



Hyman Epstein in the Exchange Street store, circa 1900. *Bottom:* Jacob and Samuel N. Cohen in the Broad Street store, circa 1902. "Nearly all the parties of the sportsmen who in the season visit the great wilderness of northern and eastern Maine make (Bangor) their rendezvous and procure their outfits here." (*Bangor and Vicinity Illustrated*; photos courtesy of Pauline Cohen)

sweaters; but uncertainty about the future in Bangor sent her back to New York for six months. She returned to Maine around 1908 where she divided her time between Alice's and working at Sam's store in Brownville. The romantic opportunities available in Bangor were still quite limited, but she discovered that there were prospects among the men who continued to arrive from Russia. Solomon Costrell, for example, had arrived in New York on February 1, 1905, and settled in New Haven where he was employed as a plumber at Yale. Although he never had any intention of staying in Bangor, he conscientiously traveled there to visit his sister Sadie (Edward Alpert's wife) prior to his planned relocation to the West Coast. Sadie was not anxious to have her brother move to what must have seemed like the other side of the world, so she persuaded him to become a plumber in Bangor. Sol, who had apparently never met his second cousin, Annie Cohen, in Europe, was soon in love with her in Bangor. But there was some competition for Annie, who was reported by both KAG and SAD to have "had eyes only for Myer Minsky," and for Sol, who Mary Fine thought would be a good catch. This triangle sorted itself out when Sol and Annie were married on August 27, 1911 and Isidor Alpert and Mary Fine said their vows less than a month later. Myer Minsky remained a bachelor until the age of forty-nine.

Sol established the Boston Plumbing and Gas Fitting Company at 73 French Street and advertised "jobbing done at lowest prices and promptly attended to." But business was slow, so the family, which soon included Edwin (b.1913) and Louis (b.1915), left for Detroit where a hardware and plumbing supply store was opened. Two more children were born in Detroit - Rose (b.1917) and Natalie (b.1922) - but by 1931 the Depression drove the family back to Bangor where they resided at 233 Parkview Avenue. Sol worked as a representative for a clothing manufacturer and then a candy wholesaler until returning to Detroit for good in 1935.

Hyman Epstein, like his in-laws (the Nathan Cohen clan), spent the first decade of life in Bangor as a peddler until opening up a clothing store in the late 1890's at 215 Broad Street. After about ten years he moved the business of H. Epstein and Son to 129 Exchange Street, where it remained until he retired in 1925. He and Sarah had continued to live at 303-305 Essex until moving to 47 Fountain Street about a year before the store was closed. At the time of the Epsteins' move, Rosa, Samuel N. and Louis relocated to a small brick home at 454 French Street.

Four Epstein children were born in Bangor including Minnie (b.1887), Myer (b.1890), Katherine (b.1893) and Anna (b.1896). The Epsteins, like most of their contemporaries, were raised in an environment where religious fidelity was important, so when a young lawyer named James Connors came calling for eighteen year old Katherine, eyebrows were immediately raised. James had ignored the wishes of his parents and left Boston to attend the law school at the University of Maine in Orono and after graduating he went looking for a wife in Bangor. He was advised to call at the big gray house on Essex Street, but Sarah was having none of him despite his protestations that he was really Jewish. Not until James Connors went to the Beth Israel Cemetery and swore an oath on Nathan Cohen's grave would Sarah approve of a marriage between her daughter and this Boston "Irishman." (As it turned out, the original

Connors family name was Kabot and had been changed when James' father or grandfather came to this country. James later changed the spelling to Cahners out of vexation with another lawyer in Bangor named Connors who suggested that James' legal career was successful only because prospective clients confused the two.)

Another of Nathan and Rosa's children, Ann (b.1878), was the first Cohen of her generation to break the interfaith marriage barrier. While attending school she fell in love with a young man from Brewer, Arthur Anderson, whose family was prominent in the lumber trade. They married, despite the protestations of Ann's mother, and settled on Grant Street where daughters Madelaine and Natalie were born. Arthur occupied himself with a real estate business he operated from an office in Brewer. The effect of the Anderson marriage was twofold: Ann was ostracized by many members of the extended family for doing what, at that time of religious and cultural orthodoxy, was unthinkable. Her bitter complaints to relatives that had maintained communication with her about being treated as a pariah by other relatives finally seemed to soften the majority attitude; and, achieving a conditional sort of acceptance, their marriage and its aftermath paved the way for other interfaith couples.⁵ Years later Ann's eldest brother, Max, married out of the faith after the death of his first wife, but this proved to be a short-lived relationship.

