



Maine Jewish Museum

MAINE JEWISH HALL OF FAME
2021 Induction Ceremony

Presented by

Dorothy Suzi Osher in Memory of Alfred Osher

Sunday, September 19, 2021

We gratefully acknowledge and join the Maine Jewish Hall of Fame in honoring

Susan T. and Jerome F. Goldberg

for their outstanding accomplishments and generous philanthropic endeavors in support of our community.



Together, Susan and Jerry have made Portland and Maine a better place for all. Susan always made time for the community and cultural institutions she loved. She served in many capacities for multiple organizations, always adding her warmth and good humor to their work. Jerry shares her commitment to service and continues to support and guide a variety of religious, arts, educational, and business entities. We are especially grateful to Jerry for his wise and steady leadership of the Foundation.



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FOUNDATION

*~With deep respect,
The Board and Staff of the Sam L. Cohen Foundation*

MAINE JEWISH HALL OF FAME

Presented by

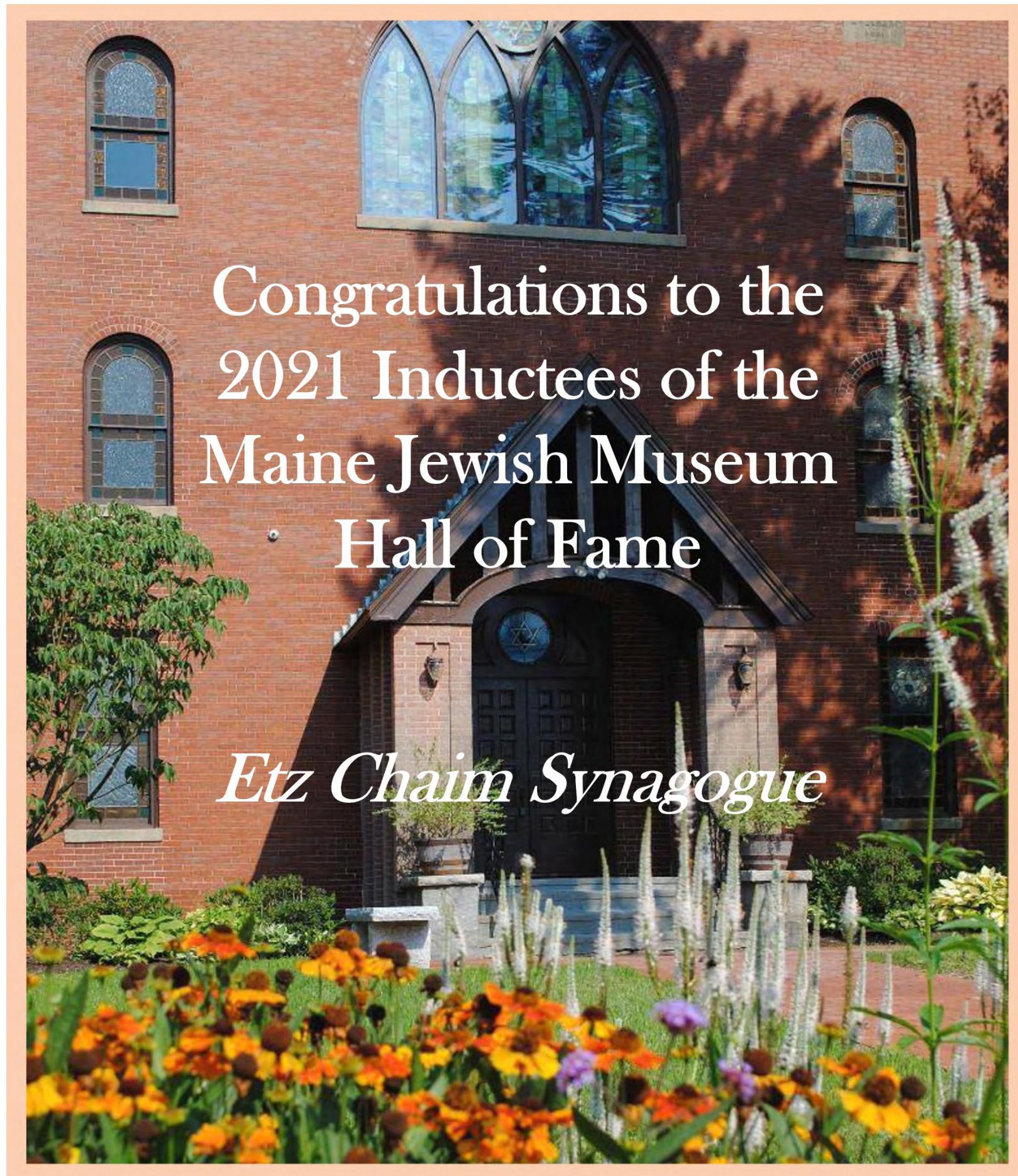
Dorothy Suzi Osher in Memory of Alfred Osher

The MAINE JEWISH HALL OF FAME was created in 2018 to bestow recognition on outstanding Jewish leaders from throughout the state who have brought distinction and honor to the State of Maine or beyond. Those who have been elected to the 2021 Class by the Nominating Committee reflect the Jewish value of making the world a better place through outstanding accomplishments and/or humanitarian and philanthropic endeavors. Inductees include leaders in the fields of medicine, environment, law, business, philanthropy, politics, and life.



