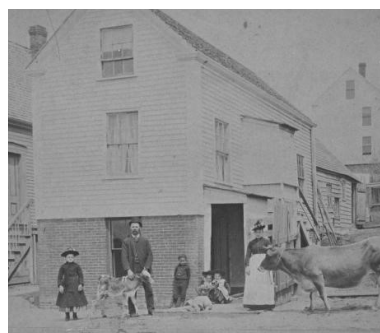


MUNJOY HILL | Hidden Stories



Through most of the 19th century, Munjoy Hill was largely characterized by middle-class homes, with a few really lavish residences. The inhabitants were largely ‘Yankee’, with some Black families and Irish families. At the turn of the 20th century the neighborhood grew more diverse, with numbers of Jewish, Scandinavian, Italian, and French-Canadian families along with others from nearly every part of the globe, finding a home on Munjoy Hill. These residents have contributed vigorously to the shape and substance of the city and the state. Residents of the neighborhood have served as longshoremen, athletes, railroad workers, storekeepers, educators, artists, firefighters and politicians. Two Maine governors, Oakley C. Curtis and Joseph E. Brennan, as well as celebrated movie director John Ford, lived on the hill. These are just a few of the stories of Portlanders who have called Munjoy Hill home.

Greater Portland
Landmarks



Historic character enriches our lives



48 Lafayette Street

Dickson Family Home

Lois Dickson Rice became a trailblazing corporate executive who helped persuade Congress to provide federal subsidies, known as Pell grants, to tens of millions of needy college students.

She was born in 1933, in Portland, the daughter of David Augustus Dickson and Mary Daly. David (1887-1979) came to the United States from Kingston, Jamaica in 1911 and his wife, Mary (1890-1981), came to the US from Jamaica in 1914. The couple purchased the home at 48 Lafayette Street in 1927. David worked as a shipper, porter, and janitor at Cressey & Allen's music store on Congress Street for many years. Mary worked as a maid and seamstress. The Dickson's raised five children, all of whom went on to college. The four sons, Leon, Audley, David, and Frederick, graduated from Bowdoin College. Leon, Audley and Frederick became medical doctors, graduated from Howard Medical School, Columbia University School of Optometry, and University of Rochester Medical School, respectively. David received his master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard and spent 40 years in academia as a teacher and university president.

After graduating from Radcliffe College, Lois became director of the College Entrance Examination Board. While there she designed and implemented the Pell Grant Program. Her daughter, Susan E. Rice, is the former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and U.S. National Security Advisor for President Obama.



Lois Dickson Rice, left, with her daughter Susan E. Rice.

“She helped create a pathway to college for literally millions of low-income and first-generation college goers, changing the trajectories of their families forever.”

Arne Duncan, former Secretary of Education



56 Lafayette Street

Giro-Gaskill Family Home

Raised in a house at 24 Montreal Street, John E. Gaskill (1892-1991) live in this house, the family home of his second wife Margaret [Marguerite] Giro, from 1939 until his death. Gaskill worked for Central Maine Power Company as a lineman for 45 years. He also served as the Portland Harbor Safety Inspector for 20 years. John, also known as “Pete”, was a member of several semi-professional baseball teams in the Portland area, and was known as a prolific home run hitter. He was inducted into the Maine Baseball Hall of Fame in 1976. His in-laws, Daniel and Marie Giro were both native French speakers, being born on the French island of Guadeloupe. Daniel worked as a chef in Portland and served as a steward on several local ships, sailing world-wide.



John “Pete” Gaskill.



46 Walnut Street, built 1864

Albert & Katie Dirwanger House

Albert Dirwanger arrived in the United States from Bavaria, Germany in 1855. Five years later he married Katie Donnelly, an Irish immigrant who came to the United States in 1856. Albert Dirwanger bought 6 lots off North Street from developer Moses Gould in 1864 for \$1400. Albert and Katie lived at 46 Walnut Street. Albert, a florist, had his greenhouses at the rear of his house lot at the corner of North and Montreal Streets.

In his three large greenhouses, Albert grew dahlias, pinks, asters, pansies, phlox, and verbena. His florist shop was downtown on Congress Street.



