



Colby's Maine Jewish History Project 2010–11 Annual Report

The past year was a tremendously successful one for Colby's Maine Jewish History Project. The synergy generated through interrelated coursework and public programs enabled participants in this project to advance its dual mission of fostering research on Jewish life in the Pine Tree State and sharing the results of this research with students, scholars, and community members.

As has been the case since the project's inception in Fall 2009, this year's student research focused primarily on Jewish experiences in Waterville and the Kennebec Valley. The scope of the project, however, has expanded to encompass the entire state of Maine thanks in large part to partnerships with individuals and organizations beyond the Colby community. The website of Colby's Maine Jewish History Project (web.colby.edu/jewsinmaine/) now contains 37 original works of historical scholarship, up from 11 at this time last year; several more will be uploaded in the coming weeks. Material created by members of the project research team also appears on the website of Documenting Maine Jewry (www.mainejews.org) and will soon appear on the website of Maine Historical Society (www.mainememory.net).

Public programs associated with Colby's Maine Jewish History Project reached nearly 1000 individuals this year, fostering increased interest in Maine's Jewish history both on campus and in communities around the state. These events had an especially striking impact on Colby students. Members of the project team, impressed by the depth of popular interest in their research, demonstrated very high levels of motivation and effort as they prepared presentations and the "Lobster and Latkes" exhibition. Maine Jewish history events also shaped the experiences of students enrolled in "Jews, Judaism, and the Modern World," one of the Jewish Studies survey courses. These events helped students in this course to understand and appreciate the impact of broad historical dynamics on real people living not too far from their own dorm rooms. Students valued the opportunity to interact with leading historians, including the author of the course's textbook, and also to learn about Jewish life in Waterville from enthusiastic classmates.

STUDENT RESEARCH

Research by Colby students and faculty remains at the heart of Colby's Maine Jewish History Project. Participants in this January's "Topics in Maine's Jewish History" course produced the following studies, all of which are available on the project website; five of these studies were also presented at the Discovering Maine's Jewish History Conference.

- **Isadora Alton '13**, "Prosperity is just around the corner": Migration patterns of Waterville's Jews"
- **Miles de Klerk '13**, "Change over time: Jewish-Gentile relations in Waterville"
- **Hannah Dhonau '14**, "From away: The experiences of Gisèle Baroukel Miller in Waterville"
- **Amy Eklund '11**, "Jews in Vacationland"
- **Yichen Jiang '13**, "Jewish philanthropy in 1950s Waterville"
- **Madeline Kurtz '14**, "Food and Jewish identity in Maine"
- **Lyoee Lee '11**, "Jewish manufacturers in Maine: The gearshifters"
- **Tendai M'ngange-Pfupfu '13**, "Jews in Waterville in the interwar years: Occupations, affluence, and the career choices of children"
- **Adam Thompson '13**, "Key factors in the transmission of Jewish identity during the postwar years"

The following studies, also available online, were prepared outside the framework of the January course:

- **Prof. David M. Freidenreich and Desiree Shayer '13**, “A tale of two colleges: Jews and Baptist institutions in Maine during the interwar years”
- **Kimiko Kossler '13**, “Moving in, moving out, and moving up: Jews in Waterville in the early 20th century”
- **Kimiko Kossler '13**, “Governing patterns of Jewish life in Skowhegan, Maine” [to be uploaded in the coming weeks]

The paper by Freidenreich and Shayer, which resulted from work supported by a Goldfarb Center Student-Faculty Collaborative Research grant, was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies; Desiree was the only undergraduate on the program and possibly the first ever to present at this prestigious conference. The first of Kimi's two papers was presented at the Discovering Maine's Jewish History conference.

Three student researchers are working on various facets of Maine's Jewish history this summer. **Yichen Jiang '13** is analyzing the place of Jewish businesses within the broader framework of Waterville's Depression-era economy. **Miles de Klerk '13** is researching the history of Waterville's Lebanese community, with particular attention to relations between the Lebanese and members of other ethnic communities. He hopes to use this study to shed light on Jewish-gentile relations in Waterville. **Andrea Birnbaum '12** is analyzing interwar college attendance patterns within Maine's Jewish communities. In the process, Andrea is collecting data about these communities that will lay the foundations for further historical and genealogical research.

On the work by student curators of the exhibition, “Lobster and Latkes: Jewish Life in Maine,” see below.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Colby's Maine Jewish History Project offered a robust series of public programs this year. These programs were supported by a grant from the Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project, directed by the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS). The Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project promotes sustained Jewish Studies programming in small to mid-sized communities and seeks to foster relationships between scholars and the wider communities in which they work, values embodied by Colby's Maine Jewish History Project. The Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement provided additional support, including invaluable logistical assistance, for the Discovering Maine's Jewish History Conference.

