

2008

Diversity at the Ballot Box: Electoral Politics and Maine's Minority Communities, Post-WWII to the Present

University of Southern Maine

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Recommended Citation

University of Southern Maine; Botman, Selma; Solomon, Howard M.; Peck, Abraham J.; and Greene, Bob, "Diversity at the Ballot Box: Electoral Politics and Maine's Minority Communities, Post-WWII to the Present" (2008). *Publications (Annual Event Catalog)*. 1.
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Diversity at the Ballot Box: Electoral Politics and Maine's Minority Communities, Post-WWII to the Present

Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine

Exhibition 2008



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MAINE



This catalogue was produced with the generous support of the University of Maine System Diversity Committee.



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Designed by the University of Southern Maine Office of Marketing and Brand Management, 2008

Introduction

Americans of a certain age bring a special sense of history to thinking about diversity and the ballot box, the focus of this year's Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine annual exhibition. For so many of us who were the children of immigrants or whose grandparents were part of the transformational wave of immigration that swept across the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, access to the American political process was a clear imperative: the gateway to success, power, and influence. Not only did this satisfy mid-century America's enthusiastic embrace of the "melting pot" conceptualization of demographic change, but it also helped fuel the idealism with which so many Americans and Mainers embraced the cause of civil rights during the 1950s and 1960s as African Americans pressed their demands for justice and equality under the Constitution and throughout the United States.

As this year's Sampson Center exhibition makes clear, however, my generation's powerful desire to find historical inevitability in the advance toward equal opportunity for all Americans has become far more nuanced by the sometimes discomforting reminders that advances at the ballot

box are neither as clear-cut nor as unconditional as we once hoped. The ancient antipathies of racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia are not so easily elided by political campaigns and elections. The pace of social consensus requires a degree of patience and continuing attention that tries the very fabric of American life while we attempt to comprehend the consequences of change wrought by our heightened understanding of the implications of diversity in American life.

The University of Southern Maine is proud to be the home of the Sampson Center and its continuing examination of the ways in which diversity informs Maine's sense of itself at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This year's exhibition is a timely reminder of our need to continue to reflect on what makes us a community of individuals bound by mutual respect while sensitive to the differences informing our individual histories and backgrounds.

— Selma Botman,
President
University of Southern Maine



Selma Botman



In May 1965, Maine Governor John H. Reed signed Maine's first Fair Housing Act, designed to end racial discrimination in housing, several months before similar federal legislation. Pictured with Governor Reed (who is seated) are left to right: Glen Payne, David Graham, Gerald E. Talbot, Robert Talbot, Rodney Ross, Louis Scolnik, and William Burney, Sr.

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

Quiet Revolution: A Tally of Black Victories

By Bob Greene

When Robert Talbot returned to his Bangor home in the early 1960s after serving in the military, he wanted to become involved in politics. Since Republicans dominated the state of Maine at the time, he tried to attend a meeting of the Bangor GOP, but was thwarted.

“I then got a job with Ma Bell (New England Telephone) and my supervisor, Danny Golden, was chairman of the Penobscot County Democratic Committee. I said, ‘This is where I belong,’” Talbot recalled.¹

Robert Talbot was not the first African American to become involved in politics in the state of Maine. Far from it. But he may have been in the forefront of people of color becoming involved in the grassroots part of the political landscape for the first time since the nineteenth century.

The reason for the lack of participation in politics by African Americans more than likely stemmed from their extremely small slice of the state’s population combined with the fact that most were involved in trying to survive on their meager salaries. At the time, jobs available for most African Americans in the state were at the lower end of the salary scale. It therefore was of little surprise that the first African Americans to

run—and win—elective office were either retired and living on a pension or were self-employed.

Ernest Butler and his wife were impressed with what they saw when they visited the Maine Development Commission exhibit at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York City. When he retired as an official with the United States Immigration Department on Ellis Island, the Butlers moved to Frankfort, Maine, and began a thriving home-grown strawberry business.²

In 1949, Butler became the first African American since World War II to be elected to public office in Maine when he was voted onto the Board of Selectmen in Frankfort.³ He went on to be elected selectman for eleven consecutive terms, running unopposed every year but one.⁴

Things changed dramatically in 1962 when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began a statewide campaign for a fair housing bill.⁵ African Americans in Maine became more active politically, realizing it was the only way they could force the community to change.

However, with no districts in the state having a large enough Black population to determine the outcome of a ballot, any African Americans running for political office had to depend on the

Harold E. Richardson (pictured with his campaign manager, Joseph F. Green), a Portland businessman, became the first African American elected to public office in Portland as a member of the Board of Trustees for the Portland Water District in 1963. Despite the newspaper headline, he was not the first African American elected in Maine. The honor of being the first successful African American political candidate after 1945 belonged to Ernest Butler, elected to the Frankfort Board of Selectmen in 1949.

Harold E. Richardson Papers, African American Collection of Maine, Sampson Center

Richardson Wins PWD Race, Becomes 1st Negro Elected In Maine

By JOSEPH E. COYNE
Staff Reporter

"I hope they hear about this down in Birmingham."

That's what Harold E. Richardson, 41, declared here Monday night when he learned he was the first Negro ever to be elected to public office in Maine.

Richardson was elected a trustee of the Portland Water District over incumbent Paul B. McLellan, 763-719.

"It's great to win and it's great to know that so many people have confidence in me," Richardson declared.

Richardson said he had felt confident that his race wouldn't be a handicap to running for public office in Portland. A resident of the city all his life, Richardson said he had never noticed any prejudice here toward the people of his race.

RICHARDSON is the co-owner with his brother Clifford of "Kippy's Service," an office cleaning firm with eight employees.

He lives with his wife, Helen and four children, Haroldene, Carol, Laura and Robert, at 35 Frederic St.

Richardson was congratulated by McLellan who called him shortly after the election returns became known.

City Clerk Arthur H. Duffett said the 1,485 voter turnout was considerably larger than expected. The average vote in a Water District election is less than 1,000. Monday's turnout was the biggest in recent years.

In 1957 1,406 votes were cast in a two-man contest for a trustee seat.

As a PWD trustee Richardson will serve a five-year term. The salary is \$400 a year. He will serve in a consultative capacity with the four other trustees.

RICHARDSON'S parents came to Portland 44 years ago. His mother, Mrs. Una E. Richardson lives at 247 Valley St. His father is deceased.

He attended West School, where he is president of the PTA. He is a graduate of Portland High School where he was prominent in athletics.



Richardson Congratulated

Harold E. Richardson, right, who was elected a Portland Water District trustee Monday, is congratulated by his campaign manager Joseph F.

Green after they learned election results at City Hall. (By Staff Photographer Olson)

Last month he was elected president of the Little League 2 Association. He is a director of the Portland Boys Club Alumni Association; Cumberland County Firemen's Asso-

ciation, and the Portland Fire Buffs Club. He is a trustee of the West Congregational Church and a member of the Central Maine Branch of the National Asso-

ciation for the Advancement of Colored People. Richardson said he has no further political ambitions. "Not now, anyway," he grinned.

entire population, not just one ethnic group, in order to be successful.

