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Tarragona Club of Bangor, 1905

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African American Collection of Maine

Glickman Family Library, Sixth Floor
314 Forest Avenue
Portland, ME 04104
(207) 780-4275

Reading Room Hours:

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

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UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MAINE

From the Editor's Desk



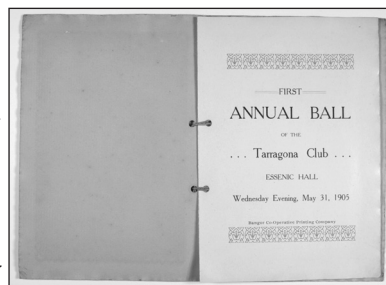
The African American Collection of Maine and the larger Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine have been in a flurry of activity since classes began in the

fall. Much of this activity has been supported by the increase in University events space. This trend is sure to continue as more construction projects are completed and more buildings are brought online.

Part of transforming USM into a regional comprehensive university of national excellence is creating and meeting an expectation for substantive, predictable programming that reflects scholarship and informs teaching. In that tradition, the African American Collection presents its eighth annual exhibition. This year's exhibition, called "Old Wine in New Wine Skins: Bringing Out the African American Collection of Maine," features more than 100 photographs, visual objects, books, and documents from across the Collection. This issue of the *Griot* explores the significance of one, rather small, item in the exhibition: the program of the Tarragona Club's ball in 1905.

A Place in Time: The First Annual Ball of the Tarragona Club (1905)

The program of the First Annual Ball of the Tarragona Club governs what appears to have been the club's premiere social event, held in Bangor's Essenic Hall on May 31, 1905. Printed by the Bangor Co-Operative Printing Company, the program features a floral cover, a front page announcing the ball, a two-page order of dances, and a back page listing officers and event supervisors. There are several intact copies of the program; one even has its tiny, original pencil attached. A true gem of the Gerald E. Talbot Collection, the Tarragona Club program/dance card is a perfect symbol of Bangor's



Black community, a group that was growing and thriving in the early 1900s.

According to the 1900 United States Census, 176 Blacks lived in Bangor—a significant increase from the 84 Blacks recorded there in 1870. Black Bangor would increase in number to 228 in 1930, before declining to a reported 112 in 1950. Migrants from along the eastern United States, Canada, and the Caribbean augmented Bangor's Maine-born population to create a vibrant hybrid community. Tarragona Club membership reflects this diversity. Tarragona President Charles Raynsford Talbot was a native of Bangor; Vice President Edward Buck was from New York (or possibly New Jersey); Secretary Charles Smallwood was from Virginia; Treasurer William Stewart was from the Caribbean—possibly Martinique or Puerto Rico. Other noted members of the Club included Bangor native Charles A. Talbot and New Brunswick native Sterling A. Dymond.

The men of the Tarragona Club worked a variety of jobs. Charles A. Talbot was the proprietor of a seemingly profitable delivery business in the city.

His son, Charles R. Talbot, worked as a dining car chef before taking employment at the distinguished Bangor House Hotel. Edward Buck was a railroad porter, William Stewart was another delivery man, and Sterling Dymond was a manager for the Great Northern Paper Company. While the Tarragona Club appears to have been a men's club mod-

eled after the city's exclusive Tarratine Club, the women of Black Bangor are not to be forgotten. Josephine Smallwood was a restaurant cook turned caterer. Janie Dymond did not work outside the home, but exclusively took care of her

growing family. Panzy Dymond Talbot, wife of Charles R. Talbot, was a well-known cateress.

The Tarragona Club program illustrates the mystery of Bangor's Black community. On one hand, reliable sources of information, including the manuscript census, newspaper articles, obituaries, and city directories, aid in constructing the identity of the organization's men and women. However, a complete understanding of its origin, purpose, and ultimate durability remains elusive. Some of these questions may never be completely answered, but they do not diminish the charm and value of this historical artifact. In fact, the unanswered questions may just enhance these qualities.

Sources: 1870, 1900-1950 U.S. Censuses; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States 1790-1915* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968); 1900-1930 United States Censuses (ms); "Mr. and Mrs. C. Raynsford Talbot Celebrate Golden Anniversary," *Bangor Daily News*, 10 June 1958, 11; "Married 50 Years Ago," *Bangor Daily News*, 6 November 1951, 2.

Events

Continuing through March 31, 2005:
Old Wine in New Wine Skins: Bringing Out the African American Collection of Maine.

