

# The Jews and Lebanese of Waterville: A Comparison of 1930 Census Data

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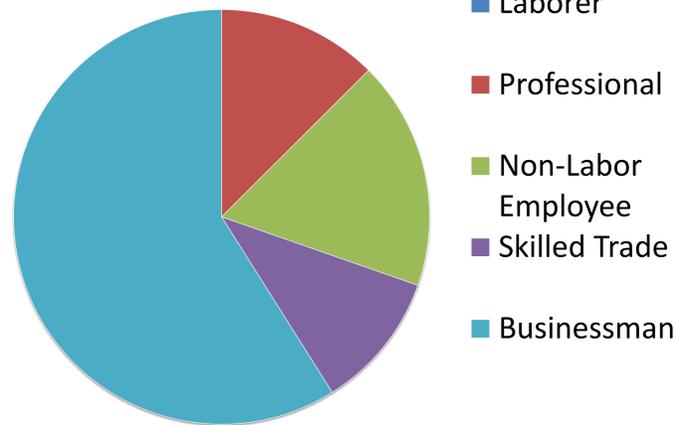
working with David Freidenreich, Pulver Family Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, several ethnic communities had formed in Waterville, Maine. Among these groups were Eastern European Jews and Lebanese Christians. Like other immigrant groups, the Jews and the Lebanese were seeking economic opportunity as well as the company of family and friends from their home countries. Although they came for similar reasons, by 1930 the two communities occupied distinctly different economic classes, occupations, and homes.

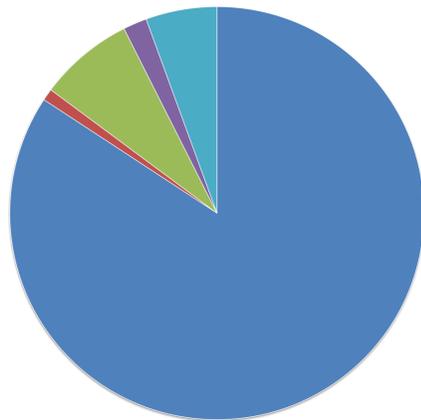
## Occupations of Jews and Lebanese

In the Jewish community, there was a strong focus on working for yourself. As a result, most of the Jewish heads of households started out in Waterville as peddlers with the ultimate goal of opening their own businesses, which many did.

### Jewish Heads of Household



### Lebanese Heads of Household



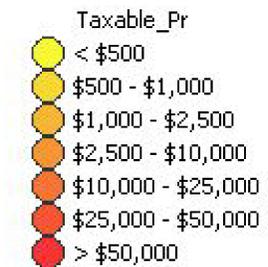
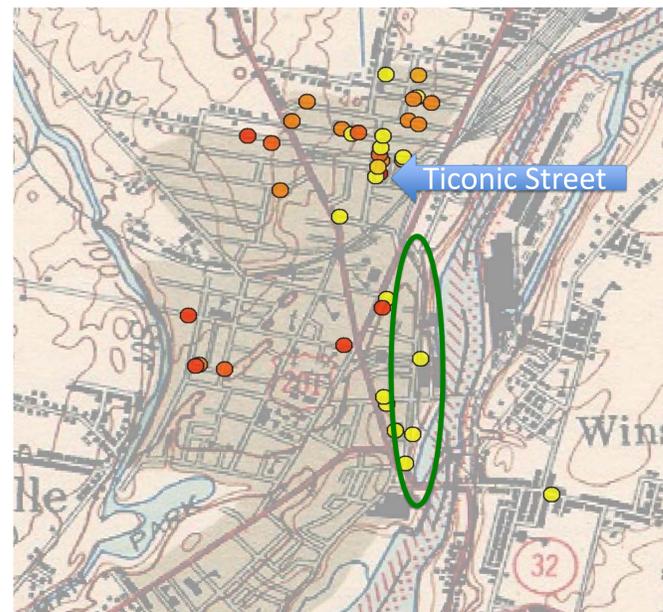
In stark contrast, the Lebanese were drawn *en masse* to jobs in Waterville's textile mills. Many of the heads of Lebanese households worked as weavers, spinners and packers in these mills, while others worked as laborers on the railroads.

## Family Size

The average family size differed tremendously between the Jewish and Lebanese populations. The average family size among Jews in Waterville was about 5 people (3 children). In the Lebanese community this number is closer to 8 (4.5 children). Both groups separate themselves from the median here, as the average number of children per family in Waterville was 3.5. We are still in the process of exploring the reasons for the size of Waterville's Lebanese families. We know that Waterville's Jews set their sights on upward mobility. Instead of raising large families, they only had as many children as they felt they could provide for well, setting them up for prosperous futures.

## Residential Locations and Property Values

The location and affluence of each Jewish household was mapped by Kimi Kossler '12. This map offers a clear view of the upward mobility of Waterville's Jewish population as they move away from the original Jewish neighborhood on Ticonic Street into more affluent areas where they purchased their own homes.



High Density of Lebanese Residents

Lebanese households, in contrast, remain concentrated in one of the working class neighborhoods along the Kennebec River. Consistent with their lower income, the heads of Lebanese households more often found themselves renting property, rather than owning it.

	Jewish	Lebanese	Waterville
Average Value of Owned Home	\$7984.62	\$5414.29	\$5446
Percent Owners	79%	45%	46%
Average Value of Monthly Rent	\$31.29	\$15.38	\$23.38
Percent Renters	21%	55%	54%

While the value of Lebanese property is about average for Waterville, property values and ownership rates demonstrate the affluence of Waterville's Jews in 1930.

## Plans for Future Research

Although the conclusions we can draw from census data are valuable, this type of analysis is not the main focus of this project. Rather, the goal is to produce a detailed, experience-based history of the Lebanese in Waterville during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our research will focus on specific themes such as the preservation of ethnic identity, the process of Americanization, and interactions with non-Arabs. Our research will expand beyond census and other governmental data into a series of interviews with members of the Lebanese community in order to gain greater insight into the experiences and history of this unique community.