The Library of Congress National Serials Data Program (NSDP), Washington, D.C. 20540, which operates the U.S. Serials Data System, has assigned the following International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) to the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, a publication of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association: ISSN 0556-8609.
This issue’s article on Jews in Rhode Island’s jewelry industry is the result of the work of many people — the writers, the persons interviewed who generously gave of their time, and volunteers who assisted in interviewing, research, editing, and proofreading. The subject is such a large one that we know readers will find omissions. A second part of the article will be published in a future issue of the Notes, and we urge anyone who knows of Jewish jewelry manufacturers in Rhode Island before World War II who may not have been mentioned to let us know. We will also be looking for information on jewelry companies established during or after World War II.

We rely on volunteer writers for the articles in the Notes, and I am deeply grateful for their work. I would also like to thank Association members for their cooperation and, for their special help, the following members: Eleanor F. Horvitz, Rosalind Gorin, Lynn and Samuel Stepak, Aaron Cohen, Geraldine S. Foster, Bernard Kusinitz, Stanley Brier, Alfred M. Weisberg, and Bonnie N. and Seebert J. Goldowsky. Appreciation is also due to Brown University student intern Craig Bargher and to three very helpful librarians: Toby Rossner, Bureau of Jewish Education; Reini Silverman, Temple Beth-El; and Lillian N. Schwartz, Temple Emanu-El.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Dr. Goldowsky back to the pages of the Notes after a brief absence. Dr. Goldowsky served the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association with distinction for eighteen years as Editor of the Notes. The year 1989 was a busy and fruitful year for our Editor Emeritus. In addition to writing three articles for this issue, he published one book, Yankee Surgeon, The Life and Times of Usher Parsons 1788-1868, and completed the writing of another, A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership: The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, (Temple Beth-El), Providence, Rhode Island.

Members of the Association can take pride in the recent presentation to Dr. Goldowsky by the Rhode Island Medical Society of the Charles L. Hill Award. The resolution voted by the House of Delegates of the Society on May 19, 1989, stated that Dr. Goldowsky had “given more than 60 years of service to his patients, his community, and his colleagues,” had “served the Medical Society in many prominent roles, including that of Editor-in-Chief of the Rhode Island Medical Journal from 1960 to 1989,” and “under his leadership the Journal has maintained high standards editorially, grown stronger financially, and eschewed all jargon scrupulously.” This editor of the Notes pledges that she will attempt to meet these same high standards.

Judith Weiss Cohen
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Carl Klitzner recalled in an interview, January 8, 1990, that his uncle, Robert Klitzner, told him that this photo shows the candy store on Bernon Street in Providence where Harry Klitzner first made jewelry. Robert said that the woman selling bagels in front of the store was his grandmother, Harry’s mother. Carl Klitzner knew a man named Kilmartin whose uncle said he stoked the boiler at the store for two cents a day. The photo, courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society, appeared on the front cover of the Notes, Volume 7, Number 2, November 1976. At that time the picture was described as “Scene Lower Chalkstone Avenue — circa 1903 (Unidentified).”
JEWS IN THE JEWELRY INDUSTRY IN RHODE ISLAND

PART I

BY JEANNE WEIL AND JUDITH W. COHEN

INTRODUCTION

Joseph W. Ress, a prominent jewelry manufacturer in Rhode Island after World War II, describes the jewelry industry as

... so fragmented it is difficult to pinpoint one specific area and call it jewelry. The subject can include casting, findings, plating, contractors, cards, jewelry boxes, high style inexpensive costume jewelry, high style expensive costume, classic precious jewelry; faux stones set in brass, silver, or gold; semi-precious stones set in gold and silver. The industry's mortality rate is high, companies flourish and wane without reason or pattern, almost by the toss of a coin. Suffice it to say, Jews never stay still.

Before World War II, most Jews in the jewelry business were factory workers or sales people, not contractors, said Ress. "Many of those in business came from New York looking for cheap labor in Rhode Island and established satellite businesses in the state. They rented factory space, hired supervisors, bought parts from all over Providence as inexpensively as possible, assembled them, and made the items look good."

Alfred M. Weisberg, a historian of the jewelry business, wrote: "The jewelry industry has always been highly cyclical. From the beginning, it has seesawed from boom to bust and back again. The cycles affected individual companies; some firms lasted only a single season." Another description of the jewelry industry, from the Saturday Evening Post: "Providence is full of Horatio Alger stories. There are few fields where a good idea can pay off more handsomely."

A 1946 Fortune article presented a negative view of the jewelry industry:

... it is exceedingly risky to estimate its size. The industry is almost all privately held and still crowded with fly-by-nights. Widely disparate guesses as to its dimensions may be heard even from the old-line manufacturers. ... The day-to-day life of the industry is described by one big rhinestone man as 'sociable, but nervous.' By this he means that many of the older hands know each other well, and enjoyably, but that all have a touch of the competitive jitters — provided especially by the profiteering jobbers. The industry is as vague in outline as a lily pad ...

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Vol. 10, No. 3, Part B, November, 1989
The jewelry industry typically required relatively simple machinery and a small capital investment. Because so many Jews engaged in jewelry manufacturing and because of the volatility of the business, this article presents only a first look at Jews in the jewelry industry. We by no means claim that it is complete or that everyone who should be is included. More information, when discovered or presented to us, will be published in a future issue of the Notes. Because of the subject’s scope and the Notes’ emphasis on early Jewish history, only companies in existence before World War II are described in this issue. We will also not include the categories of watchmakers and retail stores.

JEWS FACTORY WORKERS

This article concentrates on Jewish jewelry manufacturers, but Jewish factory workers cannot be forgotten. Many Jewish immigrants to Rhode Island began their working lives as production workers in the jewelry factories. Of these, some became manufacturers themselves, some went on to other careers, and it is likely that others remained on the production lines.