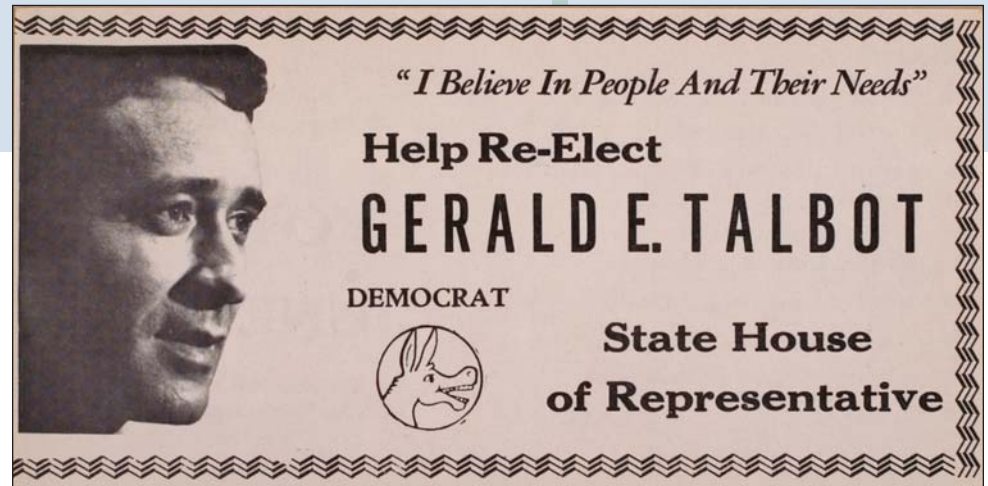
Harold E. Richardson, co-owner with his brother Clifford of Kippy's Cleaning Service, became the first African American elected to public office in Portland when he won a seat on the Board of Trustees for the Portland Water District in 1963.⁶ He served for twenty-one years (1963-80) and was district chair three times, starting in 1967.⁷

Richardson was the tip of the iceberg as African Americans in Maine joined in the civil rights revolution.

In September 1963, more than 400 people marched down Portland's main thoroughfare, Congress Street, to protest the bombing of a Baptist church in Birmingham, Alabama, in which four girls were killed. The marchers were met by 200 more protestors at the Cathedral Guild Hall. That same year state legislators killed a bill that would have banned racial discrimination in rental housing in Maine.⁸

Two years later, more than 2,000 people marched down Congress Street to protest the death of the Rev. James J. Reeb, a minister from Boston who was killed during the Selma, Ala., civil rights demonstrations.

In Portland, Robert Talbot's older brother, Gerald, had become involved as an activist in the



civil rights movement. He was one of a handful of Mainers to join the "March for Jobs and Freedom" in Washington, D.C.,⁹ in 1963 when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his stirring "I Have A Dream" speech.

That also became the dream of Gerald E. Talbot, who in 1964 helped to reorganize the Portland branch of the NAACP and was elected to the first of his three stints as president. That year he also joined the voter registration drive in Mississippi and was a key figure in helping to get Maine's Fair Housing Act passed in 1965.¹⁰

Wanting to do even more, Gerald Talbot ran in 1972 for the House of Representatives as an at-large delegate from Portland, becoming the first African American to be elected to the Maine Legislature. He was reelected in 1974 and 1976.

After several tries, a bill Talbot sponsored, "An Act to Prohibit the Use of Offensive Names for Geographic Features and Other Places in the State of Maine," finally was passed into law. He also co-sponsored with Laurence E. Connolly, Jr.

Gerald E. Talbot was a three-time president of the Portland Branch, NAACP and the first African American member of the Maine House of Representatives. His tenure in the House was marked by his successful efforts to end housing discrimination against African Americans, to eliminate derogatory place names from all state of Maine maps, and his efforts on behalf of Native Americans, people with low incomes, members of the gay community and other minorities in Maine.

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

the first “Sexual or Affectional Preference” (1977) amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act.¹¹

Talbot was the first black chairperson of a legislative committee, the Human Resources Committee (two terms), and the first black speaker pro-tem of the House of Representatives. He served on the Maine State Committee on Aging and later served on Minority Affairs for the American Association of Retired People (AARP), both in Maine and nationally. In 1980, Talbot was awarded the Jefferson Award as the candidate performing the “greatest public service by an elected or appointed official”¹² and was appointed to the Maine State Board of Education by Governor Joseph Brennan.¹³ Four years later he was elected by the board as chair.¹⁴

In 1995, Gerald Talbot donated his collection of memorabilia, documents, and books concerning the history of African Americans in the state to the University of Southern Maine. The collection was the cornerstone of the African American Collection of Maine, which became a linchpin for the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine.¹⁵

The auditorium in Luther Bonney Hall on the USM campus in Portland was named the Gerald E. Talbot Lecture Hall in his honor in 2006.¹⁶

A lawyer, Frederick D. Williams was elected in 1970 as a selectman in Windham, where he

served three years before becoming head of the Board of Selectmen. Later, he served three terms on the Windham Town Council and became its chair.¹⁷

In 1971, Clifford “Kippy” Richardson, Harold’s younger brother, was elected to the Portland School Committee, garnering the most votes of nine candidates for the three seats up for election. He served three terms on the School Committee, wrapped around a three-year stint on the Portland City Council (1976-79).¹⁸

In Bangor, Robert Talbot was heavily involved in the Democratic Party as an activist, “serving on the city and local committees, stuffing envelopes,” he said. Then in 1968, while he was serving an internship in Augusta with Gov. Kenneth Curtis, the state of Maine created a Task Force on Human Rights.

The next year, the Task Force became the Maine Human Rights Commission, and in 1971 Robert Talbot was named its executive director.¹⁹ The Commission was given the task of enforcing compliance with the Maine Human Rights Act, which banned discrimination based on race, national origin, sex, age, religion, and ethnic heritage.

Clarence Roberts, who was president of the Portland NAACP branch in the late 1940s, was elected a town councilor in Old Orchard Beach in

1977 and served one year as its chairman. A native of Florida, Roberts ran unsuccessfully for the Maine House of Representatives as a Republican in 1982. A member of the Old Orchard Beach Planning Board for seventeen years, Roberts was named 1981 Citizen of the Year by the seaside community.²⁰

While Roberts was a councilor, E. Emerson Cummings was elected to the Town Council in Old Orchard Beach. Cummings was born in Massachusetts and came to Maine as a child. He was an engineer who became a teacher at Old Orchard Beach High School, where he developed a mathematics program and taught analytical geometry, introduction to nuclear physics, and advanced calculus. Cummings also served as a deputy town clerk.

"I like the town and do what I can to help them," Cummings told a newspaper reporter in 1976. "When I was overseas in the Army during World War II, I said if I ever got home again I'd never leave it."²¹

In 1971, T. J. Anderson was an associate professor and chairman of the science department at Husson College in Bangor, as well as president of the Bangor chapter of the NAACP. He also was elected to the Bangor School Board, telling the Bangor Daily News he was running for the school board to keep the educational system sensitive to



the students and a changing society. Anderson resigned from the School Board when he left Bangor to take a job at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.²²

A native of Augusta and a star basketball player in high school, William Burney, Jr. was elected in 1982 to the Augusta City Council. He served a total of three terms before becoming in 1988 the first African American to be elected mayor in the state of Maine and in northern New England.²³ Burney served as mayor of the state's capital city until 1996. In the fall of that year, the Democrat was again elected to the city council where he served two more years.

Burney wasn't through running and winning elective office. In 2002 the "hometown hero," in the words of his predecessor as mayor,²⁴ was again

William D. Burney, Jr. (pictured at his 1988 inauguration with his proud mother, Helen M. Burney, to his left, and his sister, Annette F. Burney, to his right) was the first elected African American mayor in Maine and northern New England. After serving as mayor of Augusta from 1988 to 1996, he was elected chair of the Augusta Board of Education, the first African American to occupy that position in Augusta history.

