

Panel 1&2 Title Panels.**Women's Work: A Century of Maine's Experience**

An Exhibit of photographs and oral histories from the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History housed at the Maine Folklife Center.

We know nothing of these women except that they lived in Lincoln County, Maine. It seems obvious, however, that they were in the middle of some chore when interrupted for this picture. What were they doing? What type of work could four women have had to take up so much time in a house as small as this one? [P 1987]

Credits:

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(*Note: catalog numbers beginning with P indicate photos, NA indicates excerpts from oral history interviews, both from the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History at the Maine Folklife Center)

Maine Folklife Center

The Maine Folklife Center, located in 112 South Stevens Hall houses the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral history, a collection of approximately 3,000 interviews, student papers, tape recordings and video recordings of folklore, oral history and folk performances and about 10,000 photographs and slides of folklore and folklife from Maine and the Maritime Provinces of Canada.

The mission of the Maine Folklife Center is to document, present and preserve the folklore and folklife of Maine and the Maritime Provinces. In addition to an archives, the Center publishes an annual monograph, *Northeast Folklore*, a bi-annual newsletter, *Maine Folklife*, and occasional publications of video and audio tapes of oral history and traditional music. The Center offers exhibits and other interpretive media to the public at the university and especially at festivals such as the Penobscot River Festival in Bucksport (September 12-13), the Maine Festival in Brunswick (August 6-9) and the **Folk Traditions Festival** (November 6-7) at the University of Maine. Staff at the center offer courses in folklore, oral history and public history through the anthropology and history departments. Other educational workshops are given to the public in communities around the state. Support for the Center's activities comes from the University of Maine and from members and individual donors.

Lombard Log Hauler loaded with white birch on its way to a spool bar mill in Grindstone, Maine. The young woman is not identified. [P41]

Section 1. Wage work 12 panels.

Women's Work is Not Just Inside the Home...

Women work for wages. In Maine they have worked as sardine packers, herring smokers, machine operators, potato pickers, blueberry rakers, broccoli harvesters, telephone operators, shoe makers, clothing and textile workers, secretaries and store clerks and paper makers. They also worked in war industries during W.W.II, and took part in the time-honored traditional roles of nurses and teachers. What else do women do? Little research has been conducted on female rural workers in Maine. How is Maine's story different from other regions of the country? We'd like to find out.

Additional reading:

Blewett, Mary, *Men, Women, and Work: Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780-1910*, (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988).
 Kessler-Harris, Alice, *Out to Work*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982)
 Smuts, Robert W., *Women and Work in America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

Rice & Hutchins, Shoe manufacturing Four Rod Road, Warren, Maine, 1894. [Warren Historical Society].

All the help in our shop are employed at day pay; there is no piece work. I get \$1.25 per day and am expected to do fifteen twelve-pair cases for a day's work. If I stitch more than fifteen cases I get no more wages, but if I fall short because the work fails to come to me, why, I am docked at the rate of 8 2/3 cents per case. I think this is a great injustice, and I think we ought to have a union here so we can get fair pay for our work.
 (--Shoemaker, 1892, *Annual Reports Bureau of Industrial & Labor Statistics for Maine*, p. 153)

These shoe stitchers at the Wise & Cooper Co. in Lewiston are called from their machines by their floor foreman to pose for this photograph circa 1910. The age range of the women suggests that many may have worked in the shoe factory throughout their adult lives, perhaps juggling family responsibilities at the same time. Did women with children continue their jobs at the shoe shop? Who took care of the children? [Androscoggin Historical Society]

A stitcher at Lunn & Sweet Shoe Co. pauses for a drink of water. Notice the long smock she wears to keep her clothing clean. A fire bucket hangs from the post, indicating the potential danger of factory fires. What hazards of the work place were women especially vulnerable to? [Androscoggin Historical Society]

While life working in the mills was harsh, many women still managed to create a relatively comfortable existence at home. "I earn \$8.50 per week with which I support my aged parents. I have no bank account but keep the home comfortable." (Mender in Woolen Mill, 1892, *Annual Reports Bureau of Industrial*

& *Labor Statistics for Maine*, pg. 157) [Photo of Bangor Maxfield mill workers donated by Lyn Rogers].

I worked in the Old Town Mills, starting when I was 14. We went over to visit Mr. Gessner and Jessie (his daughter) had just come home from the woolen mill. She was 14 and she said, "Maggie, you want a job?"

And I said "What doing?"

She said, "spooling, up at the woolen mill."

And I said, "Young as you are?"

She said "yes, they wanted a spooler. You want to come up and try?"