A study of occupational data for 1915 by Joel Perlmann found that: “The major Providence industry in which the Russian Jews were somewhat more heavily concentrated than others was the costume jewelry industry.” While eighteen percent of Russian Jewish immigrant fathers in 1915 worked in manufacturing, six percent worked in jewelry manufacturing. Of all the fathers who were employees in low manual occupations, the largest percentage, nineteen, worked in jewelry manufacturing. “Possibly the fact that Jewish employers had entered this industry, possibly the hope of progressing from a worker to an owner oneself — the industry required only a small outlay in order to get started — drew Jewish manual workers into it.”

The following sections reveal examples of workers who became owners. A few vignettes here may serve to illustrate the lives of jewelry workers.

Mrs. Jacob Horvitz in a 1976 interview said:

When we came to South Providence [she was nineteen years old] I went right to work. . . . I used to work ten hours a day for Silverman Brothers for $3 a week. I started at 7:00 A.M. I remember the Silvermans. They had a sister. She used to pick me up. I got up so early in the morning. I wasn’t used to it. In Russia I had just gone to school. My father didn’t like me working. . . . My uncle . . . said, “You know who doesn’t work in America — the sick ones.” I didn’t mind. I worked. I had a long walk from my home on Willard Avenue to the shop. If I was late, they took off 10 cents from my pay.
Eventually I did piece work on jewelry and made up to $12 a week. We would get through earlier on Saturdays — 4 P.M.6

Max Siegal of the later famous City Hall Hardware Store in Providence

worked as a stonesetter in a jewelry factory, and his wife, Rebecca, stayed in their little hardware store ... on Prairie Avenue. ... When business improved in the hardware store, Siegal brought his work from the jewelry factory to work on in the back of the store, in order to be free to help out when needed.7

Max Rosen, who came to the United States in 1898, worked in a jewelry factory for $7.50 a week. With that pay, "He could live and even buy cigarettes."8

Max Strasmich and Tilly Kenner met and fell in love when they were bench workers at Osby & Barton in 1915. They each earned about $7.50 a week for 54 hours of work. Their son Erwin jokes, "My mother always said she married my father so she could get away from that job."9

An interesting career related to the jewelry industry was that of Bernard Manuel Goldowsky (father of Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., Editor Emeritus of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes). Goldowsky operated a private detective agency employed by jewelry manufacturers to prevent thievery of precious metals. For a detailed account see Seebert J. Goldowsky, "Bernard Manuel Goldowsky — 1864-1936," Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Volume 6, Number 1, November 1971, pp. 83-101.

For a discussion of Jewish jewelry workers and the labor movement see Paul M. Buhle, "Jews in Rhode Island Labor: An Introductory Investigation," Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Volume 10, Number 2, November 1988, pp. 146-158.

Lederer

The earliest listing of a known Jewish name in The Providence Directory10 is the name Lederer in Seery & Lederer, (Edward Seery and Sigmund Lederer) jewelry manufacturers, 117 Summer Street, 1875. Sigmund and Benedict B. Lederer came to Providence in the 1870s and entered the jewelry business shortly after. Lederer is listed at 111 Summer Street in 1879. S & B Lederer advertised in 1884 as "Manufacturers of Fire Gilt, Nickel, Fine Electro and Silver Plated Chains, 66 to 72 Stewart Street, and 22 Maiden Lane, New York,"11 and was later listed at 100-106 Stewart Street.
Another jewelry business with a Lederer name was the Providence Stock Company, owned by George T. Lederer. When Lederer died in 1977, his obituary in the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* stated that he was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1880, the son of the late Elias Joachim Lederer. He had been affiliated with the jewelry manufacturing firm from 1907 to his retirement fifty years later. Lederer was married to Dorothy Jacobs, daughter of Henry Loeb Jacobs. (See “Henry Loeb Jacobs and Bryant College,” page 373.)

The Providence Stock Company was in operation from 1890 to 1950 and was located in the S & B Lederer Building at 100 Stewart Street in Providence. It manufactured “rolled plate chains, silver novelties, chain bracelets, lorgnettes, ladies’ and gents’ gold chains, gold scarf pins, and brooches.”

Henry Lederer and Brothers, Incorporated, received a State of Rhode Island charter on May 10, 1904, with the names Adolph Lederer, Henry Lederer, and Edward B. Lederer, for “Manufacturing, buying and selling jewelry.” The brothers were sons of Benedict Lederer. Located at 150 Chestnut Street, the company manufactured chains, fountain pens, and pencils.

Alphonse Jacob Lederer, the son of Henry S. and Julia Lederer and grandson of Benedict Lederer, was born in New York City in 1897. At the time of Alphonse’s birth, his father managed the New York sales office of Henry Lederer and Brothers. After high school in Providence, Alphonse joined the jewelry business as a salesman.

Henry Lederer died in 1917 and Adolph in 1922. Young Alphonse, barely twenty years of age, succeeded his father as head of the firm and rose to be its president, treasurer, and secretary. He never married and lived with and cared for his widowed mother. He was a very private person and lived a quiet and unostentatious life. He conducted the enterprise successfully for almost thirty years.

Alphonse Lederer died suddenly in 1946. Upon the death of his mother in 1947, his estate was bequeathed to Temple Beth-El and was instrumental in funding construction of the congregation’s new building on Orchard Avenue in Providence.

Brier Manufacturing Company acquired the assets and equipment of Henry Lederer and Brothers in 1948 and reconstituted the business under the name of Reibling-Lewis. August Reibling, one of the two principal investors, was a German national who came to the United States to assist Lederer and had to remain here because of World War II. The other principal was Howard R. Lewis, son-in-law of Benjamin Brier.
Reibling-Lewis manufactured cigarette lighters, chains, dresser sets, and other products and operated until 1952, at which time the chain-making equipment was sold to the Armbrust Chain Co.16

**LUDWIG-STERN COMPANY**

Very little is known about the Ludwig-Stern Company. Henry Ludwig, jeweler, is listed in The Providence Directory at a home address in 1883 and as a foreman at 183 Eddy Street, Providence, first floor, from 1884 through 1887. Henry Ludwig and Co., manufacturing jewelers, is listed in 1888 at 195 Eddy Street, first floor. The Jewelers’ Directory for 1897 lists as jewelry manufacturers H. C. Ludwig, on Blackstone Street, corner of Gay Street, Providence, and Louis Stern & Co., Metcalf Building, Providence.