Albert Dirwanger's house at 46 Walnut St. and his three large greenhouses between Merrill and North Streets are visible on the 1876 Bird's Eye Map of Portland.



61-63 Montreal Street, built c.1912

Dirwanger Triple-Decker

Albert and Katie's daughter Isabella built and occupied the triple decker behind their house at 61-63 Montreal Street circa 1912. Albert's nephew, Joseph N. Dirwanger, was also a florist who lived on Lafayette Street for several years before moving into this family apartment building on Montreal Street.



105 North Street, built 1891

Joseph Dirwanger House

Albert's brother Joseph (1826-1910) lived at first in a house at 56 Walnut Street (*demolished*) then moved around the corner to 105 North Street. Joseph Dirwanger, like his father and brother, was also a florist. His greenhouses were on a plot of land leased from Neal Dow, behind what is now the Rite Aid on Congress Street in the West End. His shop was nearby at 722 Congress Street. He and his brother were members of the Society of American Florists and Ornamental Horticulturalists.

Joseph had six children: Jessie, Anna, Elizabeth, Fredrika, Annie and Ludwig. Joseph's daughter Elizabeth [Lizzie Anne] is identified in city directories as a clothing factory inspector and then later as a telephone operator. Daughter Jessie was a wax artist, creating wax flower arrangements in her shop on Congress Street.

JOSEPH A. DIRWANGER,
FLORIST
 719 Congress Street, - Near Foot of Dow.
BOUQUETS and FUNERAL DESIGNS
 Composed of the Choicest Flowers, Furnished at all seasons of the year.



52 Melbourne Street, built 1876

John C. Main House

The Second Empire House at 52 Melbourne Street, at the corner of Merrill Street, was built in 1876 for John C. Main, a Scottish immigrant and an agent at the Grand Trunk Railroad. He came to the United States in 1867. He previously lived on Quebec Street with his wife, an English immigrant, before building this house on Melbourne and Merrill Streets on land he bought from William Hoyt in 1875. He died very young of Bronchitis, at age 44 while in Detroit, Michigan in 1888. He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

The St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad was chartered in 1845 to connect Portland to Montreal. Four months after train service commenced in April 1953, the new line was leased by the Grand Trunk Railway. The Grand Trunk's system operated in Quebec, Ontario, New England, and Michigan.



The John C. Main House at 52 Melbourne Street (left), was later owned by George T. Dealey, who then built his own house at 126 Eastern Promenade (right). He was a director at Burnham & Morrill Co. in Portland (below).



The Burnham & Morrill Co. of Portland was a food canning business with canneries or "corn shops" operating throughout the state of Maine. In 1867, George Burnham started his own food canning business. He was soon joined by Charles Morrill, and Burnham & Morrill was born. In 1913, B&M moved from its original location at 13 Franklin Street in Portland to its present site in East Deering.



126 Eastern Promenade, built 1910

George T. Dealey House

The John C. Main House was later occupied by George T. Dealey (below), a traveling agent selling fish at wholesale in Portland. Dealey was a Canadian immigrant, born to English and Irish parents. He came to the US in 1878 from St. John, New Brunswick and married Hattie Pride of Westbrook in 1880. He petitioned for citizenship in 1883. He later became a wholesale merchant of canned corn and a director at Burnham and Morrill Company. He built a new home at 126 Eastern Prom in 1910. Within a few years he would be able to look across the water from his home on the Prom to the cannery when a new facility was built in East Deering. He too is buried in Evergreen Cemetery.



**George T. Dealey
1855-1935**



119 Morning Street, built 1925

Morningside Apartments

The large apartment building at 119 Morning Street was built by and remains in the ownership of the Albert family. Built on land once owned by the Deering family, the apartment was built c1925 and was once known as the “Cleevesland”. It was built for and occupied by James Albert, a realtor.

James Albert (c.1886-1970) was born in Russia to Pauline and David Albert. He and his father came to the United States around 1893, while his brother Herman and their mother Pauline followed a few years later. The family lived on Smith Street prior to the construction of the apartment building. Although the family initially occupied just one unit in the apartment building, after the brothers married they each had a separate unit in their building, with Pauline Albert living with her son Herman and his wife. James married Rose Garber in 1933. James is buried in Temple Beth El Memorial Park.



