

Bangor ultimately prompted both Edward and Sam to relocate to larger cities. Sam took his family back to New York after the war, whereas Edward moved to Bucksport for a short time and then to Detroit where he eventually founded Edward E. Alpert and Son, dealers in scrap metal and iron.

Izzy worked with his cousin, Samuel N. Cohen, in a clothing shop at 131 Broad Street until establishing his own operation (circa 1910-11), United Tailoring and Pressing, at 79 York Street. Once Izzy had settled in Bangor, his brother Israel was not far behind. He had been staying with the Koppleman family in Brooklyn and working in a sweatshop in Manhattan's lower east side, where, according to SAD, "his job was to sew the sleeves of shirts together and then to the body of the shirt. Fortunately for his future children Israel was color blind, so when he sewed the wrong color sleeves to the shirt bodies, he was fired. He decided to try to make a go of it with his family in Maine." He arrived in Bangor on the first day of April, 1907 and lived with his older brother, Shimsel, who had arrived the year before and taken lodgings at 28 Carr Street. According to SAD, her father "started out with a little outdoor hot dog stand on the bridge connecting one side of the city to the other at the mouth of the Kenduskeag Stream where it entered the Penobscot River. He earned about \$7.00 a week which was adequate for his immediate needs." When Shimsel's family arrived in 1908, Israel moved in with his sister Leah and her husband Jacob Sclair. But this proved to be an unpleasant environment. SAD recalled her aunt Leah as "a tiny little woman, about four feet, six inches tall, married to a man Jake Sclair, who towered above her at about five feet, nine inches. Leah was a very straightforward, generous and loving woman, while her husband was cunning in aspect and rather sadistic in small tricky ways to his wife. I'm sure my father must have despised him, although he never verbalized his feelings in my presence. Anyhow, papa did not stay there very long and sought room and board elsewhere." This he found with the Harrisers (Mr. Harris was the beadle of the synagogue) with whom he lived for the next two years.

It was while living with the Harrisers that Israel met his cousin Bessie (Basha) Fine, who was to become his wife. According to SAD,

In 1908 Basha, for what reason I do not know, decided to emigrate to America. She took a trip to Sosenska to both meet and say goodbye to her Aunt Miriam [Merke] and also to bring greetings from her to her sons and daughter in America. Aunt Miriam told Basha that she had two single sons in America, Israel and Isaac, but that Israel would be best for her.

Basha took the emigration route to America through Vienna to Liverpool and from there by ship to America. The fog was so thick during her three days in Liverpool she could hardly see the city. To her it was dark, dirty and most discouraging. In contrast to Israel's pleasant trip across the seas, the ocean was turbulent, steerage was dark and dirty, and the experience was so terrible that for the rest of her life Basha refused to even get into a rowboat when we went fishing.



Alice and Jacob Cohen with daughters Pauline and Mae, circa 1915. (Courtesy of Pauline Cohen)
Right: Simon Alpert family, circa 1921. Shimsel was a logger on the Viliya until emigrating to Bangor in 1906. Back row, left to right: Hy, Esther, Morris. Front row: Miriam, Abraham and Paul. (Courtesy of Miriam Alpert Meyers)

Basha Fine landed at "Castle Garden"...in early May 1908. When she saw the streets of New York she felt a deep sense of disappointment. To the people of her world America was the land of freedom and opportunity, and New York City was "Goldenah Medina." Gold was to be found in the streets and could be had for picking it up. Basha took those words literally, and to see the dust and dirt of the East Side with its concomitant poverty made her homesick for the familiar surroundings of her native land.

After a couple of weeks in New York, Basha, finding no prospects for a decent job, decided to try her luck in Bangor, going ostensibly to visit her cousin Leah Sclair, but in reality to look over Leah's brother, Israel. If there was nothing there, she would look for work in Bangor, and, if she found no work, she planned to investigate what possibilities were available in the factories of Connecticut. Besides, she had a cousin who was a girlhood chum in New Haven, and she might settle there.

Basha came to Bangor and stayed with Leah Sclair. Soon after her arrival she took a walk to Carr Street to visit Israel. It was late afternoon when she arrived and Israel was in the basement kitchen sitting at the table in the back of the room. There was a knock at the back door and as Israel said "Come in" the door opened and the figure of a trim young woman in a large brimmed hat appeared silhouetted in the doorway. The aura of light around her figure made him think an angel had appeared. Her warm and friendly demeanor, as they became acquainted, strengthened this feeling. Papa later claimed it was love at first sight for him. Basha, on the other hand, was more reserved and made up her mind to try her luck in Connecticut.

It took two weeks to persuade Basha to stay in Bangor and to marry him.

The newlyweds relocated to 32 Pine Street in 1909 and to economize, Izzy moved in with them.

Just as Izzy and Israel were the closest of the siblings in their family, Bessie and her younger sister Mary were the closest in theirs. Mary had stayed behind when Bessie emigrated but, according to KAG, "she had worked hard and finally saved 400 rubles (\$200) to come to America (the boat passage about 200 and 200 to take care of herself and get herself started...)

She went on the passport of Mendl Gendl of Smorgon, as his daughter. Mendl Gendl was a character who traveled back and forth from America every year and every year his wife had a child from his visit (he finally died on one of his back-home visits.) According to Fannie Coven, mother was secretly in love with [Fannie's] brother, a tall, handsome, brilliant youth - there has been at times some hint of a crush on someone of that sort back in Russia, and how he didn't show any serious intention toward her until after she was settled here and then she finally wrote back to him not to bother. Something of that sort. Anyhow when she reached Liverpool with Mendl Gendl, they separated and she went to visit some relatives there. The ship was supposed to leave in two days and she left all her goods with him - her money and her

trunks (with the big red linen goosedown pillows, the heavy silver). She took the carriage to the hotel the next afternoon and found that he had checked out. She'll never forget that moment - in a foreign city, unable to speak the language. She screamed so - they finally quieted her. The ship had sailed earlier than expected. Her tickets and money were in the office. Mendl Gendl would send her baggage up from New York and she could take the next boat.