The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association has a photograph of employees of the Ludwig-Stern Company, located on the northwest corner of Blackstone and Gay Streets, circa 1900. The photograph, published on the back cover of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Volume 3, Number 1, November 1958, shows 23 men in front of a brick and wood building. Some of the men are wearing business suits, some white aprons, and one is in overalls. The only persons identified are Simon Horenstein, Samuel Silverman, Abram Jacobs, Simon Goldstein, Nathan Horovitz, and Abraham Zellermayer.

**SILVERMAN BROTHERS**

A Saturday Evening Post article of 1947 describes the start of Silverman Brothers in 1897.

Archibald Silverman, one of the leading producers for the chain stores, went into business with five dollars. Coming to this country from Russia with his family at the age of ten, he got a job running errands after school for a Providence jewelry house. When he was eighteen, he borrowed five dollars from his father and bought some gilded wire with which to make beauty pins. But it did not take him long to become one of the pioneers in the field of creating timely jewelry. When Pope Leo XIII died, [in 1903] Silverman made some black-bordered brooches bearing the Pontiff’s picture and sold them personally on the streets of Boston. He started manufacturing ornaments called “Merry Widow wings” when the musical show was at its crest, and was one of the first to turn out fancy veil pins when brave ladies started riding in horseless carriages.18

The Silverman firm was started in a small space rented in a jewelry factory on
Eddy Street, Providence. Archibald's brother, Charles, who had been a foreman in another factory, joined the business about three months later. Archibald was the salesman, and Charles supervised the manufacturing operations. According to a testimonial at the 50th anniversary celebration of Silverman Brothers, "The sales ability of one brother, and the creative ability of the other made a very successful combination that has weathered three wars and several depressions."

The story in an *Evening Bulletin* interview of how Archibald Silverman met his wife is an indication of the small size of the business in its early days.

> We had a small shop on Calendar Street. I had no telephone in our place and where she worked they had a telephone. Her name was Ida Marcia Camelhor then and she was working during the summer vacations at a place where the Strand Theater is now. ... she quit school and came to work for us as bookkeeper. She got $6 a week. And she got a $1 raise, too. "Yes," Mrs. Silverman interposed. "You forget that I was more than just a bookkeeper. I was also shipping clerk, stenographer ..."

The firm grew and moved several times before moving, in 1917, to 226 Public Street. It was a partnership until 1946, then a corporation. The officers at the time of incorporation were President, Archibald Silverman; Vice President, C. Leon Silverman; Secretary and Treasurer, Charles Silverman; Assistant Treasurer, C. Sydney Silverman; and Assistant Treasurer, Norman L. Silverman. The sons of the two founders were all active in the business at one time or another. Harold, C. Sydney, Milton, and William were Charles's sons. Milton was head of sales in New York and California, and Sydney ran factory operations. Norman, Irwin, and C. Leon were Archibald's sons. Norman headed the business after the death of Charles Silverman.

Archibald Silverman was president of the New England Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths Association from 1926 to 1929.

On May 15, 1945, Silverman Brothers won the Army-Navy "E" Award for its production of insignia and decorations for the Armed Forces. The Award consisted "of a flag to be flown above your plant and a lapel pin which every man and woman in your plant may wear as a symbol of high contribution to American freedom." Silverman Brothers was cited for producing more than 26 million pieces for the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot. In addition to insignia, the company also made surgical instruments and airplane and torpedo parts for the war effort.

The co-founders and owners of Silverman Brothers were guests of honor at a surprise celebration staged by the 320 employees on the company's 50th anniversary.
in 1947. Ignaz Wenkart, plant superintendent, was Master of Ceremonies.

A quote from Norman Silverman in a *Providence Journal* article in 1950 is a good summary both of Silverman Brothers and the costume jewelry industry as a whole:

Silverman Brothers, which makes metal jewelry, and employed close to 700 before the war, has recently had work for only about 325, many of them on cut time.

"I don't know the whole answer," Norman Silverman said the other day. "Nobody does. We're squeezed between costs of labor and material on one side and having to make an inexpensive product on the other.

Bows, hearts, and so on are perennial products; with different treatment in design, they sell year after year...."

Quoting one of his elders in the business, Mr. Silverman said, "'We sell you some nothing.' That's about the size of it. The materials aren't valuable. It's the design, the idea, that the buyer gets satisfaction out of."

**Colonel Harry Cutler**

Colonel Harry Cutler, one of Rhode Island's most distinguished Jews and an important jewelry manufacturer, was born in Czarist Russia in 1875. Louis Marshall, Esq., in a memorial address for Cutler, described his early life:

Driven from inhospitable Russia in tender childhood, ... he came to these shores a boy of eight with stout heart and will incontrollable. Without friends, without influence, without the opportunities of education, asking nought of charity, he eliminated childhood from his calendar and struggled with his revered mother to maintain the family. No service was so menial but that he was prepared to render it so long as it was honorable. His daily tasks as a newsboy, a boot black, a worker in a cannery, a mill-hand, heroically performed ...