Courtesy, William D. Burney, Jr., Augusta



John Jenkins was elected mayor of Lewiston in 1993 and served until 1997. In 1996, he became the first African American to be elected to the Maine Senate. In 2007, he declined to run for mayor in the city of Auburn but was elected overwhelmingly as a write-in candidate, the first person in Maine and American political history to win a mayoral election in such a manner.

Courtesy of Mayor John Jenkins, Auburn

a winner at the ballot box, being elected chairman of the Augusta Board of Education, a position to which he was reelected to several three-year terms.

Burney also has served as Maine state field office director for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.²⁵

“No one gives a squat” about skin color, according to John Jenkins, who has proven to be an extraordinary pillar of political strength in Maine.²⁶

Jenkins won a runoff in 1993 against an incumbent councilman by a three-to-one margin to become mayor of Lewiston, a city that was more than 99 percent white at the time. It was just the start of a remarkable political career in Maine for the Upward Bound graduate from Newark, New Jersey.²⁷

He came to Maine to attend Bates College in Lewiston, from which he graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology. He wasn't sure he would stay in Lewiston long enough to get his diploma.

“I chose to stick it out at least that first year, and then it became another year. I really wanted to get out of here in the worst way because I was unhappy. I was uncomfortable,” Jenkins said in a 2003 interview. “But then I realized that, perhaps, challenges help you to grow. And so, whether I've

grown in the right directions, who knows. Hopefully I'm a better and different person than I was when I first got here.”²⁸

Jenkins was a star in both football and track at Bates College before gaining national and international distinction in the field of martial arts as both a competitor and instructor. He is a four-time international karate champion and was world jujitsu titlist in 1985.²⁹ He was inducted into the Maine Sports Hall of Fame in 1989.

After serving two terms as mayor of Lewiston, from 1993 to 1997, Jenkins won a seat in the Maine Senate. He ran for—and lost—a bid for governor of Maine in 2002, basing his campaign on education, economic development, and protecting the environment.^{30, 31}

In 2006, Jenkins, who had moved from Lewiston to the sister city of Auburn, was elected mayor of Auburn, taking office for a one-year term. But nine months into his term, Jenkins announced he wouldn't run again because it took too much time away from his other jobs, including being Business Development Officer at Northeast Bank, teaching a leadership course at a regional high school and helping people statewide as a motivational speaker and facilitator.

The citizens of Auburn wouldn't take “no” for an answer.

Jenkins, whose name wasn't on the ballot in

2007, made history again by riding a tide of write-in votes that swept him back into the Auburn mayor's office.

"I believe 2,100 showed up to vote, and 2,100 people took the time to write in John Jenkins' name. I don't think a recount would be worth anyone's time," said Eric Samson, who was listed on the ballot and finished second in the voting. Jenkins received 2,166 write-in votes, more than half of the nearly 4,000 votes cast.

"I got lucky," Jenkins said of his unprecedented write-in victory. "And I love public service. I can't deny that."³²

While Jenkins and Burney have held high-profile mayoral posts, other African Americans have been successful politicians in the state of Maine.

Bishop L. Buckley was the first African American to be elected to the Kittery School Board and the Kittery Town Council. He served on the school board for two three-year terms, from 1983 to 1988, and for one three-year term on the council, 1988-90. In 1988, he was council chairman.³³

Sallie Chandler was the first African American woman to be elected to public office in Maine. She was appointed town clerk of Lebanon in 1995, then won elections in 1996 and 1999.³⁴ She later was elected to the seven-member York County Commission, which she currently chairs.

Jill Duson became the second black woman elected to public office in the state when, in 1999, she was elected to the Portland School Committee, serving as chairwoman. The director of Rehabilitation Services, Maine Department of Labor, Duson later was elected to the Portland City Council where she served a one-year term as mayor of Portland in 2005.³⁵

In 1999, Chester "Chet" Garrison became the first African American to be elected to a public office in West Bath. The Republican served on the West Bath School Board (1999-2004), which he chaired in 2000-01, and was elected to the West Bath Board of Selectmen in 2001.³⁶

In 2008, Garrison was elected to the newly formed seven-member Lower Kennebec Region School Unit 1 Board of Directors, which oversees the education of children in Bath, Arrowsic, Phippsburg, and West Bath.

It is apparent that African Americans have been successful politically in a state where they are in such a small minority. But the road to school boards, city halls, and the state house has been far from smooth sailing.

When Rory Holland ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Biddeford in 1999, racist graffiti was painted on his fence. The following day, three people—two of them dressed in white hoods and the third wearing a "white supremacy" arm



Jill Duson was the first African American mayor of Portland in 2004-2005. She has served with distinction on the Portland City Council for several terms.

Courtesy of William David Barry, Portland

band—demonstrated in front of Holland's home.

Five years after Jenkins completed his last term as Lewiston mayor, the city attracted international attention when then-Mayor Laurier Raymond wrote an open letter urging the city's growing Somali community to discourage other Somalis from moving to Lewiston.³⁷ A white-supremacist organization, the World Church of the Creator, based in Illinois, called for a rally in Lewiston to repel "the Somali invasion."³⁸ The rally drew about thirty people.

With the NAACP and other African Americans in the forefront, Maine's governor and attorney general along with the state's entire U.S. Congressional delegation held an anti-racist counter-demonstration rally of four thousand people.

The quiet revolution at the ballot box has resulted in African Americans emerging as both winners and losers. But the success of politicians of color since World War II has been remarkable in a state that is one of the whitest in the nation. Indeed, it has been a Tally of Black Victories.

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16. *JBHE Weekly Bulletin*, "Award," June 22, 2006, 24 July 2008, http://www.jbhe.com/latest/index062206_p.html.

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20. *Maine's Visible Black History*, 283.

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27. Ann S. Coles, *The Journal of Negro Education*, "Trio Achievers: The promise of the Future," Fall 1998, 23 July 2008, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3626/is_199810/ai_n8823445/pg_5.
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31. Lindsay Tice, "It's Good To Be Needed," *Sun Journal*, Lewiston, 8 Nov 2007.
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In his first attempt for political office, Republican candidate Troy Lawson of Portland received 40 percent of the vote in a losing bid for the Maine Senate in 1990.

Maine's Visible Black History Research Papers, Maine Historical Society



Rosalyn and Sumner Bernstein, who was elected to the Portland City Council in 1955, demanded that any organization to which they belonged hold no meetings at Portland's Cumberland Club, a facility that until the early 1970s did not admit Jews or African Americans as members.

