's right hand man. They were happily married for five years when tragedy struck once again.

Leigh: So we have a quote here describing this:

"In Fall 1878, Noonan was sent out on patrol in pursuit of some rebellious [Native Americans] and Mrs. Nash suddenly fell ill from what was believed to be appendicitis. When her condition became worse, she called for a priest and instructed her friends that she wanted to be buried as she was, without the normal preparation for burial."

When Nash died on November 4th, her closest friends decided to show her proper respect by cleaning her up, they removed her clothing and discovered Nash had genitalia associated with being assigned male at birth. A laundress reportedly ran out of the room screaming rather crudely about the size of Nash's genitalia, and upon further investigation by medical examiner, it was concluded that there was, quote:

"Not a mark of physical femininity upon her body."

Ashten: And then, I guess, here's just another content warning for suicide. When her husband Noonan returned, he was unfortunately endlessly ridiculed and tormented for what they discovered about Mrs. Nash. And not only did he have to deal with the loss of his partner, he had to deal with being just extensively harassed by soldiers that he considered his friends and family like because according to what I've read about him, the military was his whole life.

A month after Mrs. Nash's passing, unable to cope with the death of his partner, and as I said all of this harassment, Noonan became distant and eventually committed suicide. One soldier, John Berkman recalls, quote:

"Noonan walked in, his face was gaunt and sort of set. The carpenter looked up. 'Hello, Noonan,' he says, 'say you Miss Noonan never had no children, did you?' We all started laughing. And then we stopped sudden, Noonan was standing, looking, and his eyes was wild, like an animal that's been hurt. Then a'fore we had sense to stop him, he pulled out his gun and shot hisself dead, right there at our feet."

Leigh: Ah, god. And he really loved her, like, he's one of the few. And I mean, that's something that we're not unfamiliar with- is the story of, you know, a straight man being harassed and bullied for falling in love and being with a trans woman. Which is-It just brings me back to I think it was Laverne Cox, who said "loving trans people is a radical act." [sighs]

So, what did the world do with Mrs. Nash? Just as with our other trans folks, once her secret was discovered, Mrs. Nash made the news. A lot of the terms that were used to describe her in these papers were not very kind things like "man-woman", "hermaphrodite" in regards to her relationship "an unnatural union." And there were a lot of elements of racial bias. They made up stories of murder and deception, and even just, like, no longer calling her Mrs. Nash, but just "the Mexican."

Ashten: Which is important to talk about because racism played a lot into how Mrs. Nash was discussed both before and after her death. There was a lot of racism and prejudice that was involved in why people never caught on before she died that she was trans. I'm sure you will remember Elizabeth Custer's quote from earlier, it wasn't exactly kind. Like the only kind thing about it was that she was described as "tender-hearted." But otherwise, it wasn't exactly savory.

Some of the prejudiced things that people talked about when they discussed why they never knew, was that they just assumed that all Mexican women grew beards, which is not true. They assumed that her face shape and the reason her voice was sort of deeper was because she was Mexican. And because of all these racial prejudices and assumptions that were in play here during this time, it's why they were so shocked when the truth was revealed because they attributed all of these-the lack of femininity to her race, not necessarily because of her gender.

Leigh: And we saw that up at the top with Boag's quote about like male-to-female crossdressers being heavily racialized and that we really don't see any white or Anglo-American figures because they were basically just erased from history. And the only way that you could have gender nonconformity in that way was 'Well, but look, it's all of these other folks.'

And I just want to say like we have an illustration of Mrs. Nash, and she's pretty! She's very cute, like, fuck you all, transphobes. [sighs] So...

Ashten: I mean, like we said, racism.

Leigh: Racism.

Ashten: They took all of-like she was-she was a beautiful woman. I mean, she's not a fashion model, but she was a woman of her times, and I think that it was because of her race that they described her so harshly and unfairly.