At sixteen Cutler was hired as a shipping clerk by a Providence jewelry firm. A 1913 newspaper article said of him:

He advanced rapidly, first to the position of foreman and finally to general manager. At twenty-four he purchased a jewelry factory that was about to go bankrupt with a small sum of borrowed money. By the beginning of the 20th century the Cutler Jewelry and Comb Company developed into one of the leading firms of its type in the United States, and Cutler emerged as one of a handful of Jewish manufacturers in Providence.
The Cutler Jewelry and Comb Company, located at 7 Eddy Street, Providence, was chiefly noted for the manufacture of gold shell* rings. It was made up of two corporations chartered in 1905: Cutler Comb Company and the Providence Jewelry Company, listed with capital of $50,000.28

Cutler was active in jewelry organizations, serving as founder and president of the Jewelers Protective Association, president of the New England Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths Association, and a member of the National Board of Trade. He was prominent in Rhode Island affairs, both secular and Jewish, and an important figure in national and world-wide Jewish affairs. For a description of his many activities, see Stanley B. Abrams, "Harry Cutler: An Outline of a Neglected Patriot," Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Volume 9, Number 2, November 1984, pp. 127-140.

Cutler died suddenly at the age of forty-six in 1920. The company was last listed in The Providence Directory for 1930.

LYONS MANUFACTURING COMPANY

Louis Lyons was born in London, England, in 1868 and came to Providence at the age of twenty-one. (For an account of his wedding to Faina S. Dimond, see "Society Wedding," page 317.) He first entered the textile industry and later the jewelry business and was located by 1900 at 101 Sabin Street, Providence, a center of jewelry manufacturing known as the Manufacturers Building.

The Lyons Manufacturing Company was incorporated in 1906 with Louis Lyons as president and treasurer and was capitalized at $100,000. It was listed as "manufacturing jewelers and ring-makers." In later years (1931) his business was listed as Louis Lyons & Company, Jewelry, at 385 Westminster Street.29

The Lyons enterprise was not listed after 1932, probably because the jewelry industry fell on hard times as a result of the Depression. In 1933 Lyons was recorded as "Insurance Agent" at 111 Westminster Street. The 1934 Providence Directory listed him as general manager and treasurer of the LaSalle Ring Company, Inc., at 107 Stewart Street, another jewelry factory area, but this may have been a belated appearance in the Directory, indications being that Lyons had left Providence in 1933. He died in California in 1938.

The name of Louis Lyons also appears in the charter, dated November 23, 1906, for "The William Loeb Company, Louis Lyons et al., Manufacturing Jewelry."30

* Early term for gold-filled jewelry, which has an outer surface of gold with other metal on the inside.
The A & Z Chain Company was founded by Charles Anschen and Benjamin Zetlin in 1903 at 9 Calender Street in Providence. The business moved to 116 Chestnut Street in 1909 and was incorporated in 1918 for "Manufacturing, buying and selling jewelry."

Anschen is considered to have invented and perfected the expansion watch bracelet. In addition, the company also made very fine gold-filled jewelry, such as rings, bracelets, key rings, and crosses.

Benjamin H. Rossman was born in Russia in 1892 and came to the United States by himself at age 13, hoping to become a doctor. Instead, his first job was washing dishes in a barroom in Boston. He worked at several jobs of this type to earn enough money to bring his whole family from Europe to live in Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Rossman began working for the Hanover Jewelry Company in Boston and was trained in all departments. Eventually, he became a partner in the business with his cousin. The cousin ran the inside operations of the company, while Rossman was the salesman. Through his contacts on the road, Rossman dealt with the A & Z Chain Company of Providence. When Anschen became ill in 1923, Zetlin was looking for a knowledgeable person for the business. Rossman sold out his Hanover Jewelry interest and started working for A & Z. He had married in 1922 in Boston and commuted back and forth to Rhode Island for several years until he became a partner with Zetlin.

Rossman bought Zetlin in the early 1940s and became the sole owner. He died in 1964. During the '60s the company moved across the street to a larger building at 95 Chestnut Street. A new modern facility was built at 655 Waterman Street, East Providence, in 1970. The company is now A & L Hayward, division of the Allison Reed Group.

According to a history of Klitzner Industries published on its 75th anniversary in 1982.

Around the turn of the century, fourteen-year-old Harry Klitzner worked as a plater's helper in someone else's jewelry shop. When he went home, he made fraternal emblematic jewelry in the back of his mother's candy store. Homemade tools hammered the designs. A goldfish bowl and enamel pots were used for dipping tanks. Owning a business with an
American flag flying over the building was the young man’s dream.

The history states that Klitzner had fancy letterheads made for Harry Klitzner Co. and guaranteed, “If our goods don’t make good we will.” With only a small directory of Loyal Order of the Moose Lodges listed across the country, he launched his mail order company in 1907. Business arrived in mail sacks, and he prospered. The first success was an elk’s tooth carved from Alaskan walrus for members of the Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks. “The secret dye used on the tooth was coffee.” One Masonic emblem still selling comes from a die made in 1907.

Harry Klitzner’s dream to own a successful company, in the words of the history,

was helped along by family members during those early years. His first recruit was his sister, Lillian. She quit school, taught herself how to type, and the money was so scarce she rarely received a salary. Some days she waited for a customer to send in a check before she could buy stamps to send out the next order. ... When Harry’s niece, Ruth Goldman, was 15, she used to type catalog labels for him. When she came into the company, her desk was next to her uncle’s. ... 35

Robert A. Klitzner, Harry’s son, joined the company after service in World War II. Another son, William, and Harry’s grandchildren, Alan and Carl, also became part of the company.

Klitzner Industries now covers an entire city block at 44 Warren Street, Providence, and consists of four divisions: Harry Klitzner Company, fraternal jewelry; Providence Emblem, industrial and premium jewelry; Historic Providence Mint, consumer collectibles; and K. I. Special Sales, private label manufacturing.

Lillian Klitzner, sister of Harry, who worked for Klitzner Industries for 58 years, at her desk in 1946.
BRIER MANUFACTURING COMPANY

The Brier family immigrated to the United States from Austria in 1900, and Samuel Brier started a tiny jewelry company in Providence. His brother Benjamin, who had worked as a solderer in several jewelry shops, came to work for him. Benjamin Brier, in an interview in 1976, said:

"We all went to work very early, selling newspapers at the age of eight on. It was pretty much the case with everyone we knew. I worked also as an errand boy and floor sweeper in jewelry shops, where I began to learn the fundamentals of manufacturing."

