

Spring 2007

## The Eastern Real Estate Company of Portland

Maureen Elgersman - Lee (ed.)  
*University of Southern Maine*

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# THE GRIOT

Preserving  
African American  
History in Maine

University of Southern Maine

Volume 10, Issue 2

Spring 2007

## African American Collection of Maine

Glickman Family Library, Sixth Floor  
314 Forest Avenue  
P.O. Box 9301  
Portland, ME 04104  
(207) 780-4275

**Reading Room Hours:**  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday:  
1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

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The African American Collection of Maine welcomes donations of materials on African American life in Maine.

The African American Collection of Maine is a member of the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine.

<http://library.usm.maine.edu/special-collections/jbscenter.html>



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## From the Editor's Desk



someone who does, please contact the Collection by telephone, e-mail, or mail (See contact information at left.) We look forward to hearing from you.

—Maureen Elgersman Lee, Lee, *associate professor of history and faculty scholar for the African American Collection of Maine at USM*

## In Memoriam: Beverly Dodge Bowens

The community was saddened last summer to hear of the passing of Portland native Beverly Dodge Bowens. Born in Portland, Beverly Dodge grew up on Munjoy Hill, in a neighborhood that she loved. An exemplary student, Beverly graduated from Portland High School. While a high school senior, Beverly made headlines when Senator Margaret Chase Smith and Governor Frederick Payne intervened on her behalf and pressured a Washington, D.C., hotel to reverse its decision not to accommodate Dodge on her senior class trip because she was Black. After graduation, Beverly attended Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, where she came under the tutelage of Sister Mary Consuela, a woman who had a sig-

nificant impact on her career. After this graduation, Beverly moved to New York City and attended Teachers College at Columbia University, where she earned several degrees in nursing education.

Beverly spent the bulk of her professional career in nursing education and administration; she returned to Portland several years ago and was a faithful supporter of the African American Collection's projects and public programming. Despite her many accomplishments, Beverly generally shunned the spotlight and preferred to work "behind the scenes." Always soft-spoken, dignified, and supportive, Beverly Dodge Bowens is deeply missed.

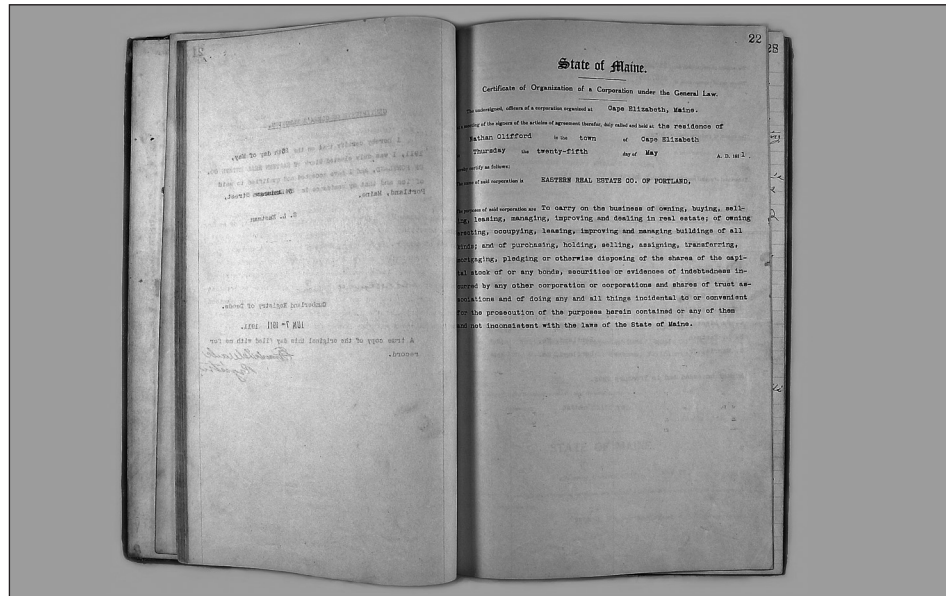
## A Place in Time:

### The Eastern Real Estate Company of Portland

In 2006, the African American Collection received an extraordinary donation, the archives of the Eastern Real Estate Company. Made possible by the generosity of Leonard and Mary Jane Cummings, this collection will greatly enhance our understanding of Black commerce, residency patterns, and home ownership in Portland.