The mission of the Maine Jewish Museum is to honor the contributions and diversity of Maine's Jewish immigrants in the context of the American experience. Through such exhibitions and programming, the Museum seeks to build bridges of appreciation and understanding with people of all backgrounds.

The Board of the
Maine Jewish
Museum wishes
to extend a most
heartfelt Mazel Tov
to the Board and
congregants of
Etz Chaim Synagogue
as they celebrate the
100th
Anniversary
of the Synagogue's
founding in 1921.
Much like the lives
of our Hall of Fame
Inductees, the path
forward was not
always an easy one
for Etz Chaim. Over
the years, events,
circumstances and
changing times caused
many periods of
doubt and despair,
but yet the Synagogue
survived and like the
Phoenix , literally rose
from the ashes to once
again flourish today
both physically and
spiritually.



*We look forward to joining in celebratory events in the year to come and wish for another
100 year legacy at the top of India Street for Etz Chaim!*

Kol ha'ka'vod

MAINE JEWISH HALL OF FAME 2021 INDUCTEES

David Astor* – *Portland, ME*

Rabbi Tuvia Ben-Shmuel-Yosef (Donald Gellers)* – *Eastport, ME*

Norman Godfrey* – *Portland, ME*

Jerry & Susan* Goldberg – *Portland, ME*

Abraham & Fannie Levey* – *Portland, ME*

George I. Lewis* – *Portland, ME*

Leonard & Merle Nelson – *Cumberland Foreside, ME*

The Unobskey Family* – *Calais, ME*
(*Joseph and Sarah and sons William, Arthur and Charles*)

* of blessed memory

PROGRAM

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Irwin Gratz

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Steven Brinn

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Rabbi Rachel Isaacs

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Irwin Gratz

Steven Brinn

CLOSING BENEDICTION

Rabbi Gary Berenson

SPECIAL THANKS

Nanci Kahn & Steve Melchiskey
for their generous donation of wine for
the reception.

&



Greetings from

STEVEN BRINN

President, Maine Jewish Museum Board of Directors

2021 Maine Jewish Hall of Fame Event Chair

Dear Inductees, Inductee families, and friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Third Maine Jewish Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. While we've been waiting almost 15 months now from our original Induction date of June 2020, as they say better late than never! It is so wonderful to be able to finally meet in person and have you all here!

In many cases, this year's 8 inductees lived through the great influenza pandemic of 1918, or in at least two cases have experienced the current pandemic. So, they are not unfamiliar with adversity. Their lives were filled with many challenges, both societal and personal, yet they were able to excel and leave the world a better place than they found it. They serve as great examples to all of us of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, and we are thrilled to be able to honor them today!

We are also extremely pleased to thank Hall of Fame Inductee (2018), *Dorothy Suzi Osher*, once again, for her generosity and caring in becoming the permanent naming sponsor of this event as the *Maine Jewish Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Presented by Dorothy (Suzi) Osher in Memory of Alfred Osher*. We greatly appreciate Suzi's support in naming the *Maine Jewish Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony* as well as the *Permanent Hall of Fame Exhibit* located on our third floor. We hope you will take the time to view the Exhibit's contents. Every year we will add our new Inductees to the exhibit so while it currently contains only 2018 and 2019 inductees, it will be updated later this year to include this year's class.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of our wonderful sponsors for their generosity as well as our *Host Committee Co-Chairs, Charlie and Ellie Miller and Steve and Susie Schwartz*, for a job well done, to thank all of our Host Committee members, and of course our advertisers. We hope you will support all our advertisers and sponsors for their great community involvement.

This event wouldn't happen without extraordinary help from many volunteers including our Nominating Committee, who once again did an excellent job with their Induction choices (*including several inductees nominated by the public*), and the Planning Committee, who oversees and plans all that takes place today. Thanks to all of you! All their names are listed in your programs along with the Sponsors, Host Committee Members and Advertisers, so please acknowledge them if you can.

I am so grateful to you for being here today and participating in this wonderful event!

Shalom and a Happy New Year to all of you!

With much gratitude,

Steve Brinn

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

The Maine Jewish Museum gratefully acknowledges the sponsors and advertisers of the Maine Jewish Hall of Fame and extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported the 2021 Class of Inductees by both financial support and deed.

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DAVID ASTOR



David Astor (1919-2011) was the son of the late Max and Sonja (Novick) Astor. He grew up on Munjoy Hill where he met his wife Esta Venner. Dave was a graduate of Portland High School and of the University of Maine in Orono. He will be remembered for his philosophy, *'life is a continuing adventure'*, which he embraced through his high school days,

throughout college, and into his time in the Marine Corps. After being stationed in Quantico, Va., David served in the Pacific theater of war and was discharged in 1945 after receiving many citations and commendations.

Following the war David worked with his father at Kaiser-Frazer dealership. He was then asked by WGME to develop

a television show. Dave produced one of Maine's best loved homegrown TV shows *"The Dave Astor Show: For Teenagers Only"* which first aired in 1956. The show inspired countless young people to pursue careers in music by featuring live performances from local high school kids dancing, lip synching, and singing. He will be remembered for saying, *"Students could receive a C on their report card and still play their varsity sports - but only kids with the Honor Roll were allowed on my show."* The show remained on the air for over 16 years on both WGME 13 and WCSH 6.



David also co-founded Center Day Camp in the Jewish Community; directed many plays at the Portland Players; was a Board Member at Cedars; was a member of the Portland Rotary for many years; was a lifelong member at Temple Beth El; and served on various committees at the Jewish Community Center.



