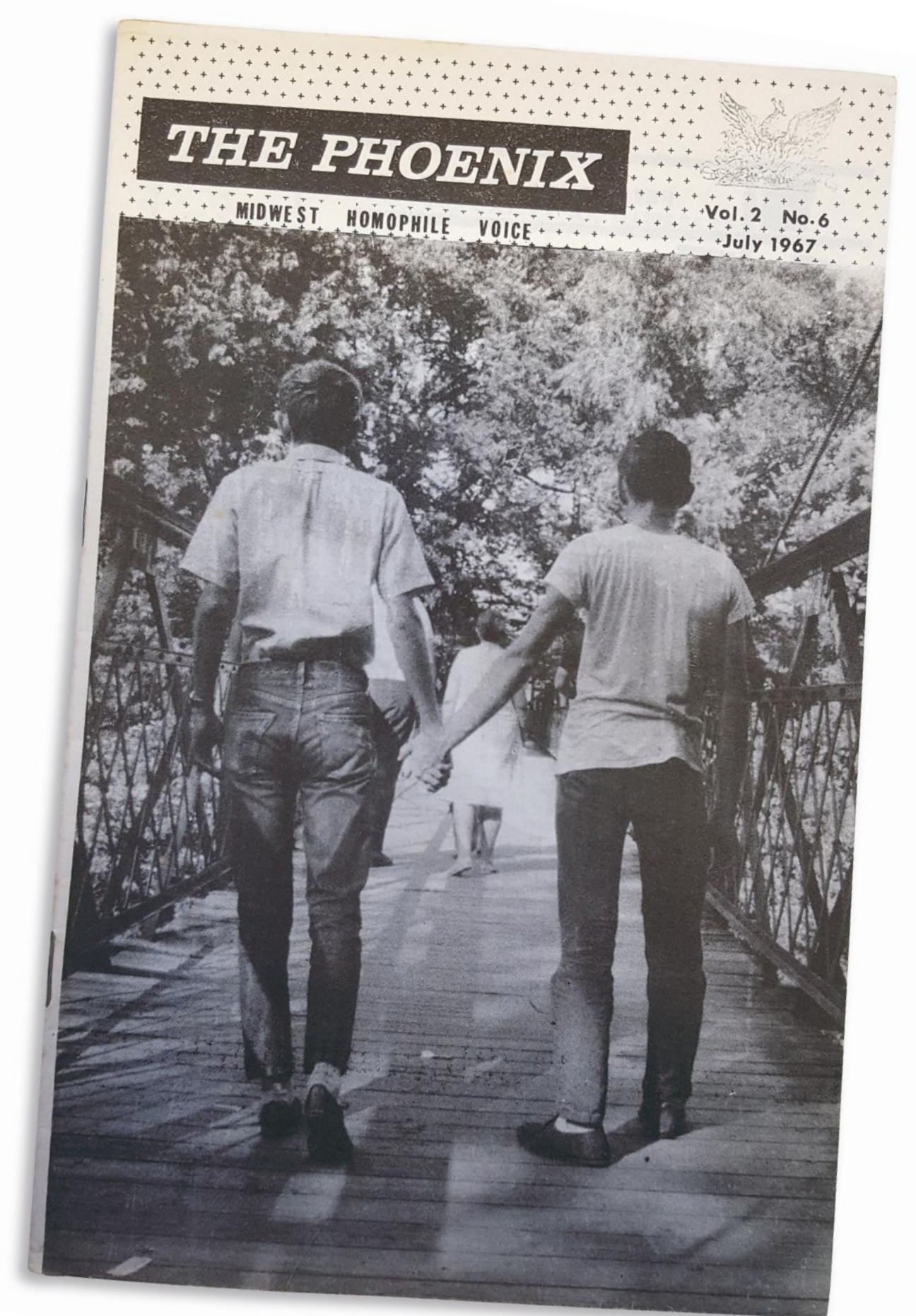


A Long Standing Community

In the 1960s, "sodomy" was illegal in Ohio and Cincinnati had an ordinance targeted at "cross-dressers" banning "the wearing of unusual costumes or apparel for illegal or immoral purposes." Gay and Transgender people were often seen as an aberration or as criminals. That did not stop them from existing, loving, expressing themselves, or gathering together. There were several Gay bars in the area, and groups of Gays and Lesbians had been congregating for decades.

Homophiles in the Midwest

By 1967, Cincinnati was home to at least one formal Gay and Lesbian rights organization. The Cincinnati Mattachine Society was influenced by both the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and by the Homophile movement - a collection of Gay and Lesbian rights groups across the country. The movement sought to gain acceptance, legalize homosexuality and prevent discrimination against Gay people. Cincinnati Mattachine was composed mostly of "respectable-looking" white Gay men. A 1968 Enquirer story even said they looked like members of a "civic society."



Gay Liberation

By 1972, a very different group was meeting at St. John's Unitarian Church. Cincinnati Gay Community was influenced heavily by hippie culture, the Peace movement, and free love. They embraced the radical countercultural ethos of Gay Liberation. The group included several Gay and Lesbian couples and at least one Black Transgender member. Cincinnati Gay Community participated in statewide actions and attempted to organize for nondiscrimination protections. Several groups and services with more specific goals also started out of Cincinnati Gay Community, like the Metropolitan Community Church, founded in 1973, and 621-CARE and Gay Community Switchboard helplines.

Gay Pride 1973

To celebrate their first year, CGC held the first Gay March or Pride in the city. The weekend featured a spaghetti dinner, brunch, a March, skits, and a dance. Between 40 and 70 people Marched publicly from Washington Park to Fountain Square. Although the city's reaction was mostly negative, LGBTQ people from Oxford, Louisville, Columbus, and Indiana attended the landmark event for Gay activism and visibility.

A Legal Fight for Gay Groups

When the new Ohio Revised Code took effect on January 1, 1974, "sodomy" was no longer a criminal act. Although laws against solicitation were still used to persecute gay male cruising, the state could no longer deny recognition to Gay organizations.

Artifact Image: The Phoenix: Midwest Homophile Voice, Phoenix Society for Individual Rights, Kansas City, Missouri, July 1967.