And I said, "Why, yes, I'll go!" I was tickled to death, I got my dinner pail all ready and I was out on the bank at 5 o'clock in the morning because I was afraid that the Gessners would go by without picking me up. So when we got to the mill, course I'd never been anywhere like that; she didn't tell me anything about how to spool. [NA 1489.004]

Old Town Woolen Mill. [Harold Lacadie collection, French Island].

Sigue Hill, 82 years old. The oldest remaining packer performing light duty work at the Port Clyde Cannery in Rockland [1997 photo by Tammy Packie, Bar Harbor]

Christine Kennedy and Christine Winslow (L-R) sharing a joke while packing fish at Port Clyde Cannery, Rockland. [1997 photo by Tammy Packie, Bar Harbor].

"Women pack sardines in an Eastport factory, about 1880... Women have always been the packers in the sardine industry." [W.H. Bunting, *A Day's Work*, p. 240. Maine Historic Preservation Commission photo.]

"I was fourteen. I left school. I thought I was gonna get rich in the factory, and I'm sorry now that I left. Still packin' fish. Over fifty some odd years." [Frances Miller, "Eastport for Pride", *SALT* Vol. VI No. 1&2, p. 67]

"Workers are paid \$3.00 for each filled 10 pound box. By 11:30 in the morning, Angie Sawtelle is on her ninth box. She started five hours earlier at 6:30. With good smoked fish, Angie says she can fill 13 boxes on average during a day's work."

[Hugh French, "McCurdy's Smoke House" Lubec, ME. *SALT* No. 28, Vol. VII No. 4. photo by Lynn Kippax Jr.]

At the Bates Street Shirt Co. in Lewiston, women and men work in the finishing room, pressing, folding and pinning the completed shirts from the stitching floor. Did the women and men do the same work in the finishing room? When this photo was taken, circa 1910, what was the difference in women's and men's wages? [Androscoggin Historical Society]

C.H. Rich's clothing factory or "pants shop" at the corner of Main and Church streets in Clinton, 1890. [Maine Historic Preservation Commission]

Nearly all of us work by the piece... Those who work by the piece have to work very hard to pay our board and dress decently. The prices paid are 85 cents for a pair of pants, or a vest, \$2 for a sack coat, or frock coat and \$3 for an overcoat, custom made clothes, and the girl who makes two overcoats a week spends no idle time but does her best. We do not think that we get paid enough for

our work. I have not been working very long in the shop and the best I can do is to make \$4 a week, and the board here for girls is \$2 and \$2.50 per week. [Sewing girl in Taylor's shop 1888, *Annual Reports of the Bureau of Industrial & Labor Statistics for the State of Maine* circa 1880-90, pg. 106]

Windsor House Hotel, Fort Fairfield. Owned by E.H. Thompson, circa 1893. [Maine Historic Preservation Commission, reprinted in Bunting, *A Day's Work*]

"My work is extremely hard, for I am compelled to travel up and down stairs two stories, there being a gentlemen's room on the ground floor, ladies' room above, and in the basement is the cookroom. I work from seven a.m. to eleven p.m. and some Saturdays as late as one o'clock at night before I go home. I pity any girl who has to work, but I think the girls in shops have an easier time than those in restaurants or at housework."

(Waiter, Restaurant, 1892, *Annual Reports of the Bureau of Industrial & Labor Statistics for the State of Maine* circa 1880-90, p. 154).

Cooking for Old Town restaurants circa 1920. L-R Sadie (Bosse) Shorette cooked for King's Restaurant; her sister, Amanda (Bosse) Cote; Ida (Cote) Graham, Amanda's daughter. At age 16 Amanda was the head cook at the Hotel Fransway in Old Town. [Harold Lacadie # 9-14].

The girl behind the counter in the white dress was working at another 'female' occupation, that of store clerk. Her job is unusual, however, because in this photo she is working at Russell's Hardware Store in Rangeley, Maine, in 1924. [P 6529]

The nurses have prepped the patient and are ready to assist the surgeons at the Central Maine General Hospital in Lewiston, circa 1900. Nurses were considered the servants of doctors, and were required to stand when a doctor entered the room. [Androscoggin Historical Society]

By the late 19th century, nursing had become an accepted vocation for a woman, especially if she were older and "plain". It was a profession that enabled a woman to use her home-honed skills of caring for others to earn a livelihood. [Androscoggin Historical Society]

Miss Lamberson and Miss Welch are probably instructors of nursing at the Central Maine General Hospital in Lewiston, 1912. Was the choice to enter the nursing profession the fulfillment of an ambition, or an economic necessity? [Androscoggin Historical Society]

French Island School, 1921, teacher Miss Sinett. (Harold Lacadie photo)

Agnes (Tom) Thibodeau (believed to be the first Postmistress in Old Town, circa 1920, Harold Lacadie photo).