Courtesy of Jack Montgomery

Is It Good for the Jews? Is it Good for Everyone? Maine Jewry between Civic Idealism and the Politics of Reality

by Abraham J. Peck

“Jews earn like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans,” wrote the noted sociographer of the American Jewish community, Milton Himmelfarb, to describe the central paradox of Jewish politics in present day America. Indeed, if politics is about economic and group self-interest, then Jews should vote and think like many of the politically conservative groups with whom they have achieved the highest levels of education and earning power in our nation—Episcopalians among them.¹

American Jewish voting patterns, with few exceptions, at least since the end of World War II, have shown themselves to be much closer to those of African Americans and Hispanics, groups who have the most to gain from the liberal, progressive economic and social policies symbolized since 1933 by the Democratic Party and the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as president of the United States.²

What motivates American Jews as voters and as politicians to behave in such a contradictory manner? In his classic study of Jewish political culture, *The Political Behavior of American Jews*, Lawrence Fuchs argued that Jewish political culture after 1945 was shaped by three important elements of Judaism: the Jewish emphasis on

learning and intellectual freedom; tzedakeh, charitable giving that translates into sympathy and support for the weak and oppressed and to the striving for social justice; and a commitment to tikkun olam, repairing and reshaping the world in God’s image.³

The Triumph of the “Yankee Spirit”

Maine’s Jewish voters and politicians have always sought to balance the notions of being “a good American and a good Mainer,” including the struggle to achieve a sense of civic and social equality of opportunity for their religious and ethnic community, with the understanding that they were part of a people devoted to those elements of Judaism described by Fuchs that would culminate in the creation of an ideal Maine and America for all people.

The historical record shows that Jews in Maine faced both the harshness of religious and social bigotry as well as receiving the help of non-Jewish politicians who shared their view of an ideal community. And Maine Jewry did not always vote for a Democratic ticket and still does not; before 1933 many American and Maine Jews saw the Republican Party, still carrying the aura of the legacy left by Abraham Lincoln, as the vehicle best suited for social change.⁴



Linda and Joel Abromson. Linda was the first female Jewish mayor of Portland and Joel was a well-respected member of the Maine State Legislature much admired for his humanitarian approach to equal rights for all Maine people.

Courtesy of Linda Elowitch Abromson, Portland

Maine was certainly in the Republican camp during the years that Portland, at least, elected several Jews to serve on the City Council. Among those elected were Samuel Rosenberg, the first Jew to hold elective office in Portland (1898), as well as Harry M. Taylor, Samuel Davis, Oscar Tabachnik, Henry N. Taylor, Edward Simon, Morris Sacknoff, David Sivovlos, and Louis Bernstein. The final two were the last Jews to serve as part of Portland's elected mayoral system of government that ended in 1923.⁵

But there was a problem. The classic Yankeeified Puritan spirit, in which the Maine Yankee was recognized as the most authentic, played a decisive factor in shaping the image that the State of Maine wanted to project to the outside world and to itself. It was an image that sought to confront, overwhelm, and neutralize the "religious dissenters, profane economic opportunists, and non-English immigrants [who] disrupted the region's Puritan and, later, Yankee culture and identity."⁶

By 1923, Portland's established Protestant communities, centered in the city's Woodfords and Deering neighborhoods,⁷ had had enough of a sizeable Catholic and Jewish representation on the City Council, especially from the heavily Jewish Ward 3.⁸

A "Committee of 100," made up of Protestants, one Catholic, and no members from the city's ethnic neighborhoods in the East End, sought to change Portland's elected mayor, the 18-member common council, and the nine-member board of alderman, with a form of government administered by a business manager and a five-person City Council.

The announced aim of the committee was to end partisan politics, the ward system, and political cronyism. But those communities who saw the end of their political representation at hand felt otherwise. "If this plan goes through, every man of Irish descent may as well pack up his trunk and leave the city as far as representation on the city government is concerned," stated one of Portland's most prominent Jews, attorney Israel Bernstein, at an anti-Committee of 100 rally a few days before the election.⁹ He did not have to state the obvious: that such a change would essentially deny Portland's Jewish community a similar representation.

Another organized community seeking to guarantee Protestant control of politics in Portland also made its presence felt. The Maine Ku Klux Klan, led by the flamboyant F. Eugene Farnsworth, sought to ally itself with the "Committee of 100."

The influx of Jewish immigrants to Portland was especially on Farnsworth's mind because ships

carrying Jewish and other immigrants that were diverted from New York landed in Portland in 1923 and again in 1924, and the passengers maintained on House Island in Casco Bay.¹⁰

At a rally several weeks before the election, the Klan head threw out a challenge to the opposition: “Gather together all the anti-Klan voices you can—Catholic, Negro, Jew, and Italian votes—all the gang, and I wouldn’t give you ten cents for the whole bunch...”¹¹

In September 1923 Portland voters threw out the old form of government and voted in the new council-manager government by several thousand votes. In December, when elections were held for the new City Council, Klan and committee-endorsed members swept to victory and defeated the one Jewish candidate for the Portland school board, the Polish-born wife of Dr. Elias Kaplan, a leading member of the Jewish community.¹² The new City Council was made up entirely of Protestants.

Seeking to Break the Barriers

For the next several decades, Maine’s largest Jewish communities, Portland and Bangor, had little input into the struggles that defined the politics of political power in either city. As Judith Goldstein has written about Bangor’s Jewish community during this period, “The Protestants ran the city and the Jews ran their businesses.”¹³

In Portland, too, the Jewish focus was on the development of economic status and the building of communal organizations that would better serve the young. Both Portland and Bangor created Jewish community centers in the 1930s, institutions that were essentially designed to increase social activities for Jewish adults and young people.

That did not mean a total cessation of Jewish political activities. If Jews could not break the Protestant grasp on city politics, they were able to contribute at the state level. Benjamin Stern, born in Lithuania in 1885, was a New Deal Roosevelt Democratic legislator in the Maine House of Representatives in the 1930s. Representing the heavily French Catholic community of Biddeford, Stern was a long-time champion for social justice. He helped to create laws for child labor, workers’ rights and safety initiatives, and old-age pensions.¹⁴

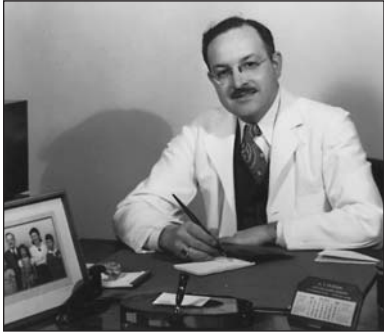
But most important for Maine’s Jews were two events that defined the experience of Jews everywhere. The destruction of six million Jewish lives during the Holocaust and the creation of a 2,000-year-old Jewish dream, the State of Israel, all occurred within less than two decades.

Traumatized by one event and electrified by the other, Jews in Maine put little effort into an organized drive to combat prejudice and discrimi-



Lithuanian-born Benjamin Stern was a New Deal Democratic legislator in the Maine House of Representatives in the 1930s. A resident of Biddeford and a long-time champion for social justice, Stern helped create laws for child labor, workers’ rights, and old-age pensions.

Courtesy of the Maine Historical Society, Portland



Benjamin Zolov, a Portland physician who chaired the Maine Equal Opportunity Commission, was instrumental in obtaining passage of a bill by the Maine State Legislature that barred discrimination by hotels and resorts on the basis of race, color, or creed.

Courtesy of Mark Stern, Portland

nation against their community and other minority groups. Julia Lipetz has offered one interpretation of this phenomenon in her Amherst College senior thesis:

*Because Portland Jews successfully created internal institutions, they did not feel deprived socially or culturally. They had succeeded in providing themselves with everything their non-Jewish neighbors had, and were thus content to remain in a comfortable and safe, yet segregated environment.*¹⁵

This unnatural sense of security and satisfaction did not mean that well-intentioned non-Jews could ignore the social barriers that kept Catholics, Jews, and African Americans from attaining full social and political equality.

