



Colby's Maine Jewish History Project: 2012–13 Annual Report

This year, in honor of the College's bicentennial, members of the Maine Jewish History Project research team focused primarily on the history of Jews at Colby. Four students enrolled in the January "Topics in Maine's Jewish History" course, producing the following essays:

- ["The United Nations Fraternity: Tau Delta Phi,"](#) by Calvin Lee '15
- ["Jewishness at Colby,"](#) by Thomas Williams '13
- ["Jewish Philanthropy to Colby College,"](#) by Ginny Keesler '13
- ["Ludy and Colby: A Lifelong Love Story,"](#) by Michelle Wang '16

In addition to preparing full-length papers on these subjects, these students wrote short essays published in the *Colby Echo*—available on the project website—and presented their findings at an on-campus event in February. Recordings and transcripts of the interviews they conducted have been archived in [Digital Commons](#), Colby's online document depository, for use by future Colby-based researchers.

In addition, **Michelle Wang** assembled a finding aid for the Colbiana archive alumni files of Jews who attended Colby during the interwar years and gathered further data about the role of Tau Delta Phi in debates over racial integration of Colby fraternities (the "Nunez Proposal" of 1961).

Two seniors devoted their capstone research to topics related to Maine's Jewish history:

- **Miles de Klerk '13**, a long-time member of the research team, drew on more than two years of experience studying ethnic communities in Waterville in his ["Kibbee, Community, and Culture: Lebanese Food and Identity in Waterville"](#); this work is especially illuminating when read alongside earlier studies of [food and Jewish identity in Waterville](#).
- **Charlotte Wiesenber**g '13 drew on her background as a History major and a camper/staff member at Camp Walden to produce ["The New Promised Land: Maine's Summer Camps for Jewish Youth in the Mid-Twentieth Century,"](#) the first in-depth study of its subject.

The journal *Maine History*, published by the Maine Historical Society, has accepted a new article by **Prof. David Freidenreich**, ["Making it in Maine: Stories of Jewish Life in Small-Town America."](#) This article, based on talks I gave around the state in 2011, will not be published until the January 2015 issue, but a pre-publication manuscript is now available online.

Three students conducted research on Maine's Jewish history during the summer of 2011. As there was no 2011-12 annual report due to my sabbatical, I include reference to them here:

- **Andrea Birnbaum '12**, ["College Attendance among Jews in Lewiston, Maine, During the Interwar Period"](#)
- **Miles de Klerk '13**, ["The Jews and Lebanese of Waterville: Comparison of 1930 Census Data"](#)
- **Yichen Jiang '13**, ["Waterville's Jewish Retailers During the Great Depression"](#)

As always, the work of the Maine Jewish History Project research team depended on the generosity of numerous individuals who gave of their time, memories, and expertise to help us better understand both their own experiences and the broader story of Jewish life in Maine. The following individuals took the time to speak with members of this year's January class:

Bill Alfond	Harold Kowal
Sara Arnon	Thomas Longstaff
Albert and Meg Bernier	Ellie and Charlie Miller
Judy Brody	David Pulver
Linda Cotter	Aviva Sapers
Jerry Goldberg	Burton Silberstein

Pat Burdick, Erin Rhodes, and Maggie Libby, among others in Special Collections and Miller Library, provided invaluable research assistance. Several members of the Development staff, including **Meg Bernier, Sue Cook, Chris Marden, and Lisa Tessler**, also provided crucial help in identifying prospective interview subjects. My thanks as well to **Jo Radner** for training students to conduct oral history interviews.

The theme for next year's research will be "Becoming Jewish Mainers." Students will explore the experiences of Jews who moved to Maine from away since World War II, as well as Mainers who have converted to Judaism. In addition, I hope to write a much-belated essay on college attendance patterns among Jewish Mainers during the interwar years, drawing on research conducted by members of the team in 2011.