According to a *Fortune* article in 1936, Samuel Magid of Boston

had gone into the wholesale jewelry business in 1907 after a short career as a novelty-jewelry salesman selling such things as badges reading: "Remember the Maine, to hell with Spain." Then in 1913 Mr. Magid married a Providence girl named Rose Brier, and formed the Brier Manufacturing Co. to make jewelry for his wholesale trade with Benjamin, Charles, and Harry Brier, buying out Samuel Brier.

As President, Mr. Magid selected Benjamin Brier, his twenty-year-old brother-in-law and "christened the firm Little Nemo because he was very fond of the Winsor McCay comic-strip character. ... By 1916 Little Nemo was going so nicely that Mr. Magid went out of the wholesale business and became treasurer of Brier."

The company started in rented space at 70 Ship Street and, in 1928, moved to its large new factory at 222 Richmond Street, where it remained for half a century. The firm "exemplified the general trend in the Providence jewelry industry toward high volume production of increasingly inexpensive jewelry."

*Fortune* said about the Brier company in 1936:

"When gold was cheaper, Little Nemo used to make ten-carat gold baby rings that retailed for twenty cents. But the customers refused to believe that there was really gold in them. They preferred honest brass and nickel rings that made no extravagant claims. Now that's all cleared up, and Little Nemo is doing a fine business in rings. It's doing a fine business in other things, too, for Little Nemo is the biggest five-ten-twenty-five-cent jewelry manufacturer in the country. Last year the company grossed upward of $1,500,000 on some 30,000,000 pieces of jewelry, which it sold..."
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to chain stores like Woolworth and Kresge. This year it expects to do as well. ...

Little Nemo turns out about 5,000 products, but the only stable items are wedding rings, signet rings for children, pearl ear buttons, and collar and tie pins. Everything else has to be changed in three to six months because customers like their cheap jewelry new and strange. This helps to keep stock moving, but it prevents the company from doing much of its work by machine since it costs too much to manufacture special equipment that can be used only a short time. Ordinarily Little Nemo employs 500 people, but currently, because of the Christmas trade, there are 1,000 working at the plant, 75 per cent of them women. Sixty per cent of the cost of Little Nemo jewelry is in labor, and Mr. Magid gets despondent when he describes the seventy-five operations it takes to make a rhinestone bracelet that sells for only twenty cents. ...

Little Nemo has never tried to get its jewelry into department stores. The company thinks it's better to make jewelry at one price and make it right than to get mixed up trying to make jewelry at different prices. Since Woolworth changed its price policy to include items up to ninety-five cents, Little Nemo has put out a few articles that cost as much as fifty cents. But that's as high as Little Nemo intends to go."

A 1946 Fortune article describes Brier and Silverman Brothers as the largest plants manufacturing syndicate jewelry [the costume jewelry industry term for items sold to syndicate, that is, chain stores and 5- and 10-cent stores].

Burleigh (B. B.) Greenberg, a nephew of Benjamin Brier, worked for the company before World War II, traveling to and from Czechoslovakia and Germany buying rhinestones, simulated gems, and artificial pearls. After serving in the armed forces, he returned to Brier Manufacturing, where he was a key figure.

Benjamin Brier was president of the New England Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths Association in 1942-1943. He retired from the jewelry business in 1972 and died in 1986. His son, Milton, became president of Brier Manufacturing after Benjamin retired. The company ceased operations in 1978.

Blacher Brothers, Inc.

David Blacher, a coppersmith, first came to the United States from Russia in 1890, returned, and then immigrated to Providence in 1900. In 1904 his wife, five sons, and two daughters traveled from Zabludovo, Russia, by horse and wagon, train, and ship to New York, and then by boat to Providence "where supposedly the mother paid an iceman some money to take her and her family in his wagon to a place
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on North Main Street where they then stayed the first night. After that they went to live with the father at 44 Shawmut Street. 39

Harry Blacher, who was then 13 years old, worked for several different companies from 1904 to 1907 and learned jewelry making.

Benjamin Blacher, years ago, told a story of why his older brother Harry decided to go into business for himself. ... Harry, realizing that he knew his trade well, walked out on his last employer after demanding a large salary increase that the employer would only meet half way. He then went into business for himself, at the age of 17, and used the name United Jewelry Company. 40

This costume jewelry manufacturing business is believed to have been located at 26 Fountain Street. Bernard Cohen (see Cohen Manufacturing Co., below) remembers his father, Harry Cohen, telling him that Harry Blacher was one of the best sample makers he ever saw. 41

The Blacher Brothers partnership of Harry and Samuel Blacher was organized in 1911 at the Fountain Street address. The business moved to 31 Mathewson Street in 1917. Two other brothers, Samuel and Louis, started working for the company in 1919 and were admitted as partners in 1920. (Joseph Blacher, the oldest brother, had gone into the roofing business in Boston.)

Blacher Brothers was admitted to membership in the New England Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths Association in 1920. Two officers who signed the letter of admission were Harry Cature and Archibald Silverman.

The company moved to 43 Sabin Street in 1921. Through the years Blacher Brothers took over several other jewelry companies: Morris Bieber Manufacturing Company, American Jewelry Findings Company, and Providence Art Metal Company. From Providence Art Metal they received very old tools, including tools for making Civil War insignia.

Blacher began the manufacture of frames and ornaments for handbags in about 1930, moved to a purchased building at 299 Carpenter Street in 1937, and stopped producing jewelry in 1945. The business was incorporated in 1946. Harry Blacher was chairman of the board until retiring in 1978 and died at 90 in 1981. Stanley P. Blacher is now president of the firm, which maintains offices at 166 Valley Street. 42
Maurice J. Karpeles came to Providence in the late 1890s from Washington, D.C., where he was born. He started the first business that imported cultured pearls from Japan into the United States and, with a Japanese associate, Mikimoto, exhibited cultured pearls at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900. He was listed in the Providence Directory of 1903 as a manager at 152 Weybosset Street.

