

Jewish Philanthropy to Colby College

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What do the Pulver Pavilion, Bill Alford Track, Harold Alford Athletic Center, Harold and Bibby Alford Residence Complex, Alford-Lunder Family Pavilion, Lunder House, and Lunder Wing of the Colby Museum have in common? They are all Colby College facilities that were funded by and named after Jews. Indeed, Jews have donated generously to Colby over the years, and in ways that have reflected broader trends in American Jewish philanthropy.

Since the mid-twentieth century, Jewish philanthropy has become increasingly secular. In the late 1950's, Marshall Sklare conducted the first full-scale sociological study of suburban Jews. He examined the Jewish members of a prominent suburb of Chicago, which he called "Lakeville." The Lakeville Jews were asked to identify which out of a list of components are essential for a "good Jew." Sklare found that while 67% of respondents considered "support all humanitarian causes" to be essential, only 39% considered "contribute to a Jewish philanthropy" to be essential. The Jews of Lakeville placed higher value on general philanthropy than on philanthropy for Jewish causes. Sklare anticipated that an ideological preference for general charity would eventually lead to a practice of more secular giving (Sklare, 1993).

This did in fact come to pass. By the 1980s, the majority of philanthropic dollars donated by Jews went toward secular causes (Windmueller, 2007). The secularization of Jewish philanthropy has been driven by the continuing assimilation of Jews into American society (Kosmin, 1995; Tobin, 2000; Windmueller, 2007).

Institutions of higher education, and particularly private institutions such as Colby, have benefited from this shift in Jewish philanthropy. Tobin, Solomon, & Karp (2003) examined

mega-gifts, defined as gifts of \$10 million or more, from 1995–2000 and found that 49% of total mega-gift dollars donated by Jews went to institutions of higher education, primarily private institutions. One point that remains ambiguous, however, is the extent to which Jewish philanthropy toward institutions of higher education is truly secular and the extent to which it relates to Jewish cultural heritage. Since the 1980s, Jewish philanthropy has helped make Jewish studies programs increasingly common at American colleges and universities (Baskin, 2011). Jewish donors have also funded centers for Jewish life on campus.

Jewish philanthropy toward Colby reflects both secular and Jewish values. Through their contributions, Jews have sought to enhance the institutional excellence of the college. In some cases, they have done so in secular ways, and in others, they have driven advancement in the field of Jewish studies specifically. Jews who graduated in the interwar years have been inspired to support Jewish programs by their gratitude for the opportunities they gained at Colby during a time when anti-Semitism was widespread across American colleges and universities. The support of later generations of donors seems to be based not on personal exposure to discrimination against Jews, but rather on the principled belief that Jewish programs are important.

The donations made by Esther Ziskind Weltman are one example of secular Jewish philanthropy that has followed explicit administration priorities for bettering the college. Mrs. Weltman was not a Colby alumna, but her nephew, David Ziskind, graduated in the class of 1961. As a co-executor of the Jacob Ziskind Charitable Trust, Mrs. Weltman supported numerous charities and educational institutions. Her 1965 gift to Colby endowing the study of the non-western world allowed the college to expand its academic offerings and resources in the areas of Far Eastern, Middle Eastern, Latin American, Indian, and African culture and politics. According to David Ziskind, President Strider specifically solicited funds for East Asian studies. A Colby

press release from June 15, 1965, describes how President Strider had a special interest in non-western studies and was the chairman of the Commission on Liberal Learning of the Association of American Colleges. This commission published a report in 1964 that emphasized the importance of non-western studies to institutions of higher education. Esther Ziskind Weltman's gift clearly helped to advance the pre-defined academic vision of Colby as an institution. The Grossman Professorship of Economics, a chair endowed by Nissie Grossman ('32), constitutes a similar example of secular Jewish philanthropy aimed at enhancing the academic excellence of Colby College.

David Pulver's donation for the Pulver Pavilion is another case of secular Jewish philanthropy toward Colby College. Mr. Pulver ('63) was inspired to support the project by his concern for student community. As he explained in a recent interview:

In a more general sense, I've always been very, very interested in the student affairs and the student experience... I was chairman of the Student Affairs Committee and it actually led to, ultimately, when I funded naming gift for the Pulver Pavilion because I felt that Colby didn't really have a central place...a student union type of a facility. (Pulver, 2013)

The Pulver Pavilion was a gift that improved Colby as an institution but does not appear to bear any direct relation to Mr. Pulver's sense of Jewish identity.

