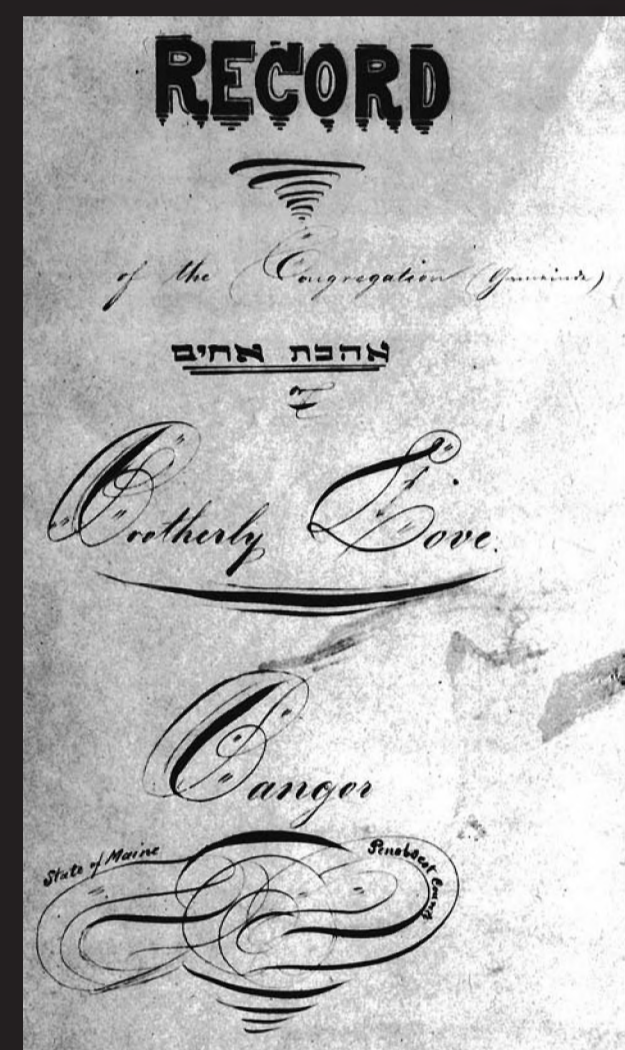


LEGACY

What does it mean to be a “Maine Jew” ... a “Jewish Mainer”? This question is more complicated, even, than its constituent parts – what it is to be Jewish, what it is to be from Maine – and certainly those are questions ever ripe for debate.

This exhibition relies to a great extent on the self-definition of its subjects. It presents individuals who, in one way or another, connect to Judaism – through birthright, cultural identification, spiritual practice or intellectual affinity. It presents Jews who, in one way or another, connect to Maine – whether they were born here, vacationed here, once lived here, or chose to relocate here.

Maine’s first Jewish resident is thought to be Susman Abrams, a tanner born in Hamburg, Germany in 1743. He settled in Union some time after the Revolutionary War. There was a Jewish congregation in Bangor by the late 1840s, and there are records of a Jewish resident and a Jewish cemetery in Portland in the 1860s and 1870s, respectively.



Record book, Congregation Ahawas Achim, founded in Bangor in 1849

Estimated Jewish Population	NAME and ADDRESS of SECRETARY	REMARKS
60 adults 125 children (est. 2177) Jacob Gundersen Secy		The estimate of the Jewish population of Maine was furnished to Mr. H. S. Friedman by Mr. M. S. Morning of Boston
30 adults 50 children	Moses Jacobs	Guest and it is supposed 500 welcome of members in the whole state
25 adults 40 children	Bern Kalish	
18 adults 25 children	W. Schmuckler	
	Jonas Levy	
	Kenny Stern & Co	
	A. J. Levy	

Statistics on Maine’s Jewish population, 1875

The state’s Jewish population grew in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as it did throughout the United States. More than two million Jewish immigrants fled anti-Semitic oppression and persecution in Eastern Europe and sought economic opportunity and religious freedom in America. Some Jewish immigrants may have landed in Portland’s harbor; more passed through Philadelphia, New York, Boston, St. John, Quebec, or Halifax as their North American journeys began.



Relatives of Louise Berliawsky Nevelson



Former Beth Israel Synagogue in Bangor, 1897

The Jews of Maine have had, and continue to have, an impact disproportionate to their number. They have made their marks in Maine and beyond through commercial and entrepreneurial efforts, creative contributions in arts and letters, pace-setting accomplishments in the medical, legal and financial professions, philanthropic munificence and dynamic civic leadership.



