

2005

The Ties That Bind: Experiences of Family in Maine, 1900-Present

Univeristy of Southern Maine

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The Ties that Bind: Experiences of Family in Maine, 1900-Present

Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine

Exhibition 2005



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MAINE

Welcome



Richard M. Pattenau

*T*he University of Southern Maine (USM) is a university where changes happen in the lives of people, in the community, and in the world. These changes occur because USM strives to be a genuinely inclusive community in which differences in background, points of view, and life choices are valued and respected. USM encourages the active examination and exchange of diverse ideas and perspectives and provides the opportunity for all persons to achieve their full potential so they are able to offer their unique contributions to others. USM recognizes the complexity of our identities, and is moving as an institution from simply acknowledging these identities to integrating these complexities into its organizational and cultural fabric. As a result, it is a com-

munity that is willing to investigate and implement strategies that create and sustain innovative and intercultural structures and practices.

The Sampson Center's mission of promoting and advocating for diversity and civil rights through research, education, and outreach plays a critical role in moving USM forward toward the realization of its diversity goals.

—Richard M. Pattenau
President
University of Southern Maine

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Albert Brenner Glickman Family Library

314 Forest Avenue
Portland, Maine 04104-9301

Reading Room Hours

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday,
1:00-5:00 p.m. or if necessary, by
appointment.

Please call Jenifer Hughes at
(207) 780-4275 to schedule an
appointment.

Exhibition Area Hours

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday,
1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine

The University of Southern Maine's Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine collects material documenting the ongoing histories of diverse communities. Current collections represent the African American, Jewish, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered communities. The Center advocates for diversity and civil rights through research, education, and outreach. Last year, the Sampson Center was visited by seven University classes, created three exhibitions, and sponsored eight programs.

The Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine can trace its inception back to 1994, when Provost Mark Lapping formed an *ad hoc* committee to discuss accepting a large collection of books, journals, posters, photographs, artifacts, and the papers of Gerald E. Talbot (first African American to serve in the Maine State Legislature). By creating the African American Archives of Maine, the provost saw the opportunity for the University to embrace diversity by building a resource to attract a more diverse academic community. Three years later, based on the initiative of faculty, staff, and students, the provost created the Gay and Lesbian Archives. By July of 1997, this commitment to diversity was formalized when the University of Maine System Board of Trustees accepted the University of Southern Maine's proposal to unite the African American Archives, the Gay and Lesbian Archives, the Franco-American Heritage Collection at the Lewiston-Auburn

College, and a planned Jewish Archives, into a Center for Diversity in Maine.

The Center was named after Jean Byers Sampson to honor her lifelong work for diversity, civil rights, and academic freedom. Before Sampson moved to Maine in 1952, she had worked for the NAACP in New York, researching and writing a report on African Americans in the military. Her 1947 report was circulated in government offices and helped lead to the desegregation of the armed forces. Her experience helped to found the Central Maine branch of the NAACP, where she served as president during the 1960s. Sampson was executive director of the Maine Civil Liberties Union in the late seventies.

Sampson served on the University of Maine's Board of Trustees, and as chair, led the Board to support a lesbian-gay conference at the University and defy the Governor when he demanded the Board's resignation. In accepting the American Association of University Professors Alexander Meiklejohn Freedom Award on behalf of the Board, Sampson said "The University must be accountable to society and it must be responsive to its needs...." It is this understanding of the University's role in society that made it fitting to name a center to document and study diversity after her.

It was Shepard Lee who first suggested to Provost Lapping that the Center be named to

honor Jean Byers Sampson. As USM President Pattenaude later wrote “Jean represented all that is good in humanity in her respect for all people. USM will be proud to be home to a center devoted to issues of diversity and pluralism...”

Even though the Center existed mostly on paper in the early years, programming was always a priority. In February 1997, the African American Archives of Maine hosted a talk by Yolanda King, “Multicultural Diversity: The Next Frontier.” When Maureen Elgersman Lee became faculty scholar for the African American Archives, she established a newsletter, *The Griot*. The first issue was published in February 1998 and announced the first annual exhibition from the collection, “‘What Shall I tell My Children?’: Selected Pieces from the African American Archives of Maine.”

Meanwhile, a committed group of USM faculty, staff, and students, as well as community members, were creating programming around the new Gay and Lesbian Archives. An opening reception for the archives was held in February 1999 with a performance by Brian Freeman of material from his play “Civil Sex.”

In 2001, the Franco-American Heritage Collection hosted an exhibition “Hands & Harmony: The Culture of Work and Music in Lewiston's Franco-American Community” in the Area Gallery of USM's Portland Campus.

The work of the faculty scholars has ensured the Sampson Center would produce high quality programming. Each collection has a faculty member who is responsible for collection development,

interpretation, programming, and outreach.

Maureen Elgersman Lee was hired in 1997 as assistant professor of history and faculty scholar for the African American Archives of Maine. In the fall of 2000, Barry Rodrigue became assistant professor of arts and humanities/Franco-American studies for USM's Lewiston Auburn College where he also serves the Franco-American Heritage Collection. These full-time faculty were joined in 2001 by adjunct history professors and scholars-in-residence Abraham J. Peck and Howard M. Solomon. Along with serving the Jewish Archives, Peck is director of the Academic Council for Post-Holocaust Christian and Jewish Studies. Solomon, recently retired from Tufts University, is now helping to build the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Collection.

It is not just their individual skills and experience as scholars that make their contributions to the Sampson Center so important, but their joint work. Each collection has its particular constituency, but the scholars have reached out to the entire Maine community by speaking for academic research and the importance of civil liberties and a diverse society. In January 2003, the four scholars wrote a strong statement in support of Lewiston's Somali community. In November 2004, three of the scholars did a presentation “Memory, History, Diversity: Harvesting the Resources of the Sampson Center.” In 2005, they are presenting the Sampson Center's first annual event, “The Ties that Bind: Experiences of Family in Maine, 1900 to the Present.” The event combines an exhibition, lectures, and a published catalog. The scholars are

“The University must be accountable to society and it must be responsive to its needs....”

—Jean Byers Sampson



Susie R. Bock

also reaching out to public school teachers by offering a workshop through the Maine Humanities Council.

Although the name of the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine has never changed, the names of the collections have been altered to reflect the best academic practices. The term “collection” has been substituted for “archives” since it better expresses the nature of the material being preserved. The current names are the African American Collection of Maine, the Judaica Collection, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Collection. In 2003, the Franco-American Heritage Collection was removed from the Sampson Center’s administration. The Franco-American Heritage Collection is geographically separated from the Sampson Center and it is funded by and reports to USM’s Lewiston Auburn College.

In 2003-04, the Sampson Center had a rebirth fueled by changes in personnel and the construction of a new facility. The Sampson Center had been administratively part of Special Collections, a department in the University Libraries which reports to the Provost. In 2000, Joseph S. Wood became provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. Under his leadership, the head of Special Collections, Susie R. Bock, was appointed director of the Center in 2002. During that year and the next, working with the Center’s scholars, the director, and the interim library director Zark VanZandt, Wood created a new structure for the Center. While this administrative

structure was being created, a new facility for Special Collections was built on the 6th floor of the Glickman Library. The new facility has offices for the scholars, a reading room for the public to use the collections, a seminar room to host classes, work areas for the Special Collections staff, and a stacks area with climate control and state-of-the-art security. The new facility opened in April of 2004, and in May the Sampson Center steering committee met for the first time.

The steering committee consists of University faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of the local community. Chaired by Bob Greene, retired AP reporter and local historian, the steering committee has strengthened the Sampson Center so that it can accomplish its mission. The exhibitions, classes, and programming created by the Sampson Center in 2004-2005 is testament to the committee’s success.

Now, in the fall of 2005, the Sampson Center is poised for a new level of research, education, and outreach. “The Ties that Bind: Experiences of Family in Maine, 1900 to the Present” will engage the community in an examination of Maine history and diversity.

—Susie R. Bock

Director, Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine
and Head, USM Special Collections;

Diversity, Scholarship, and Learning

Diversity and scholarship are two of the very important themes of my tenure as provost at the University of Southern Maine, where we are teacher-scholars devoted to learning of all kinds. “The Ties that Bind: Experiences of Family in Maine, 1900 to the Present” demonstrates how we meld these two themes of diversity and scholarship, seeing them as interdependent. The exhibit and lectures reflect as well the very real maturation of the USM Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine.