Making it in Maine: Jewish Stories from the Pine Tree State

Over the course of the fall semester, **David Freidenreich** delivered a series of talks around the state depicting Jewish experiences in Maine from the nineteenth century to the present. These interactive programs provided a framework for understanding Maine's rich Jewish history, illustrated with anecdotes from around the state. Audience members were encouraged to add their own stories to the mosaic as well. In total, seven “Making it in Maine” events took place, reaching over 300 individuals. Versions of David's talk will appear on the websites of Colby's Maine Jewish History Project and Maine Historical Society's Maine Memory Network by the end of the summer.

Discovering Maine's Jewish History: The Second Maine Jewish History Conference

Approximately 170 people attended this April 3 event, spilling into the hallways of Roberts Union outside especially popular sessions. Attendees included about 50 students, primarily from Colby; 10 academic scholars affiliated with a variety of institutions; and 110 adults of all ages from across the state and beyond. There were a total of 26 poster and panel presentations by student and community historians. In addition, the conference featured keynote addresses by two leading scholars of American Jewish history, Hasia Diner (New York University) and Lee Shai Weissbach (University of Louisville), and tours of the Lobster and Latkes exhibition. Nearly all of these presentations are already on the project's website; the remainder will hopefully be posted in the coming weeks.

Lobster and Latkes: Jewish Life in Maine

Over 500 individuals visited this exhibition during its two-month run in the Robinson Room of Special Collections, including 395 elementary school students from local public schools and from Maine's Jewish day school. Other visitors included Colby students, faculty, and alumni as well as adult community members. As part of the course "Exhibiting Maine's Jewish Experiences," student curators—**Miles de Klerk '13, Jena Hershkowitz '12, Spencer Kasko '12, Madeline Kurtz '14, Robyn Wardell '11, and Margie Weiner '12**—designed the exhibition, prepared labels and interpretive panels, led tours, and created online exhibitions that will appear on Maine Memory Network. A virtual version of the complete exhibition, which consisted of over 70 artifacts from around the state, is available on the website of Colby's Maine Jewish History Project.

THANK YOU

The work of Colby's Maine Jewish History Project depends on the involvement of so many people both at Colby and beyond. The list that follows is no doubt incomplete.

Colby's Maine Jewish History Project is a collaboration of the Jewish Studies Program and Special Collections. **Pat Burdick** and the rest of the Special Collections staff played crucial roles in supporting both archival-based student research and the Lobster and Latkes exhibition. **Karen Gillum, Clem Guthro, Marty Kelly, and Peggy Menchen** of Miller Library also provided valuable assistance to various facets of Project activities.

The Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement, which helped to get Colby's Maine Jewish History Project off the ground last year, continued its generous support for student involvement in the Project's activities. In addition to funding student research, the Goldfarb Center provided logistical support and other in-kind contributions to the Discovering Maine's Jewish History Conference. This support—in particular the assistance provided by **Barb Spangle**—proved especially valuable as the number of conference presenters and attendees far exceeded initial estimates. I am grateful, as always, to the Goldfarb Center's steering committee for its support and, in particular, to **Sandy Maisel** and **John Turner**.

Public programming on Maine's Jewish history was made possible by the Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project, directed by the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS). Support for the project is generously provided by Legacy Heritage Fund Limited. I appreciate the work of **Natasha Perlis** of the AJS staff and Colby's **Scott Smith** in facilitating the financial aspects of our grant.

"Making It in Maine" talks were hosted by community institutions around the state, whose staff and volunteers provided essential on-site support. These included Congregation Adas Yoshuron of Rockland (**Richard Aroneau**), Congregation Beth Israel of Bangor (**Penny Lamhut**), Etz Chaim Congregation of Bath (**Lisa Tessler**), Etz Chaim Congregation of Biddeford (**Stan Karlin, Beth Strassler**), Maine Historical Society (**Steve Bromage, Richard D'Abate**), Temple Beth El of Augusta (**Rabbi Susan Carvutto**), and Temple Shalom Synagogue-Center of Auburn (**Phyllis Graber Jensen**).