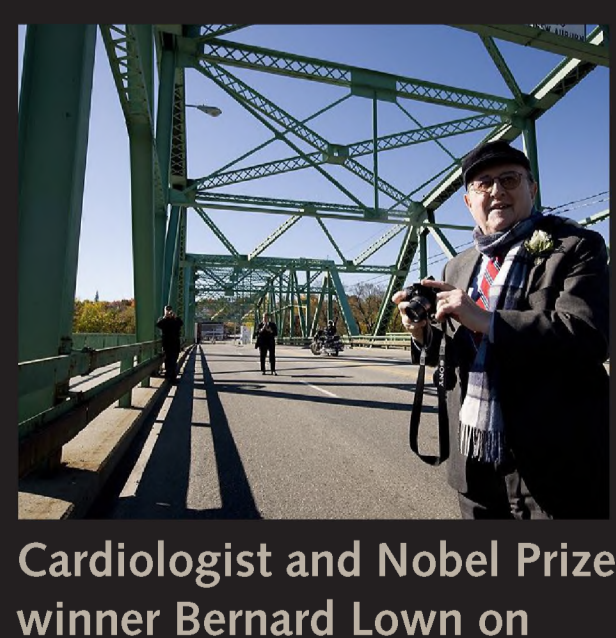
Children with tzedakah boxes or pushkes, 1940s



Portland’s Bet Ha’am members volunteer for Cultivating Community



WWII-era servicemen and others on the steps of Bangor’s JCC



Cardiologist and Nobel Prize winner Bernard Lown on the Auburn-Lewiston “Peace Bridge” named for him

Although Maine’s Jewish population has rarely exceeded 10,000, this number has remained fundamentally stable since the 1980s. Concentrated populations of Jews currently reside in and around Augusta, Bangor, Bath, Biddeford-Saco, Lewiston-Auburn, Portland, Rockland and Waterville. Twenty-four synagogues have existed in Maine towns or cities; sixteen continue to serve the community in 2010.



Decalogue tablets, former synagogue in Gardiner



Beth Israel Synagogue in Bath



Beth Israel Synagogue in Waterville

Individuals across the state are supported by an array of Jewish communal and cultural organizations, such as the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine and the Bangor Jewish Community Council. Jews also come together around Hillel organizations at the University of Maine and Bates, Bowdoin and Colby Colleges. In more isolated and rural corners of Maine, Jews committed to their faith and heritage find ways to maintain and express their Judaism in the absence of a *minyan* (minimum gathering) of ten.



Rosh Hashanah celebration in Presque Isle



The shofar (ram’s horn) sounds in Weld

In some periods and places Maine’s Jews have been subject to discrimination and exclusion. Over time, however, they have successfully broken down barriers that once limited their access to social clubs, educational and professional opportunities, and the world of politics.



Rabbi Harry Sky and Portland-area clergy plan for a 1963 Civil Rights march

Morris Holland spotlights his Jewish granddaughter in a Christmas display at Unobskey’s in Calais

Maine+Jewish is a first programmatic effort by the new Maine Jewish Museum, based at and from Portland’s Eitz Chaim Synagogue. Documenting Maine Jewry (www.mainejews.org), a virtual museum on Maine’s Jewish life and history, served as the exhibition developer. Amy E. Waterman was the lead curator-writer; Harris Gleckman, DMJ’s day-to-day coordinator (Shanimo) supported the process and managed the introduction of the associated kiosks. Images and ideas derive from the research of many scholars and the knowledge and contributions of numerous individuals and institutions. The work was facilitated greatly by

the previous, substantial work of Abraham and Jean Peck and by the input of a small advisory group, including David Freidenreich, Phyllis Graber Jensen and Judith Halpert. Special thanks are extended to Gary Berenson and Jody Sataloff at the Eitz Chaim Synagogue, Abraham Schechter of the Portland Public Library, Richard d’Abate and his staff at the Maine Historical Society, Steven Greenberg of Boston’s Villa Shalom, the DMJ Minyan (coordinating group), and Gabbaim (regional coordinators), and to Susan Cummings-Lawrence for her research skills and resourcefulness.

Photographers: Phyllis Graber Jensen (Lown), Marilyn Jo Josephson (Weld)