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With Best Wishes
to the
Abraham S. and Fannie B. Levey Foundation
on the 2021 Hall of Fame Induction

Chi Chi Levine
Stephen J. Schwartz
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RABBI TUVIA BEN-SHMOEL-Yosef (Donald Gellers)



Rabbi Ben-Shmuel-Yosef also known as Donald Cotesworth Gellers was born in New York City on May 2, 1936, the son of Elsie Glasser and Samuel J. Weitzen. Samuel was a physician who had emigrated to the U.S. from a Sephardic Jewish community in southern Poland where his father, grandfather, and a brother were rabbis. Gellers enrolled at

Columbia to study international law and interned at the United Nations. There, however, he said he learned that what one of his professors had said was true: “A diplomat is an honest man who is sent abroad to lie for his country.” “That’s not why I had ever wanted to be a lawyer,” he recalled. “I was motivated by a love of justice. So, I needed to find something else.”

That something turned out to be Eastport, Maine, where Gellers and his first wife moved in 1963, inspired by its remote location, stupendous beauty, and apparently welcoming people. She was an artist, he intended to become a small-town lawyer, believing you could have much more impact in a small community than in a large metropolis. “We ended up in this wild pocket of rural America, and I thought I would have a bucolic existence.” Then George Francis, governor of the Passamaquoddy reservation at Pleasant Point, walked into his office. Nothing for Gellers, the tribe, or Maine would ever be the same.

For six years from May 1964, Gellers represented the tribe in matters large and small. He got charges dropped against peaceful protesters in a land dispute at the Indian Township reservation and compelled state officials to repair leaking

reservation sewage systems, Princeton barbers to cut Indians’ hair, and legislators to repeal laws prohibiting tribal members from hunting on their own land.

He and Indian leaders lobbied the state to create a new Indian Affairs Department, which was headed by a young anthropologist and, later, by a past and future Passamaquoddy chief.

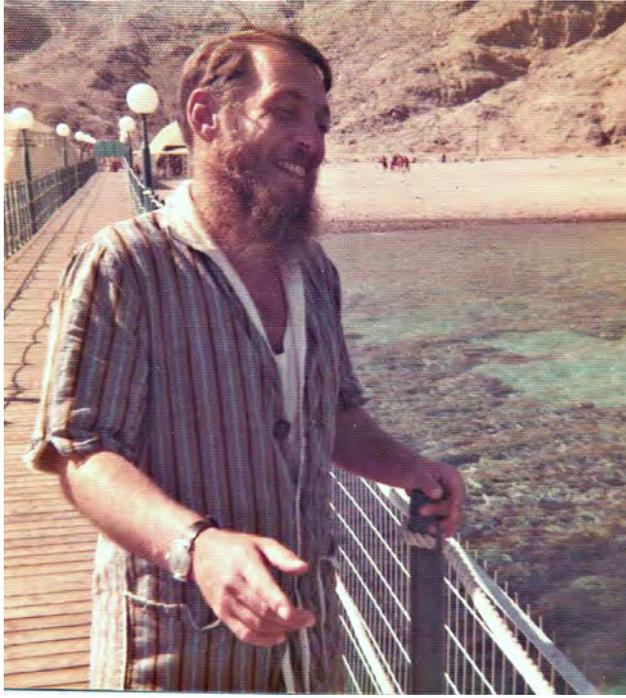
Gellers represented several Indians who were involved in a late-night melee with a state policeman and who, in the early hours of the morning, had been dragged from their beds and allegedly beaten by a posse of law enforcement officials, who forced their way into Indian homes and threatened residents. On March 8, 1968, he went to Boston to file the \$150 million land claims suit he had been working on for the tribe for the past few years, one aiming to hold Maine accountable for the illegal plundering of the Passamaquoddy’s trust fund and for allowing the seizure of thousands of acres of land. When he returned home to Eastport, the police were waiting for him, in disguise. Maine Attorney General James Erwin prosecuted Gellers under an older felony statute, and he was sentenced to two to four years in prison.

Gellers said that when he came to Maine he was not particularly religious – “there wasn’t much kosher food in Eastport,” he pointed out – but through his trials and tribulations he rediscovered his Jewish identity. In 1971, his legal recourses exhausted, he decided to emigrate to

Israel and said he met with the state prosecutor, Dick Cohen, to inform him. Cohen had no objection. Although he kept them abreast of his whereabouts for years thereafter, Maine authorities never sought to apprehend Gellers, who hadn’t



Gellers continued...



served his jail term. In Israel, Gellers adopted his Hebrew birth name, Tuvia Ben-Shmuel-Yosef, lived on a kibbutz and fought and was wounded in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. He also applied to the Israeli bar, submitting full documentation of his conviction in Maine.

In the early 1980s, he returned to the U.S. and New York City, although he had always intended to return to Israel. “Perhaps he wanted to see if he could pursue to some degree the wrongs that were done, to clear his name, but he never intended to stay here,” his brother, Paul Gellers, said. “His goal and his hope was always to return to Israel, to live there and, if it were possible, to be buried there.”

In 1989 he disclosed the circumstances of his case to authorities at the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit, before which he had been admitted to practice law in 1966. The court issued him a certificate of good standing, allowing the supposed fugitive to practice law there as well, although he didn’t do so full-time. He had by then become a rabbi.

In Forest Hills, Gellers – Rabbi Ben-Shmuel-Yosef – was part of the Moroccan Jewish Organization synagogue. Teaching students there, his brother said, had become a central focus of his life.