Effective understanding of diversity is an educational objective that cuts through the curriculum at USM. Yet too often, I believe, we only reference diversity in our classrooms; we don't confront it intellectually; we don't interrogate multiple perspectives. Too rarely do we use the challenge of integrating people who are different from us into our work as a learning opportunity. Indeed, too often we are simply paralyzed by our encounter with people who are different, which only makes our failure in the University to intellectualize difference all the more problematic.

“The Ties that Bind” helps us escape this paralysis. It opens a window to meaning in the material culture of Mainers outside the dominant culture. Focusing on family, the three Center scholars whose work is catalogued here provide a lens that allows us to peer through that window

into something of the complex nature of difference. The three scholars reveal otherwise anonymous Maine people, whose very anonymity came from the difference that was culturally constructed to segregate them from the dominant culture. Family, which reflects something common to every different culture, works here to highlight unity in human diversity. In that way, family also provides a mirror for every one of us in Maine's increasingly diverse population.

I congratulate the Sampson Center, its Director Susie Bock, and its three faculty scholars, Maureen Elgersman Lee, Abraham Peck, and Howard Solomon, for their contribution to this annual celebration of scholarship in the Sampson Center. By intellectualizing difference through multiple perspectives on family, these scholars have revealed commonality in human experience. And in so doing, they demonstrated the scholarly promise that my predecessor Mark Lapping imagined when he and other USM faculty members first conceived of the Sampson Center for Diversity.

—Joseph S. Wood
Provost and
Vice President for Academic Affairs



Joseph S. Wood



Migration, Mortality, and Maturation: Three African American Families of Bangor and Portland

The five decades between 1900 and 1950 were watershed years in African American history. Initially defined by the absolute decline of race relations and the record-breaking migration out of the American South, the twentieth century gave way to the forces of Black institutional development and maturation across the country. Local and regional movements formed the bases for either the emergence or the expansion of critical, national organizations including the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), and the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). When coupled with the cultural influences of the Harlem Renaissance and the broader political mandates of the New Negro Movement, African American organizations (some with powerful European-American allies) marked a new day. U.S. government legislation that included the Fair Labor Standards Act (1938) and the 1941 desegregation of the federal government and defense industries also helped extend both the reach and the face of economic change.¹

For African Americans in Maine, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed incredible transformation as well. While the statewide Black

population fluctuated between a low of 1096 and a high of 1363, it averaged 1269 people between 1900 and 1950. In Portland, the home of the state's largest Black population, many African American laborers transitioned from ocean-based to land-based work, searching for new places in

African American Collection of Maine

the local economy. In Bangor, the city with the state's second-largest Black population, Canadian migration shaped the community in unprecedented ways. Numerous Blacks born in New Brunswick cities including Fredericton, Kingsclear, and Woodstock made homes in eastern Maine.²

Black Population in Maine, Portland, and Bangor, 1900-1950³

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950
Maine	1319	1363	1310	1096	1304	1221
Portland	291	273	300	268	325	176
Bangor	176	205	208	228	222	112

In the midst of the ebb of flow of local and national developments, life followed a basic rhythm. Blacks were born, they grew up, married, raised children, worked, and eventually died. Binding them together—within and between families—were many things beyond race, including migration, mortality, and institutions. In addition



Edith Delaney Johnson and child—possibly Edith Olive—ca. 1895-1896.

Photographs on page 8: Gerald E. Talbot Collection, African American Collection of Maine.

to making or expanding their familial presence in Maine, Blacks established important organizations that addressed their various social, civic, and fraternal needs. The three families explored in this essay—the Johnsons, Talbots, and Hills—are just a few of many possible studies in Maine's Black familial and organizational life during the first half of the twentieth century. Rather than being the exceptions, these brief profiles illustrate the importance of family and also identify new, critical ways of seeing African Americans in Maine's history.

The Johnson Family

Having migrated to Bangor in the 1870s and 1880s, respectively, William A. and Edith Delaney Johnson were firmly rooted in Bangor by the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷ More than twenty years his wife's senior, Virginian William A. Johnson was proprietor of Johnsons, a business that specialized in cleaning clothes, and, later, in selling second-hand merchandise and renting costumes.



Cecil Johnson, Bangor.

The Bangor Daily News reported the success and popularity of the family business, as the adage "See Johnson First" was sage advice to local residents. St. Thomas native Edith Delaney Johnson was a wife and mother. By the time of the 1900 census, she had given birth to five children—Alonzo, Cecil, Edith, Ruth, and Vivian. When William Johnson died in 1913 at the age of sixty,

Edith had given birth to five more children—Doris, Julia, Evelyn, Earl, and Lucille.⁴ According to a 1963 published interview marking her ninetieth birthday, Edith Johnson had been a busy woman. In addition to having made "all of her children's clothes, [she] crocheted, tended flowers, and kept up with music." Johnson maintained that her longevity was tied to "doing [her] duty as a wife and mother, keeping busy and happy, and doing for others and sharing with them."⁵

The Talbot Family

Maine native Charles Alvin Talbot also lived in Bangor in 1900 with his New Brunswick-born wife, Francis ("Fannie") Saunders Talbot, and their



Young Vincent and Edgerton Talbot.

growing son, Charles Raynsford. Before that decade's end, Charles Raynsford was old enough to start his own household; in June of 1908 he married eighteen-year-old Woodstock, New Brunswick native Panzy Dymond. Twenty-one-year-old Talbot was already working as a local cook at the time of his marriage; his wife would become a well-known caterer.⁶

Charles Raynsford and Panzy Dymond Talbot had two sons, W. Edgerton and Vincent. Edgerton Talbot married Arvella McIntyre, another New Brunswick native, in June of 1931; Vincent mar-

ried Bangor-born Margaret Cromwell in December of 1940. Edgerton and Arvella Talbot raised a sizeable family of their own. The Parker Street neighborhood, home in 1930 to approximately one half of the city's African American population, was where Talbot family members settled into their homes. Through personal contact or simply by reputation, the Talbot family was well known in the city.⁷

The Hill Family

Llewena Baker Hill was born in Portland in May of 1900. Her parents, F. Llewellyn and Sarah McCarthy Hill, were born in Bath, Maine, and Fredericton, New Brunswick, respectively. At the time of his daughter's birth, Llewellyn Hill worked for the railroad, his employer for many years to come. As a young woman, Llewena Hill matriculated at Gorham Normal School, where she trained to become an elementary school teacher. She graduated in 1921, and went to a seemingly brief career as a public school teacher, possibly a substitute, in the Portland-Westbrook area.⁸

Five years after her graduation, Llewena Hill married Gardiner native Oscar S. Mathews, Jr. Mathews worked as a railway porter in Portland. By the time of her marriage, Llewena Hill had left the teaching profession and had taken a job as an elevator operator, one of the few jobs outside of domestic service generally available to the city's Black women. Llewena Hill Mathews worked in the Chapman Building at 477 Congress Street, a large building that hosted a variety of businesses and offices, including Chapman National Bank,

Filene's of Boston, the Portland Psychological Association, and the Cumberland Tea Room.⁹

Mortality

As much as the histories of these three families are about the bonds of familial growth, they are also about the most private bonds of loss. Grief over the premature loss of family members, particularly children, also connects these groups. The Johnson family suffered considerable loss. Born in 1895, William and Edith Johnson's infant daughter, Edith Olive, died shortly after her first birthday. Their daughter, Ruth Pauline, died at the age of twelve, and their son, Cecil, lived to adulthood, but died a young man of twenty-three. Charles and Fannie Saunders Talbot lost one of their two children prior to 1900. Llewena Hill Mathews lived a short life. She died at the age of forty-one at Maine General Hospital of post-partum complications. Tragically, her death came three days after Christmas and ten days after giving birth to twins James William and Anna-Ruth. In several of these cases, both child and adult mortality were attributed to pneumonia, either as the primary cause of death or as a contributing factor.¹⁰

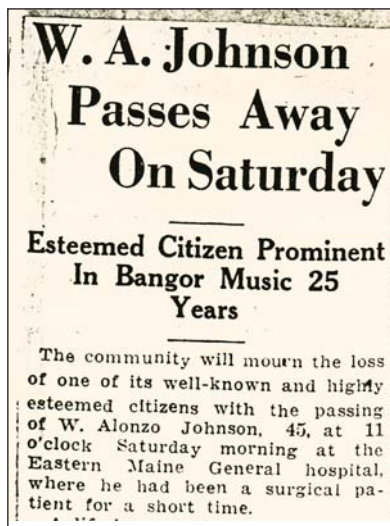
Maturation

The movement, expansion, and contraction of the Johnson, Talbot, and Hill families are part of and, at the same time, stand against the institutional maturation of Bangor and Portland's African American communities. Maturation was signified by the desire to go beyond membership in existing institutions and create other institutions tai-



Llewena Hill's 1921 Gorham Normal School photograph.