Bangor's Rev. Alan Andrew Baillie of All Souls Congregational Church stood out as one of the most important voices in the struggle for social and religious equality during the years after 1945. In February 1946, he told his congregants that "Our task right now is to consider the sore problems of the social prejudices that we display against Negroes, for instance, or against our Jewish neighbors, for another instance."¹⁶

It took the long memory of Dr. Benjamin Zolov, whose father had been threatened by the Klan in the 1920s,¹⁷ for the first cracks in the wall of social discrimination to appear. Zolov, who represented the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Portland, began both a radio series to

educate the Portland community about the ongoing prejudice against minorities, and an even larger campaign to outlaw a long-standing policy of discrimination by many of Maine's finest hotels and resorts.

For six years, from 1954 to 1960, Dr. Zolov, with the aid of Maine Supreme Court Justice Sidney Wernick, one of the most brilliant Jewish legal minds to serve the state, as well as non-Jewish state legislator, William Earles, and Maine Governor Clinton Clauson, struggled to pass a discrimination bill against numerous summer resorts in the state of Maine.¹⁸

By the time the legislation was passed in the Maine Legislature, other cracks were also beginning to appear. Two organizations, the Masons and the Portland Rotary Club, lifted restrictions on their membership, all the while denying that they had knowledge of such a ban.¹⁹

Portland Jews began, at the same time, to appear again as members of the Portland City Council. Sumner Bernstein, a member of one of Portland's most prominent Jewish families, was elected to the Portland City Council in 1955 along with Mitchell Cope, who was first elected in 1957.

Good for the Jews, Good for Everyone

By the late 1960s, Portland's Jewish community had achieved a position of recognition, both in terms of its involvement in social welfare and

the prominence of its business and professional communities. But the opportunity for Jewish business people to socialize with their Christian counterparts beyond the 9 to 5 work day was a rare or even non-existent occurrence.

This was especially true of two institutions where business and professional groups met on the golf course or over the two-martini lunch or dinner—the Portland Country Club (actually located in Falmouth) and the Cumberland Club.

During the 1950s and 1960s, both, but especially the Cumberland Club, became targets of Jewish opposition to their discriminatory membership policies. Catholics had actually been the first minority community to gain membership to both clubs, but African Americans and Jews were still excluded.

Sumner Bernstein and his wife, Rosalyne, circulated a “Cumberland Club Letter,” that demanded any organization to which they or Bernstein’s father, Israel, belonged, hold no meetings at the Cumberland Club as long as it did not admit Jews. The same demand was made by Barnett Shur, Portland’s corporation counsel since 1946, when he assumed the presidency of the United Fund Campaign.²⁰

But it took the anger and persistence of a non-Jewish Republican legislator, Senator S. Peter Mills of Franklin County, to finally breach the

almost unbreakable barriers that had been erected by Portland’s exclusive social clubs.

The road to a major victory for Portland’s Jewish and African American communities began in 1969, when Kermit Lipez, a legal advisor to Governor Kenneth Curtis and later a federal judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, asked if the governor wanted to “have some fun.” But his question was a deadly serious one. Lipez had researched the record and discovered that many of the clubs that were practicing social and religious exclusion had liquor licenses issued by the State of Maine.

The progressive Curtis, when informed of this fact, decided to propose a bill denying a liquor license to any private club that practiced discrimination.

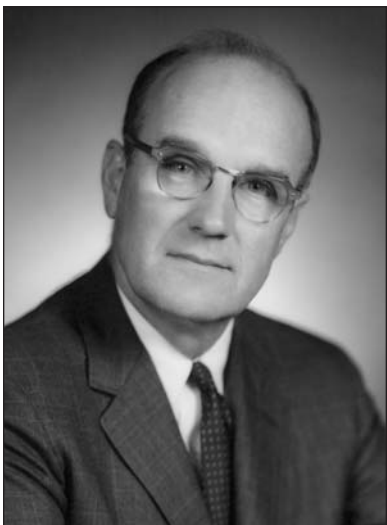
But who to employ as a sponsor for Legislative Document (LD) 1349, a bill entitled “An act relating to discrimination on account of race and religion,” outlawing “once and for all that the policy of this State that those who hold out their services generally...shall not covertly and under cover quietly practice any type of discrimination against people because of their religion, their race, or ethnic origin?” If they did, they would be denied a state liquor license.²¹

Governor Curtis found a rather unusual ally, Mills, a Republican legislator but a civil libertari-



S. Peter Mills was a Maine legislator, a Republican, and a civil libertarian. He led the effort to pass Legislative Document 1349, a bill that sought to end “discrimination on account of race and religion” in Maine.

Courtesy of Paul Mills, Farmington



A prominent Portland lawyer and member of the City Council who was not Jewish, Charles Allen led the struggle to deny liquor licenses to several private clubs that would not allow Jews and African Americans to become members.

Courtesy of Diana and Congressman Tom Allen, Portland

an. Mills was an angry man in 1969, because a year earlier he had attended a panel in Portland where he stated that it was a good thing that Maine was free of intolerance toward Jews or any other groups. He was told by a friend, a Jewish lawyer from Portland, that this was not the case, that the new director of the Portland Symphony Orchestra had just been turned down by the Cumberland Club simply because he was a Jew.

"When I was driving home to Farmington, that night," Mills remembered, "this information bothered me terribly. I couldn't stop thinking about it. I thought it was a disgrace that the State of Maine could tolerate such a situation where a person could be barred because of race, religion or color."²²

Claiming that "southwestern Maine is rife with the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant concept of supremacy," Mills went after both the Portland Country Club and the Cumberland Club.²³

With little opposition, the Maine House passed the bill at the end of May 1969 and it was soon signed into law by Governor Curtis. Although the bill was a major victory for the African American and Jewish communities, it was still necessary to apply the law specifically to Portland. Charles Allen, a non-Jewish member of the Portland City Council and a prominent attor-

ney, led the Council in denying liquor licenses to both clubs.²⁴

With the denial of the liquor licenses to these two notorious private clubs and another liquor license denial to the local Portland Elks Club for similar discriminatory policies in 1970, an era that defined the ugly side of an otherwise beautiful state came to an inglorious end.

When the walls finally came tumbling down, Portland could ultimately count six Jewish mayors among its civic leaders, including two women. Calais could boast of a Jewish mayor as well, and the Maine legislature was strengthened by the service of pioneers for social justice such as Merle Nelson, Harlan Baker, Norman Minsky, Michael Saxl, and the extraordinary and unforgettable Republican fiscal conservative and social humanitarian, I. Joel Abromson.²⁵

1 Quoted in Anna Greenberg and Kenneth D. Wald, "Still Liberal after All These Years?" in L. Sandy Meisel and Ira N. Forman, *Jews in American Politics: Essays* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004) 163.

2. Greenberg and Wald, "Still Liberal after All These Years?," 163.

3. Greenberg and Wald, "Still Liberal after All These Years?," 164-165.

4. Steven Windmueller, "Are American Jews Becoming Republican? Insights into Jewish Political Behavior," *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, Number 509, 15 December, 2003.