Sister Edwina Pelletier is a Nun in the order of the Good Shepherds, taught from about 1938 (Harold Lacadie photo)

During W.W.II, many women took jobs previously held only by men. When the war ended, the women were let go and their jobs were given to returning soldiers.

Ethel Linscott and an unidentified co-worker, working in the core room at the Saco-Lowell Foundry in Biddeford, Maine sometime in 1942 or 1943. [P 5252]
 "I worked in what they called the core room. You can imagine the jokes that come from that! Talk about pounding sand, that's where you pound sand! The sand was mixed with oil, and you had molds, and you pounded this sand into the molds. Then you had to take the sides off the molds very carefully to get the things to come apart without falling apart. My hands weren't as delicate as they should be, and this was quite a job" [NA 1532.007]

Since the early 1900s, women have worked for wages as teachers, and this experience was put to work for the war effort, as shown by this picture of 1st Lieutenant Reta L. Graham, US Women's Army Corps, School Instructor. [Harold Lacadie photo]

New England Shipbuilding Corp., taken April 28, 1944. A woman welder wearing leathers and helmet speaking to Lowell Thomas, a famous newsman. This type of propaganda was produced during the war to encourage women to go to work in war industries, but the true attraction for many women like this welder was the higher wages they received for welding and other non-traditional jobs. [P 5377]

Telephone companies preferred women operators because of their "docile natures," (which meant that they were less likely to swear at the customers like the young boys formerly hired by the companies had been wont to do.)

L-R Doris Arey, Hazel Fish, Suzanne Fish Perkins, Elizabeth Cooke, & Bea Raymond, of Winterport, Maine Telephone operators. [Winterport Historical Society and New England Museum of Telephony, Ellsworth, Me.]

La Bree's Bakery workers circa 1948-50. Front L-R: Bernie Sirois, Hogan, Emile Doucette, back row L-R Marion LaBree, Ester Young, Emily Young, Madeline Ouellette, Blanche Lemare, Bella Nadeau, Magre Gibbons, Rose Door, Ester Ryan, Joyce Oaks, Alma Blair [Harold Lacadie photo].

Nyomee Murquis sorting paper in Eastern Fine Paper, Brewer, circa 1960. [Eastern Fine Paper company photo.]

The finishing department of Eastern Fine Paper, Brewer, using a Hayssen Breadwrapper retired from Nissen Bread Co. and retrofitted to wrap reams of paper. Top to bottom: Margarite Young, Nina Williams and Leona Arsenault. [Eastern Fine Paper company photo.]

We may know more about women's work for wages than about other kinds of work because of data from census records, industrial and economic statistics. Women have done all these things, but there's so much more we don't know...

What did women who worked in the lumberwoods do?

What was the work like, and how much did they earn?

How many women supported their families because they were widowed, abandoned, or never married?

Did the work of women from Maine reflect national trends?

Section 2. Home, Farm and Family Care 8 panels

Women's work revolves around the home. Some of the activities women did as part of their daily chores included: caring for domestic animals such as cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens; home gardening, cooking and canning garden produce bearing and caring for children; home furnishing, including making clothes, rugs and other domestic adornments; washing clothes, cutting firewood and feeding stoves. While the nature of women's work has changed, women work just as hard today juggling family, career and community responsibilities.

Then my aunt--now breakfast was something else--she would prepare bacon and eggs, fried potato, pie and always cookies. then she would fry doughnuts...My aunt was a good housekeeper and everything was clean and so there was always sweeping, always cooking...and then she read every night of her life and she could go through a number of books...And then, of course, the garden and preserving and canning and jelly making. And look at the dishes that took so much longer on a wood stove, like baked beans which cooked all day, and soups and chowders.

And then there was one day you had to be killing chickens, and then another day she was churning. She made between 140 and 150 pounds of butter a week...And then there was washing and that was a day's job. Yes, it would be washing on Monday, ironing on Tuesday, and she would have to get the churning in before they went to town, usually at the end of the week...she also had to do the daily routine chores like cleaning the milk dishes, gathering eggs morning and night, cooking three hearty meals a day...And then in the evening she would read or crochet or knit. So she was a busy woman! [NA 1576]

Additional reading:

Cowan, Ruth S., *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
Davidson, Caroline, *A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650-1950*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1982).

