

II. Explore Digital Primary and Secondary Sources

Important Note: When learning about William Dorsey Swann, it is important to understand the limitations of historical sources for marginalized communities. As you explore the primary and secondary sources, consider how historical narratives are constructed and shared, what constitutes authoritative knowledge, and the following:

1. **Newspaper Bias:** Newspaper articles about Swann's drag balls and police raids often used sensationalized and derogatory language. These sources provide factual information about events but reflect the prejudices of the time.
2. **Legal Records:** Court documents and police reports offer official accounts but represent the perspective of authorities rather than the participants.
3. **Absence of Personal Accounts:** Unlike many historical figures, we have no diaries, letters, or autobiographical writings from Swann himself.
4. **Modern Interpretation:** Recent scholarship by historians like Channing Gerard Joseph has worked to recover and contextualize Swann's story.

Primary Sources

1. *"The Queen" Raided. National Republican. (Washington City (D.C.)), April 13, 1888. Image 1. Chronicling America. Library of Congress.* (Hover over the top right column and use the zoom tool to scroll down and read the full article.)

2. *Colored Men in Female Attire. Police Raid a Dancing Party. Washington, DC Evening Star, April 13, 1888. Chronicling America. Library of Congress.* (Hover over the second (2nd) column and use the zoom tool to scroll down to the article located at the center of the page.)

3. *Made a Raid. Washington, DC Evening Star, January 1, 1896, Image 8. Chronicling America. Library of Congress.* (Hover over the fourth (4th) column and use the zoom tool to scroll down to the article located at the center of the page.)

4. *William Dorsey Swann Pardon Application and Petition, October 1896. National Archives. Pages 4-12.*

5. *Financial Impact Statement (FIS) on William Dorsey Swann Street Designation Amendment Act of 2023.*

Secondary Sources

1. *UnErasing LGBTQ History and Identities: A Podcast, Season 3, Episode 2: William Dorsey Swann. Apple Podcasts.*

2. *Swann Street Re-Dedicated For First Known Drag Queen | DCist.*