Organized in May of 1911, the Eastern Real Estate Company of Portland was empowered to "carry on the business of owning, buying, selling, leasing, managing, improving and dealing in real estate; of owning, erecting, occupying, leasing, improving and managing buildings of all kinds; and of purchasing, holding, selling, assigning, transferring, mortgaging, pledging, and otherwise disposing of the shares of the capital stock of or any bonds, securities or evidences of indebtedness issued by any other corporation or corporations and shares of trust associations and of doing any and all things incidental to or convenient for the prosecution of the purposes herein contained or any of them and not inconsistent with the laws of the State of Maine."

*continued*



Ledger, Eastern Real Estate Company of Portland.



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African American Collection of Maine  
University of Southern Maine  
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Portland, ME 04104-9301

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### On the Bookshelf:

#### ***Maine's Visible Black History***

The teachers, students, historians, and history buffs who had held their breaths waiting for a state-wide survey of Maine's African American history exhaled collectively last year, with the publication of H.H. Price and Gerald E. Talbot's *Maine's Visible Black History: The First Chronicle of Its People* (Gardiner: Tilbury House). The book represents the completion of the authors' long-held vision of a comprehensive history that could be used across the state by virtually every segment of the reading public, but would be

especially valuable to Maine teachers and students.

Across more than 380 pages of text and with the support of many contributors from Maine and across the country, *Maine's Visible Black History* tells the story of African Americans in state history from the colonial era through the opening years of the current century. The text is organized around six main themes: Early History, Families and Community, Living and Working, Arts and Sciences, Social Change, and Black Mainers and

Beyond. *Maine's Visible Black History* contains hundreds of illustrations, drawn from museums and archives as well as from private family collections. The narrative varies, from academic essays to highly personal narratives, a balance that is sure to attract and engage a wide readership.

In sum, *Maine's Visible Black History* is an accomplishment unmatched in its breadth, and promises to be a resource for years to come.

### In Review

The following books were recently reviewed in the *American Historical Review* and may be of interest to readers of the *Griot*.

Weise, Andrew. *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. [Reviewed by Barbara M. Kelly, Hofstra University]

Weise divides the twentieth century into three periods—1900 to 1940, 1941 to 1960, and 1961 and beyond—to demonstrate that although the century saw a rise in Black suburban homeownership, Blacks were denied access to more affluent neighborhoods and depicted as being uninterested in having homes of their own.

Fingard, Judith and Janet Guildford, eds. *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work, and Social Policy in Post-1945 Halifax*. Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2005. [Reviewed by Margaret Little, Queen's University]

Included among the text's various essays on Canada's post-WWII social history is Wanda Thomas Bernard and Judith Fingard's essay on African-Nova Scotian domestic workers. Much research has been done on domestic workers in Canadian cities like Toronto, but this expands our understanding of Black women's work in eastern Canada.

### The Eastern Real Estate Company of Portland

*continued*

ing or otherwise disposing of the shares of the capital stock of or any bonds, securities or evidences of indebtedness incurred by any other corporation or corporations...."<sup>1</sup>

According to the articles of incorporation, the company was to have at least seven, but no more than ten, directors. The seven founding directors were Walter Richey, president; Moses S. Green, treasurer; Alexander Dumas; John A. Jacklin; C.H. Diggs; Cornelius Harris, Jr.; and Sumner L. Eastman. The founders swore oaths before Justice of the Peace Nathan Clifford in his Cape Elizabeth home. From beginning to end,

the company lasted for 90 years. The archives primarily comprise ledger books containing the articles of association, by-laws, and minutes of company meetings as well as stockholder, financial, and legal information.

The archives of the Eastern Real Estate Company of Portland will prove to be invaluable primary source materials for those who study, research, or simply enjoy history, geography, sociology, and business. It is an exceptional asset to the African American Collection of Maine.

1. Archives of the Eastern Real Estate Company of Portland, Ledger 1, page 22. African American Collection of Maine.

***Save the Date!***

African American  
Collection of Maine  
**Community  
History Exhibition  
on Central Maine**

**February 1, 2008**

More information to come.