Home

Madelaine Soucier-Labbe spinning wool from sheep raised on the family farm in Wallagrass, circa 1925. [photo from Rick Wilson, Brunswick, ME]

Peggy Dore sewing together a braided rug, 1980. Historically women had to make all of the rugs, quilts, and other necessities for the home. Traditional skills are passed down and still practiced today.[P4792]

Three women at quilting frame working on a Double Wedding Ring quilt. They are Mrs. Deal, in the dark dress, Mrs. Ray Keller, next to her, and Mrs. Leonard Knauff. [P990]
"Some quilt by themselves, but of course I suppose that quilting probably started in as a sociable affair. Women like to get together, and they could quilt and talk. Years ago, where they lived so far apart, I suppose probably that that was an excuse to get together occasionally." [NA 778.028]

Constance Young, using a vacuum cleaner in 1939. [P5302]
Vacuum cleaners actually increased women's work in the home, while they once beat carpets every spring, now vacuuming is a weekly chore. [NA 1566]

Even though one might not live in a typical domestic setting, housework had to be done. This picture shows a group of women washing clothes in the woods, somewhere in northern Maine. The man in the center of the picture is adding hot water to the wash pot, while women in the background scrub, and the woman off to the sides is hanging clothes out to dry. [P6389]

Two unidentified women, one splitting kindling, the other bucking up birch with a saw, in the Lincoln County area. Women's work, as this picture shows, was not limited to the domestic labor that we might expect. Women also worked at 'men's' tasks in the woods, as well as at home, sometimes because they enjoyed it, and sometimes because there was no other choice. [P1994]

Farm

Taking a break from haying activities to pose for a photograph on Lindore Labbe's farm in Wallagrass on a Sunday in 1933. back (L-R:) Madelaine Phoebe Labbe, Rosa Caron, Myrtle Brown-Labbe and Jennette Bouchard, front: Laurie Labbe. [Rick Wilson, Brunswick, ME]

An unknown woman milking a cow in Kingfield, Maine. [photo # 0044-06 Maine Historical Photograph Collection, Special Collections, Fogler Library]
"Your first goal was to be able to squirt the milk into the cat's mouth that was just beyond the trench!" Milking was "the hardest job, of course. If you can imagine a three-legged stool and you with the pail between your legs, and you were supposed to put the cow's tail up under your knee so it wouldn't switch you while you were milking or get dirt in the milk. So there was really some coordination to learning how to milk." [NA 1576.006]

Millicent Wilkins standing in her vegetable garden, 1930s, somewhere in Androscoggin or Sagadahoc counties. The vegetable gardens of farm women were important sources of family food and nutrition, as these gardens provided all kinds of vegetables throughout the summer, and plenty to can for the winter. [P5470]

"She had special duties that she had to do on certain days of the week, but she also had to do the daily routine chores like cleaning the milk dishes, gathering eggs morning and night, cooking three hearty meals a day." [NA 1576.025]
One of these daily tasks was the one depicted here, feeding the chickens, in 1910. [P5290]

Group of young women standing with potato baskets, part of the Women's Land Army ready to help with the potato harvest during World War Two. [P5477]
"The schools would resume after three to four weeks of potato recess, and we'd all be anxious to exchange our different episodes: How many barrels was picked a day, how much was earned, what new clothes was bought, etc.!" (Ann Berubé Desjardins of Van Buren, Maine in "Potato Picking in the 40's" *Le Forum*, 25, no. 4, p. 27)

Bertha, Linwood, and Daryl Lord, June of 1933, in Bucksport, Maine. As this picture shows, farm women cared for their children in addition to other types of work, such as vegetable gardening and the care of young livestock such as this lamb.[P5315]

Family

Rachel Kent and Dorothy Blanchard as senior Home Economics majors practicing their baby tending skills in Home Management House at the University of Maine in Orono in the fall of 1939.[P5298] At that time, all senior Home Economics majors lived in the house, sharing the duties of housekeeping as a means of practicing their skills. Each year, a baby was brought to live in the house with them for the girls to practice on! [NA 1566]

John D. and Lila Smart, J.E. and Cora Smart, Geo. Hopkins, Lillian and Emma Dearborn, and Carrie Royal Smart gathered around an outdoor cooking fire, sometime around the turn of the century. Although these people seem to be in the woods for recreational purposes, the women are nevertheless working, cooking for the group.[P8040]

Mrs. Marion Stansfield of Ogunquit, County Foods Leader for the Cooperative Extension Service, baking in her own kitchen, using sugarless recipes during World War Two, when sugar was rationed and difficult to get, exemplifying the saying so typical of Maine and the rest of the nation during the Depression and World War Two, "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without!" [P5476]

Abby Bean of Topsfield, frying doughnuts in a frying pan on the stove, June 27th, 1980.[P3866].