Leigh: Mhmm So, those who are closest to her, however, though, they were in shock, still seems to hold her in reverence. Elizabeth Custer, who we've described as her close friend for the decade and that she'd been in her service, remarked:

"The mystery which the old creature has guarded for so many years, through a life always public and conspicuous was revealed. Old Nash, years before, becoming weary of the laborious life of a man, had assumed the disguise of a woman and hoped to carry the secret to her grave."

And she's still using she/her pronouns even after this discovery, which is pretty remarkable, especially for the time.

Ashten: Yeah, and as for her husband, two days before his suicide, he was interviewed by the Bismarck Tribune. And according to a quote from Boag:

"Noonan straightforwardly explained that from the time he married Nash, he knew her to be a woman."

And that was something that we see throughout a lot of what was reported about him after Mrs. Nash death is that he insisted again and again:

"My wife was a woman, she was always a woman, she was never anything else to me, and shouldn't be to anyone else."

Leigh: Finally, we're gonna go into our last person who's one of my personal favorites, and someone that I've known about for a little while is Charley Parkhurst. So we're gonna close out on Charley or Charley "darkey" Parkhurst. And this is actually someone we're not going to tell you the dead name of because he's pretty much known as Charley Parkhurst everywhere, and certain articles will mention his dead name, but it's not relevant and not necessary to research him. So yay.

So also known as One-Eyed Charley or Six-Horse Charley, Cockeyed Charley. He was a badass stagecoach, driver, trans American hero. He was described as small, only about five-six, slim and wirey with alert gray eyes. In another source, "a stout compact figure, sun browned skin and a beardless face, with blueish gray eyes." He was handy with a gun, [sound of gunshot] excellent with a whip, [crack of a whip] and had a penchant for fighting and swearing, but was also known for being kind and charitable to those in need. He liked to drink, chew tobacco and smoke cigars: just a true man of the frontier.

And while he was shoeing a horse, he was actually kicked and lost sight in his left eye, leading to basically a striking eyepatch figure and the "One-eyed Charley" nickname.

And something I wanted to mention here is that like stagedrivers at the time were absolutely revered. They were basically the road warriors of their day. A man named Henry W. Bellows, who was president of the US Sanitary Commission declared in 1864, while he was on a trip to California, quote:

"I think I should be compelled to nominate the stage drivers as being on the hold the most lofty, arrogant, reserved and superior class of being on the coast. That class has inspired me with the most terror and reverence."

So basically, we have Charlie Parkhurst, the equivalent of a Wild West superhero. And what is incredibly significant about him is the reverence he experienced not only in life, but even after death with the discovery of his assigned sex.

Ashten: So let's go into a little bit of the early life of Charley Parkhurst. He was born in 1812 in Sharon, Vermont and shortly after was sent to an orphanage after the death of his mother. Ran away from the orphanage at the age of 12 and adopted the name Charley and began dressing in a masculine fashion. While in New Hampshire, he met Ebenezer Balch, the owner of the livery stable in Providence, Rhode Island, who took him in and raised him as his own son, which is very sweet.

He taught him how to ride horses, to drive wagon teams and work as a farmhand. Charley had an immediate affinity with the horses, and soon was driving coaches with up to six horse teams for local folks and the surrounding countryside around Providence. After that, he went west and he left for California in 1851.

During his late 30s, following the droves, he headed out west for the California Gold Rush and was recruited to work in San Francisco for a drayage business, which was like short distance transportation.

Leigh: A few years later, Charley actually began driving stages and he very quickly after, developed a reputation as one of the best stagecoach drivers, also known as a whip, which is a really fun nickname for that, on the west coast. He drove a team for nearly 30 years through Northern California sometimes working for Wells Fargo, and he had routes. Some of his most famous routes were from Stockton to Mariposa, San Jose to Oakland and San Juan de Santa Cruz. And was known to be on the level of some of the most famous drivers of the day.