Jewish Immigrants on Munjoy Hill

In the decade after 1916 an influx of Polish-Russian, Yiddish-speaking families began moving to Munjoy Hill, settling on the lower end of Congress Street and along Morning, Vesper & Beckett Streets. They would be followed after WWII by additional families from Eastern Europe. Nearly all of these families rented in the neighborhood for some years before they purchased their homes.



Thera Hilton's Drugstore at the corner of North & Congress Streets.



33 Congress Street, built c.1901

Hilton - Turesky House

Two families, Hilton and Turesky, have owned 33 Congress for most of its 120 year history. The first owner, Theara Hilton, purchased the lot from Henry Deering in 1901, while he, his wife Mary and a young son were renters at 3 North Street. Theara Hilton (1862-1939) was an apothecary. For decades, Theara Hilton's drugstore was located at 129 Congress Street, at the corner of North Street. Hilton usually rented out a portion of his house on Congress Street. In 1910 the tenant was the family of a packer in the corn industry. Ten years later the tenant was the family of a retail grocer.

In 1947 the Hilton house was bought by Solomon Turesky. Both Solomon and his wife Ida were born in Polish-Russia in the late 19th century. Yiddish speaking, they married and had two children before Solomon emigrated to the United States in 1910. His wife Ida and children followed two years later, and four more children were born in Maine. He was a peddler in dry goods before becoming a merchant in the clothing trade, with a shop, Park Clothing Co. at 361 Congress Street. By 1924 he had bought a triple decker at 20 Sheridan Street, where he lived before purchasing 33 Congress Street. After his death in 1963, the house passed down through numerous children to his grandson, the current owner.



36 Morning Street, built 1890

Anna DiBiase Romano & Henry Romano House

Originally built for Leslie E. Mitchell, the single family house at 36 Morning Street was purchased in 1956 by current owner Anna [DiBiase] Romano and her husband Henry A. Romano. Anna's sister Viola was already living at 40 Morning Street when the young couple purchased the house next door. The women were the daughters of Giacomo DiBiase, an Italian immigrant. Henry's parents were also Italian immigrants, his father Cosmo Romano, a barber, came to the United States from Casalduni, Italy in 1903 and his mother Grace Galli arrived in 1905.



Giacomo DiBiase (1885-1971)

Born in Lettomanopello, Italy, Giacomo apprenticed as a stone mason, then settled in Stonington, Maine to work in a stone quarry, before moving to Portland in 1920. Giacomo worked at the Portland Company as a crane operator for 41 years. His second wife and Anna's mother Rosina, helped operate the family's shop, Jimmy DiBiase's Grocery store at 71 Merrill Street (*below*).

Giacomo petitioned for U.S. Naturalization for himself, his first wife Rosaria, and daughter Viola in 1916. He, Rosaria and Viola were all naturalized on the same document on April 11, 1917.