5. Benjamin Band, *Portland Jewry: Its Growth and Development* (Portland, Jewish Historical Society, 1955) 43-44.
6. Joseph Conforti, *Imagining New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 6-7.
7. Band, *Portland Jewry*, 43.
8. Albert F. Barnes, compiler and editor, *Greater Portland Celebration 350* (Portland: Guy Gannett Publishing Co., 1984) 146.
9. Barnes, *Greater Portland Celebration 350*, 146.
10. Band, *Portland Jewry*, 52.
11. Quoted in Robert H. Boone, "A Kleagle and His Klan. F. Eugene Farnsworth and the Ku Klux Klan in Maine," np, *History* 301-302, May 24, 1965, 18.
12. Boone, "A Kleagle and His Klan," 50-51.
13. Judith Goldstein, *Crossing Lines: Histories of Jews and Gentiles in Three Communities* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992) 124.
14. See the materials on Stern in the Maine Jewish collection at the Maine Historical Society, Portland.
15. 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, 52.
16. Goldstein, *Crossing Lines*, 122.
17. Interview with Dr. Benjamin Zolov, "Portraits of the Past," Jewish Bicentennial Project, 1976-1977. Interviews located in the Portland Room, Portland Public Library.
18. Lipez, "A Time to Build Up," 68.
19. Lipez, "A Time to Build Up," 64-65.
20. Interview with Sumner Bernstein, *Maine Bar Journal*, Volume 17, Number 4, Summer 2002, 148.
21. Lipez, "A Time To Build Up," 82.
22. "Maine's Maverick: Peter Mills," *Maine Times*, July 23, 1993.
23. "Check Indicates Eastern Maine Clubs Open To All," *Bangor Daily News*, December 18, 1968. According to a survey done by Senator Mills and confirmed by Judith Goldstein in *Crossing Lines*, 151, private clubs in northern and eastern Maine were far less restrictive than those in the southwestern part of the State. I am grateful to Paul Mills, Esq., a well-known historian of Maine politics and the son of Peter Mills, for making available to me copies of the extensive materials on his father's involvement in the legislation.
24. Lipez, "A Time to Build Up," 85.
25. The six Jewish mayors were William B. Troubh, I. Edward Bernstein, Esther Clenott, Linda Abromson, David Brenerman and James Cohen. The Calais mayor was Charles Unobskey.



May 15, 1997. Longtime gay rights activist Dale McCormick celebrates as Gov. Angus King signs "An Act to End Discrimination." Sen. Joel Abromson, the bill's sponsor, is directly behind the governor.

Photograph by Annette Dragon, Annette Dragon Papers, LGBT Collection, Sampson Center

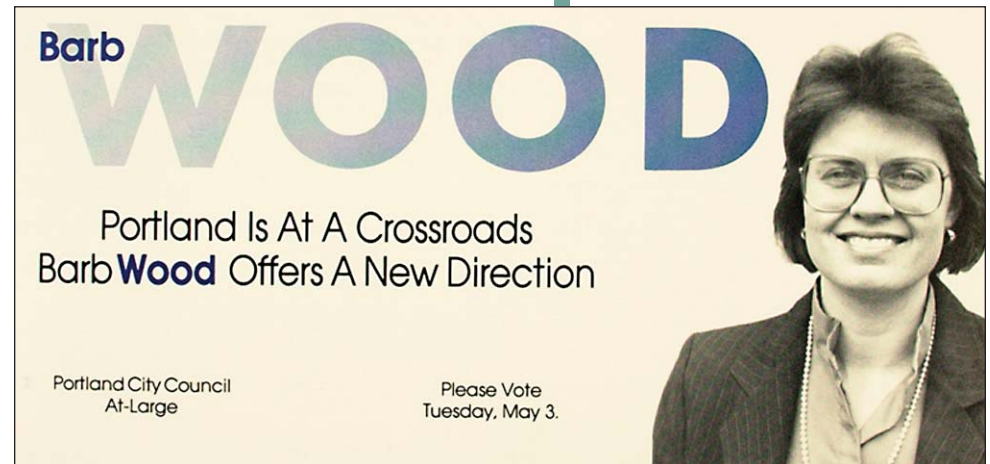
From the Closet to the Ballot-Box: Electoral Politics and Maine's LGBT Citizens, 1970s to the Present

By Howard M. Solomon

In 1987, political neophyte Barb Wood ran for an at-large seat on the Portland City Council, “to make a statement that gays and lesbians didn’t have horns, and could be contributing citizens like anyone else—and I did not expect to win.”¹

In 1987, Wood’s assessment was certainly a realistic one. Maine’s gay community was just beginning to emerge into public view. The first Gay Pride parade took place that summer, in Portland: nervous about police protection and hecklers along the route, the activists who walked from Deering Oaks Park to Monument Square stayed on the sidewalk and waited patiently for traffic lights to change.² In spite of the efforts of straight allies and the newly formed Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance, a decade of attempts to amend Maine’s Human Rights Act to protect lesbians and gay men—the so-called gay rights bill—had stalled in the State House. Elsewhere in the United States, a few openly gay pioneers, like Elaine Noble in Boston and Harvey Milk in San Francisco, had been elected to public office, but none had ever run successfully in Maine.

Two decades after Wood’s successful 1987 campaign—making her the first openly lesbian or



gay candidate elected to public office in Maine—LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) men and women have entered a host of electoral contests, and won. In 2005, after one divisive citizen-initiated referenda after another, Mainers voted decisively to add sexual identity and gender expression protection to the state’s human rights act. In 2008, organizers of another referendum to roll back those protections folded when their campaign ran out of steam. The history of LGBT people at the ballot-box in Maine—as voters, candidates, and subjects of public debate—may have finally reached a turning point.

Barb Wood, Portland City Council campaign flyer, November 1988.

Courtesy of Howard M. Solomon, Bowdoinham



Lois Reckitt addresses the national NOW convention, New Orleans, July 1985.

Lois Reckitt Papers, LGBT Collection,
Sampson Center

The First Crisis

LGBT issues first entered Maine politics in 1974. State legislators were threatening a \$35 million appropriation for the University of Maine System unless university officials shut down a student-run Gay Symposium on the Orono campus. In spite of a homophobic media campaign led by the Christian Civic League, university trustees held firm, the Legislature passed the appropriation, and the crisis eventually passed. LGBT people and politics had become front page news.³

The 1974 legislative crisis set a long-standing pattern for political action and debate in Maine. First of all, LGBT-related issues were immediately contextualized in religious and moral terms, rather than in terms of equal rights or political process. Secondly, in the absence of LGBT leaders in the public sphere, straight allies like Jean Byers Sampson (who was chairperson of the university trustees in 1974) took the lead on gay issues—and often at great political risk.

The “Bill”

In 1975, state legislators passed the Maine Human Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations and credit on the basis of age, race, ethnic and religious background, or physical or mental disability. A year later, a small group of activists began a campaign to amend the law to

extend protections to lesbians and gay men as well. Their leader was Lois Reckitt, of South Portland, a national vice president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) who was active in Maine feminist circles.

The bill was considered political suicide, and no other state had done it.⁴ Nonetheless, organizers persuaded Rep. Gerald Talbot and Rep. Laurence Connolly, Jr., Democratic legislators from Portland, to introduce the bill in 1977—in Talbot’s words, “to be a voice here [in the Legislature] for those who have no voice.”⁵ In spite of their leadership, and the courageous face-to-face lobbying of Nan Stone, Peter Prizer, Richard Steinman, Stephen Leo, and a handful of other gay activists, the 1977 bill failed to pass. Reckitt was sanguine about the defeat: “we knew it was at least a ten-year battle we had on our hands.”⁶

As it turned out, Reckitt was a much better strategist than prognosticator. Legislation to amend the Maine Human Rights Act—“the bill,” as it was commonly known—was introduced every session from 1977 to 2003 (with the exception of 1995).⁷ And every session it was defeated. Straight allies who were early sponsors—Talbot, Connolly, Harlan Baker, Gerald Conley, Sr., Mary Najarian, Tom Andrews—combated opponents who routinely referred to gay people as “the lowest scum of the earth,” and worse, on the floor of

the Legislature.⁸ With each session, the bill gained more supporters, but not enough to win a majority in both houses.