The Low-Taussig-Karpeles Company was incorporated in 1910 by Maurice J. Karpeles, Joseph B. Congdon, and Frank H. Bellin "For importing, exporting and dealing generally in precious, semi-precious, scientific reconstructed, manufactured, glass and paste stones and pearls." The business was located at 139 Mathewson Street, and Karpeles was president.

Karpeles manufactured simulated pearls, giving his product the name La Tausca, from the sound of the first syllables in the company’s name. He used beads dipped in a luminous paste made from herring scales, “a process he is believed to have developed. La Tausca pearls were known as the finest artificial pearls made. During the ’30s Karpeles sold the name to another manufacturer.”

After losing money during the Depression, Karpeles went into business manufacturing ecclesiastical jewelry, establishing three companies: M. J. Karpeles, Inc., Di Roma Corp., and the Karpeles Rosary Company. He received an award from the Vatican in recognition of his work in making the rosaries presented to the first Americans named as cardinals by the Vatican.

L. Jim Williams of Providence has interesting memories as a child in the early ’40s of going with Karpeles, his grandfather, to the daily lunch meetings of Providence jewelers, first at the Narragansett Hotel and later at Winkler’s Middle Street Cafe. He recalls that men in the jewelry business occupied three tables, one he remembers for stone importers, one for chain manufacturers, and one for other manufacturers, but that occasionally the seating arrangements were mixed up. Some of the diners were Christian, some Jewish, Williams says. “I remember Archibald Silverman and Charles Rothman. Rothman’s son, Robert, and I were the two children frequently invited. More deals were cut there than anywhere else. The lunches were the start of the Providence Jewelers Club.”

Harry Cohen’s father was trained while in the Russian army to be a physician. After he died, his wife and her four young children came to Rhode Island, where they had relatives, in about 1896.
Wholesale price sheet from Maurice J. Karpeles, 1920s.
Harry Cohen, who was ten years old, shined shoes and sold newspapers to help support his family. When he was a little older, he was hired by a jewelry manufacturer on Sabin Street in Providence to count pieces of jewelry by the gross. At 18, he became a foreman. The business went bankrupt in 1909, and Cohen decided to start his own business. He had about $50 and, with great difficulty, managed to borrow another $150.

Cohen Manufacturing Co. began in 1910 in rented bench space on the top floor of 24 Calender Street, Providence. Cohen sold an order in Boston for stickpins, bought materials, soldered them together, took the product to a plater for finishing, and then delivered the pins to Boston. He worked every day from about six in the morning to eleven at night. The next year he rented larger space on the third floor of 9 Calender Street and later moved to Sabin Street. In 1913 he moved the business to the Doran Building at 70 Ship Street. The company made inexpensive jewelry — pins, rings, and bracelets — for the syndicate stores. At one time he employed about 150 people. "Many employees were needed because a worker would have to solder about ten cups of rhinestones together to make one bar pin."

Cohen stopped manufacturing jewelry when World War II started, but continued to pay rent to Doran Brothers, planning to start again after the war. However, Speidel Company, located in the same building, needed more space, and Cohen’s lease was cancelled. He then opened a small manufacturing business on Weybosset Street with his son, Bernard. Harry Cohen died in 1958. The business was sold when Bernard Cohen retired.

Coro

Coro started as the Cohn and Rosenberger* Company in New York City in 1896 for the manufacture of imitation pearls, novelty jewelry, and beads. Coro, Inc., jewelry manufacturers, was founded in 1901 and established a factory in Providence in 1906. Samuel Austen of Staten Island, New York, who worked in the New York office of Coro as a very young man from 1930 to 1937, recalls hearing that Cohn and Rosenberger started a separate company to manufacture Corograms, which were metal initials for women’s handbags, and then named the whole company Coro.

In 1929 they moved into a new factory at 167 Point Street, Providence, noteworthy at the time of its construction for the unprecedented amount of floorspace devoted to one jewelry company’s operation, 160,000 square feet. ... built in the.... flat-slab, reinforced concrete style of construction

*Cohn’s first name is not known; Rosenberger’s first name was Carl.
Although the onset of the Great Depression made this expansion appear ill-timed, the Coro Company survived by becoming the leading manufacturer in the field of costume jewelry in the United States. Paradoxically, the Depression of the 1930s stimulated the Providence jewelry industry, as precious jewelry craftsmen applied their skills to the design of cheaper, mass-produced jewelry. By introducing a quality approach, they raised the production standards of costume jewelry and stimulated its consumption. Coro had been one of the first firms to experiment in costume jewelry, and with its new plant, it was the best equipped to respond to the new demand. It consolidated its early lead and went on to become the biggest manufacturer of costume jewelry, on into the 1960s.

Carl Rosenberger was first Coro president, then board chairman. His son Gerald succeeded him as president. His other son, George, was in company sales.

After the new plant opened in Providence and the company ceased manufacturing in New York, the New York operation of Coro consisted of showrooms, offices, and a small stock and shipping department for the convenience of city buyers. Austen remembers that he started at a salary of $15 a week in 1930 and progressed to $17 a week as head of the earring department.

Austen’s brother-in-law, Julius Kaplan, had started at Coro at the age of 14 in 1923. Kaplan had been head of the earring department and then advanced rapidly to become the chief buyer for the company. As Austen explains,

Even Coro, the biggest jewelry manufacturer, couldn't produce every item needed for a complete line for salesmen. They bought items from smaller manufacturers and contractors and also imported some items. Kaplan’s job as buyer of all these items was a very responsible position. Though not an officer, he was the backbone of the company.

Kaplan worked for Coro for 51 years before he retired at 65. He lived in Rhode Island for 35 years, first in Washington Park, Providence, and then in Warwick. He died in 1987.