University Archives, Special Collections,
University of Southern Maine Libraries.



Obituary of Alonzo Johnson, *Bangor Daily Commercial*, April 10, 1937.

lored to the social, civic, or political needs of the Black community and its allies. Each of the three families profiled herein were prominent in founding and growing institutions that defined the time; some associations served as platforms for organized activity that continues in the twenty-first century.

Organizational membership was highly evident in the Johnson household, and it is possible to link family members to no fewer than four different Bangor groups between 1900 and 1950. Alonzo Johnson was its first vice-president and one of more than fifty charter members of the Bangor NAACP that organized in 1920 and received its charter in early 1921. As then president of the organization, Alonzo Johnson helped challenge the 1921 Bangor presentation of D.W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). With the cooperation of the host theatre's management, the Bangor NAACP was able to have the film's content edited, in their efforts to counteract content "calculated to inspire race hatred." Alonzo Johnson belonged to the Black Masons' Pine Tree Lodge, as did his brother, Cecil. He was also a member of Bangor's Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (GUOOF), a fraternal organization designed to ensure the proper burial of fellow members and to provide benevolence to the widow. Edith Johnson, also a charter member of the Bangor NAACP, was a member of the Mothers' Club. Likely founded sometime during the 1910s, the Mothers' Club was a community-based group of Black women who held monthly meetings, sup-

ported each other with cooperative, familial work, and organized seasonal events for the larger African American community.¹¹

In the Talbot family, father and son, Charles Alvin and Charles Raynsford Talbot, were both members of Bangor's Tarragona Club, a social club—quite possibly fraternal—that existed by the early 1900s. Little material evidence of the Tarragona's existence survives, but the program of the club's 1905 first annual ball indicates that the senior Talbot, who served as floor manager during the ball, was a member of the executive committee, while the junior Talbot was president. Charles A. Talbot was a charter member of the local NAACP; his wife's name was probably added to the charter subsequently.¹²

In Portland, the women in the Hill family were particularly visible institution builders. Sarah McCarthy Hill was an active member of the Black women's club movement, and one of the relatively few links between Maine's Black women and club activity. According to the African American newspaper, the *New York Age*, Sarah Hill became one of seven vice-presidents of the Northeastern Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC) at its July 1915 meeting in Philadelphia. Each New England state, New York, and New Jersey had its own vice-president who served under the organization's president. In 1915, Sarah Hill served under former NACW president, Elizabeth Carter of New Bedford, Massachusetts.¹³

Sarah Hill's participation in the Black women's club movement must have had some

influence on her daughter. Llewena would have been an impressionable teenager of fifteen when her mother, a matron by occupation, served as NFWC vice-president. It is no surprise, then, that Llewena Hill joined the Portland NAACP when it organized in 1920 and received its charter later that same year. Hill was still matriculating at Gorham Normal School when she, and her mother, Sarah, became two of more than sixty original members of the branch.¹⁴

One of the seminal, public activities of the Portland NAACP was following the legal proceedings surrounding the 1921 Portland murder of Baltimore seaman James Walker and the beating of several of his Black crew members. NAACP president Joseph C. Fisher reported to James Weldon Johnson in May of 1921, "I was in the court this morning and all of the colored victims were glad to see me there. Mr. Johnson, I don't think they will need the NAACP to help them. But I think it[']s my duty to report the case to you."¹⁵ It is not clear if the Hills observed the legal proceedings in the Walker case; they would have been aware of its progression of NAACP members.

Holding up the histories of the Johnson, Talbot and Hill families to the lights of migration, mortality, and institutional maturation reveals much about Maine's African American history. Families, many of which were extended by in-state and cross-border migrations, played critical roles in founding unique, relatively insular groups, like the Tarragona Club, as well as branches of

national organizations such as the NAACP and the Odd Fellows. With families as the building blocks of the city, the county, and the state, their histories are critical portals to understanding Maine's past and present. Perhaps, even its future.

—Maureen Elgersman Lee
Associate Professor of History and
Faculty Scholar for USM's African American
Collection of Maine

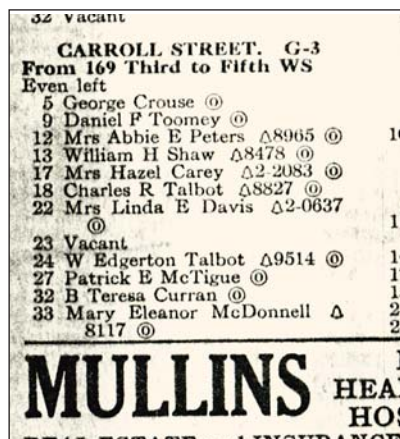


Maureen Elgersman Lee

1. For more information, see Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999); Darren Rhym, *The NAACP* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002); Larry Tye, *Rising From the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004); Williams S. McConnell, ed., *Harlem Renaissance* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2003); Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., 1925; various editions available).

2. Twelfth (1900), Thirteenth (1910), Fourteenth (1920), Fifteenth (1930) Censuses of the United States (ms), microfilm, Maine State Archives, Augusta, Maine.

3. Fifteenth (1930) Census of the United States, Population, Vol. III, part I.; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Census Statistics on Population, Totals By Race, 1790 to 1900*, and *By Hispanic Origins, 1970 to 1990*, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States. By Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung. Working Paper Series No. 56. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2002.
www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/wps0056.html 5 July 2005



Bangor City Directory, 1950.

4. "See Johnson First," *Bangor Daily News*; Johnson's Advertisement, *Bangor City Directory*, 1921-1922, 244; Marie Sullivan, "Recipe for Happy Old Age: Be Good Wife and Mother and Do For Others, Says Bangor Nonagenarian," *Bangor Daily News*, 24 January 1963, 2; Twelfth (1900), Thirteenth (1910), and Fourteenth (1920) Censuses of the United States (ms), Maine State Archives.

5. Sullivan, "Recipe for Happy Old Age," 2.

6. Twelfth (1900) Census of the United States (ms), microfilm; marriage record of Charles R. Talbot and Panzy Dymond, 10 June 1908, microfilm, Maine State Archives.

7. Thirteenth (1910), Fourteenth (1920), and Fifteenth (1930) Censuses of the United States (ms), microfilm; marriage records of W. Edgerton Talbot and Arvella McIntyre, 26 June 1931; Vincent Talbot and Margaret Cromwell, 4 December 1940, microfilm; Maine State Archives; Obituaries of Mrs. Charles R. Talbot, *Bangor Daily News*, 19 January 1962, 20; W. Edgerton Talbot, *Bangor Daily News*, 30 November 1972, 46; "Mr. and Mrs. C. Raynsford Talbot Celebrate Golden Anniversary," *Bangor Daily News*, 10 June 1958, 11.

8. *Green and White: The Yearbook of Gorham Normal School*, 1921, 1922 University Archives, Special Collections, University of Southern Maine Libraries; obituary of Llewena Hill Mathews, Portland Press Herald, 29 December 1941, 2.

9. Birth record of Llewena Baker Hill, 19 May 1900, microfilm; marriage record of Llewena Baker Hill and Oscar Stilson Mathews, Jr., 6 October 1926, microfilm; death record of Llewena Mathews, 28 December 1941, microfilm; Fifteenth (1930) Census of the United States (ms), microfilm, Maine State Archives; Portland City Directory, 1926 (Portland: Portland Directory Co., 1926), 201-203, 742.

10. Death records of Edith O. Johnson, 5 September 1896; William A. Johnson, 20 January 1913; Cecil F. Johnson, 29 October 1916; birth (stillborn) record of female child (Mathews), 27 November 1933, microfilm;

Twelfth (1900) and Thirteenth (1910) Census of the United States (ms), microfilm. Death record of Llewena Mathews, 28 December 1941, microfilm; birth records of James William and Anna-Ruth Mathews, 17 December 1941, microfilm; Maine State Archives.