Citizen-initiated Referenda

As the bill languished in the Legislature, activists began to seek human rights protection on a town-by-town basis. Portland's city council enacted a gay rights ordinance in 1992, which was successfully upheld in a hard-fought citizen-initiated referendum to overturn it. The outcome was different in Lewiston in 1993, however, when voters rolled back that city's gay rights ordinance. Eventually, over a dozen Maine municipalities would enact ordinances.

The Portland and Lewiston referenda exposed long-simmering tensions within the LGBT community. Radical lesbian members of the Apex Collective, which began publishing a statewide newspaper in February 1992, led the criticism. At first glance, disagreement seemed to be about campaign tactics: did the gay leadership of the Equal Protection Portland campaign cede too much power to political consultants who were not gay? The issues, however, were much deeper: in creating a united front to withstand right-wing assaults on gay rights, were generational, economic, and sexual identity differences within the community glossed over, even silenced? Where did compromise end, and sell-out begin? An APEX

article entitled "Too Much Business as Usual" summarized the issues: "We got a homophobic campaign that mentioned the G and L words as little as possible, and aimed to trick people into voting for us out of fealty to abstract concepts—you didn't have to be for queerness, just against 'discrimination.'"⁹

The divisions were part of a larger, nationwide conflict pitting transgressive, queer organizing against mainstream-oriented, equal rights-focused gay politics. The Equal Protection Portland campaign of 1992 began a decade-long debate within the Maine LGBT community over internal differences and political priorities.¹⁰ In the words of political columnist Al Diamon, "finger-pointing and excuse making [became] the principal gay growth industries."¹¹

In 1993, the bill passed both houses of the State Legislature—only to be vetoed by Gov. John McKernan, who earlier had promised to sign it. This set the stage for the first statewide citizen-initiated referendum, in 1995, on "gay rights." Carolyn Cosby, Paul Volle, Michael Heath, and others who had opposed the Portland and Lewiston ordinances formed Concerned Maine Families. Its aim was to forever limit the Maine Human Rights Act to the current list of protected classes, which did not include LGBT people. A coalition of about 250 progressive organizations

Fed up sex expert charges . . .

Gays are worse than murderers

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Simply write us at the above address.

ML/GPA brochures, 1985.

Courtesy of Howard M. Solomon, Bowdoinham



Susan Farnsworth, the first openly gay person elected to the State Legislature. Community Pride Reporter, May 1996.

Courtesy of Howard M. Solomon, Bowdoinham

called Maine Won't Discriminate (MWD), led by Portland attorney Pat Peard, opposed Cosby and her allies. MWD prevailed, winning a stunning 53%-47% victory statewide.

Two years later, on May 15, 1997, Gov. Angus King signed "An Act to End Discrimination" (which had been introduced and sponsored by Sen. Joel Abromson, a Republican), in a joyous State House celebration. State Treasurer Dale McCormick, a longtime gay rights activist and former Democratic legislator, hugged King after he signed the bill and exultantly clutched her hands over her head. "Freedom is a long time coming," she said afterwards. "I was moved to tears when I saw the governor sign the bill."¹²

The celebrating, however, was short-lived. Concerned Maine Families, now led by Lawrence Lockman, brought the issue to a special election in February 1998, and successfully overturned the bill—the first time in American history that voters had abrogated the rights of other citizens at the ballot box. In 2000, the bill was again introduced, debated, and passed in the Legislature and once again overturned in a citizen-initiated referendum, directed by Michael Heath and the Christian Civic League. Maine was the only New England state without human rights protections for its LGBT citizens.

The Culture Wars of the 1990s

Maine was a battleground in the nationwide Culture Wars of the 1990s, and Maine's LGBT citizens took a beating during the seemingly non-stop campaigns. Opponents of equal rights exploited stereotypes of "the two Maines"—urban/rural, north/south, rich/poor—and created a new one: gay/straight. Carolyn Cosby railed about "special rights" and "an invasion of carpetbaggers, homosexual militants...coming to Maine to BUY your vote."¹³ National anti-gay groups demonized "liberal Portland...where the gays are concentrated" as opposed to "the rest of the state of Maine—which is shot through with common sense and decency and we're in a race now to see if the rest of the state of Maine can overcome the bad apples in Portland."¹⁴ Portland became the right wing's Sodom and Gomorrah.

Against the background of anti-gay rhetoric from outside the community, accusations of sell-out and accommodation became common currency within. It took years of healing from the 1998 and 2000 defeats, as well as hard work and slow changes in public opinion, for LGBT Mainers and their allies to again take on "the bill." In 2005, legislators passed LD 1194, and Gov. John Baldacci signed it. As predicted, the Christian Civic League sought to overturn the bill at the ballot box, but in November 2005, Maine voters rejected their campaign by a 56% to 44% margin.

Three decades after its passage, the Maine Human Rights Act finally extended protection to all citizens, irrespective of sexual identity or gender expression.

ML/GPA and the Candidates

The ultimate success in winning gay rights came largely through the efforts of the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance (ML/GPA). The outrage following Charlie Howard's drowning in Bangor on July 7, 1984 propelled many gay Mainers out of the closet and into political activism.¹⁵ ML/GPA was founded a few weeks after Howard's murder. By the early 1990s, ML/GPA had evolved from a narrowly based group of lesbian and gay activists into one of Maine's most effective progressive social change organizations. ML/GPA—which changed its name to Equality Maine in 2004—became a training ground for activists who would later become candidates for public office.

Some of ML/GPA's founders ran for public office in Portland, notably Barb Wood, Fred Berger (who ran, unsuccessfully, for City Council in 1981, 1983, and 1986), and Robin Lambert (whose run in the GOP State Senate primary in 1990 was sabotaged when opponents distributed a homophobic flyer two days before the election).¹⁶ They were joined by Peter O'Donnell (elected to the City Council in 1987), who played an instru-

mental role in enacting the state's first local human rights ordinance in 1992. O'Donnell subsequently came out and became Portland's first gay mayor; a few years later, lesbian city councilor Karen Geraghty became mayor, as well. Within a decade of Barb Wood's 1987 election, Portland voters would become accustomed to seeing LGBT candidates on the ballot, sometimes even running against each other—as in 1997, when Karen Geraghty and David Garrity competed in a three-person race (Geraghty won).¹⁷

The political closet was also opening elsewhere in Maine. In 1988, Susan Farnsworth, of Hallowell, became the first openly gay person elected to the Maine Legislature. A year later, Dale McCormick, of Monmouth—a founder of ML/GPA, and its first president—was elected to the Maine Senate, becoming the first openly lesbian state senator in the United States. In 1996, McCormick ran in the Democratic primary for the US House of Representatives, losing in a close race to Tom Allen. She subsequently became Treasurer of the State of Maine, and today serves as head of the Maine State Housing Authority.

Maine Today

After three decades of political and electoral struggle, Maine is now among 20 states which have laws protecting citizens on the basis of sexual identity and gender expression.¹⁸ LGBT Mainers



Peter O'Donnell, Portland city councilor, celebrating the Equal Protection Portland victory in November 1992.

Photograph by Annette Dragon, Annette Dragon Papers, LGBT Collection, Sampson Center

**This Tuesday,
November 7th, VOTE...**

NO ON 1
MAINE WON'T DISCRIMINATE

The headlines speak for themselves...