*Fortune* reported in 1946 that Coro was the only costume jeweler whose financial statements are on public record. It employs 2000, mostly in Providence, and the company has shown an uninterrupted rise in consolidated net sales... to $16,100,000 in 1945... Full of commercial savvy, cashing in on all levels of the costume-jewelry market, Coro mass-produces as many as 2,000 different jewelry...
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designs each spring and fall season. Its success can further be indicated by
the fact that twenty-one of its officers and salesmen earn more than
$20,000 a year.53

In 1970 Coro merged with Richton International of New York, and in 1977 the
business was reorganized as the Richton Jewelry Company with six divisions.
Among the divisions were Coro, manufacturing fashion jewelry priced from $3.50
to $7.50, and Vendome, which made better fashion jewelry priced from $5 to $25.
The trademark and stock was sold to Marvella, Inc., in 1979.54

NEW ENGLAND GLASS WORKS
RICE WEINER & CO.

New England Glass Works was started in 1913 at 12 Beverly Street in Providence
with the manufacture of hat pins. In the shop, glass was melted, shaped, and later
blown to make bubbles for jewelry and as a base for artificial pearls.

Alexander Leo and Albert Weiner came to the United States from Russia as
young children in about 1900. Albert married a woman named Rice whose brother
became a partner with him in New England Glass Works. In 1918, Alexander was
admitted to the partnership. He had worked for some years in another jewelry
company and brought to New England Glass Works the expertise he had learned as
a glass blower and the formulas he had developed for imitation pearl essence.

Pearl essence contains fish scales, color, and lacquer into which is
dipped the glass or plastic bubble. After several coats of lacquer the bubble
becomes a pearl. Before the first World War pearl essence was imported
from Germany. The New England Glass Works formula to make the pearl
essence was a closely guarded secret. No one could enter the pearlizing
room except the owners of the business and the pearlizer. This formula is
still used by companies manufacturing pearls.55

New England Glass Works flourished from the 1920s through the 1940s. When
Isaac Rice died, his share was taken over by his sons, Albert Rice and Robert Rice.
They remained partners with Alexander Weiner until 1946, when they left to form
the Barclay Jewelry Company. In 1927 Albert Weiner left the family business to
form his own company, the Albert Manufacturing Company. (See Albert Manufac-
turing Company, below.)

Rice Weiner & Co. was started as a division of New England Glass Works in the
1940s and remained in the sole ownership of Alexander Weiner after 1946. He was
then joined in the business by his two sons, Howard and Lloyd Weiner. After the
demise of Rice Weiner and New England Glass Works in 1956, Howard Weiner started his own jewelry company, Lambert Mfg., which he operated until his retirement in 1985.36

W & W JEWELRY CO.

Lewis Wattman came to the United States in 1903 from Kishinev, Russia, and went to work for Fraser and Co., where he was trained in all of the jobs involved in jewelry manufacturing, including tool press operation. In 1916 he and Samuel White pooled their resources of $500 and started their own factory, the W. & W. Jewelry Company at 9 Calender Street. Wattman used his skills as a stone-setter, and together they designed and made rhinestone jewelry, some sold to jobbers for department stores and some to syndicate jewelry stores.

The business closed in the early 1960s.37

KESTENMAN BROS. MFG. CO.

Abraham Kestenman, oldest of the Kestenman brothers, and his father, an egg candler, came to the United States from Haskelton, Austria, in about 1910. After working in New York for a while, they moved to Providence, where Abraham started a small jewelry business on Clifford Street in 1916. His mother and three brothers, Charles, Louis, and Max, remained in Europe for a time.

The brothers then joined Abraham in the jewelry venture, and the business became the Kestenman Bros. Mfg. Co. in 1917. It is believed to have manufactured snaps for women’s lingerie in the early days. Cameos were one of the first jewelry items produced. A booklet marking the move from a plant at 150 Chestnut Street in Providence to 280 Kinsley Avenue stated:

in 1920 our facilities were focused toward pioneering in the designing and production of watch bands. Since that time the demand for these watch bands has steadily increased compelling us to expand at different locations to obtain larger plant facilities. Today our watch bands — "Kestenmade", "Peerless", and "Sentinel" — are well-known and worn all over the world.38

The Kestenman brothers were very close and worked together as a cohesive group. Abraham Kestenman spent much time traveling for the business. He left the company in 1938 and founded Colonial Manufacturing, making costume jewelry, in a two-floor building at the corner of Eddy and Public Streets, Providence. He retired after World War II but in 1950 opened Lloyd’s restaurant on Waterman
Street in Providence, recalling how he had wished that he could buy a good sandwich in Providence like those he had when he was “on the road.”

Max, who became president of the company, dealt mainly with the public. Charles, the company’s artist, studied jewelry design at the Rhode Island School of Design. Louis managed the office and financial matters. A nephew of Louis, Morton Zisquit, worked for the company for 40 years.

S. Samuel Kestenman, son of Max and Pauline (Garr) Kestenman, was active in the company for 35 years and became president in the 1970s. He was elected president of the Providence Jewelers Club in 1969. After his death in 1986 the business was liquidated.

Front Row, l. to r., Max Kestenman, Jacob and Golde Kestenman. Back Row, l. to r., Louis Kestenman, Abraham Kestenman, Charles Kestenman. Photo from early 1920s.
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A. BELLIN & CO.

Archie Bellin came from Elizabethgrad, Russia, to Rhode Island by himself in 1906, when he was 14 years old. Two years later his father asked him to come back to Russia, but he returned permanently to the United States after six months.

Bellin’s first job in Rhode Island was as a bench hand and press operator at Silverman Brothers. He also worked for Koter & Copit for a short time.

Shortly after his discharge from World War I Army service in 1918, Bellin started his own jewelry manufacturing business, A. Bellin & Co.