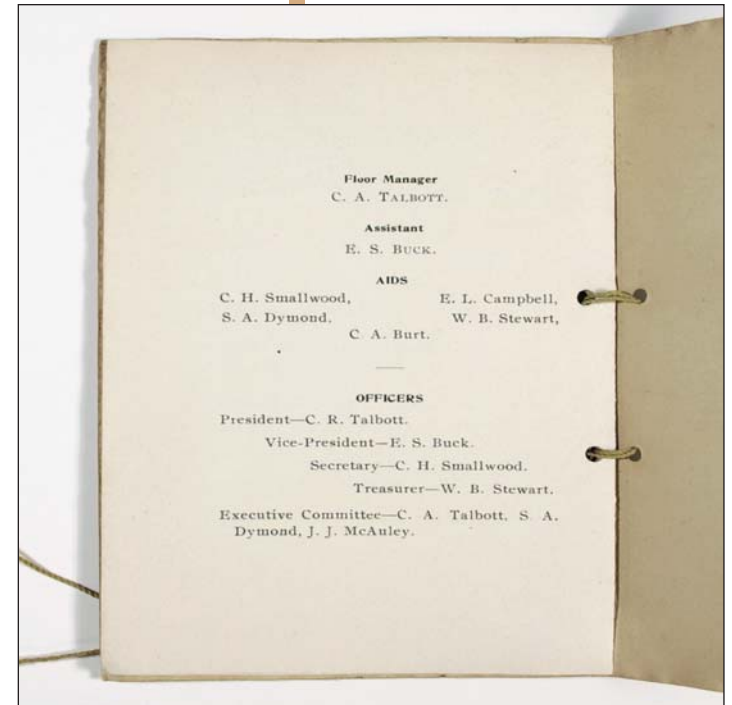
11. 1912 Bangor City Directory, 388; 1923-24 Bangor City Directory, 478; Application for Charter of the Bangor, Maine Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, October 1920; Queenie Peters to NAACP National Office, 22 July 1921; NAACP Branch Files, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Bangor also had a chapter of the Household of Ruth, a women's auxiliary of the GUOOF.

12. "First Annual Ball of the Tarragona Club, Essenic Hall, Wednesday Evening, May 31 1905" (program/dance card), Gerald E. Talbot Collection, African American Collection of Maine, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Libraries.

13. "Women's Federation of Northeast Meet," New York Age, 15 July 1915, 5; "Women Meet in Louisville-National Federation Holds Seventh Biennial Session," New York Age, 21 July 1910, 1.

14. Application for Charter of the Portland, Maine Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, April 1920, NAACP Branch Files, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; *Green and White: The Yearbook of Gorham Normal School*, 1921, 1922, University Archives, Special Collections, University of Southern Maine Libraries.

15. Joseph C. Fisher to James W. Johnson, 23 May 1921, NAACP Branch Files, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.



Program/dance card from Tarragona Club Ball, May 1905.

Gerald E. Talbot Collection, African American Collection of Maine.

THE NEW YORK AGE—THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 1905

WOMEN'S CLUBS AT BOSTON.

Hundreds of the Gentler Sex Attend the Ninth Annual Session of the Northeastern Federation—A Philadelphia Pastor Impresses Bostonians—Noted Visitors at the Hub from Many Sections.

BOSTON, Aug. 14.—Boston has acquired the reputation of being the literary centre of the United States. It is the one great city in this country whose intellectual light is seen everywhere. But added to this reputation, it is safe to say that Boston is also the most enchanting American city from the standpoint of architectural beauty, both in its public and business structures as well as in its private dwellings; and as for its park system there is nothing in the world to surpass it in picturesqueness. The hundreds of ladies who were here last week attending the Ninth Annual session of the Northeastern Federation of Women's Clubs, were simply charmed

1905 report of Black women's club activity.

Portland City Directory, 1930.

HESELTINE & TUTTLE CO.

419 CONGRESS ST. PORTLAND MAJOR BUILDING THE QUALITY DRUG STORE OF MAINE

618 PORTLAND [1930] DIRECTORY

MASTA

Masta Charles A (Mary) h rear 197 Sherwood
—Charles R r rear 197 Sherwood
—Mary Mrs basket mkr rear 197 Sherwood r do
Masterman Carrie M Mrs lodgh 48 Brown r do
—Dexter C (Carrie N) pntr 70 Free h 48 Brown
—Eben E slsmn 186 Middle h at Jay
—Lottie A r 466 Cumb av
Masters Ethel N bkpr 511 Forest av r 89 Carleton
Mastodas John mov to Todelo Ohio
Mastro Geneva Mrs r 189 Cong
—Michael (Geneva L) h 208 Cong
Mastroluca Alice cash 529 Cong r 190 Veranda
—Antonio (Alice A) mech r 190 Veranda
—Constantino (Madeline) confr 164 Veranda h 190 do
—James r 190 Veranda
—Mario r 190 Veranda
Mastromattu Ralph (Piscopo) lab h 34 Deer
Mather George (Hazel) slsmn 48 Main SP h 17 Milton
Mathes Edward A (Gladys D) asst treas 119 Exch rm 701 h 133 Longfellow
Matheson John H (Christina) hlpr 173 Kennebec h 116b Wilmot
—Wilfrid G mov to Bethel
—William D r 116b Wilmot
Mathew Herman B (Christine M) r 50 Farnham
Mathews Byron E (Mildred M) pkr 64 Union whf h 45 Grand SP
—Ellen Mrs maid 645 Cong r 3 Park pl
—George r 743 Cong

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—Ida L treas 51 Preble
—Marginal Way h 146 Scam
—Edna B h 50 Farnham
—John (Edna) h 3 Park pl
—Kenneth gen mgr 51 Preble r 146 Scam h SP
—Kenneth h 26 Kellogg
—Llewena B Mrs elev opr 474 Cong r 28 Forest
—Oscar S (Llemena B) h 28 Forest
SEE MATTHEWS
Mathieu Arthur driver 11 Richland SP r at Biddeford 1929
—Germaine I Mrs hkpr died Nov 5

MATHIS

Mathis Isabelle I wid L D h 59 State apt 55
SEE MATHES
Matluck Bros (Morris and Samuel S Matluck) Junk 270 Lancaster
—Morris (Mary) (Matluck Bros) 270 Lancaster h 72 Parris
—Samuel S (Celia) (Matluck Bros) 270 Lancaster h 72 Parris
Matson Allick (Ina M) h rear 75 Wilmot
—Annie I Mrs clk 433 Cong r Eastland Hotel
—Belle pres 36 Plum h 288 State apt 3
—Esther bkpr 36 Plum r 288 State apt 3
—Louis (Annie I) treas 433 Cong r Eastland Hotel
—Maud A sten r 118 Winter
—Maurice R (Edith) clk 433 Cong h 189 Dartmouth
—Myer (Ruth) treas 36 Plum h 150 Noyes
—Navigation Co Fred E Gignoux apt 176 Middle
—& Marcus Co Louis Matson pres clothing 433 Cong
Mattatall Errol W (Marion) slsmn 105 Elm h 30 Brentwood
—George M (Laura) mldr 57 Kennebec h 161 Franklin
—John D slsmn 195 Elm r at Rockland
—Marion Mrs pkr 105 Elm r 30 Brentwood
Matteo Dorothy waitress 79 Oak r 8 Deer
—Pacilio (Nicolena) prop 79 Oak h 8 Deer
Matthews Albert H r 542½ Cong
—Blanche Mrs bkpr 633a Cong r at Falmouth Foreside
—Bruce W (Bessie M) utilitymn Mex Pet Co h 49 Kelsey SP
—Burt T (Ethel G) prop 224 Federal h 345 Cottage SP
—Charles W (Caroline M) elev opr 445 Cong h rear 75 Danforth
—Elias B (Lillian R) slsmn 123 Wash av h 127 Anthoine SP
—Emma A wid Samuel B h 26 Kellogg
—Eva nurse 62 State r 52 do
—Florence D Mrs hkpr 75 Lincoln r do
—Frank (Ethel M) driver 27 Chadwick h rear 179 Spring
—Fred (Emma A) opr CCP&LCo h 18 Victoria

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PHONES
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—Oscar S (Llemena B) h 28 Forest
SEE MATTHEWS
Mathieu Arthur driver 11 Richland

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If Not Jerusalem, Then at Least 'The Jerusalem of the North:' Continuity and Discontinuity in Three Portland Jewish Families

Jewish Families between East and West: The Challenge of Modernity

In the century and a half that stood between the first debates about Jewish emancipation during the French Revolution and almost immediately following in Germany and the destruction of European Jewish life during the Holocaust, the classic image of the Jewish family became almost impossible to maintain. Jews throughout Europe experienced massive dislocations in areas such as economic stratification, education, urbanization, and acculturation to the societies in which they lived.

