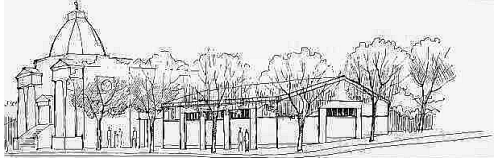


**CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
1888**



BILL SIEMERS, Rabbi

BRIAN KRESGE, President

NORI KAZDOY, Vice – President

PENNY LAMHUT, Treasurer

NANCI MILLER, Secretary

The Honorable Patsy G. Crockett
Kennebec County Commissioners
125 State St, 2nd Floor
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Ms. Crockett,

Congregation Beth Israel is the oldest extant synagogue in Maine. We were founded by Jewish refugees who had fled the scourge of European anti-Semitism, which had impoverished and otherwise disadvantaged them. As a Jewish congregation, we are acutely aware of bigotry and oppression in all its forms; and with that in mind, we are writing to request that you relocate the recently erected Melville Fuller statue from the front of your courthouse.

American slavery and its aftermath are a terrible blot on our country's history and culture. Justice Fuller's vote to effectively re-enslave African Americans was, and is, inexcusable. The *Plessy* decision, which he oversaw, gave legal permission for the racist laws and violence that followed. Many of Melville Fuller's other decisions were blatantly racist. His legacy does not deserve the honor that his statue in its present location suggests.

We do not support the arbitrary destruction or removal of historical symbols, but this statue has no historical standing. It has been in place for only six or seven years, and it was privately funded and promoted. We understand that the statue could be relocated to a museum or another appropriate site, where it will not be honored as a symbol of American justice but will be discussed as an historical artifact within the context of Justice Fuller's life and judicial decisions. We ask that you resist any effort to keep the statue where it is.

Representing the Congregation and its Board of Directors, we thank you for your consideration of this request,

Bill Siemers
Rabbi

Brian Kresge
President