“He was always a living example of what Judaism embodied, and in his studies of the Torah and other sacred texts and books, he realized that we as a people are about justice and truth,” Paul Gellers aid. “His passion was a striving for justice and fairness for anyone, especially the underdog and the

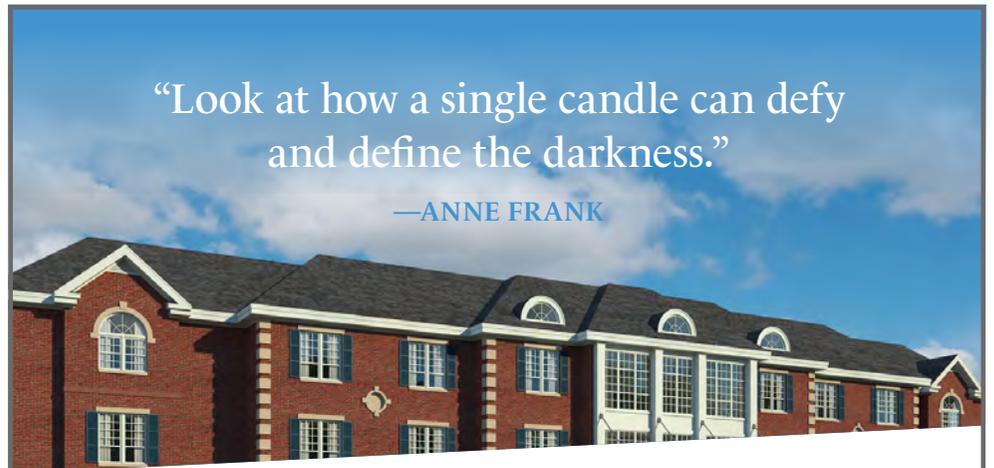
downtrodden. It could be a tribe or it could be a poor woman who lost her luggage on an airplane.”

Gellers paid a terrible price for taking up the cause of Maine’s Indians, becoming the victim of a state-sponsored conspiracy to drive him out of Maine or into prison, one orchestrated by the Attorney General’s Office, zealously executed by the state police and rubber stamped by judges. The whole sordid tale was revealed in the pages of the Portland Press Herald in 2019, the first act of the 29-part series “Unsettled: Triumph and tragedy in Maine’s Indian country,” and allies in Maine have been working to secure him a gubernatorial pardon.

Sadly, Gellers – who had gone by his Hebrew birth name Tuvia Ben-Shmuel-Yosef since fleeing to Israel in 1971 – didn’t live to see his name cleared. The lawyer-turned-rabbi died Oct. 8 at his home in the Forest Hills section of Queens, New York, after an all-too-short battle with cancer. He was 78. As of January 7, 2020 Don Gellers was officially cleared of all charges.

“Look at how a single candle can defy
and define the darkness.”

—ANNE FRANK



**The Cedars celebrates
the 2021 Maine Jewish
Museum honorees.**



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NORMAN GODFREY



Norman Israel Godfrey was the first Executive Director of the modern JCC in Portland. His vision led to the creation of Center Day Camp, which was dedicated in his honor posthumously following his untimely death. The 1920s and 1930s were tumultuous decades in American and in Maine Jewish history. By the late 1930s, American Jewry was a community that faced severe economic

depression, unprecedented social anti-Semitism, and deep political impotence. Portland was known as the “Jerusalem of the North,” a designation that did not refer to an atmosphere of learning and study, but rather to a traditional piety that allowed no Judaism to flourish except an orthodoxy dominated by East European Jews. Also, Maine’s native Anglo-Saxon Protestant population, allowed little or no challenges to its centuries-long social, political and religious dominance.

The new JCC was, from its very founding, a secular Jewish institution. It was, in many ways, an alternative to the synagogue, a place where Jews could socialize without wearing a label. One was simply Jewish and not an Orthodox Jew, or if the other movements in American Judaism had existed in Portland, a Conservative or Reform Jew. The uniqueness of such a communal institution was distinctly American and a departure from the traditional form of Jewish religious and communal life.

That uniqueness was not lost on Portland’s Jews, especially not on Norman I. Godfrey, the legendary first executive director

of the JCC. Godfrey spoke at the dedication dinner of the new JCC in November 1938. His speech focused on the twin aspects of Jewish identity and a commitment to democracy and Americanism:

“Consecrated to the noble purpose of perpetuating Jewish life upon the highest possible plane, in consonance with the traditions of the founding fathers of our great democracy, the Jewish Community Center enters now upon its course of service devoted to the enrichment of the individual personality and the enhancement of American Jewry.”

For Portland Jewry, this was an historic moment. Norman Godfrey’s dream, as recounted by his wife, a dream “to bring... the very best of Jewish life and combine it with the American life and the American way in this community,” would be realized, even though his early death in 1947 deprived Godfrey of seeing its full implementation.

For more than 40 years of its existence until it was sold in 1979, the Jewish Community Center building on Cumberland Avenue was a unique experience for thousands of Portland Jews. With classes and presentations in music, drama, dancing, art and crafts, an Institute of Jewish Studies as part of its focus on education; with classes in “weight normalizing and slenderizing,” and facilities that offered a full gymnasium, handball courts, exercise rooms, bowling alleys, a billiard and golf driving net, the JCC was truly separate but equal to the best facilities offered by the non-Jewish community.

