

The Women's House of Detention

author: Hugh Ryan

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Synopsis

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This "crucial" (The Advocate) and "compelling" (BuzzFeed) history of a prison, and the queer women and trans people held there, is a window into the policing of queerness and radical politics in the twentieth century.

The Women's House of Detention, a landmark that ushered in the modern era of women's imprisonment, is now largely forgotten. But when it stood in New York City's Greenwich Village, from 1929 to 1974, it was a nexus for the tens of thousands of individuals who inhabited its crowded cells.

Historian Hugh Ryan reconstructs the little-known lives of these incarcerated New Yorkers, making a uniquely queer case for prison abolition and demonstrating that by queering the Village, the House of Detention helped define queerness for the rest of America. From the lesbian communities forged through the Women's House of D to the turbulent prison riots that presaged Stonewall, this is the story of one building and much more: the people it caged, the neighborhood it changed, and the resistance it inspired.

Reader's comments

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