And like we said, up top being a stagecoach driver was not only, you know, incredibly revered, it was revered so because it was incredibly dangerous. You constantly had to deal with holdup attempts, storms, rickety trails. As historian Charles Outland described it,

"It was a dangerous era in a dangerous country where dangerous conditions were the norm."

We'll get into some stories of Charley's wild stagecoach experiences in a second, but we wanted to kind of get into the rest of his life.

Ashten: In his later years, around the 1860s, Charley settled in to Watsonville, California and retired from driving once railroads were gaining steam-

Leigh: [punny laughter]

Ashten: Very funny-and cutting into the stagecoach business. He opened a saloon between Santa Cruz and Watsonville and worked for 15 years as a farmhand in lumber and raised chickens in Aptos and SoCal. He was known as one of the most skillful and powerful choppers and lumbermen, where his services were eagerly sought for, according to his obituary.

He later sold us alone and moved into a cabin in the woods outside of Watsonville to deal with his rheumatism and as his health declined, which, after all of his hard labor, it's no surprise that he had rheumatism.

Leigh: Yeah.

Ashten: He passed away on December 18th 1879, in Watsonville, California, at the ripe old age of 67, which is really good, but of tongue cancer, of all things.

Leigh: Yeah.

Ashten: When he passed away, his neighbors came to the cabin to lay out his body for burial and to take care of his final resting needs, and discovered his assigned sex, which created a local sensation and even garnered national attention and coverage in newspapers.

Leigh: And I mean, I'm familiar with Charley Parkhurst because I lived in Santa Cruz for like 15 years. But what I think is so fascinating about him and one of the reasons why I really wanted to put him in here is his obituary

from the San Francisco Call was reprinted in the New York Times and is surprisingly remarkable in its treatment of his life, legacy and gender. The headline read

"30 years in Disguise, a Noted Old Californian Stage Driver Discovered, After Death, to be a Woman"

But the entire several hundred word article-and we'll put a picture of it, it is very long-it actually uses he/him pronouns and discusses the length and notoriety of his career throughout the entire thing. Only in the very last paragraph, only the very last few sentences ,with the reveal of the quote "discovery" are feminine pronouns used for the following quote, no pronouns have been changed. And we really want you to note the difference between the way that Charley was written about versus Harry Allen.

♪ [light guitar strumming in background]♪

"Last Sunday in a little cabin on the Moss Ranch, about six miles from Watsonville, Charley Parkhurst, the famous coachman, the fearless fighter, the industrious farmer, and expert woodman, died of cancer on his tongue. He knew that death was approaching, but he did not relax the reticence of his later years other than to express a few wishes as to certain things to be done at his death. Then, when the hands of the kind friends who had ministered to his dying wants came to lay out the dead body of the adventurous argonaut, a discovery was made that was literally astounding. Charley Parkhurst was...a woman."

The discoveries of the successful concealment for protracted periods of the female sex under disguise of the masculine are not infrequent, but the case of Charley Parkhurst made fairly claims to rank as by all odds the most astonishing of all of them. That a young woman should assume man's attire, friendless and alone, defy the dangers of the voyage of 1849 to the then almost mythical California, through dangers over which hardy pioneers still grow boastful, has in it sufficient of the wonderful that she should have achieved distinction and an occupation above all professions, calling for the best physical qualities of nerve, courage, coolness and endurance. And that she should add to them the almost romantic personal bravery that enables

one to fight one's way through the ambush of an enemy seems almost fabulous.

And that for 30 years, she should be in constant and intimate association with men and women, and that her true sex should never have even been suspected, and that she should finally go, knowingly, down to her death, without disclosing by word or deed who she was, or why she had assumed man's dress and responsibilities, are things that our reader might be justified in doubting if the proof of their exact truth was not so abundant and conclusive."

On the great register of Santa Cruz County for the year 1867 appears this entry,

"Parkhurst, Charles Darkey, 55, New Hampshire farmer, So Cal, where he then lived."