Due in no small part to Norman Godfrey’s tireless activities at the JCC, by the early 1970s, most of Portland and Maine’s social barriers for Jews had largely, but not entirely, fallen. Jews were not only able to join once-exclusive and discriminatory country and social clubs, but they now provided important leadership roles for numerous civic and philanthropic organizations in the greater community.

Well done.

Congratulations to the
2021 Maine Jewish Hall
of Fame Inductees



hannaford.com

JERRY AND SUSAN Goldberg



Susan and Jerry Goldberg grew up in Portland, Maine and attended Deering High School. Susan graduated from Brandeis University and Jerry from Colby College. He received both his MBA and JD degrees from Cornell University. They began dating as teenagers and married the summer after Susan graduated from college. While Jerry attended graduate school, Susan worked at the Department of Agricultural Economics at Cornell to help support them.

After a short stint in Boston where Jerry worked at a tax firm, they moved back to Portland where Jerry became a partner in the law firm, Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer, & Nelson and Susan focused on raising their three children, Brian, Amy and Julie. Jerry later became a partner in the international public accounting firm, Coopers & Lybrand. Currently, he is a principal in Bramlie Corporation, a real estate development company that he founded with his son.

Jerry was chair of the Maine State Bar Association Tax Section, a member of the executive committee of the Federal Tax Institute of New England, director of the annual Colby College Tax and Estate Planning institute, represented

the MSBA on the IRS North Atlantic Region-Bar Liaison committee and was president of the Maine Estate Planning Council, He was a tax policy advisor to two Maine governors and served on tax policy committees of the American Bar Association and the U.S. Treasury Department.

Jerry was an adjunct faculty member at the University of Maine Law School. He lectured at the Boston University Graduate Tax Program and the NYU Tax Institute, authored several tax articles and was a frequent speaker at local, state and national tax seminars.

Jerry helped Sam Cohen found the Sam L. Cohen Foundation and has served as its chairman since its inception. The Foundation concentrates its grant making efforts in southern Maine and to date has awarded several million dollars in grants.

Jerry and Susan have made substantial contributions to many community and cultural organizations important to them.

Jerry was president of the Jewish Federation (now JCA) and Temple Beth El; chairman of the Israel Bond Drive and chairman of the Jewish Federation's annual campaign. He was vice president of the Portland Symphony Orchestra; an advisory trustee of the Portland Chamber Music Festival; on the boards of The Cedars and the Maine Audubon Society; chairman of the lawyer's division of the United Way; president of his class at Colby College; national chairman of the Colby College Alumni Association; and an Overseer and a member of the Colby College Board of Trustees. In recognition of his service to Colby, he was awarded a "Colby Brick."

Susan served in many capacities for multiple organizations in which she was involved. An accomplished pianist, she served on the board of the Portland Concert Association (now Ovation), where she sponsored the annual PCA concert to bring classical pianists to perform in Portland. She was president of Opera New England; vice president of the Portland Public Library,

Goldberg continued...



where she not only was a member of the committee to build the library, but also went on to found the Brown Bag Lecture Series; she was a Lion of Judah, she chaired the women's division of the Jewish Federation Annual Campaign and co-chaired the overall Jewish Federation

Annual Campaign; was active with Temple Beth El Sisterhood; vice president of the National Council of Jewish Women, vice president of Jewish Family Services and the League of Women Voters.

She was co-editor of "Know Your Schools," a guide to the Portland, Maine public school system published by the League of Women Voters and the Portland School Department and served on several school department committees.

Susan established the Susan Turitz Goldberg scholarship at her alma mater and was president of the Maine chapter of

the Brandeis Women's Committee. She donated the Brandeis National Committee library collection in Music to Brandeis University.

After surviving breast cancer, Susan was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2009 and passed away in 2018. She was a resource and comfort to others who had cancer, available to speak with anyone who wanted her insights. At the recommendation of the medical staff at Dana Farber, she was selected to be an ambassador for the Takeda Pharmaceutical Company, the maker of a drug used to treat her disease, to travel the country to tell her story and talk with physicians and patients about her experience living with multiple myeloma. Even as her disease progressed, she never stopped thinking of others.



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ABRAHAM AND FANNIE LEVEY



A.S. Levey's photograph hung at the entrance to the (former) Jewish Federation office. It now hangs in the new Jewish Community Alliance building. His name is on the Jewish funeral chapel, the Hebrew day school, a room and library at Maine Medical Center, the social hall at the (former) Shaarey

Tphiloh Synagogue, and the pavilion at the (former) Jewish Home for Aged. In Israel his name is inscribed on plaques at Weitzmann Institute, Hebrew University, Technion and Boys Town.

Who was this man? Abraham Shlomo Levey was born near Riga, Latvia in 1885 and died in Portland, Maine on March 10, 1976.

Abe's father, a cattle dealer, tried to give his son the best Jewish education possible, hoping that someday Abe would become a rabbi, the ultimate achievement for any Jewish man in tsarist Russia. At the tender age of three, Abe started cheder (Hebrew school). At the age of ten he attended yeshiva (advanced Hebrew school). His mind proved to be one of genius. Life as a yeshiva student was not easy. He had to study sixteen hours a day, sleep on hard benches and eat in the different homes of local Jews who considered it an honor to support a yeshiva student.

By fifteen, Abe was just steps away from ordination as a rabbi. At sixteen he realized that he no longer wanted to become a rabbi. In 1901 he left for America. He arrived in Portland

then went to Chelsea, Massachusetts where he learned a trade, interior decorating. He returned to Portland and married Fannie B. Mack.