More than 100 books, photographs, documents, and visual objects from throughout the African American Collection.

Special Collections, Sixth floor, USM Glickman Family Library, 314 Forest Avenue, Portland, ME 04104. The lobby area can be accessed anytime during the library's operating hours. The entire exhibition may be viewed Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m., or during other times by calling (207) 780-5492.

Sponsored by the Women's Studies Program and the African American Collection of Maine/Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine.

"Women of Color in the Americas: New Scholarship on Race and Sex"

March 17, 2005; 5-6:30 p.m.
7th floor University Events Room;
Glickman Family Library.

USM faculty members will discuss recent and pending book publications. Eve Raimon will discuss and sign copies of her new book, *The "Tragic Mulatta" Revisited*. David Carey, Jr., will discuss his forthcoming book, *Engendering Mayan History*. Maureen Elgersman Lee will discuss her forthcoming book, *Black Bangor*. Free and open to the public; light refreshments will be provided.



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In Review

Coretta Scott King. *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969.

My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr., was first published in 1969, but was revised and reissued in 1993. I read Coretta Scott King’s autobiography when I was in grade 13. *Yes, grade 13*. Each morning during home room, we had a mandatory fifteen minutes of reading time. A voracious reader even then, I found those fifteen minutes blissful and inspiring. I gained valuable insight into the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., a man I idolized at the time, and into the personality of his wife, a woman whom I admired, but did not really understand.

Coretta Scott King’s biography changed that. In what must have been a labor of love and sorrow, King allows the reader entrée into the joy and pain of having loved and lost one of the most important men—African American, American, Christian, human—in recorded history. King’s biography reminds us that before she was “Mrs. King,” she was Coretta Scott, an ambitious, engaging, and highly talented woman.

Some of the most heartwarming moments in the book are the funny, highly normal moments that take place inside any given family during any given day. *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* illustrates how very normal the King family home was, and yet, how very atypical it was as the home of a Nobel-Prize winning civil rights activist.

The drama of *My Life* is found in moments like the murder of Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi, a murder that preceded and even foreshadowed King’s own assassination in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1968. Coretta Scott King also reveals that her husband’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech, delivered at the 1963 March on Washington, D.C., was inspired. After agonizing over what to say at that critical moment, King began his speech only to depart from the written words and speak from his spirit, *with* his spirit.

My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr. allows the reader insight into the quiet dignity of the womanhood of Coretta Scott King. After finishing it, I had a greater appreciation for the complexity and strength of Coretta Scott King, qualities that have continued to serve King in creating the King Center in Atlanta and protecting the integrity of the King family name.

Recent Publications

The following books were recently reviewed on H-Net Humanities and Social Sciences Online and may be of interest to readers of the *Griot*. The reviews may be viewed in their entirety at www.h-net.org/reviews.

Francis Njubi Nesbett. *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. [Reviewed by Gerald Horne, University of Houston.] Nesbett explores the roles that W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, and other, lesser known Black Americans played in the eventual defeat of African apartheid.

Charles F. Robinson II. *Dangerous Liaisons: Sex and Love in the Segregated South*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003. [Reviewed by Elizabeth Alexander, Texas Wesleyan University] Robinson argues that despite the enactment of rigid segregation and anti-miscegenation laws, Southern courts selectively enforced them.

Martha Ward. *Voodoo Queen: The Spirited Lives of Marie Laveau*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004. [Reviewed by Caryn Cossé Bell, University of Massachusetts Lowell.] Ward presents a new, well-received treatment of the life and influence of New Orleans’ powerful “voodoo queen.”

Benita Roth. *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. [Reviewed by Tim Hodgdon, Mellon Fellow, Duke University.] Roth argues that women of the 1960s and 1970s were encouraged to organize their own feminist movements, resulting in separate feminist histories.

Jennifer Fleischner. *Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Keckly: The Remarkable Story of the Friendship Between a First Lady and a Former Slave*. New York: Broadway Books, 2003. [Reviewed by Matthew Pinsker, Dickinson College.] In her book, Fleischner offers compelling biographies of Abraham Lincoln’s wife and her servant, Keckly, and explores their long and complex friendship.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America’s First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers*. New York: Basic Books, 2003. [Reviewed by Babacar M’Baye, The Evergreen State College.] In yet another treatise on the Black literary tradition, Gates explores Wheatley’s position as a poet and an enslaved woman, her reception by Thomas Jefferson, and her place in Black Atlantic studies.

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