Modernity, in all its nuances, affected the way in which Jews adhered to traditional family values and the gendered roles of men and women within the life of the Jewish family were transformed according to their class standing and cultural mores in either Western or Eastern Europe.

Jewish family life in Western Europe from the beginning of the nineteenth century reflected the urban Jewish elite's desire to adapt to the culture of the surrounding societies and to achieve a middle class material comfort.

Adhering to modern bourgeois gender roles, Jewish men were responsible for work in the public sphere and women were slated for work in the domestic sphere of household responsibility and the rearing of children.

Women assumed nearly all the responsibilities of preserving and transmitting traditional morality. "Judaism begins in the home," was the principle that held women responsible for reli-

giously based "good works," including the basic religious education of children.

Bourgeois Jewish women took the lead in limiting the number of children per family. The two-child family was pioneered by German Jews.

Smaller families meant that women could devote more of their time to charitable activities, something that had not been the case in the classical traditional Jewish family.

Judaica Collection

Like other women of the European middle-classes, Jewish women developed important roles in the work of social welfare and education. They believed that like their own households, the influence of women on the broader society, which was merely the household writ large, was necessary in areas of social and political concern.

This entry into the public sphere also meant that unlike the traditional Jewish role for women, the previously considered off-limits area of education became available to Jewish women throughout Western and Central Europe, and they took advantage of it to the point that Jewish women, like Jewish men, were disproportionately represented in institutions of higher education.

But Jewish families in Eastern Europe did not and could not, for the most part, attain middle class status. Jewish family values remained far more traditional in a society that did not facilitate the division between the public and domestic realms, an essential requirement for the emergence of a Jewish middle class.



Kirill Shkolnik during his bar mitzvah with his rabbi and teacher, Rabbi Moshe Wilansky.

Private photo, Shkolnik family.

Because of economic necessity, Jewish women participated fully in secular public and economic life. Eastern European Jewish women were fully responsible for contributing to the economic support of their households.

Full-time Torah study for men, although hardly possible for most Jewish families, still meant that the primary obligation for the family's economic support fell upon women. But because of the necessity of economic survival of the family, Jewish men had to work as small-scale merchants or artisans.

Yet the cultural ideal of male learning and women's labor meant that Jewish women in Eastern Europe were far more active in the world of trade and commerce than their Western European counterparts. Such a presence meant that women were far more independent and open to a larger variety of social contacts than were common in Western and Central Europe until well after World War I.¹

The "Jerusalem of the North"

If any community in modern times can be said to defy Professor Salo Baron's charge that Jewish history is too often presented as lachrymose, as a study in suffering, that community must be American Jewry.

Now in its 350th year of continuous existence, the American Jewish community has found in its adopted homeland an expansive capitalism, dynamic and largely successful. Here Jews have found a land whose golden age lay not in a medieval past of corporate political structures as they did in many European conceptions of the

"nation," but in a political tradition reflective basically of an optimistic, idealistic view of people and government. In America, there was no debate about the terms of political emancipation for Jews, since emancipation asserted itself as a major theme of the nation's existence as early as 1777 in the New York state constitution. "America," the German poet Goethe wrote, "you've got it much better," mirroring the "enlightened" European's view of the new republic.

Maine, too, has always seemed reassuringly different. As the historian Judith S. Goldstein has described it "Maine's publicists have sought to cultivate...its pristine beauty, civic virtues, social order and strong, Anglo-Saxon past. Removed from large urban centers and little industrialized, Maine nevertheless attracted immigrants—French Canadians, Irish, Italians, Greeks, Armenians and German and eastern-European Jews."²

But Goldstein also noted a harsher, more Darwinian side to the encounter of native and immigrant:

Powerful forces of economic change in Maine caused immigrants and the native Anglo-Saxon population to struggle with the competing forces of mobility, aspiration and privilege. Maine's upper-class populations firmly exercised their control. They promoted their culture over the immigrant minorities and native-born lower classes. Immigrants, for their part, mostly emulated American ways and adjusted to the hierarchical order.³

The three Jewish families highlighted in this exhibit represent the three great migrations in

American Jewish history: the Venner/Schulman family represents the more than three million East European Jews who came to the shores of America between 1881 and 1914; the Messerschmidt family represents a dual immigration—that of the more than 250,000 German Jews who arrived in America between the 1830s and the 1860s and over 100,000 survivors of the Holocaust who found refuge in America between 1947 and 1952; finally, the Shkolnik family represents the group of Jews from the Soviet Union who began to immigrate to America beginning in the 1970s until the present.

What they sought and presumably found was an American “exceptionalism” that was translated into an American Jewish “exceptionalism.”

That exceptionalism was already evident to the French observer of America, Alexis de Tocqueville, who in 1835 commented in his classic *Democracy in America*, that “all the nations of the world—English, French, German: people differing from one another in language, in beliefs, in opinions, in a word, a society possessing no roots, no common ideas, no national character, yet with a happiness a hundred times greater than our own.”⁴

Beginning in the 1830s, thousands upon thousands of Jews from Germany came to America to seek that happiness. They included a small number of Jews who came as peddlers to Bangor, Maine, and by 1849 had established a synagogue and a cemetery. Neither the peddlers nor the synagogue remained for very long.⁵

But for those German Jews and the remain-

der who settled in the American Midwest and South, to a people who before the Enlightenment had been historically denied the fruits of full equality in the lands of their birth, who had suffered economic and professional as well as geographic restrictions and had always been on the margin of national activity, America meant, in a word, to reintroduce de Tocqueville, everything.

For nineteenth-century Jews from Germany it meant the opportunity to place themselves on sure economic ground. It meant the opportunity to establish a vast network of philanthropic, religious, social and defense organizations, which would serve as the foundationstone of future American-Jewish life.⁶

The fact that the German-Jewish peddlers did not stay in Bangor and appeared in smaller numbers in the area of Portland, meant that there was no established German-Jewish community to welcome the dozens of East European Jewish families who began to come to America and to Portland after the passage of the infamous May Laws and other anti-Jewish legislation in the 1880s. That included the Venner family from Kaunas (Kovno) Lithuania in 1894 and the Schulman family in 1904.

These East European Jewish immigrants had traveled to America with very light cultural baggage. They brought a sense of their own Jewishness with them but hardly any traces of a Russian identity. Such a state would be reversed by the hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Soviet Union who would come with an identity devoid of Jewishness after more than seven decades of life under Soviet Communism.



Judy Halpert's grandfather, Jacob Venner, peddling in the area around Gorham and Buxton at the beginning of the 20th century.

Private photo, Venner/Schulman families.

When Portland celebrated its centenary on July 4, 1886, just a handful of Jewish families lived in the community, as Bernard Aaronson, designated to speak for the small Jewish community of the time, observed: "We number sixty families, and over the majority portion being of the middle or poorer class, yet content with their lot...."⁷

That contentment was reflected in a sense of pious synagogue worship, a piety that earned Portland Jewry the nickname of the "Jerusalem of the North," a designation it shared with Montreal Jewry.

When Kurt and Sonia Messerschmidt and their daughter, Eva, arrived in America in 1950 and then came to Portland shortly thereafter, the Venner/Schulman family had been here for more than half a century, observing from a distance the cataclysmic events that would befall their East European cousins after World War I and culminating in the Holocaust.

The Messerschmidts were more than observers. They were victims of the greatest tragedy to befall the Jewish people.