Abe opened an interior decorating shop and then built a building on Middle Street, the first one named "The Levey Building." The Depression came and there were no tenants, so Abe decided to occupy the building himself and open a furniture store.

Then came World War II. Abe bought two more buildings, borrowed money, and stocked all the space available with furniture. Within a short time, the U.S. entered the war. Furniture was rationed and prices frozen. Reliable Furniture Co. had a large inventory and suddenly Abe started making money. He saw the opportunity to realize his life's dream. He became a philanthropist.

Abe and Fannie lived very frugally, but there was no limit to their charity. The needs in the community were enormous. News of the Holocaust was devastating; there were hundreds of survivors who had to be fed and sustained. The needs of Jews in America were also growing; supporting Jewish education was very important.

Abe called a meeting of community leaders and within a short time the Jewish Federation of Portland was born. Abe was its founder and first president. Instead of having many fund-raising campaigns, there was now only one. Most of the Jewish organizations became constituent/recipient agencies. Abe was the driving force and also the largest contributor.

Abe's philanthropy continues to this day through the A.S. & F.B. Levey Foundation. Following Abe's wishes, the trustees of the foundation allocate funds to the Jewish Community Alliance (formerly the Jewish Federation and Jewish Community Center), the Levey (Hebrew) Day School, Maine Medical Center, the United Way, local synagogues (particularly the Orthodox synagogue), scholarships for local high schools and the Cedars (formerly the Jewish home for Aged).

GEORGE I. LEWIS



George I. Lewis, who passed away in May 1987, was an entrepreneur and philanthropist who preferred to stay out of the limelight except when it came to helping his fellow man on Commercial Street in Portland, or in the poultry houses in Penobscot County, or at the Jewish Federation in Portland. His legacy in these three venues is time-honored by way of both the “Lewis

Gallery” at the Portland Public Library and the “George I. Lewis Auditorium at Cross Insurance Arena”, named after him by the seamless communities which he served.

In his business life, George was an investor in the Maine fishing and poultry industries. During the post-war era, he controlled as many as 25 vessels in Portland and carried mortgages on others, thereby enabling fishermen to prosper. In 1962, he purchased the massive 100,000 square foot, five-story brick building on Cumberland Wharf which had survived the 1866 Great Fire of Portland. He insulated the building with cork, converted it into a cold storage warehouse, and named the business Cumberland Cold Storage. George’s investments of both finances and time strengthened the waterfront economy and the significance to the City of its working waterfront.

In Penobscot County, George invested in the poultry business, becoming one of the owners of Penobscot Poultry. He was a caring employer, taking an interest in his employees and doing what he could to make things easier for them. Even into his eighties, he was known for stopping by the plant to observe his employees on the lines in order to both makes things better for them and improve production.

While George’s contributions to the fishing and poultry industries in Maine were great, his contributions as a leader of Maine’s Jewish Federation for the survival of Judaism may have been greater. In 1945, the Federation launched its third annual campaign, which was directed by George. With the able assistance of his colleagues, he recorded a fundraising high of \$120,000 (est. \$1,675,000 in 2019 dollars). These funds assisted with the relief and rehabilitation of the remnant of European Jewry, together with the deliverance of European



Jewish survivors and support of Jews in Palestine. He again took the helm as general campaign chairman for the 1948 fundraising drive. Under his leadership, Jews of Portland contributed \$292,000 to the Federation (est. \$3,044,000 in 2019 dollars). In 1954, George negotiated a \$150,000 loan with Casco Bank and Trust Company (\$1,401,000 in 2019 dollars), with the proceeds being forwarded to the United Jewish Appeal. That year, the State of Israel embarked upon a campaign to promote the sale of a second issue of Israel Development Bonds, resulting from the success of the first efforts. In Portland, the campaign was launched with a testimonial dinner honoring George I. Lewis in recognition of his services to the initial bond drive. The dinner, held November 9, 1954, was attended by several hundred persons.

George I. Lewis was that rare, quiet, venerable businessman who unceasingly worked for the betterment of humankind across all borders.

LEONARD AND MERLE NELSON



Lenny and Merle Nelson have dedicated their lives to the advancement of their family, their professions and to their community. Their commitment to Maine's Jewish Community in particular, has been a constant throughout their lives.

Lenny and Merle Nelson have been leaders in Portland from their Deering High School days until the current moment. At Deering, Merle was a class officer, a cheerleader and elected by a school wide vote as "Miss Deering." Lenny was a distinguished student and a star for three years on the Varsity tennis team. He was elected the president of the Center Youth at the Jewish Community Center and was also elected as President of the Center Youth of New England. They both went to college in Cambridge, MA: Merle at Lesley College and Lenny at Harvard College. They married as undergraduates at the end of their Junior year. They each graduated college with honors. Merle began teaching elementary school in Newton, MA, which supported Lenny as he embarked on a three-year program at Harvard Law School. Merle was named a Master Teacher by Newton which made graduate study for her possible at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In that academic period, Merle gave birth to Judd and earned her Master's degree from Harvard; Lenny graduated from Harvard Law School and all three of them returned to Maine.

