



Presidential Forum: The Future of Higher Education, Leadership and the Jewish Community

President Daniel L. Lehmann in conversation with the
Presidents of Babson, Brandeis and Tufts



Rabbi Daniel Lehmann
Hebrew College



Leonard A. Schlesinger
Babson College



Jehuda Reinharz
Brandeis Univ.



Lawrence S. Bacow
Tufts Univ.

Tuesday, November 23, 2010, 7:30-9:00 pm
Hebrew College, 160 Herrick Road, Newton Centre

Rabbi Daniel L. Lehmann will discuss with Lawrence S. Bacow, Jehuda Reinharz and Leonard A. Schlesinger issues that include: responding to shifting paradigms in higher education; developing the next generation of Jewish leaders; and engaging students with Israel after they have experienced Birthright Israel.

COST: Pre-registration on-line: \$10 at
<http://hebrewcollege.edu/events#presidentialforum>
At the door: \$15 general admission, \$12 students and seniors

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Contact Renée Tepper, rtepper@hebrewcollege.edu, 617-559-8622.

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Camp Lown, Oakland, 1948, a photo from the Web site of Documenting Maine Jewry.

Maine's Jews assemble a treasure of history

Project spurred by one man's cemetery visit

By Sheila Barth

Special to the Advocate

Former Mainer Harris Gleckman received a bit of a shock after traveling from his New York home to Mt. Sinai Cemetery in Portland to visit family graves.

Gleckman found documents in disarray, with burial records not matching up to gravestones. Six years later, Gleckman is still piecing documents together – but with far more success than he had ever imagined.

Gleckman first turned to his friend Ken Levinsky, administrator of Portland's Temple Beth El. At his recommendation, Gleckman got a local newspaper to run a story to spur interest in documenting the history of Maine Jews. Eight people responded, and the number of history buffs continues to grow.

The cemetery association wanted to know the living members of the families buried in the cemetery, linking old gravestones to families who were now scattered around the state and country.

"We went from the cemetery to the community," said Gleckman, 64. "We realized one-third of the burials at Mt. Sinai Cemetery were from the southern half of the state. Folks in Bangor wanted to know why we weren't doing Bangor."

Gleckman's effort suddenly sprouted tentacles, reaching far beyond the cemetery to Mainers and their descendants nationwide. "I became the project shammash as it grew," said Gleckman, a married consultant and father of two.

His group – known both as Documenting Maine Jewry and the Maine Jewry Project – has photographed headstones in Jewish cemeteries throughout Maine and posted them on the Web. Now people anywhere in the world can visit their family graves by clicking onto www.MaineJews.org, which includes the funeral prayer El Moleh Rachamim and its transliteration.

"One of the things that's wonderful about this [project] is reconnecting families," Gleckman said. "I sent out lists of people, and I got a note from somebody who said, 'It's wonderful reading this'; and I actually found a cousin."

The Web site also includes historic photos, oral histories, genealogical information, and a treas-

ure chest of factual memorabilia. It serves as an umbrella site for dozens of Jewish organizations, from JCCs to choral groups to camps, all of which are collaborating with the Maine Jewry Project. "It goes back to our Jewish cultural heritage of remembrance," Gleckman said.

Besides building the Web site, the Maine Jewry Project is restoring an old synagogue in Portland as a museum and cultural center (see story, Page 7).

It has enlisted the help of genealogists, religious scholars and historians. For example, Rabbi David Freidenreich, who teaches Jewish studies at Colby College, enlisted his students to help research families in Kennebec County.

The Jewry Project also has its social dimension, spurring reunions of Mainers at sites from Old Orchard Beach to Florida. The next reunion is Nov. 14 in Newton at the Solomon Schechter Upper Day School of Greater Boston. Karen (Kornetsky) Levine, who moved to Newton from Portland 40 years ago, had planned to host the meeting at her home. Initially, Levine, 63, thought only about 20 people would be coming, but she heard from many more.

"People are coming from everywhere," she said. "We're recreating the entire Jewish community." One respondent called to tell her: "Did you know your dad and mine started the Jewish Masons in Portland?"

Among the admirers of the Maine effort is Steven Greenberg, executive director of Boston's Vilna Shul. "They're doing a wonderful job up there," Greenberg said. "Some of us in Jewish history in Massachusetts have talked about forming a collaborative, with the Maine Jewry Project as a model." Marveling at how it is "reconstructing the tapestry of the Jewish community," he said he hoped that Jews here and across the country can achieve the same thing. "G-d forbid, when our grandkids ask us what it was like in Boston in the 1840s or 1910s – what a shame if we lose this history."

The Newton meeting will be Nov. 14, 2 to 5 p.m., at Solomon Schechter Upper School. To attend, emaildopj@mindspring.com.

For more on the history project, visit www.davidkrut.com/pj.

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