They came to America as penniless and emotionally drained survivors with personal losses that words and numbers could not describe. But they also came with a voice that somehow sought to give meaning to the meaninglessness of survival, to help overcome the feeling of being "living corpses," at the mercy of an uncaring world. Sacred Jewish music was one source of that meaning; saying "yes" to a Jewish future after the tragedy of the Holocaust, by bringing new life into the world, was another. What kind of Jewish fami-

ly would emerge from the ashes of Auschwitz?

And, finally, the Shkolnik family. Earlier studies of Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union paint a picture of a community that, in opposition to its American Jewish brothers and sisters who identify themselves along religious lines as a community, identifies itself through ethnicity and Russian cultural lines. While American Jews are profoundly American, Jews from the former Soviet Union, at least a large number of them, are intensely Russian.

Yet the Shkolnik family does not have easy access to the ex-Soviet Jewish cultural life of Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, where English is not a preferred language or to the Russian Samovar restaurant located in Manhattan's Theater District where ex-Soviet Jews can come and quench their nostalgia for Soviet culture.⁸

What forms of Jewish family life are available to the Shkolniks after decades of religious and cultural repression? Is there one particular model that meets their specific needs and understanding?

Concluding Thoughts

Just as it was impossible to speak about *the* Jewish family in modern Europe because the family patterns of Jews in the modern period varied so dramatically, it is equally impossible to speak about *the* Jewish family and family life in Maine.

The "exceptionalism" of America as more than a haven, rather as a home for American Jewry, has created an American Jewish family in tension and in transition. Synagogue worship and attendance, or the lack of it, Jewish education, intermarriage, the growth of a Jewish feminism,

and the worry over Jewish continuity, are but some of the issues that both concern and fascinate American Jewry.

Portland and Maine are not exceptions to this state of American Jewish affairs. For many modern Jewish families, the past is prologue. The past still hovers over their daily activities, their rituals, and their festivals.

The Jewish family stood for standards of life and action; it strove for continuity; it considered itself an integral part of a greater whole; and it was the bulwark against the winds of change as well as allowing itself to be reshaped by the onset of modernity. Jewish family life in Maine and the United States is, like the liberal Jewish understanding of Judaism, an evolving concept. No Jewish family will ever again be the family of a hundred years ago. Yet American Jews, in their comfort zone of American Jewish exceptionalism, will find some way to extract from their heritage that which will affect their current behavior. It will also affect their family lives.

The next generation of Venner/Schulmans, Messerschmidts, and Shkolniks holds the key to the future of the Jewish family in Maine. With hope, that future will honor the past, but will also carve for itself a new chapter in the saga of an eternal people.

—Abraham J. Peck

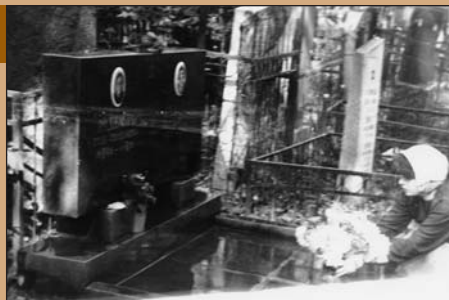
Director, Academic Council for Post-Holocaust
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Scholar-in-residence for USM's Judaica Collection

1. Paula Heyman, "The Jewish Family in Modern Europe," in Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (eds) *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 25-38.
2. Judith S. Goldstein, *Crossing Lines. Histories of Jews and Gentiles in Three Communities* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1992), 14.
3. Ibid, p.14
4. Quoted in Lothar Kahn, "Early German-Jewish Writers and the Image of America (1820-1840)," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook XXXI* (1986), 407.
5. On early Bangor Jewry see William J. Leffler II, "A Study of Congregation Ahawas Achim, Bangor, Maine from 1849-1856 from the Minutes of the Congregation", American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (May 1957) and Goldstein, *Crossing Lines*, pp.45 ff.
6. On this point see Lloyd P. Gartner, "The Jewish Community in America Transplanted and Transformed," in Herbert Strauss (ed.), *Conference on Acculturation* (New York, 1965) and Naomi Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984).
7. Quoted in John T. Hull, ed., *Centennial Celebration 1776-1885* (Portland: Owen, Stout and Company, 1886), 145. See also Benjamin Band, *Portland Jewry: Its Growth and Development* (Portland: Jewish Historical Society, 1955). For examples of the new scholarly approach to American Jewish history and to Portland in particular see Michael Cohen "Jerusalem of the North. An Analysis of Religious Modernization in Portland, Maine's Jewish Community, 1860-1950," Brown University Senior Thesis in the Department of History and the program in Judaic Studies, 2000 and Julia M. Lipez, "A Time to Build Up and a Time to Break Down: The Jewish Secular Institutions of Portland, Maine," Senior Thesis, Amherst College, 2002.
8. On Jews from the Former Soviet Union see, among other works, Steven J. Gold, *Refugee Communities: A Comparative Field Study* (Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1993); Leah Moses, "Russian Immigrants in Search of a Communal Identity," *Forward*, August 8, 2003; Joanne Strasser, "The Last of the Soviets. Ex-Soviet Jewish Culture," *Russian American Culture*, 2002.



Abraham J. Peck

Shkolnik family



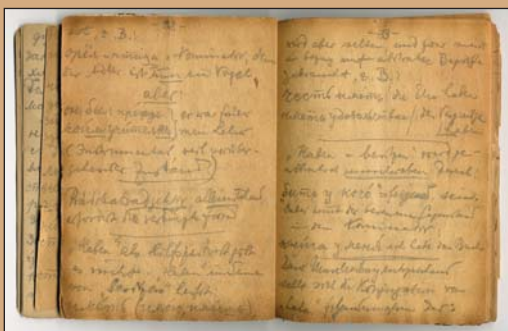
Lana Shkolnik at the graves of her mother and grandmother, z"l, just before her departure to the United States (1989).



Ester and David Shkolnik at the Kotel (Western Wall) in Jerusalem.

Private photos, Shkolnik family.

Messerschmidt family



A Russian-German dictionary created by Kurt Messerschmidt shortly after liberation (August 1945).

Private photos, Messerschmidt family.

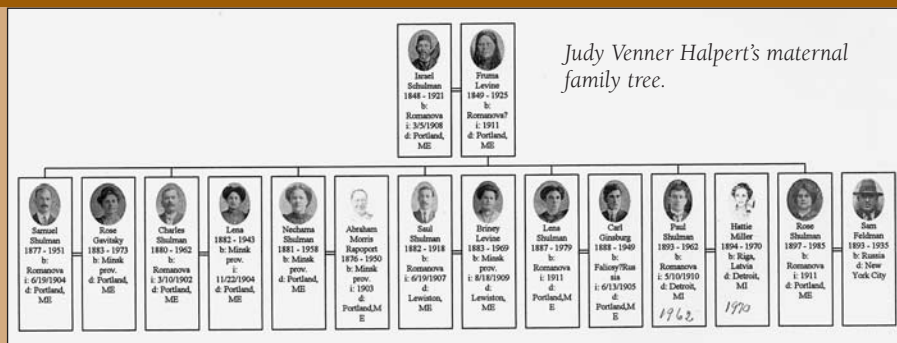


Bis Hundert und Zvanzig! (May you live to the age of 120).



The Messerschmidts and extended family in Portland.

Venner/Schulman/Halpert families



Judy Venner Halpert's maternal family tree.

Private photos, Venner/Schulman/Halpert families.



The city of Slutsk in Belarus, the closest city to the region where the Rapoport /Venner family originated.

Russian couple couldn't wait anymore

The next time you're standing in line at the grocery checkout, waiting behind 10 people with carts filled to the brim, stop cursing and look on the bright side.

You could be in Russia. Shopping in the former Soviet bloc is an exercise in patience. Twenty-three years ago, The New York Times reported on a study that found Soviets wasted 20 billion hours annually waiting during shopping trips. Joseph and Lana Shkolnik, Soviet immigrants now living in Portland, say things have not improved since then.

Russians typically shop for groceries several times a week because of the scarcity of many foods. At the store, they must wait in separate lines for each type of grocery, such as meat or dairy.

They pick out what they want, find the price, go to the cashier line to pay for it, then return with the receipt to pick it up.

"Sometimes, you just stay in line and just go home without anything, because you can't get what you need," Lana Shkolnik recalls.

Russians also wait in long lines to buy clothes and books, to see a doctor, to apply for emigration, "to get anything, anything," Shkolnik says. It is not unusual to wait a year and a half to buy a high-quality refrigerator, or six years to purchase a condominium.