BACK TO MAINE IN 1960

Lenny began his legal career at Bernstein and Bernstein in June of 1960 as an associate of Israel, Louis and Sumner Bernstein, becoming the 4th lawyer at the firm. By 1964, Lenny organized the merger of Bernstein, Bernstein and Nelson with Barney Shur and Herb Sawyer to create Bernstein Shur Sawyer and Nelson, which is now Maine's largest law firm staffed by 122 lawyers. If a major legal matter was occurring in Maine in the last half century, Lenny and Bernstein Shur were frequently in the thick of it, whether it was the gigantic Bath Iron Works Dry Dock deal, or the Georgia Pacific national hostile takeover of Great Northern Paper, or the fight to end religious and racial exclusionary practices at Portland's powerful private clubs.

In the last 25 years as Lenny's business and legal skills were recognized beyond the borders of Maine, he became a fiduciary to many of the nation's prominent families. He currently acts as a fiduciary for the Saidye Bronfman Trust of Montreal and New York, the Charles Bronfman Trust of Delaware and the Glickman Family office – originally of Beverly Hills and now of Maine. In addition to building Maine's premier law firm, Lenny also found time to lead and reorganize many of Maine's most important cultural charities. He served as president of the Portland Symphony Orchestra Board in his 20's; chaired the Maine State Arts Commission in his 30's; and became President of the Portland Museum of Art in his 40's. He also served as chair of the architect selection committee for both the Portland Museum's IM Pei building and the Cumberland County Civic Center. He and Merle separately ran two Maine State Israel Bond drives in the 60's, and he and Merle together chaired the 50th anniversary celebration of Temple Beth El. Lenny was elected to and served five years on the Falmouth town council, two of which he was the chair.

MERLE'S PUBLIC CAREER

After returning to Portland, Merle and Lenny began raising their growing family: Judd, Eve, and Julie. Merle's public service, which was continuous, took off dramatically in 1976 when she decisively won election to the Maine House of Representatives for the City of Portland. She served for 10 productive years in that office before retiring in 1986.

Merle's legislative career focused on trying to make life better and more equitable for all people, especially in civil rights matters. She sponsored landmark legislation to create opportunities for women so that they were prepared to join or re-enter the workforce. She sponsored and passed tax reform, safety, and health protection for children and women. She began innovative educational programs for gifted and talented children in art, music, dance, reading and math. She established new organ transplant procedures for the State of Maine. She provided research and educational opportunities for children and adults struggling with physical and mental disabilities. She introduced voluntary mediation in matrimonial matters, restorative justice in criminal matters and restricted smoking in public places.

As a result of her legislative efforts on behalf of the artists of Maine, she received an Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from the Maine College of Art. She championed the % for Art bill in all Maine public buildings generating over \$20 Million for Maine artists. For her work in the Legislature and the community, Merle received the Deborah Morton Award for "Service to the State of Maine." When Merle was the National Chair of the Arts and States Committee of the National Conference of all the States Legislatures, she co-authored a book on "Funding the Arts of America."

Merle consistently contributed to the care and welfare of the Jewish communities of Maine. She introduced the first state funding for the fledgling Holocaust Center in Maine. While serving on the newly constituted Holocaust Human Rights Center Board, she developed the program to systematically introduce the teaching of the Holocaust, in public and private schools, in Maine.

While serving on the Temple Beth El Board as President of its Sisterhood, Merle co-authored and helped finance the printing of the Beth El Sabbath Services handbook.

As a Board member of the national Seeds of Peace organization, Merle founded the Maine Seeds of Peace program that brought children of color, immigrant children, and under-privileged children

together not only at the summer Seeds Camp in Otisfield, but also during the regular school year.

Merle found time to volunteer for the Cedars "Meals on Wheels" for many years and the Preble Street food kitchen as a representative of Temple Beth El.

Merle continued her service to the community of Maine and New England by serving as President of Children's Theatre, Vice President of the Spurwink School, member of the Executive Board of the Junior League, and a Trustee of: Lesley University, Maine Community College System, New England Organ Bank, Maine Ethics Commission, Portland Public Library, the Mitchell Institute, Council of Jewish Women, and the Portland Symphony.

Merle's personal philosophy can be stated simply: "I have always felt and believed in the importance and the power of being a Jewish woman. Judaism has guided my life and helped to give it honor and purpose."

More recently, and closer to home, Merle organized the fundraising and managed the design of the magnificent garden at the Jewish Museum in Portland. She and Lenny established 20 years ago the Nelson Social Justice Fund at the Portland Museum of Art, an endowed fund, that annually honors artists whose work or lives reflect a "commitment to social justice." Lenny and Merle are currently the honorary chairs of the Portland Stage Company's \$6.5 Million capital campaign. There is no discussion of retirement from either of them.



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THE UNOBSKEY FAMILY of Calais, Maine



Brothers: Charles, William and Arthur Unobskey
Children of Sarah Rhea Unobskey

The Unobskey family came to America from Snovsk, Russia (now Ukraine) and settled in downeast Maine.

At the time of the Russo-Japanese war in 1903, Sarah Unobskey (1878-1935) encouraged her husband, Joseph, to leave Russia. He left her and their two sons. Arriving at Ellis Island he soon began working in Boston in the fur industry.

His territory was Washington County, Maine. His career as a peddler was traveling from farm to farm to sell goods.

After two successful years, in 1905, Joseph was able to finance the immigration of Sarah and their sons, Arthur and William. The family settled in Eastport, ME. They had another son, Charles. As the story goes, "Sarah liked Eastport. Its climate and view reminded her of home and they could own land, not allowed to Jews in Russia."

