



# Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation

*John Dececco Phd*

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## **Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation** John Dececco Phd

Take a revealing look at gay sex and gay history—and the man who helped kick-start gay activism in today’s society

The Mattachine is the origin of the contemporary American gay movement. One of the major players in this movement was Hal Call, America’s first openly gay journalist and the man most responsible for the end of government censorship of frontal male nude photography through the mail. Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation, the Hal Call Chronicles travels back to the times before Stonewall and its aftermath, to the beginnings of the modern homosexual movement and the lesser-known individuals who started it. This stunning chronicle boldly goes beyond the standard whitewashed/desexualized history usually provided by other gay historians, to give the unexpurgated—and sexually charged—history of the activists who organized homosexuals, using the biography of the controversial Hal Call as its springboard.

Behind the Mask of the Mattachine provides a revealing illustration of gay life and gay sex in the past through an intergenerational history of the early gay men’s movement. Noted author James T. Sears generously weaves oral history, seldom seen historical documents, and rare photographs to provide a rich behind-the-scenes look at the first wave of Mattachine activists and the emerging gay pornography industry. This historical chronicle of a previously neglected era is packed with details of Call’s personal struggles, his celebration of the phallus, and his assertion linking homophobia and heteronormativity to our culture’s sex-negative tradition. The reader is transported to the sexual underworld of youthful hustlers, porno kingpins, spurned lovers, sex clubs, cruising grounds, secretive societies, and personal in-fighting over the direction of gay activism. This enthralling narrative is impeccably referenced.

Behind the Mask of the Mattachine examines:

- the origins of the Mattachine Society
- the Mattachine Foundation of Harry Hay and others of the “Fifth Order”
- the Weimar Republic in Germany—the roots of the modern homosexual movement
- networking of homosexuals through correspondence clubs and speakeasies in Depression-era America
- the intense rivalries between San Francisco and New York City Mattachine groups
- censorship of books, magazines, and films
- *much more!*

The book explores the lives of three generations of pre-Stonewall gay activists:

- Magnus Hirschfeld and Benedikt Friedländer
- Henry Gerber and Manual boyFrank
- Harry Hay and Hal Call

Behind the Mask of the Mattachine is not only candid about gay sex and its impact on society but also puts a needed spotlight on a time in lesser-known gay history. This is important, illuminating reading for historians

and gay persons interested in the undeniably sexually charged history of the early gay men's movement.

Take a look at these other James T. Sears books on LGBT issues:


Growing Up Gay in the South

online at <http://www.haworthpress.com/store/product.asp?sku=0502>

and

Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Issues in Education

online at <http://www.haworthpress.com/store/product.asp?sku=5180>

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