"I never minded making doughnuts, it was never no chore, and its always nice to know you have them in the crock, so you could reach for them if you want to. I hardly ever eat them myself, though." [NA 1358]

Mrs. Margurite Bartlett, East Bethel, inspecting jars of canned chicken, 1942. [P5514]

Rural Maine women, would typically 'put up' 500 to 600 quarts each summer, using the hot water bath method, which was very time consuming. She didn't have a pressure canner until the 40s, which substantially cut the canning time. All the canning was done on a wood stove, making it extremely hot work. [NA 1569.016]

Preparing rhubarb (1914) S-R Edna (Morreault) Herbert, Agatha (Morreault) Bouchard, Sophie (Doucette) Morreault (Agatha's mother) Zellie Doucette (Sophie's sister); Harold Lacadie photo).

Teaching needlework to the next generation (1914). L-R Agatha (Moreault) Bouchard, Zelia (Morreault) Albert, Marie Anna Morreault; [Harold Lacadie photo]

In spite of technological innovations, women continue to spend much of their time caring for their homes and families.

How can we understand the value of women's contribution to the family economy?
How have national events effected women's domestic work?
How has technology shaped rural vs. urban domestic work?

How much have women contributed to the family economy through their domestic work?

Section 3. Women assisting husband's work: 6 panels

Women often became invisible when they got married. Much of their work is unrecognized in the documentary record, though undoubtedly much appreciated by husband and family.

Women who were pioneers (and new immigrants) often helped their husbands clear land and cared for cattle and crops when husbands had to travel to work. Women assisted farming husbands with haying, milking, feeding new lambs, book keeping, marketing. Women assisted their husbands in lumber camps, and offered important support services to husbands who were at sea fishing.

"My aunt never had any money. My uncle was the one who got the cash for the produce, but he and she were a team when it came to producing it, because they were in that together. But she never had any actual cash until she started working at the bean plant...Then she saved it like a miser...And yet if ever we needed money we could borrow it from her...

I would expect if we put it on an economy scale today, counter her hours, what she did, and childcare and washings and the cooking, I would think, really, it would be 50%. I think it was a 50/50 deal and they would consider it that. They worked hard, and yet they were always happy and there was always time for a picnic, even if it was just out on the lawn." [NA 15760]

Additional reading:

Groneman, Carol and Mary Beth Norton, *"To Toil The Livelong Day": America's Women at Work 1780-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

A man and a woman seated on a pile of logs in the woods, woman holding a cant dog, and the man holding a felling ax, somewhere in Lincoln County area. Women did not always work in isolation, or only with other women. This photograph seems expressive of affection and cooperation between a man and a woman.[P2064].

A group of people standing on some felled logs in the woods, somewhere in the Lincoln County area. This photograph is probably more typical of women's work in the woods, caring for children and carrying lunch to the lumbermen.[P2014]

An unusual picture of a cook, Lew Cole, and his family, Alice, Tena and Sadie Cole, in a lumber camp, circa 1920, Palmer area. [P 5837]

While the picture might be unusual, the practice it represents was not. Lumber camp cooks were generally male, but Gladys Morrison, the wife of the owner and manager of a lumber operation, remembers that it was common for wives to join their husbands in the woods, and wives whose husbands were cooks would generally help out with the cooking. Whether these women received separate wages for this work or if their work was included in their husband's wage is not clear. [NA 1972.014]

Blaine "Tinker" Averill, the cook, and his wife, Goldie, taken between 1945 and 1947, at Little Musquash Lake woods camp. [P929]
 These two worked together to feed the lumbermen at this camp three meals a day, all winter, for fifteen years. Goldie remembers that "I used to love to cook. My husband and I did everything together. And now I just hate to get a meal for myself. . . . He'd do the mixing, and I'd do the frying. We did everything together. And the pies, he'd fill them, and I'd put the meringue on top."
 [NA 1075.006]

Elsie Marden driving the team to hay, Gene Marden receiving hay from hay loader to 'make' the load. 1930s to early 1940s. [P5291].
 Farm women's work was not limited to feeding chickens and milking cows, but included 'helping out' when they were needed in the fields.

In addition to their own work, farm women 'helped out' with other farm work, like these unidentified women and children, bringing in the hay with a horse, and hay rake in a field in Lincoln County. [P2042]

Bringing in the broccoli harvest in Aroostook county, Maine. Men walk in front of the harvester cutting, while the women on the harvester bunch the plants. [H. Smith Packing, Aroostook, from *SALT*, #44, Vol. XI number 4, pp. 26-27. photo by Amy Toensing].

"After Tristan was born, I was back out in the barn. You had to do it. You have to be able to work together. We are partners." ["Family Dairy Farm" in *SALT* #41 vol. XI, no. 1, p.51, photo by Cay Chalker.]