Staff photo by John Partipolis
Joseph and Svetlana Shkolnik and son Kirill: Their great wait is over.

It doesn't feel as angry," adds Lana Shkolnik. "People talk."

— Shoshana Hoose

chase a condominium. All of that waiting makes people edgy. They worry that someone will bypass them, or take the last piece of meat.

"It's a big humiliation," says Joseph Shkolnik. "The system makes people like animals."

People search for ways to bypass long lines, sometimes by bribery or other illegal means. They also vent their anger at disabled people, who get preferential treatment under Russian law that lessens their waiting time.

The Shkolniks immigrated to America two years ago. For the first time in their lives, they enjoy shopping.

"If we stand in line, we don't suffer," says Joseph Shkolnik, a database administrator for Hannaford Bros Co. "It's a good time for looking around."

The Shkolniks look back on life in Russia.



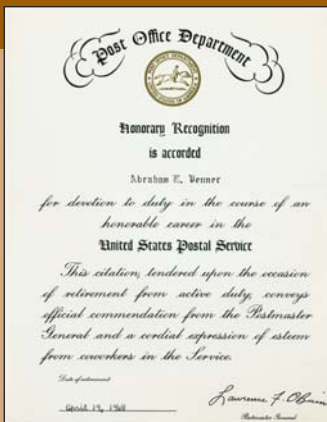
David Shkolnik poses with friends a year before the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union (1940).



A teacher, Kurt Messerschmidt, and his pupil and future wife, Sonja (front row, 4th from left).



At home with Sonja and Kurt Messerschmidt.



Certificate of honorary recognition awarded to Judy Venner Halpert's father, Abraham Venner (1968).



The Monument School, Portland (1941). Judy Venner is seated in the second row from the bottom, second from the right.



John Labrie and Charley Mitchell celebrate Christmas 2000 with their children.
Private photo.

Ozzie and Harriet, Same-Sex Marriage, and the Culture Wars: LGBT Families in Maine, 1960 to the Present

For Maine's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) citizens, the coming out process has often meant struggling against the beliefs and expectations of their families of origin. Over the years, LGBT Mainers have forged alternative forms of family life while grap-

pling with the ties that bind them—for good or for ill—to tradition and convention. So too have LGBT organizations in Maine been entangled with their political opponents in four decades of public debate about “family values” and “gay rights.”

Until the 1970s, most sexual minorities in Maine, like their counterparts elsewhere, adapted to living their lives in the closet. Four decades ago, few Mainers could claim to have ever seen a real life “homosexual”—except perhaps in the summertime artist colonies of Ogunquit or Mt.

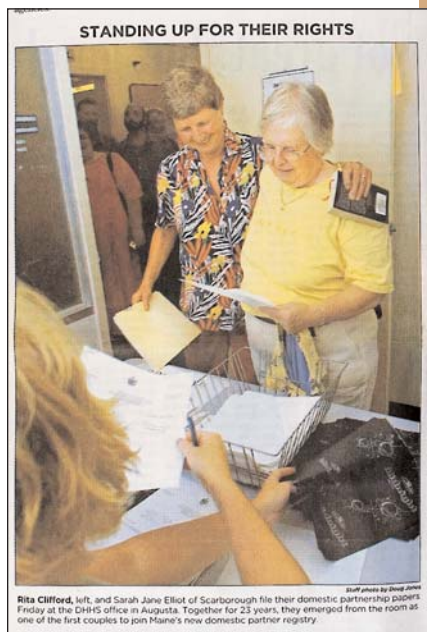
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Collection

Two complementary, and sometimes antagonistic, themes underlie the history of LGBT families in Maine. How have LGBT Mainers experienced “family” personally and politically? How have other Mainers understood—or misunderstood—those experiences?

The history of LGBT families in Maine since the 1960s parallels, and illuminates, the broader history of American society during this same period. The varieties of family experiences within Maine's LGBT communities—long-term domestic partnerships, religiously-sanctified marriages, single parents, men and women living alone and finding family among friends—help us understand the evolving role of the family at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Desert Island—let alone known one. But many Mainers had a favorite uncle who came back from World War II and never married, or had a spinster aunt who taught school or worked as a nurse as her brothers and sisters got married and set up their own households. Throughout small town and rural Maine, many same-gender couples shared their lives together, families to each other in everything but name and public recognition. Neighbors might have familiarly referred to such local couples as “the boys” or “the girls,” but few people would have used the term “homosexual” or “heterosexual” to describe their world.

Throughout the 1960s, lesbians and gay men often used the expression “S/he's a member of the family” to introduce their homosexual friends to each other. Embedded in this coded expression was the reality that family life outside of their closeted circles was for many of them an elusive fantasy. Closeted Mainers didn't see anyone like themselves on “Ozzie and Harriet” or “Father



Domestic partnership became effective in Maine on July 30, 2004: long-time partners Rita Clifford and Sara Jane Elliot register at the Office of Vital Records in Augusta.

Portland Press Herald, July 31 2004.

Knows Best.” Nor could homosexuals looking for models of family life find them in the medical and psychiatric literature, which defined homosexuality as a mental disorder. In popular culture as well as science and medicine, the categories of “homosexuality” and “family values” occupied mutually exclusive universes.

In 1969, demonstrations at the Stonewall Inn in New York City heralded the beginning of the modern “gay rights movement;” four years later, the American Psychiatric Association deleted homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. All over America, lesbians and gay men were coming out of the closet, and Maine, too, began to experience the emergence of visible LGBT organizations.

Family issues, broadly defined, were high on the agenda of Maine’s early LGBT groups. The first gathering of the Maine Gay Symposium (later, the Gay and Lesbian Symposium) took place in 1974, following a controversial conference organized by the Wilde-Stein Club at the University of Maine in 1973. Every year, meeting at various sites throughout Maine, Symposium attendees participated in workshops and discussions about marriage, raising children, coming out to their families of origin, etc. Maine Lesbian Feminists, organized in 1976, rallied around lesbians who were involved in child custody disputes. The Maine Gay Task Force, operating in loose association with the Gay People’s Alliance at the University of Maine Portland/Gorham (later renamed the University of Southern Maine), formed at the same time. The *MGTF Newsletter*, the first state-wide gay publication, eventually grew into the monthly *Mainely Gay*: every issue carried stories about

child custody battles, parenting, finding a life partner, etc.

At first glance, much of the rhetoric of 1970s queer activism, in Maine as elsewhere, seemed to reject everything about family values—straight “breeders” were the enemy, monogamy was a trap, and “doing your own thing” was the vaunted ideal. Looking back from the perspective of three decades, however, the picture is quite different. By subjecting mainstream assumptions about the boundaries of public and private, the role of the State, and the construction of sexuality and gender to radical scrutiny, activists of the 1970s were revealing a concern about “family values” as passionate as anything coming from social conservatives like Anita Bryant.

In 1975, State Representative Larry Connally, Jr., and State Senator Gerald Talbot introduced legislation to amend Maine’s Human Rights Act to protect LGBT people from discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodation and credit. “Marriage” and “family” were not mentioned in the proposed legislation, nor in any of its subsequent versions: by seeking to extend human rights protections to all Mainers regardless of sexual orientation, supporters of “the bill” (as it was commonly called) propelled the experiences of LGBT Mainers—and their families—into the legislative arena and onto the front page. The Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance, founded in 1984 (renamed Equality Maine, in 2004), worked tirelessly for the bill and other issues related to the rights of LGBT people and their families. Citizen-initiated referenda in 1998 and 2000 prevented the bill from becoming law and threaten to do so

again: a proposal to overturn LD 1194, signed into law by Governor Baldacci on March 31, 2005, is on the November 8, 2005 ballot.

By the late-1980s, a handful of health care and social service providers, many of them influenced by social work professor Richard Steinman of the University of Southern Maine, began to deal with LGBT families in their practices. Liberal churches and synagogues welcomed LGBT Mainers, and some performed commitment ceremonies for same-sex and transgendered couples. PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gay People) Outright, and the Gay/Lesbian Student Teachers Network (renamed Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) advocated for parents and children; the Portland-based Matlovitch Society featured speakers on family topics, and community newspapers *Apex*, *Our Paper*, and *Community Pride Reporter* documented the increasing visibility of LGBT families in Maine life.

