A Place in Time: George Ross and Samuel Osborne

Labor has long been the barometer of African Americans’ status in society, both locally and nationally. Labor impacts all aspects of life, including housing, education, health care, and consumerism. And while it may not rival cities like Portland or even Bangor, the labor history of Black men in central Maine during the early to mid 1900s reveals some of the ways in which they have been valued, endearing members of their communities.

Prominent among the legends of Black labor in central Maine is the story of George Ross. A Virginia native, Ross graduated from Bates College in 1904. More than a mere custodian, he was a mentor to hundreds of Colby students who annually addressed the graduating class during commencement celebrations. Samuel Osborne, his wife, Maria, and their children—two of whom attended Colby—all left indelible imprints on central Maine history.

[Information provided by the Edmund S. Muskie Archives and Special Collections, Bates College, Lewiston; and Colby College Special Collections, Waterville.]

On the Bookshelf

The Women Who Raised Me: A Memoir

By Victoria Rowell

Victoria Rowell relates in her recently published memoir, The Women Who Raised Me (William Morrow/Harper Collins), her recollection of a fourth-grade incident at St. Patrick’s Grammar School in Roxbury, Massachusetts. While serving detention for whispering in English class, Rowell weighed the options of waiting to be dismissed against being served detention for whispering in English class during commencement celebrations. Samuel Osborne, her father, and Maria, and their children—two of whom attended Colby—all left indelible imprints on central Maine history.

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In Review

The following books were recently reviewed in the *Journal of African American History* and may be of interest to readers of the *Griot*.

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[Reviewed by Sylvia Hood Washington, University of Illinois at Chicago]

Orleck uses a historical narrative to tell the story of Ruby Duncan and other women activists whose pre-Nevada migratory experiences gave them the courage to take on powerful Las Vegas money interests in search of better institutional protections and services for the poor.