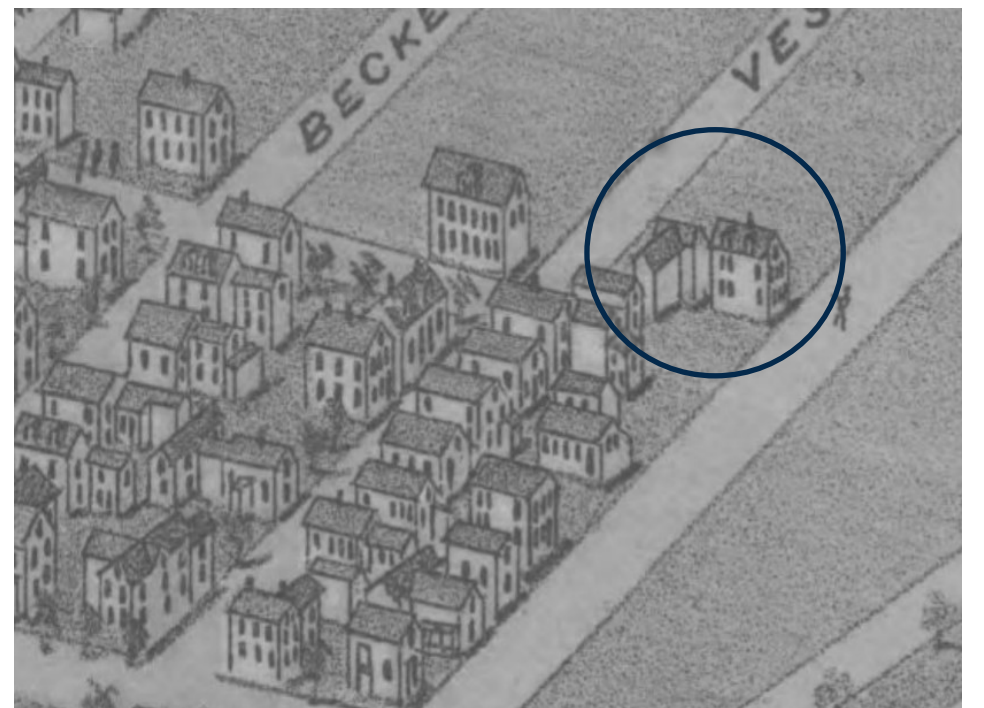
His first wife, Rosaria brought Viola from Italy in 1919. Rosaria died a few years later in 1925, and he remarried her cousin Rosina in 1927. They had five children together, including Anna. The family lived on Washington Avenue, Merrill Street, and then at 53 Melbourne Street.



40 Morning Street, built 1868

Viola DiBiase Romano & Alfred Romano House

40 Morning Street, the former Edward Boyden House is one of the oldest houses on Morning Street, as it first appears on the 1871 Bird's Eye Map of Portland (*below*). Viola DiBiase married Alfred Romano, a welder at the Portland Company in 1937. She was born in Lettomanopello, Italy and as a young woman in Portland she worked as a stitcher in a handkerchief factory. Alfred and Viola moved to Morning Street in 1948.





100 North Street, built 1873

Charles Rundlett & Mary [Curtis] Rundlett House

Charles F. Rundlett (c1832-1918) married Mary E. Curtis in 1860. The Curtis family lived on Munjoy Hill in a house at 23 Lafayette Street at the corner of Cumberland Avenue. Originally a carriage maker, Charles later worked for the Curtis family's business, Curtis & Son Co., manufacturers of chewing gum. The newlywed couple lived with her family for over a decade, inheriting the house on Lafayette Street after her mother's death in 1878.

Charles Rundlett went into business with his brothers William and James at Rundlett Bros. Chewing Gum, after the couple moved into the house on North Street in 1873, but he left the company by 1877. Rundlett & Bros. was later part of a Trust that consolidated several gum manufacturer's including Flint & White, Worthington's, Beeman Chemical Company, W.J. White & Son, the S.T. Britten Company, and the Primley's Kiss-Me Gum Company.

After leaving his brother's company, it is believed that Charles continued to develop chewing gum flavors, experimenting in an outbuilding at the rear of his house on North Street.



One of the forgotten industries of Maine's past is the Spruce Gum business, once providing employment to hundreds of Mainers, mainly young women.



Women work in the Fore Street chewing gum factory c.1900

Curtis & Son Company

Mary Curtis Rundlett's father and brother John B. Curtis (1827-1897) are believed to have commenced the first commercial production of chewing gum in 1848. While her brother marketed the product, Mary's father led the production of the beeswax and spruce resin gum, first in Bangor then at larger facilities in Portland. While the family lived on Munjoy Hill, her brother and father's company built a three-story factory on Fore Street in 1866, employing over 115 women in the manufacture of spruce gum.

For more than 50 years, young women, many new immigrants or first generation Americans, rolled out, flavored, sugared, cut, and packaged spruce and peppermint gum for a national market. Workers at Curtis & Son Co. living on Munjoy Hill hailed from Ireland, England, Sweden, Canada, and Nova Scotia. Young women earned \$3.50- \$6.00 per week (c.1907), while their male co-workers earned double the salary.

The Fore Street gum factory would later be operated by the Sen Sen Chiclet Co., then American Chiclet Company. Sisters and first generation Irish-Americans Julia Qualey and Mary Craven, tenants at 39 Waterville Street in the 1910s and 1920s, worked at the factory as Forelady and Assistant Forelady.