The Eastern Real Estate Company of Portland

Maureen Elgersman - Lee (ed.)

University of Southern Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/griot

Part of the American Studies Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Publications at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Griot by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu.
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

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, etc."
African American Collection of Maine
University of Southern Maine
P.O. Box 9301
Portland, ME 04104-9301

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 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.


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

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.