She was always afraid of men, she said (perhaps it was this prudery that held the dark handsome youth off). Even on the boat going over, she wouldn't answer a single man who spoke to her. She had heard or read so much about "white slavery" that she took a boat that went to Boston instead of New York. She traveled steerage and was miserably seasick. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society agent met her at the ship in Boston and housed her overnight and put her on the train for Bangor...

Mary moved in with Bessie and Israel at 98 York Street. Israel continued peddling junk with Shimsel, having abandoned the hot dog stand the year before, and Mary went to work as a rag picker at the Eastern Manufacturing Company pulp mill⁶ and then soon afterwards as a pant presser at a factory. Romantic intrigues developed when Izzy, who was still living with Israel and Bessie, began making overtures to Mary, who SAD described as "a very pretty girl, small, petite, with dark wavy hair and a beautiful complexion. Of course Isidor promptly fell in love with her." According to KAG, "She at first rejected him....a small and gentle and intelligent young man, with humor and understanding and sensitivity. She wanted someone bigger and stronger, with more drive - besides she was in love with Sol Costrell [characterized by SAD as 'a young man full of idealism and liberal sentiments...']. Finally Annie Cohen accepted Sol and mother accepted daddy." Izzy may have been living in the same house but, according to KAG, "when she was engaged, she never allowed him to cross the threshold of her room... He could just kiss her good-night and that was all." Their wedding took place September 17, 1911.

Within two years Izzy established his first confectionery store at 355 Main Street. By 1917 the store had relocated to 407 Main and an apartment beside the store at No. 407½ was occupied by the young family which included Katya (b.1914), Sylvia (b.1916) and Sidney (b.1917). The business was sold in the early 1920's in favor of the Modern Clothing Store which was opened at 197 Exchange Street. The family moved to 8 Larkin Street. Meanwhile, Shimsel and Leah took over the store at 355 Main Street and Israel and Bessie moved to 162 Palm Avenue, from where Israel based his own peddling operation until establishing a small grocery store at 135 State Street. After surviving a serious automobile accident in 1925, Izzy returned to the Modern Clothing Store only to find that his partner had vanished with all of the inventory. This marked a return to the confectionery business on Main Street, once again at No. 355. After Shimsel and Leah had packed up and moved the family to Boston, the original structure at the 355 address was torn down and a new building designated as the Cassidy Block was erected on the same site. This block, which was located across from the railroad yard and in front of the Bangor Gas



Isidor Alpert in the Main Street store, circa 1930. (Author's collection) *Bottom:* Israel Alpert in the State Street store, circa 1930. (Courtesy of Michael Alpert)

works, housed Izzy's new store until the end of the 1920's when it was moved to its final location, 453 Main Street. There it was transformed to a beer parlor and took on the name Alpert's Spa. After several years the family purchased the house at No. 455 which they occupied until the property was sold in the late 1940's.

In November 1910, Mendel Alperowitz left Dolhinow for Bangor where he first lived with his younger brother, Shimsel. After about a year enough money was saved to send for his eldest daughter Fannie (b.1894) and then, after another year, his eldest son Morris (b.1898); but with the outbreak of World War One communication with Eastern Europe was cut off and the whereabouts of the rest of his family was unknown. Dolhinow, as it turned out, had been destroyed - though his wife and children returned to live there for a short time. Shortly thereafter they had relocated to Minsk, which had been virtually untouched by the war, though Mendel was unaware of their move.

Life in Bangor for Mendel followed the pattern typical of newly arrived immigrants of the time. He stayed with Israel and Bessie at 162 Palm Street and peddled for a living while Fannie, who had followed her father to Bangor in 1912, remained with Shimsel at 165 Parkview Avenue and worked at the small grocery store established by Shimsel's wife, Leah, at 322 Hancock Street. He applied for naturalization February 25, 1914 and this, including the request that his name be changed to Max Alpert, was granted in early 1917 with cousins Jacob and Max Cohen standing as witnesses. Mendel's years with Israel and Bessie left SAD with one of her earliest memories: "He was a small round man with blond hair and blue eyes, very quiet and kindly in nature. He must have liked children because I remember him taking me on his lap and gently blowing on my cold fingers to warm them up. He stayed with us until his daughter, Fannie, married when he moved to live with her."

The rest of the family, including Ida (b.1900), Sylvia (b.1905) and Sophie (b.1907), finally made it to Bangor through the adventurous means of the trans-Siberian route and then from Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay across the continent to Maine. Enough money was saved to open a small confectionery shop on York Street, which was called the Hole in the Wall. A Bangor Daily News article celebrating the sesquicentennial of Bangor reported that in the shop,

The [Alpert] girls sold vanilla and chocolate ice cream packed in drums so heavy the customers had to lift them to the counter. There was a showcase for tootsie rolls, caramels and licorice. Steamed hot dogs sold for a nickel. The sisters also shined shoes on the street outside...

Woodsmen came into the tiny shop to buy hotdogs, and some of them appointed themselves guardians to the young girls. [According to Sylvia,] "If anyone swore or said anything wrong, they would throw them out on the street."⁷

Just after her mother and siblings arrived in 1917, Fannie Alpert married her second cousin, Robert Cohen (Yankev Alperowitz's youngest son). Robert had sailed for America on December 3, 1911 and went immediately to Bangor