Ludy Levine ('21) and Pacy Levine ('27) contributed to Colby in more informal ways. The brothers would financially support Colby students who had trouble paying tuition and would also give suits to graduating students who needed them for job interviews (Brody, 2013). The brothers did make efforts to help Jewish students specifically: Sara Arnon Miller, Ludy and Pacy's niece, described how they would write letters to worried parents saying that there was a Jewish community in Waterville that would look after their children and give them a place to

celebrate the High Holidays (Arnon, 2013). Overall, however, the brothers' philanthropy was of a more secular nature; Ludy and Pacy helped students regardless of religious faith, particularly bonding with athletes (see: Michelle Wang, "Ludy and Colby").

The desire of local Jews to support the Waterville community more broadly is also a manifestation of the secularization of Jewish philanthropy (see: Yichen Jiang, "Jewish Philanthropy in 1950s Waterville"). Paula and Peter Lunder, Harold Alford, and Bill Alford were all members of the Waterville Jewish community and have sought on some level to support both the college and the community at the same time.

Paula and Peter Lunder ('56) made a lead gift to the Colby Museum's Lunder Wing and endowed the Lunder Curator of American Art and the museum's new Alford-Lunder Family Pavilion. Meg Bernier ('81) recounted the community involvement of Paula Lunder and how the Lunders would bring local children through the Colby museum:

Paula Lunder donated the art museum and that collection of art. But one of the things I don't think people know about Paula Lunder is that she is very much a local, hands-on person...before they [the Lunders] even thought about doing the museum and knew the collections were coming, they would bring local kids to the museum... She is the type of person that gives it to Colby and I think she is giving it to the local community, too.

(Bernier, 2013)

The Lunders' philanthropy toward Colby and their desire to help the Waterville community at large reflect secular rather than specifically Jewish priorities.

A newspaper article preserved in Colby Special Collections suggests that Harold Alford's \$200,000 challenge grant for a 400-meter all-weather outdoor track at Colby was in part inspired by public use of the indoor track. Colby has long allowed the community to use its

indoor and outdoor tracks, and Mr. Alfond was impressed when he saw the large number of elderly people who were walking on the indoor track. Mr. Alfond is quoted as stating that "The community is number one," adding: "What I try to do is mix things in with Colby that the community can use also" (Lizotte, 1987). Upgrading the outdoor track from a cinder oval that remained flooded most of the spring benefited both Colby athletics and the community more generally. The same is also true of the millions of dollars Harold Alfond provided as a matching grant for the renovation of Colby's Harold Alfond Athletic Center.

Bill Alfond ('72) emphasized his work assisting with community causes during a recent interview (Alfond, 2013). Mr. Alfond has supported a number of renovations to the athletic facilities at Colby, such as constructing the turf field, but he spent much more time discussing his role in launching the Big Brother, Big Sister Program during his years at Colby and his involvement with Educare more recently. He said that he has a clearer memory of his work with community service while at Colby than of his sports matches, and that he ultimately found the former to be his greater passion. Bill Alfond's contributions to enhancing Colby's facilities have supported the Waterville community, and so has his concurrent involvement in other community programs. Both forms of giving reflect secular philanthropic values.

The contributions of some Jewish donors to Colby also illustrate the ways in which colleges have served as magnets for philanthropic efforts to uphold and enhance understanding of Jewish heritage. Inspiration for donating to Colby's Jewish studies program seems to vary generationally. The gifts of Bernard Harry Lipman ('31) and Doris Rose Hopengarten ('40) were molded by their experiences as Jews at Colby during a period of rampant anti-Semitism. The hardships that interwar-generation donors endured and the gratitude they felt for the

opportunities they received at Colby motivated their philanthropic involvement. Younger generations of donors expressed quite different reasons for supporting Jewish studies at Colby.

For Bernard Lipman, who was born into a large but poor family in Skowhegan, attending Colby was an incredible educational opportunity. Mr. Lipman failed physical education because of a gym teacher who was prejudiced against Jewish students, but after his death, his son wrote that Bernard "never soured to learning and he forever associated Colby with scholarship... He revered Colby the institution" (Lipman 2007). Bernard Lipman provided funding for the Bernard H. Lipman Library of Judaic Studies and for the Samuel and Esther Lipman Lecturship, an annual lecture on a Jewish subject. The lecture, named after Bernard Lipman's parents, is described as having been established as "a memorial to two individuals whose observed ideals were devoted to the traditions of the Jewish way of life" (Report of Contributions, 1992–1993). Mr. Lipman also endowed the Chapman Room to hold the Colbiana collection. Bernard Lipman named the room after his favorite English professor, who supported him in a Colby environment that offered important educational opportunities but was not always hospitable to Jews.