Sarah and Joseph moved to Calais, Maine in 1911 and opened a clothing store called "Unobskey's" which became known as "Unobskey's New York Store." Sarah and Joseph next opened the State Theater next door -- an 870-seat venue featuring movies, vaudeville acts, fashion shows, political rallies, and graduations. After Joseph died, Sarah and her sons Arthur and Charlie built Unobskey's into a men's and women's clothing store as well as a two-story professional building -- all during the Depression. William (Bill) became a practicing surgeon in NYC and head of surgery at The Joint Disease Hospital.

Sarah was determined to build an 88-seat synagogue in Calais named 'Chaim Yosef' in her husband's honor. In 1926 the first and only synagogue in Washington County opened its

doors. A minyan often included Jews from New Brunswick and Washington County. Sarah's half-brother Morris Holland was particularly dedicated to helping the synagogue succeed.

After Sarah's death in 1935, sons Arthur and Charles became the business and civil leaders of the next generation. They ran the existing store and theater, invested in vegetable canning and manufactured wood bottle tops. They funded hospital affairs, school buildings, airport operations and the Calais Blue Sox baseball team. Like his father Joseph, Arthur was a furrier and had one of the largest collections north of Boston. In 1951 Arthur met with President Truman to encourage the Passamaquoddy Tidal Power development project. Senator Margaret Chase Smith remembered him as "very direct, very honest, and very civic-minded." Meanwhile, Morris and Charlie kept the stores running in Calais. Charlie won several elections for mayor, earning him the nickname "Unanimous Unobskey."

Arthur married Lillian Rudman in 1931. From Bangor, she was a graduate of U of Maine. They had three children: Joseph, Martha and Sidney. Arthur died in 1955.

Fast forward to the Calais downtown fire in 1958 which leveled the department store, theater, and adjoining properties. Charles died in April 1958. Brothers Joe and Sidney managed the business redevelopment and the store thrived with Joe at the helm until it closed in 1974.

Joe married Marylou, lived in Calais and had 3 children: Arthur Charles, Sydney Jean and Jeri. They later moved to Bangor and was integrally involved in the development



Martha and Fred Goldner Jr, MD wedding, Feb 6th, 1955 in Unobskey Home, Calais, ME
Martha Unobskey Goldner, Samuel Rudman, Israel Rudman, MD, Ida Rudman, Arthur H Unobskey, Lillian Rudman Unobskey, Anne Rudman, Rebecca Rudman Balis, Pauline Rudman, Fred Goldner, Jr.

THE UNOBSKEY FAMILY continued...

of the Bangor Mall. His store there was ladies ready-to-wear clothing-specializing in large sizes. His other passions included musical theatre and participation in the Jewish community. He later died in 1981.

Sidney left Calais, graduated from Yale, went to NYC and began his career as a real estate developer. He married Nancy Goldstein of Rochester, NY. They have two children: Laura and Arthur Charles Messenger and five grandchildren: Oscar and David Unobskey and Nadav, Ela and Noa Shenkar. Sidney and his wife participated in the financial and cultural life wherever they lived especially Washington County, Calais, and Robbinston. Sidney passed away in early 2021.

Martha graduated from Wellesley College and married Dr. Fred Goldner in 1955. They lived in Nashville, Tennessee for 65 years and involved in many areas of Jewish, medical, musical and educational participation, especially Vanderbilt University. They have four children: Arthur Lee (deceased 1988 from melanoma), Cynthia Ruth, Francie Sue, Fredjoseph. Their grandchildren include: Aaron, Natalie and Hannah Niederman and Dorian and Julian Goldner. Fred passed away this passed April.

Contributed to the MJHF by:

**Dr. Fred Goldner and Martha Unobskey Goldner
Sidney Roy Unobskey and Nancy Goldstein Unobskey**

From strength to strength, their legacy carries on with love & devotion.

We honor Sarah & Joseph, their sons Arthur, William and Charlie for living and following a life of Jewish values built in Eastern Maine.

Their choice upon coming from Russia in the 1880s was to settle in Eastern Maine, Eastport, Calais (the St Croix River Valley). With their individual talents and personal eagerness to gain privileges as American citizens and freedoms not available to them in Europe, they extended family and created a safe haven. The Congregation Chaim Joseph was founded in 1929 in Calais, Maine.

None of their achievements would be possible without the work and faith of:
Rae & Morris Holland- children Sylvia Waterman and Henry. Mary & Louie Unobskey- children Anne, Dora and Bert. Bert and Tillie- children Marc and Mary.

Anne & Sidney's son Miles & Sharon Theeman- children Allison and Meredith

Lillian Rudman & Arthur Unobskey- children Joseph, Martha & Sidney.

Joseph & Marylou Unobskey- children Arthur Charles, Sydney Jean and Jeri

Fred Goldner & Martha Unobskey Goldner- children Arthur Lee, Cynthia, Francie and Fredjoseph and 5 grandchildren. Sidney Roy and Nancy Goldstein Unobskey- children Laura Shenkar, Arthur Charles Messenger and 5 grandchildren.

Mazel Tov from the Goldner Family



Mazel Tov to the outstanding Jewish leaders in our great state inducted into the Maine Jewish Hall of Fame.

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Thank you to all who gave their time and energy to make this event a success!



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Congratulations.

Bernstein Shur congratulates **Lenny and Merle Nelson** upon their induction to the **2021 Maine Jewish Museum Hall of Fame**. Their commitment, contribution and tireless support of Maine's Jewish community is truly inspiring.

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