And that's the end. That's the end of the obituary. And like, even after talking about him being a woman and using she/her pronouns, the very last sentence specifically talks about him in the masculine pronouns. And his name on the register is Charles Parkhurst, using he/him pronouns. And his headstone also reads Charley Parkhurst, which is really, really fascinating.

Ashten: And what's even more fascinating and honestly wonderful is that, this obituary just speaks of respect, other than the misgendering. It speaks of respect and reverence and just how- impressive to these people of these times, like Charlie Parkhurst was, which I think is great.

Leigh: And the fact that like he was assigned female at birth, and they were surprised and impressed at the ways in which he was able to do what he was. Even if they're like misgendering him, the fact that it's less so what we saw with Harry Allen, like, 'Is oh, look at this person, deceitful, evil, blah blah blah, blah blah,' it's, 'Hey, how was he able to do all of this? This is so absolutely remarkable with his situation,' which was really, really cool.

So we've promised some fun stories about Charlie on the road. Why don't you start us off?

Ashten: Yes, there was this one trip, where a bandit named Sugarfoot, which is a great, a great bandit name, ordered Charley to give up the strongbox full of valuables holding him up at gunpoint. He was caught off guard and gave in, but vowed revenge and to settle the score.

Later on, Sugarfoot stopped Charley's coach again on the same route-you think he would have learned-and this time Charley just whipped out his .44 pistol and shot him dead so...goodbye Sugarfoot.

From Charley's obituary again, Charley, quote:

"turned his wild Mustangs and his wicked revolver loose and brought everything through safe. That his shootin' was to the mark was subsequently ascertained by the confession of Sugarfoot, a notorious highwayman who, mortally wounded, found his way to a miner's cabin in the hills, and, in articulo mortis, told how he had been shot by Charley Parkhurst, the famous driver, in a desperate attempt with others to stop his stage."

And I just love this, so much.

Leigh: I love how much this obituary just immortalizes and valorizes him.

Ashten: Like, it turns him into a hero, which he was!

Leigh: Yeah! He was a superhero!

Ashten: Honestly.

Leigh: He was a superhero of the Wild West.

Uh, on another trip, his horse team actually veered off of a road suddenly and he was thrown from the coach. But, being a badass he was, he refused to give up the reins and was actually dragged along behind the coach until he could maneuver the team to some bushes to slow them down. The riders ended up putting up a collection of \$20, which was huge at the time, to give him in appreciation for keeping them safe.

And then lastly, he raced the stagecoach onto like a really haphazard, rickety bridge that was over a river that had been kind of swelling from a big storm. And he looked back to find that the bridge had basically collapsed or washed away just as they crossed. And if that's not like an amazing movie scene, I don't know what is. That is so good. That is shit you see in the movies.

Ashten: I want a movie about him. Like, think of how badass and wild and just what a good Western a movie about Charley-

Leigh: I think there's actually some stuff about him out there.

Ashten: Okay, but like a good movie that honors him as a trans man.

Leigh: Right. Yeah, [laughter] most of them treat him as-as a woman.

Ashten: Some other fun facts about Charley Parkhurst...

Supposedly he was considered the first quote-unquote "female voter" in California, and this is what actually turned him into a local legend in Santa Cruz. There is a document proving Charley's registration on file in 1867, but unfortunately, there's no evidence to show he actually voted.

His tombstone in Watsonville however does have a plaque declaring him the first quote-unquote "woman" to vote in the US, but I would prefer to think of him as the first trans man who voted in the US, which was pretty neat.

Leigh: There we go. He may also have been intersex. It's really tough to discern, as it could be newspaper exaggeration and slander again, but the San Francisco Call remarked-again no pronouns have been changed here:

"No doubt he was not like other men. Indeed, it was generally said among his acquaintances that he was a hermaphrodite."