Doris Rose Hopengarten attended Colby before her mother's illness led her to return to Boston. Her initial choice to come to Colby was heavily influenced by the low level of anti-Semitic bias in the college's admissions policies relative to other schools. When she was seeking to transfer to a school in Boston to be near her mother, Mrs. Hopengarten was confronted with the blatant discrimination she had sought to avoid. She went for an interview at Tufts, and the dean told her that the quota was already filled without bothering to interview her. Although Mrs. Hopengarten studied at Boston University after leaving Colby, she continued to identify Colby as the place where she truly felt at home (Hopengarten, 2010). She created the Hopengarten-Moss Library Fund to purchase library books and research materials for Jewish studies at Colby. Doris

Rose Hopengarten valued her experiences at Colby College, perhaps particularly because it was a relatively welcoming school for her as a Jewish student.

David Pulver and Patricia Downs Berger, both 1960s alumni, have supported Jewish studies at Colby more on the basis of principle. While the Pulver Pavilion was a secular contribution, the Pulver Family Chair in Jewish Studies enhances Colby's institutional excellence on more Jewish terms. Endowing faculty chairs became one of Colby's gift priorities under President's Cotter administration; during this time period, the number of fully endowed chairs increased from 3 to 42 (Smith, 2006: 334). It was David Pulver who had the idea to endow a chair specifically in Jewish studies, however. The inspiration came from reading a B'nai B'rith publication indicating that Colby had less to offer Jewish students than did similar peer institutions. Mr. Pulver decided that

the ultimate thing, at least for Colby at that point, would be to have a professor of Jewish studies, just so that you had some kind of consistent Jewish presence on campus, somebody who was at least available to students that wanted it, somebody who would help develop programs for people who wanted to study more about Jewish studies (Pulver, 2013).

For David Pulver, the choice to endow a chair in Jewish studies was not related to his memories as a Jew at Colby; he identified with his Jewish background but did not endure anti-Semitism in college and was not particularly active in on-campus Jewish activities. Rather, Mr. Pulver has a general sense that students at Colby should have access to Jewish programs should they want to be involved with them. His awareness of this issue was enhanced by the experiences of his children in considering prospective colleges.

Similarly, Patricia Downs Berger ('62) and Robert L. Berger established the Berger Holocaust Studies Fund based on the general principle that it is important to combat anti-Semitism. In describing her inspiration for the donation, Patricia Berger said, "What we are *really* talking about here is learning about prejudice and racism and fear." Robert Berger explained that "the Holocaust is a prime example of what can happen when tolerance for other people does not exist" (Report of Contributions, 1992–1993). As a Colby student, Patricia Berger studied for a semester at Fisk University, a predominantly African American institution. She said that this experience instilled in her a recognition of the importance of understanding other people. As with the Pulver Family Chair, the Bergers' contribution seems to broadly reflect a sense of connection to Jewish heritage rather than gratitude stemming from poignant experiences of anti-Semitism.

Barry M. and Judith Bronstein are not Colby alumni but were inspired by their daughter's experiences to establish the Bronstein Family Fund for Jewish/Holocaust studies, to provide broad support for Jewish studies at Colby. Laurie Bronstein ('96)'s enthusiasm for Holocaust studies and Mr. and Mrs. Bronstein's own belief in the importance of the subject area were more general motivations as opposed to the direct discrimination experienced by interwar-generation Jews.

It is somewhat unclear whether Colby will continue to enjoy Jewish philanthropy that is of the same nature and magnitude. Lerner references Doris Rose Hopengarten's grandson, Dave Moss, as an example of a millennial-generation Jewish philanthropist whose conception of "strategic philanthropy" does not cast Colby as a particularly worthy recipient for gifts. Rather than donating to Colby, Mr. Moss directs his philanthropy toward smaller organizations, like the National Youth Rights Association, of which he is director of development and operations. Dave

Moss is quoted describing an incident in which he tried to dissuade his grandmother from donating more to Colby: "They built all the buildings they need. I tried talking to her, but she likes recognition and that \$50,000 got her a plaque somewhere. She is the way she is" (Lerner, 2011). Mr. Moss believes that targeting his contributions at smaller, more specialized organizations garners more meaningful returns. It is probably still too early to identify any concrete changes in philanthropic trends among the millennial generation. Donors typically start contributing after they have settled down and accumulated wealth, and the members of the millennial generation are still too young to have generally reached this stage of life.

What is known is that Jewish donors have been important contributors to Colby College, and some of their gifts have reflected their Jewish heritage. Colby College can be viewed as a microcosm of broader trends in American Jewish philanthropy during the second half of the twentieth century. Many of the contributions to Colby have reflected the growing secularization of Jewish philanthropy, but Jews have also supported Jewish studies, if for different reasons across different generations. The nature of Jewish donations to other educational institutions is a topic worthy of further research. It would also be informative to examine the philanthropic priorities of younger generations of donors at a time when that analysis would be appropriate.

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