

WORK

The first Jews in Maine were often peddlers, or “junk” dealers, staking out new territory north and east of city centers in New York and Boston. Starting out, these merchants in rags, paper, tin and clothing needed only the rudiments of English to exchange goods or handle currency.



Peddlers Simon Epstein and Jacob Venner, based out of Biddeford and Portland



Spending so much time on the road, these entrepreneurs could compare life in different towns within their circuits and locate Jewish citizens, even people from the same villages in Europe from which they came. With sufficient capital – from energetic and tireless work or with family assistance – these one-man (almost exclusively “man”) traveling shops expanded into early retail establishments like these.



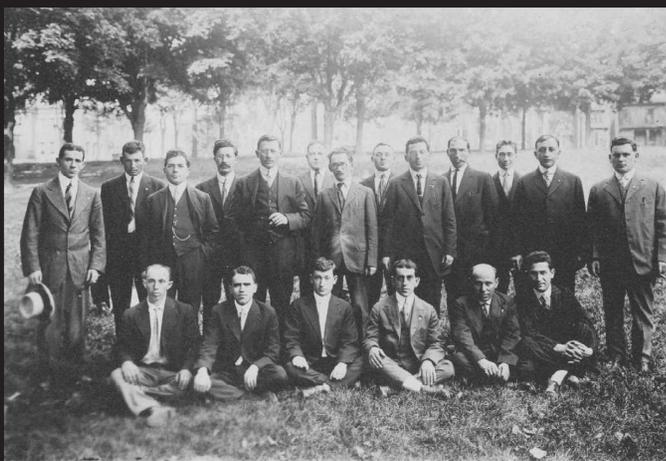
Grocery in Waterville



Povich men's store in Bath



Simon Rubinoff, Maine's first Jewish policeman



1916 conference of the Workmen's Circle

From the 1910s to the 1930s, many progressive immigrants participated in the Workmen's Circle (Arbeter Ring), a labor-oriented social and cultural organization with, at one point, five Maine chapters. As many second-generation Maine Jews studied to become lawyers, doctors, and accountants, business proprietors with Jewish names were still common in cities like Biddeford.

MARKSON BROS.
BETTER CLOTHES
FOR
MEN AND WOMEN
130-134 MAIN STREET, BIDDEFORD, ME.

N. GOODKOWSKY,
PAWN BROKER,
Money Lended on Watches, Jewelry, Diamonds and Other Precious Property.
Marital Instruments of all kinds, and "Sweepstakes" Prizes for sale at half their value.
78 Main Street, BIDDEFORD, MAINE.
RESIDENCE: 60 GARDEN STREET.

Advertisements for three Jewish-owned enterprises

POLAKEWICH BROS. & CO.,
Dry Goods, Clothing and Shoes,
69 MAIN STREET,
BIDDEFORD, MAINE.
JOS. POLAKEWICH,
L. POLAKEWICH,
M. SILVERMAN.

Lewiston, Madawaska, Old Town and Waterville are among the towns where enterprising Jews maintained successful and eponymous (“Cutler’s,” “Levine’s”) retail establishments. Day’s Jewelry has grown to be a statewide chain.



Two jewelers at Portland branch of Day's Jewelry

SWEEP CLEAN CLEARANCE SALE
Get They Go During The Greatest Of All Clearance Sale Events. Bargains Galore For The Entire Family - SAVE - SAVE!
UNOBSEKEY'S
Sensational! 200 Hats and Coats
BARGAINS
BARGAINS
See These Values Too!!
All Shirts Specially Priced

Advertisement for Calais store



Chain Apparel in Madawaska

Jews have worked in small industries, and they have also devoted energy to the land, raising poultry or farming potatoes like the Etscovitz family in Fort Kent. More recently those involved in agriculture have been joined by back-to-the-landers opting for a simple life in this predominantly rural state.

Lipman Poultry
FROM EGG TO OVEN
U. S. Graded and Inspected
GROWN FOR GOOD EATING . . .
CONTROLLED FOR TOP QUALITY

Lipman Poultry Company of Augusta



Milt Adelman, growing potatoes in Mars Hill

Jewish women and men have also served Maine and their country as military volunteers, recruits or career officers.



Lewis Selbing, a Civil War hero from Augusta

Capt. Harold Gordon brought comfort and a Torah from Bangor's Beth Israel Synagogue to WWII Jewish servicemen from Reykjavik to Bermuda



Morris Shapiro served in the 40th Royal Fusiliers of the Jewish Legion in WWI

Maine's Jews have distinguished themselves in the arts – for example, sculptors Louise Nevelson and William Zorach, painter-illustrator Dahlov Ipcar, and writer Henry Roth. Producer Hiram Abrams of United Artists and actors like Linda Lavin and Judd Nelson have entertained national audiences. The community has included fine educators, like Bowdoin College President Barry Mills, and notable attorneys and judges like Louis Bernstein, Max Pinansky, Abraham Rudman, and Louis Scolnick. Two mayors of Portland, Linda Abromson and Jim Cohen, and economist Albert Abrahamson are among many who have contributed in government or public service.

Here we highlight a few individuals whose iconic or iconoclastic careers made them virtually one-of-a-kind.

Art dealer and professional wrestler Robert Elowitz (Robbie Ellis)



L to R: Old Orchard's Dave Glovsky, the (weight) guesser

Sports journalist Shirley Povich, born in Bar Harbor