Leila Horr in a rowboat plugging lobsters in Casco Bay, Maine. Leila's husband Leon Horr was a commercial lobsterman on Casco Bay. Unfortunately, in the interview done with the couple in 1973, there was no discussion of what Leila was doing in this rowboat with a lobster. Is this part of the commercial business? Is this a lobster which will be sold as part of Leon's catch? Or was it caught to feed the family rather than to help out in her husband's business? [P443]

Leila Horr and Leon Horr, Jr. on Cheabeague Island, Casco Bay, Maine. In any work they did, whether for the maintenance of the home or to help their husbands, women generally had to interrupt in order to care for children, as in this picture. Childcare was also in itself a way to aid in a husband's work, in that if women were looking after the children men could concentrate on other things, like lobstering. [P445]

Alice M. Oxton making ribbon candy in her husband Sydney's candy business in Rockland, ME. (Alice Knight photo)

Alice and Sydney Oxton and their granddaughter Alice packing candy into boxes for shipping. (Alice Knight photo)

How can we find out more about this kind of women's work?
 Many town directories list each member of the town and their occupation. What other sources could be used?

Section 4. Women-owned businesses. 4 panels

Women have been midwives, healers, dowzers, photographers and writers. Some have started businesses for which they hired other laborers such as knitting and dressmaking. Some women took in ironing, washing, or boarders. Women have owned and managed restaurants for this entire century.

Additional reading:

Dexter, Elisabeth Williams Anthony, *Colonial Women of Affairs; Women in Business and the Professions in America before 1776*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931)

Bird, Caroline, *Enterprising Women* (New York: Norton, 1976)

Stage, Sarah, *Female Complaints: Lydia Pinkham and the business of women's medicine*, (New York: Norton, 1979).

“Mrs. Abbie Condon of Penobscot began hiring out the knitting of mittens...in the 1860s... At one time she had 1,500 persons working at home, up to twenty miles away. The use of knitting machines later concentrated the work in two factories, along with home workers in nine towns. Mrs. Condon [also] ran a large dry-goods and millinery business...[W.H. Bunting, *A Day's Work*, p. 186].

Dowsing is an old-time way to find a good place to dig a water well. Some people (both men and women) were known for having this skill. They were paid for this work.

Mrs. Marie Megquier holding water witching forked stick demonstrating techniques of dowsing to find water. [P1008-1010]

Another female dowser, Sylvia Wichenbach, related that “I spent one whole day water witching, and when I got home I was tireder than I've ever been in my life. I'd had all the magic drained out of me.” [NA 454.004]

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Native American women in Maine worked hard all winter long making baskets to sell to the summer tourist trade. Their basket sales enhanced the family income.

“I couldn't remember how old I was, I was little. Very little and my grandmother gave me all the gauges and the material and everything and said, “Now you sit and you work, you learn how to make baskets, because sometime when you marry and have a family, its gonna come in handy, and believe me, it did.”[NA 2383]

Penobscot women and child from Indian Island, Old Town, Me. circa 1890 [Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor]

Mrs. Wallace Lewey and her granddaughter Madeline Stevens, circa 1932, Passamaquoddy. [Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor]

Cecilia Newell, Passamaquoddy, circa 1945. [Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor]

Joy Neily, whitewater guide in the rear of the raft, guides her group through the Cribworks on the West Branch of the Penobscot. Her sister, Sandy Neily, is co-owner of Eastern Expeditions (printed on side of raft) a whitewater rafting company in Greenville.[P6357]

Fly Rod Crosby--Cornelia Thurza Crosby (1854-1946) was a native of Phillips. Crosby worked and fished in the Rangeley area. By 1895 she had become Maine's first registered guide, first paid tourism promoter, and a nationally known sports celebrity with a widely syndicated outdoor column. [Maine State Museum photo]

This woman is a payroll clerk for the New England Shipbuilding Corp., South Portland, Me during W.W.II. Women have continued to do this work for wages to the present day, and many have used knowledge gained in this way to start their own book-keeping businesses. [P5538]

"Madam Nordica," opera singer. Lilian Norton a working-class farm girl from Farmington began her career singing in Italy, France, England and Russia. She sang to help support an impoverished family. While she made at least three fortunes, which her unreliable husbands squandered. Norton was one of the first entertainers to endorse products such as Coca Cola. She died of exposure in a shipwreck. [Maine State Museum photo]

Unidentified woman standing on a river bank below rapids. The only other information we have is written on the back of the photograph, and reads, "cherchant un passage pour aller photographier un 'jam' des billots.[signed] M. Privotat." ("looking for a passage to go and photograph a log jam.") Whether she is a photographer herself, or an assistant to one, we don't know. [P 487]

Ida E. Shepherd Crie (1856-1917), photographer from Rockland, ME. Her husband managed H.H. Crie and Company where he made the glass plates for her, but she was the photographer. [Alice Knight photo]

L-R Barbara Seawell empties the bait bag while her granddaughter, Sabrina Mariner pulls lobsters from a trap. [BDN photo by Bridget Besaw, taken August, 1997]

"Midwife means "with woman," and midwifery is among the most ancient and vital of women's culture...even in this technology-seduced culture, the timeless art and skill of traditional midwifery endures."--Van Gorder.
Pam Dyer Stewart, midwife from Harrington, ME practices the ancient craft. [Photo by Kathy Van Gorder of West Tremont, ME taken in 1994].