Ashten: He apparently would wear blue jeans, wide leather belts, wide brimmed hats, and buckskin gloves to hide his small hands.

Leigh: On one occasion, after a night of drinking, he was staying with a family near Watsonville, and when the mother told her 14 year old son to

bring Charley to his room, the boy actually came back and said, "Mom, Charley ain't no man, he's a woman." But apparently, according to Mabel Row-Curtis in a book she published in 1959 through the Pajaro Valley Historical Society, quote:

"Those good people, sensing Charley's humiliation if confronted with the fact that he was unmasked, never mentioned it to a soul until after Charley's death, which I love. I love supportive friends."

Ashten: Yeah, supportive friends are wonderful. And we will end this on the first lines of his obituary, which is, honestly 10,000 times better than the way some trans folks have been written about post, honestly, in 2020. Like today.

"There is hardly a city or town or hamlet of the Pacific Coast that includes among its citizens a few of the gold hunters of the early days, where at least one person cannot be found who will remember Charley Parkhurst. He was, in his day, one of the most dexterous and celebrated of the famous California drivers, and it was an honor to be striven for to occupy the spare end of the driver's seat when the fearless Charley Parkhurst held the reins of a four or six in hand."

♪ [Western music]♪

Leigh: So there you have it, we have our three trans vagabonds that we wanted to talk with you about. We wanted to just kind of take a few moments to wrap up before we get into our "How Gay Were They's."

One thing that we wanted to mention is that we just, I mean, we're not going to go super into detail about it 'cause we have talked for a long time, but we just wanted to note that there's a lot of similarities between Harry Allen and the experiences of like contemporary at-risk and homeless trans youth. There's actually an article that was written about it. Fair warning, though, it does use his dead name and genders him as she/her the entire time, and basically describes him as a like woman who was doing things for economic advancement, but also calls him trans. It's kind of terrible, but it has some really interesting arguments. So we'll put it in our sources for you to check out.

There's also another source that we wanted to mention that we didn't get time to talk about. But there's actually a really cool short story from 1857 called "The Man Who Thought Himself a Woman," which is a story about what is most likely a trans woman. This is a fictional story about a person named Japhet Colbones who was essentially a trans woman. And there's a lot of experience of community support and understanding. And what we wanted to mention about this is that it's a fictional story, but it's useful documentation about the potential attitudes of others towards gender non conformance at the time that's outside of the newspapers.

So with that, then, Ashten, on this show, when we have our very first guest hosting by a person, we haze them, by putting them on the spot and asking them to kick us off with our "How Gay Were They?"

So let's break this down. Let's go: how gay was Harry Allen, Mrs. Nash and Charley Parkhurst?

Ashten: Okay, so for Harry- hazing is so mean, by the way.

Leigh: It's lovable initiation.

Ashten: [sarcastic] Uh huh, uh huh, sure. Lovable initiation. Let's go with that. Alright. So for Harry Allen, how gay do I think he is? I would say that he is- I'm going to break the like one through ten scale here. I'm gonna say he's...

Leigh: The scale [laughter]. We haven't had a one through ten scale since like episode five.

Ashten: [laughter] Okay, fine, fine, fine, fine, but like it's there in the world of like, let people rate things as a one through ten. But whatever, whatever. I would rate him as 20 police stars being thrown out of the window never-20 out of 10 police stars being thrown out of the window-never to be found again. Is how I would rate him.

Leigh: Beautiful. And what about Mrs. Nash and Charley Parkhurst?

Ashten: [thoughtful sigh] I would say that Mrs. Nash is also 20 out of 10, but for her, it's tamales that make her ungrateful husbands fat. [laughter] Ungrateful. All of them except for maybe the last one.

And then for Charley Parkhurst? Oh my goodness. I guess I want to say for him... He is 20 stereotypical western cowboy horses riding off into the sunset -20 out of 10-[laughter] stereotypical horses riding off heroically off into the sunset with like, gunshot noises and weird, like, the scream of an eagle like and all of that going on in the background.