Two of Simon Cohen's sons also broke the interfaith marriage barrier. Robert (b.1896) met Mary Fahey at the Parkhurst Trunk Factory where Simon had installed him to oversee the business. They fell in love, married over the protestations of both families, and were subsequently exiled to Houlton where Robert managed the family-owned Chain Apparel Store, despite being trained as a lawyer. His wife, a Catholic, felt that since lawyers divorced people - a practice that was contrary to her religious beliefs - Robert should not practice law. (Their only son, also named Robert, became a priest.) And it was apparently at the University of Maine that Phillip (b.1907) met Hazel Vance, for they were married in Orono in 1938. Phillip, who was a brilliant saxophone player, wanted to make a career out of music, but his parents dissuaded him. He and Hazel left for Presque Isle to manage that town's Chain Apparel Store.

The lives of Nathan and Rosa's youngest sons differed from those of their siblings in several respects. Both were born to parents who were no longer youthful: Nathan was nearing forty and Rosa was already forty-six when Sam was born. Three years later Louis was born, and Nathan would live only until his youngest son reached his fifteenth year. (One Cohen great-granddaughter mentioned that Rosa was not in agreement with Old World childbearing practices. She jumped off tables and chairs and ran up and down the stairs hoping this would cause her to have fewer children. To her dismay, she had seven.) The boys grew up in an environment where they were closer in age and sensibilities to their nieces and nephews than to their brothers and sisters. Sam and Louis were eighteen and twenty-one years younger than their eldest sister, who had married in Europe (1884) when Sam was an infant, two years before Louis was born. Consequently, Sarah and Hyman Epstein's first child, Minnie (b.1887), was only a year younger than her uncle Louis (b.1886) and four years younger than her uncle Sam (b.1883).



Simon Cohen, circa 1905. He introduced discount retailing to Maine and leveraged the concept into a real estate empire. *Center:* Ann Cohen, circa 1905. Her marriage to Arthur Anderson broke barriers. *Right:* Robert Cohen, circa 1920. His father Yankev wrote, "He's a fine boy, grown up so well, we delight in him." (Courtesy of Pauline Cohen)

It was no surprise that the youngest brothers seemed to stick together. Both went to work while still in their teens on Broad Street: the year 1905 found Sam working in a clothing shop at 131 Broad Street and Louis working next door at a fruit and confectionery stand at No. 133. By 1909, Sam was working at another clothing store at 121 Exchange while Louis was again working next door, this time at an enterprise called Cohen and Coady at 123 Exchange. This was short-lived, for Louis spent part of the next decade working with Simon at the New York Syndicate and the balance serving in the army. (Because of his age Louis was the only one of his siblings to serve in the armed forces: he was a sergeant in the Tenth Bath Infantry Corps during the First World War.) By 1922 he and Sam abandoned their careers in retailing and instead established a real estate and insurance agency, first at 23 Broad Street and then at 4 Hammond. Neither married and both continued living with Rosa on Essex Street, dutifully following when she moved to 454 French and staying there to care for her during her old age. Each was civic minded, belonging to numerous clubs and fraternal organizations. Louis, who spent twelve years as a violinist with the Bangor Symphony Orchestra, was also a member of the Bangor Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Independent Order of the B'nai B'rith and the Masons.

Rosa's death in 1935 and Sam's death in 1936 left Louis at French Street until he moved to the Penobscot Exchange Hotel in 1941. He died January 3, 1944 while engaged in his favorite pastime - playing cards at the Elk's Club.

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While the Cohens were becoming established and bearing the first generation of Bangor-born children, the Alperets had yet to reach the States. Isidor, the first of Merke Alperowitz's children to arrive, landed in New York in 1904 and remained there until moving to Bangor on May 10, 1906. He must have boarded with relatives at first, for no record of a Bangor address exists until 1908 when he shared quarters with his cousin Edward Alpert's family at 120 Hancock Street. Edward, who had abandoned the sweatshops of New York for Bangor around the same time as Izzy, at first took lodgings on 30 South Street and from there secured a horse and cart and went into the scrap metal trade. The circumstances of Edward's departure from Russia necessitated that Sadie remain behind until her husband could establish himself in the States; but the interval was no more than a year for their first child, Dorothy, was born in Bangor in 1907. The couple remained at 120 Hancock until moving to 55 Newbury Street (circa 1915) and then about three years later to 13 Adams. During this time three more children were born including Louis (b.1910), Bessie (b.1911) and Rose (b.1917).

Sam Alpert, who was having difficulty making a living in New York, traveled to Maine in 1915, at Edward's suggestion, to investigate the possibility of relocation. After spending several months in Bucksport he decided in favor of Bangor and sent for his wife and son, William (b.1912). They first settled at 75 Pearl Street where a daughter, Bessie, was born (1915), and later moved to 50 Boyd Street where Sam operated as a junk dealer. The limited opportunities in