Zita's Dancing girls, while not typically categorized as prostitutes, according to some accounts could be so placed. Rumors revealed that the behavior at the fair at night in the tents was not such that went on in polite society. Houses of ill repute were seen as "necessary evils". The most notorious house of prostitution in Bangor was run by Fan Jones.

While life as a prostitute was a horrible existence, not to be envied, at least those women who worked in a house had a place to live. Many women who engaged in this business worked on their own on the streets, and many had no place to live. Most women who became prostitutes did so because they had no other means of supporting themselves. However, they often died of tuberculosis, alcoholism, or sexually transmitted diseases. ["In Search of the Real Fan Jones," by Wayne E. Reilly and Richard Shaw." *Down East* magazine, April, 1988. "Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Bangor", student paper by Lance Paradis,

photo reprinted in W.H. Bunting, *A Day's Work.*, Maine State Fair, Lewiston, early 1900s. Zita Estrado's Genuine Nautch Dancing Girls].

Yoland Wallace [Doug and Linda Lee collection]

How much do we know about women-owned business in Maine?

How many women own tourist industry businesses such as restaurants, boarding houses, craft stores and gift-shops, hotels and Inns?

More women are fishing today than in the past. How can we find out about their work?

Pictures and oral histories are historical sources. Although many of the photographs often provide more questions than answers.

If you would like to contribute photographs or information to the collection, please contact the Maine Folklife Center staff at 581-1891.

List of photos for women's folklife exhibit "Women working"
compiled by Betsy Hedler

Cooking

P 5476 -- Mrs. Marion Stansfield of Ogunquit, County Foods Leader for the Cooperative Extension Service, baking in her own kitchen, using sugarless recipes during World War Two, when sugar was rationed and difficult to get.

P 3866 -- Abby Bean of Topsfield, frying doughnuts in a frying pan on the stove, taken June 27th, 1980

in the related accession she says, "I never minded making doughnuts, it was never no chore, and its always nice to know you have them in the crock, so you could reach for them if you want to. I hardly ever eat them myself, though." NA 1358

P 5514 -- Mrs. Margurite Bartlett, East Bethel, inspecting jars of canned chicken, 1942.

In a totally unrelated accession, Mabel Lovejoy remembers of one woman she knew:

"She would 'put up' 500 to 600 quarts each summer, using the hot water bath method, which was very time consuming. She didn't have a pressure canner until the 40s, which substantially cut the canning time. All the canning was done on a wood stove, making it extremely hot work." NA 1569.016

P 7210 -- a smorgasbord, New Sweden, Maine, 1980s
-cooking can also help maintain ethnic continuity

Cooking for the lumber camps

P 5837 -- Alice Cole, Tena Cole, Lew Cole (cook) and Sadie Cole. An unusual picture of a cook with his family in the camp, circa 1920, Palmer area.

Gladys Morrison remembers that it was common for wives to join their husbands in the woods, and wives whose husbands were cooks would generally help. NA 1972.014

P 929 -- Blaine "Tinker" Averill, the cook, and his wife, Goldie, taken between 1945 and 1947, at Little Musquash Lake woods camp.

Goldie Averill says that "I used to love to cook. My husband and I did everything together. And now I just hate to get a meal for myself. . . . He'd do the mixing, and I'd do the frying. We did everything together. And the pies, he'd fill them, and I'd put the meringue on top." NA 1075.006

Domestic work

P 1987 -- men, two women in aprons, and two young girls posed in front of a small shack, Lincoln County area

P 5302 -- Constance Young, a senior Home Economics Major at the University of Maine, using a vacuum cleaner in the Home Management House, 1939.
The Home Ec majors living in the house not only did this sort of personal cleaning, but also had a baby brought in for them to practise on. NA 1566

Domestic work in the woods

P 6389 -- women washing clothes in the woods, possibly as part of a lumber or sporting camp, somewhere in Northern Maine

P 8040 -- group of men and women around an outdoor cooking fire the people involved are John D. and Lila Smart, J.E. and Cora Smart, Geo. Hopkins, Lillian and Emma Dearborn, and Carrie Royal Smart. This is obviously a sporting rather than a lumber camp.

