

Ida Rosenthal Wolman

Meanwhile, in Waterville the Rosenthals, Levines, Shiros, and Wolmans were intermarrying. Other Jews were importing spouses from Europe or Boston and New York.

Ida Rosenthal and her family came from Vilna to her uncle William Levine when she was eight years old. Her father started to peddle utensils from a horse and buggy in 1902. She married Louis Wolman, who lived around the corner. He was employed in her uncle's junk business. Louis's mother, Gelle, was one of the first teachers in the Sunday School, and her home was a haven for anyone in trouble.

The early years of her marriage were happy but marked by much moving from Waterville to Rumford, to Winslow, etc. Her husband sold insurance for Metropolitan Life, ran a grocery store, and owned a bottling business before he took over the junk business from Ida's brother, Louis, and father, Hyman Rosenthal. Now her son, Gordon, runs it as two corporations: The Louis Wolman Co. and the Louis Wolman Steel Co. Louis served as treasurer of the Beth Israel Synagogue and was a member of B'nai B'rith and the Odd Fellows.

Ida and her peers heard no English until they entered school, yet Louis's brother, Samuel, graduated from Colby College and his brothers, Meyer and Joe, and sisters, Rose and Freda, all graduated from high school with high grades. Ida's husband spoke like a native. Ida's three sons are college graduates.

Leah Rosenthal, Ida's mother (known affectionately as "Bubby"—diminutive for grandmother, Bubba), took in transients when they were sick, like the man who was nursed for three months while he lay abed, too ill to move. She kept a kosher home and went to the synagogue every week but did not impose her standards on others. "Let others do what they wished," she would say. The family of six children—Ida (Wolman), Rose (Saperstein), Arthur (a physician in Massachusetts), Phillip, and Henrietta (before she died in an auto accident)—gathered frequently at Bubby's house. She was one of a group of mothers, Daughters of Miriam, that was started by Rabbi Silver's wife to do all the work of a social work agency. There was no burial society, but these women took turns sitting up all night with the dead in a Protestant funeral parlor before the funeral cortege buried the corpse in the Jewish cemetery in Bangor, Portland, or Lewiston.

The Wolmans and Rosenthals got along very well with their enterprising French Canadian neighbors. They cooperated in the melding of the Catholic and Protestant hospitals into the Mid-Maine Medical Center. Seton Hospital specializes but also cooperates with the other hospital.

Gordon Wolman married Mert, a New Jersey girl who was accepted by Waterville society immediately. She has been active in the hospital and schools as a volunteer. Mrs. Wolman served on the Dedication Book Committee with Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Stern, Howard Miller, and Mrs. David Gray when the new synagogue was dedicated March 28, 1958. The next day, Abraham M. Hains was honored for his thirty-two years of service as spiritual leader (he was not an ordained rabbi) and devotion to the community by naming the social hall of Beth Israel Synagogue the Abraham M. Hains Hall.

At the commemorative stone-laying ceremony in August, 1957, the Camp Lown Chorus and Assembly sang; David Gray, president of the congregation, welcomed Rev. Robert Ingraham of the Waterville Ministerial Association, Mayor Clinton A. Clauson, and Rev. John I. Daniel, pastor of the Unitarian-Universalist Church, as well as other Waterville notables. The rabbi was David P. Prince. Mrs. Phillip Rosenthal, president of the sisterhood, spoke. Harold Alfond, owner of the Dexter shoe chain, who had given the land at Maine and Kelsey streets, placed the cornerstone. The building committee—Gordon Wolman, Edward Saperstein, Saul Mandell, David Gray, and David Alfond, were able to collect contributions from practically everyone who did

business in Waterville from as far away as New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Ohio. The list of donors included nine doctors and businessmen from Skowhegan, Bangor, and Bath, as well as lawyers and others who had progressed from peddling or were children of peddlers.

The Daughters of Miriam merged with the Women's Grand Lodge of B'nai B'rith and are known now as Theodore N. Levine Chapter, in memory of a son of William Levine, the founder of the Levine Men's Clothing Store, most recently run by his sons, Ludy and Pacy, with the help of their nephew, Howard Miller.