Amidst all of this, Maine confronted the AIDS-HIV epidemic. Many LGBT Mainers living with AIDS became estranged from their families of origin; for others, the disease brought relatives, and former strangers, closer together, and broke through the stereotypes. Organizations like The AIDS Project (renamed the Peabody Center in 2002) and Down East AIDS Network (DEAN) supported a network of AIDS “buddies” whose assistance for people living with AIDS gave new meaning to family and community, and revealed the commonalities of straight and queer families taking care of their own.

Since the early 1990s, Maine has endured a difficult, and often acrimonious, cycle of so-called

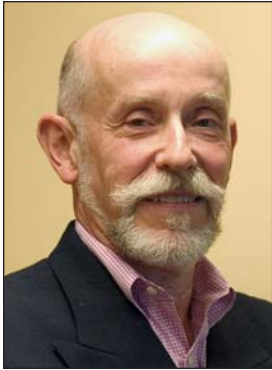
“gay-rights” referenda campaigns, state-wide (in 1995, 1998, 2000, 2005) as well as locally (Portland in 1992, Lewiston in 1993, South Portland in 1998, Westbrook in 2002). Without minimizing their significance for Maine’s LGBT citizens, the referenda on extending human rights protections irrespective of sexual orientation or gender expression take on even greater meaning within the broader context of the last twenty years of American social and political history. The 1950s and ‘60s disassociated “homosexuality” and “family values.” On the other hand, the culture wars of the past two decades - which began when Ronald Reagan declared that “private values must be at the heart of public policies”¹—have linked them inextricably together. Nowhere in the United States have the culture wars, and their contestations over family and sexuality, been more heated than in Maine.

In the referenda campaigns, political groups like the Christian Civic League and Concerned Maine Families deployed an apocalyptic rhetoric in defending Maine against a host of ill-defined evils—AIDS, hedonism, ideas “from away,” the breakdown of the family—all of which they identified with LGBT people. In contrast, groups like the Maine Speak Out Project and the Maine Rural Network countered their stereotypes with LGBT Mainers telling their own stories as partners, parents, brothers, sisters and children. In 1992, Terry, a lesbian mother in Portland, sued the Boy Scouts for preventing her from becoming a Den Mother for her son’s Cub Scout troupe; in 1996, after six years of effort, Maggie Fournier and her partner Cheryl Ciechowski successfully forced the



In 1993, Autumn Aquino became the first elementary student in Maine publicly known to have AIDS: her “coming out” as a person living with AIDS shattered stereotypes that AIDS/HIV affected only LGBT families. Left to right: Terry Dannemiller, Autumn Aquino, Ja’nette Agosto, and Tim Dannemiller.

“Open Up and Talk,” Maine Department of Education, HIV Education Prevention Conference, October 25-26, 1991.



Howard M. Solomon

University of Maine System to provide domestic partner benefits to its employees. Extensive media coverage of these, and other, stories gave further proof of the vitality of LGBT families in the 1990s.

More recently, same-sex partnerships have garnered most of the headlines. In 1999, Vermont established civil unions; in 2004, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage and, in the same year, Maine sanctioned domestic partnerships. Except for the gender of the partners, Ozzie and Harriet would find nothing out of the ordinary about these nuclear families—parents raising children, paying taxes, participating in their communities. LGBT activists went to AIDS funerals in the 1980s and same-sex commitment ceremonies in the 1990s; now they are going to Little League games, piano recitals, and school graduations. According to the 2000 census, Portland had the third-largest concentration of lesbian couples, and the tenth-largest concentration of gay male couples, of any city in the United States.²

The 2000 census reveals another startling development: single adults now outnumber couples with children as the most common form of household in the United States.³ Maine has numerous queer organizations comprised predominantly, if not exclusively, of single people. Women are in SOLO (Single Older Lesbians Organization), The Mah Jong Mavens, the Women & Trans Bike and Brew; men participate in an extensive network of groups across the state, from the Beautiful Tribe in Penobscot Bay, to Gay Men Together in Gardiner, Thrive in Portland, and Seacoast Gay Men in Southern York County. Maine's LGBT citi-

zens at the beginning of the twenty-first century are forging intergenerational, extended networks of kin just as the families of newly-arrived European immigrants and African Americans did before them. These groups are not simply about pot luck casseroles and gossip, but something much more fundamental, and radical, than that.

Whether same-sex marriage or extended networks of kith and kin, LGBT Mainers are queering traditional family values—that is, forcing everyone to look at family issues honestly and freshly. In *Same-Sex Marriage? A Christian Ethical Analysis*, Marvin M. Ellison argues that “families are formed not because the state issues a license or a religious ceremony is conducted, but because people exercise their moral agency to bond for loving, mutual care.” Marriage must indeed be available to same-sex couples as a matter of social justice, as Ellison argues,⁴ but today's single-minded attention upon same-sex marriage obscures the variety of familial relationships which Americans in general, and LGBT Mainers in particular, have actually experienced.

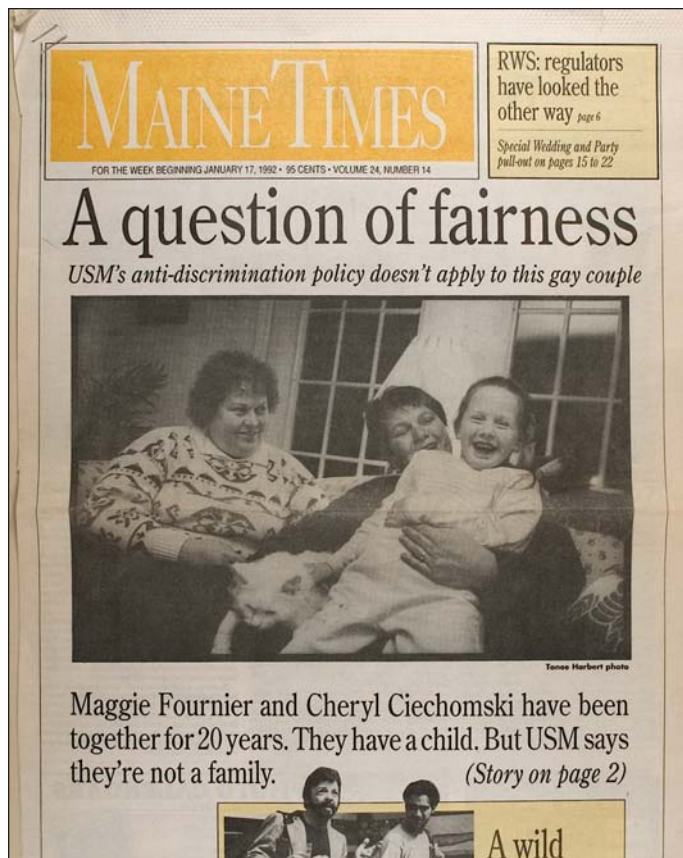
—Howard M. Solomon
Adjunct Professor of History and
Scholar-in-Residence for USM's LGBTCollection

1. 1986 State of the Union address, quoted by Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 96.

2. Kelly Bouchard, “Same-Sex Couples Drawn to Portland,” *Portland Press Herald*, July 14, 2002.

3. “Home Alone: Households of Singles Go to First in U.S.,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 18, 2005.

4. Marvin M. Ellison, *Same-Sex Marriage? A Christian Ethical Analysis* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 159.



In 1996, after six years of effort, USM professor Maggie Fournier and her partner Cheryl Ciechomski successfully forced the University of Maine system to provide domestic partner benefits to their employees.

Maine Times, January 17, 1992.



Public hearings in Augusta on the passage of a state human rights bill.

Bangor Daily News, March 13, 1997.



Levi and Leather Club. Southern Maine Pride Parade, 1998.
Annette Dragon Papers.



Outright, Southern Maine Pride Parade 1995.
Annette Dragon Papers.



Passover seder. 1990.
Am Chofshi Archives.



Terry, a lesbian mother in Portland, sued the Boy Scouts in 1992, for preventing her from being a Den Mother for her son Nick's Cub Scout troupe.
Annette Dragon Papers.



Two gay men at human rights ordinance hearing in Lewiston, 1993.
Annette Dragon Papers.



Andi Locke Mears and PJ Mears. Auburn Universalist Church, July, 16 2005.
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