

Melvin L. Stone  
640 Ocean Ave., Unit 318  
Portland, ME 04103-2835

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Hi Ken:

Thanks for the photo of the building that formerly housed the Rumford synagogue, Temple Israel.

When we moved to Rumford, in 1948, the building was still recognizable as a former one-room school. In 1947 it had received a facelift from the largesse of a fellow named Allen Goldfine. He had made a lot of money from his woolen mills during World War II and was spreading big bucks around Maine's Jewish communities. The big change was the installation of several beautiful stained glass windows in memory of Goldfine's parents.

My next door neighbor, Lou Cohen was "president" of Temple Israel. I was vice president. We would hold holiday parties in the building celebrating Chanukah, Purim, Succoth.

For high holiday services we would employ an elderly Rebbe from a New York Hebrew school. He would stay with one of the only two Jewish families in Rumford who kept kosher. His services were a mixture of Hebrew, Yiddish and broken English.

To assure ourselves of a minyan, we snagged two Jewish men from Livermore Falls. Even then, we rarely could count more than ten men at services at any time. We used to joke that if someone had to leave for the bathroom, the service would go on break!

In 1969, with only 4-5 Jewish families left, the synagogue was put up for sale. At the time I was a very active Jewish Home for Aged Board member and I persuaded the folks at Rumford to donate the proceeds of the synagogue sale to that organization in the name of the Rumford Jewish community.

Regards,  
Mel