Leigh: Perfect.

Ashten: Or wait, what about you? So how would you rate Harry Allen?

Leigh: Okay, so for Harry Allen...[sigh]. I mean, we talked about horse stealing so much. [laughter] I would give him, I'll keep on the 20 scale, I'll give him 20 stolen horses out of 10, plus a good half hour kicking out a windowpane plus just some good natured biting-some good natured pop biting and a flaming red tie. [laughter] We'll do that. Um, for Mrs. Nash... Yeah, I'll give her-I will give her 20. God See? Yeah, you took the tamales right out of my mouth. [laughter]

Ashten: I mean, they're delicious. They were spread around the fort.

Leigh: I'll just give her tamales. I will take tamales from her. I will. I will say 'Hello, Mrs. Nash. Can you please give me tamales?' That's what I will say.

Ashten: And then what's your favorite boy? Charley?

Leigh: For my favorite boy. I will give him six horses out of a six horse team.
Whoa!

Ashten: I see what you did there. Oh my gosh.

Leigh: Woah, whoah, woah, whoa!

Ashten: Oh my gosh.

Leigh: There we go. Thank you so much, Ashten for coming on here and being a beautiful bucking bronco with me. [laughter]. That is it for today's episode of *History is Gay*. You can find us online individually.

Please, Ashten, tell our lovely listeners at home where you can be found on the internets and in life. Although please don't actually find Ashten in life. Please don't stalk them. We don't condone stalking on the show.

Ashten: Please don't, I like my job and would like to keep teaching the youth of America to hopefully be better than the people of today. So when I am not devouring queer literature and comics and as I said, teaching the youth of today, I'm usually hiking with my dog or tweeting about social justice, education, being queer and birding, because birds are cool, at @Ashtenhope on Twitter. And Ashten is spelled A s h t e n.

Leigh: And as always, I'm Leigh and when I'm not nerding out about old timey queer folks and making puns about tumbleweeds and trans folks, I'm usually talking about, again, comics and queer TV over at @aparadoxinflux on Twitter, and especially now crying about Xena episodes on my couch because it was just the 25th anniversary.

History is Gay Podcast can be found on Tumblr at [@HistoryisGayPodcast](#). Twitter at [@HistoryisGayPod](#). And you can always drop us a line with questions, suggestions, or just to say hi at HistoryisGayPodcast@gmail.com. If you enjoy the show and want to support us in continuing to make it, you can support us on Patreon where you can get access to Sappho's Salon minisodes, special sneak peeks, the opportunity to have your voice show up in the show and more. You can become a patron by going to the support section on our website and join the ranks of our Patreon community along with the amazing Sean Roberts, Logan Elizabeth, Teresa Espinosa and Scott DeHart.

Thank you so much to everyone for your support. Literally couldn't do this without you. Also, your funds right now are going to the Okra project, anything that we don't use to put into this show, as well as our store. We've got some really fun awesome merch at our *History is Gay* store. Click on "shop" on our website where you can also find the coloring book, please. I'm

really proud of it. I'm really proud of these wonderful people who lent their amazing artistic skills.

Very lastly, please remember to rate, review and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. It helps more people find the show and we can expand our awesome community. And with that, Ashten, would you like to help me close out the show as we say goodbye to people?

Ashten: I would be honored. So yeah.

Leigh: Thank you so much for being here.

Ashten: Thank you for having me. I actually had a lot of fun. This is super, super fun.

Leigh: So that's it for *History is Gay*. Until next time,

Ashten: Stay queer,

Leigh: And stay curious.

[Theme music plays]

Leigh: T.H. Ponders, please put some, like, wild west sounds in here. Like web sounds and gunshots. You know what I'm talking about, some high noon shit.

Ashten: High Noon shit.

[gunshots and eagle cry sounds]