Woods Work

P 1994 -- two unidentified women, one splitting kindling, the other bucking up birch with a saw, in the Lincoln County area

P 2064 -- a man and a woman seated on a pile of logs in the woods, woman holding a cant dog, and the man holding a felling axe, somewhere in Lincoln County area

P 2013 -- a group of people standing on some felled logs in the woods, somewhere in the Lincoln County area

P 42 -- "Log hauler used at Grindstone, Maine." men and young girl standing around the log hauler.
-begin with helping father, end with helping husband.

Photographer

P 487 -- unidentified woman standing on a river bank below rapids. The only other information we have is written on the back of the photograph, and reads, "cherchant un passage pour aller photographier un 'jam' des billots.[signed] M. Privotat"

Textiles

P 4792 --Peggy Dore sewing together a braided rug, 1980

P 990 -- three women at quilting frame working on a Double Wedding Ring quilt. They are Mrs. Deal, in the dark dress, Mrs. Ray Keller, next to her, and Mrs. Leonard Knauff.

When asked about quilting, Mrs. Lillian Case said "Some quilt by themselves, but of course I suppose that quilting probably started in as a sociable affair. Women like to get together, and they could quilt and talk. Years ago, where they lived so far apart, I suppose probably that that was an excuse to get together occasionally." NA 778.028

Farm Work

P 5477 -- group of young women standing with potato baskets, part of the Women's Land Army ready to help with the potato harvest during World War Two

P 5470 -- Millicent Wilkins standing in her vegetable garden, 1930s, somewhere in Androscoggin or Sagadahoc counties

P 2042 -- unidentified women, children, horse, and hay rake in field, in Lincoln County

P 5290 -- Grandmother Marden taking care of hens, 1910

When asked about her grandmother, Carlene Hillman had this to say about her (among many other things):

"So you see she had special duties that she had to do on certain days of the week, but she also had to do the daily routine chores like cleaning the milk dishes, gathering eggs morning and night, cooking three hearty meals a day." NA 1576.025
along with, obviously, feeding the chickens

P 5291 -- Elsie Marden driving the team to hay, Gene Marden receiving hay from hay loader to 'make' the load. 1930s to early 1940s

Childcare

P 5315 -- Bertha, Linwood, and Daryl Lord, June of 1933, in Bucksport, Maine, holding a young lamb.
(both childcare and farming, all in one picture)

P 3602 -- Bea Hamilton with her four sons, from left to right, Elliot, Norris, Bea, George, and Robert, taken during the 1930s, when Bea was working in Treworgy's store in Orono, as a single mother supporting four sons.
NA 1307

War-time Work

P 5252 -- Ethel Linscott and an unidentified co-worker, working in the core room at the Saco-Lowell Foundry in Biddeford, Maine sometime in 1942 or 1943
when asked about this experience, she had the following to say:
"I worked in what they called the core room. You can imagine the jokes that come from that! Talk about pounding sand, that's where you pound sand! The sand was mixed with oil, and you had molds, and you pounded this sand into the molds. Then you had to take the sides off the molds very carefully to get the things to come apart without falling apart. My hands weren't as delicate as they should be, and this was quite a job" NA 1532.007

P 5499 -- Woman shipyard worker (Probably a model -- note hat, blouse and skirt, bare arms and legs. She is not properly dressed for the work being done) marking for the weld, for the welder following who is protected by leathers and hood. Photo taken during World War Two, at South Portland Shipyard.

P 5377 -- Official Photograph, New England Shipbuilding Corp., taken April 28, 1944. A woman welder wearing leathers and helmet speaking to Lowell Thomas, a famous newsman. (in right in overcoat and soft hat)

P 5538 -- Payroll Clerk - New England Shipbuilding Corp., South Portland, during World War Two. Pay checks went out weekly. She made sure each check was correct.

P 5503 -- Seamstress sewing flags for Liberty ships constructed at the South Portland Shipyard during World War Two.

Miscellaneous

P 6529 -- Staff inside of Russell's Hardware Store, Rangeley, in 1924.

P 1008-1010 -- Mrs. Marie Megquier holding water witching forked stick demonstrating techniques of dowsing to find water.

P 6357 -- Group of people in raft on brink of steep pitch. First chute of the Cribwork on the West Branch of the Penobscot. First Commercial Run.

Joy Neily, a guide working for the rafting company, remembers that she had lent her helmet to the woman second from front. NA 1934

Additional photos:

woman with spinning wheel (Textiles)

midwife delivering baby (Domestic?)

woman who started a therapeutic horseback riding business (Misc.)

woman tailor (Textiles)

woman candy-maker (Cooking?)

woman photographer (Photographer)