The following individuals gave generously of their time and memories as oral history narrators:

Peter Alford	Pat Hillson Goldman	Bob Rosenthal
Susan Alford	Robert Hains	Marjorie Russakoff
Sara Miller Arnon	Lester Jolovitz	Carol Shapiro
Peter Beckerman	Sumner Lipman	Sam Shapiro
Judy Brody	Paula Lunder	Burt Shiro
Ted Casher	Wendy Miller	Phyllis Shiro
Alice Emery	Julie Miller-Soros	Harvey Sterns

In addition, **Dale Russakoff** generously provided access to her grandfather's memoirs, which contain his recollections of life in Skowhegan.

The Discovering Maine's Jewish History conference was planned in cooperation with Documenting Maine Jewry and Maine Historical Society, and I am grateful to the leaders of these organizations, **Harris Gleckman** and **Richard D'Abate**, for their assistance. I am also grateful to **Jena Hershkowitz '12** for her administrative assistance. Presenters and respondents at the conference include:

Sara Miller Arnon	Prof. David Freidenreich	Madeline Kurtz '14
Zack Barowitz	Prof. Harriet Freidenreich	Prof. Melissa Ladenheim
Prof. Ardis Cameron	Jim Friedlander	Nancy (Silverman) Levinsky '83
Nathan Cogan	Harris Gleckman	Julie Miller-Soros
Natalie Cohen	Jackie Gronau	Prof. Abraham J. Peck
Susan Cummings-Lawrence	Jena Hershkowitz '12	Robyn Wardell '11
Richard D'Abate	Beth Hillson	Margie Weiner '12
Miles de Klerk '13	Steve Hirshon	Deena Weinstein
Hannah Dhonau '14	Prof. Michael Hoberman	Prof. Rob Weisbrot
Prof. Hasia Diner	Phyllis Graber Jensen	Deborah Weisgall
Meaghan Dwyer-Ryan '96	Yichen Jiang '13	Prof. Lee Shai Weissbach
Amy Eklund '11	Spencer Kasko '12	
Elliott Epstein	Kimiko Kossler '12	

"Lobster and Latkes: Jewish Life in Maine" could not have been mounted without the work of **Susan Cummings-Lawrence**, who prepared an extensive list of objects, documents, and photographs suitable for inclusion and helped to secure permission to borrow these artifacts. **Candace Kanes, Uri Lessing, and Lauren Lessing** played important roles in training the student curators. Lauren and **Kim Brennan** coordinated school group visits to the exhibition; **Greg Williams**, also of the Colby Museum of Art, provided technical advice and materials for mounting our artifacts. **Miles de Klerk '13** played a crucial role both in the mounting of the physical Lobster and Latkes exhibition and in the preparation of the online version. **Jason Parkhill** created the computer-interactive portion of the exhibition.

Many of the artifacts displayed in "Lobster and Latkes" were loaned by Maine Historical Society. I am grateful to **Holly Hurd-Forsyth, Nick Noyes, and Jamie Rice** for their assistance in locating these artifacts and arranging for their loan. Other institutions that contributed artifacts include the Bangor Public Library (**Bill Cook, Elizabeth Stevens**), the Portland Public Library (**Abraham Schechter**), the Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine of the University of Southern Maine (**Susie Bock**), the Special Collections departments of Bowdoin College (**Caroline Moseley**) and Bates College (**Pat Webber**), Beth Israel Congregation of Waterville (**Tiffany Lopes**), Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh of Portland (**Rabbi Akiva Herzfeld**), the Alford Youth Center (**Felicia Farley**), the Maine Jewish Film Festival (**Kari Wagner-Peck**), the Portland Chevra Kadisha (**Darrell Cooper**), and The Cedars of Portland (**Elizabeth Sheppard**). **Abraham and Jean Peck** permitted the use of photographs collected in their book, *Maine's Jewish Experiences*. Private lenders include:

Bill Alford	Robert Hains
Sara Miller Arnon, Wendy Miller, Julie Miller-Soros	Philip Isaacson
Judith Brody	Suzanne Jones
Nathan Cogan	Glen Lawson
Debbie Seltzer Cohen	Phil and Elizabeth Levinsky
Susan Cummings-Lawrence	Harvey Lipman
Richard D'Abate	Ann Oppenheim
Camile Davidson	Barbara Shapiro
David Freidenreich and Sara Kahn Troster	Burt and Phyllis Shiro
Judy Gatchell	Linda Tatelbaum and Kal Winer

PLANS FOR UPCOMING YEARS

Colby's Maine Jewish History Project will go into hibernation during academic year 2011-12, as I will be on sabbatical pursuing unrelated areas of research. In 2012-13, when Colby will celebrate its bicentennial, the Project's research team will focus primarily on the experiences of Jews associated with the College.