<p>"Bad business" — <i>The Republican Journal</i>, October 12, 1995</p> <p>"Question 1 is a bigot's dream" — <i>Kennebec Journal</i>, September 19, 1995</p> <p>"Maine can't compete if state discriminates" — <i>Maine Sunday Telegram</i>, September 17, 1995</p> <p>"A vote against hate" — <i>Hayom</i>, October, 1995</p> <p>"Question 1 is flawed" — <i>Moosehead Messenger</i>, October 25, 1995</p>	<p>"Hate Crimes: They're for real" — <i>Journal Tribune</i>, Tuesday, August 8, 1995</p> <p>"Vote No on Question One" — <i>Lincoln County News</i>, October 12, 1995</p> <p>"Tolerance is the issue in November voting" — <i>Portland Press Herald</i>, May 5, 1995</p> <p>"No Question 1" — <i>Church World</i>, October 19, 1995</p>
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VOTE 2005 COVERAGE

Question 1: ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW REPEAL EFFORT
YES: 43% (107,090) NO: 57% (142,679)

Constitutional Amendment: WATERFRONT ASSESSMENT
YES: 73% (172,848) NO: 27% (64,036)

LOCAL ISSUES
HURLEY RE-ELECTED MAYOR IN BELFAST;
STONINGTON VOTERS OK LIQUOR SALES

PRECINCTS REPORTED: 386 OF 634

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Question 2: HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS
YES: 68% (167,491) NO: 32% (78,362)

Question 3: WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS
YES: 59% (142,100) NO: 41% (99,765)

Question 4: ECONOMIC GROWTH
YES: 59% (144,547) NO: 41% (99,210)

Question 5: LAND PURCHASE EASEMENTS
YES: 66% (162,029) NO: 34% (82,947)

Question 6: UMS BUILDING RENOVATIONS
YES: 51% (120,880) NO: 49% (118,329)

Gay rights backers: 'We won'

Bond issues passing

Counts show repeal trailing

BY A.J. HIGGINS
OF THE NEWS STAFF

AUGUSTA — The merits of borrowing money to make money were put to an \$83 million test Tuesday as Maine voters went to the polls to determine the fate of five bond issues crafted to attract an additional \$240 million of investment from federal and private matching funds.

Inside
The wording of the 2005 bond questions

Proponents of four of the

BY JEFF TUTTLE
OF THE NEWS STAFF

PORTLAND — An effort to repeal the state's new gay rights law was headed for failure Tuesday night, with supporters of the law declaring victory shortly after 11 p.m. to a cheering crowd of more than 500



"Gay rights backers: 'We won,'" *Bangor Daily News*, November 9, 2005.
Courtesy of Bangor Daily News

sit on town councils and in the State Legislature, direct state agencies, serve as judges and members of public commissions, work as lobbyists and opinion makers for a host of progressive organizations and political causes. Today's LGBT youth are taking on tough political issues, like same gender marriage, that were barely imaginable to the activists of the 1970s and '80s who preceded them. In doing so, they stand on the shoulders of giants.

1. Interview with Barb Wood, June 10, 2004.
2. Howard M. Solomon, "Creating a 'Gay Mecca': Lesbians and Gay Men in Late Twentieth-Century Portland," in: *Creating Portland: History and Place in Northern New England*, Joseph A. Conforti, ed. (Hanover, VT: University Press of New England, 2005), 304.
3. "Gay Conference at UMO Drew National Attention," *Maine Sunday Telegram*, May 12, 1974. Rev. Benjamin Bubar, of the Christian Civic League, warned that the program "could lead many innocent and unsuspecting young men...to being recruited and enslaved"; Rev. Herman C. Frankland, of the Bangor Baptist Church, fulminated against the "Sodom and Gomorrah conclave on our Maine Campus." "Civic League Disapproves of Sanction of Homosexuals," *Portland Evening Express*, December 31, 1973; Advertisement in *Bangor Daily News*, March 10, 1974.
4. "Gay rights debate out of the closet," *Bangor Daily News*, January 3, 1998.
5. *Portland Evening Express*, March 17, 1977.
6. Lois Reckitt, "The First Gay Rights Bill in Maine. Celebrating Our Successes....," *Our Paper*, Vol. 8, No. 11 (July 1993), 3.
7. In 1995, organizers withdrew the bill, deciding instead to concentrate their energy on the statewide referendum campaign.
8. "Gay rights debate out of the closet," *Bangor Daily News*, January 3, 1998.

9. APEX, December 1992. Using the relatively new term "queer" and the acronym "LGBTQA" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, allies) was itself a challenge to the established leadership of the community. For an analysis of how these issues played out in the 1993 referendum in Lewiston, see Erica Rand, "The Passionate Activist and the Political Camera," *The Passionate Camera: Photography and Formations of Desire*, edited by Deborah Bright (New York: Routledge, 1998), 366-84.

10. Kimberley Simmons, "Grassroots Goes to the Polls: Citizen Initiative and Social Movements" (Ph.D. dissertation. Department of Sociology. University of Minnesota, 2002), 173-284. For analysis of Maine's citizen-initiated referenda within a national context, see: Bayliss J. Camp, "Direct Legislation, Lobbying and Protest: The Institutional Structuring of Political Tactics." Ph.D. dissertation. Department of Sociology. Harvard University, 2004.

11. *Casco Bay Weekly*, November 4, 1993.

12. "King signs gay rights bill," Associated Press, Friday May 16, 1997.

13. Pamphlet: "Stop Special 'Gay Rights' Status" (1995). MLGPA Archives, LGBT Collection, Sampson Center.

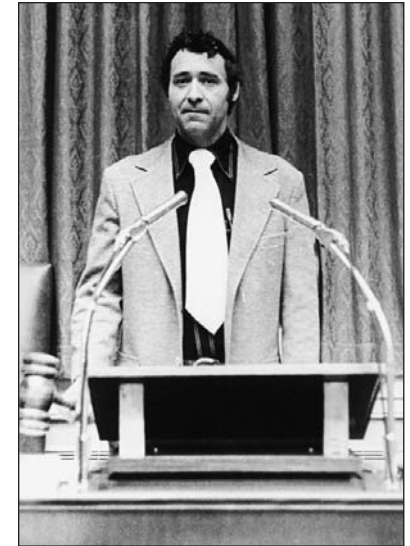
14. Transcript: Bob Knight, Family Research Council, speaking at Christian Civic League meeting, Bethany Baptist Church, Presque Isle, Maine. September 21, 1993. MLGPA Archives, LGBT Collection, Sampson Center.

15. Howard, a 23 year old gay man, drowned on July 7, 1984, after three male teenagers beat him up and threw him into the Kenduskeag Stream, in downtown Bangor. See Solomon, "Creating a 'Gay Mecca,'" 302ff.

16. "Robin D. Lambert, 56, prominent gay rights, AIDS activist," *Portland Press Herald*, October 31, 2006.

17. "Personalities draw attention in District 2," *Portland Press Herald*, May 1, 1997. Portlanders Steven Scharf and David Babin, both openly gay, ran as Republican candidates for state office in 2004; both lost. "Out in the GOP," *Portland Phoenix*, October 8, 2004.

18. "State Nondiscrimination Laws in the US," National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, January 2008.



Rep. Gerald E. Talbot, the first African American elected to statewide office in Maine, sponsored the first "gay rights bill" in 1977.

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

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