Friends in New York and Arizona encouraged Bellin to make souvenir jewelry, such as slides (used by women to adjust the length of chains), pins, and silver spoons, for conventions and for resort areas like Niagara Falls. He also manufactured commemorative jewelry for the New York World’s Fair of 1939-40 and made inexpensive costume jewelry. He was his own salesman, taking off one month during the year and traveling around the country by train to make business contacts.

During the 1920s Bellin built a factory on Bassett Street in Providence. In 1946 the business name changed to Bellin & Co. and manufactured only souvenir jewelry. Bellin retired in the early 1960s and died in 1978.

BOJAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY

In 1914 Leo Bojar, originally from Lithuania, came to New York from Poland with his wife and his son, William. While working in New York as a bookkeeper for five clients, he met Benjamin Novgrad, a sales representative, who convinced Bojar to start a jewelry business with him in Providence.

The Bojars moved to Douglas Avenue, Providence, and on September 19, 1919, the Novgrad and Bojar business started at 24 Conduit Street for the manufacture of gold rings to be sold to wholesalers.

In 1925 the partnership of Novgrad and Bojar was dissolved, and Novgrad went into partnership with Charles Rothman as Rothman and Novgrad. Bojar continued in business as Bojar Manufacturing Company, buying tools of bankrupt firms whenever he could. To this day the company makes gold rings, among other items.

Bojar’s son, William, graduated from Brown University in 1933 as an electrical engineer and went into the family business. He continues to run the company; his son David joined the firm in 1971.
C & G MANUFACTURING COMPANY

Jonas Goldenberg, who was a singer in cantorial choirs all over Europe, came to the United States from Galicia, now part of Poland, with his younger brother, David, in about 1907. They joined their father and stepmother in Rhode Island, and Jonas went to work in a jewelry factory, M & S Co., owned by Morris Streicher. He became a foreman and made friends with Morris Chusmir, a foreman in another department.

Goldenberg and Chusmir left M & S and worked for Brier Manufacturing Company, leaving Brier in 1920 to open their own business, Chusmir and Goldenberg, at 117 Point Street. In 1922 the business took the name C & G Manufacturing Company. The company manufactured high quality costume jewelry. Goldenberg was the designer, traveling to Europe for design ideas and to buy samples.

In the early 1930s Goldenberg left C & G to form his own stone-setting company. He planned to return to C & G but died in 1935.

ADOLPH MELLER COMPANY

Adolph Meller began working in the import-export business in Berlin, Germany. He was sent to New York to be trained for several years in the American counterpart of the business. After his marriage, he and his wife moved to the United States. They were lonely for their families in Europe and returned to Germany with their children after World War I, but Mrs. Meller found she missed America. They came back to the United States in 1921, and Meller founded the Adolph Meller Company at 40 Fountain Street in Providence.

The Adolph Meller Company imported precious, semi-precious, and imitation stones. Meller travelled back and forth to Europe pursuing his business interests. When he saw what was happening in Nazi Germany, he set up a small lapidary shop on Charles Street to develop the techniques of working on stones which might no longer be available from Europe. Later the company built a factory at 120 Corliss Street.

Meller went into work for the government after the outbreak of World War II. He manufactured jewel bearings, tiny precious sapphire crystals which were used in sighting devices for bombers and tanks. The company was given the Army-Navy “E” award for its wartime achievements.

Adolph Meller died at 55 in 1947. His sons, Max and Robert, were in the business until their deaths. The company is still in operation.
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GENSER MANUFACTURING CO.

The parents of Max, David, Isadore, and Julia Genser came to Rhode Island, where they had relatives, from Buczacz, Austria, shortly before World War I. After about six months they were able to send for their children.

Max and David worked for Brier Manufacturing Company; their foreman was Morris Chusmir. Max left Brier to work for Dr. Ille Berger and learn how to make dentures and crowns. After a few years he left Dr. Berger and opened his own dental laboratory in the Kinsley Building in downtown Providence. Several years later he sold that business to his brother Isadore.

Using $500 from the dowries of each of the wives, Max and David started the Genser Manufacturing Company on 111 Point Street, Providence, in 1924, making inexpensive jewelry of brass and white metal. Their salesmen also sold for C & G Manufacturing Company. These salesmen represented Genser to the chain stores such as Woolworth and to jewelry wholesalers and also to the button trade, for which they made the tops of earrings in graduated sizes for buttons.

“...In 1936 the company moved to 45 Waldo Street and expanded into the manufacture of simulated pearls, becoming the largest manufacturer of this product in the country,” said Wallace Genser, son of Max. While still in high school in 1938, Wallace Genser instituted a new process of casting white metal jewelry; “then the rest of the industry began to change. During World War II the toolroom was redone to accommodate the manufacture of items for the armed forces.”

Genser was the first company to develop plating on plastics (non-conductive materials). Alfred Weisberg recalls discussing the process with the Genser consultant, Dr. Harold Narcus of Worcester, Mass., and hearing that Genser Manufacturing, using this new technique, was responsible for silver metallizing all the gum-ball machine tokens in the United States during the 1940s.

Automatic stringing machines were developed by the Genser company in 1947-48. At this time the company was making and selling a quarter of a million strands of pearls per week and employing 1,000 people.

Max sold his share of the business to his brother David in 1951.

The husband of Julia Genser, Hyman Jacobson, worked for Genser Manufacturing for a while and then started a new business, Regal Pearl Company, with Al Weinstock as partner. This business, located at 501 Broad Street, Providence, manufactured costume jewelry.
ALBERT MANUFACTURING COMPANY

In 1927 Albert Weiner left the family business he had been in, New England Glass Works, (See New England Glass Works, above) to form his own company, the Albert Manufacturing Company, (name changed later to Sprague Manufacturing). He was later joined in the business by his son, Harold Weiner.

Albert Manufacturing made pearls and metals for costume jewelry. The most important part of the business was the manufacture of white metal molds for syndicate jewelry.

During the early 1930s, when the jobbers the company sold to started dictating terms, Weiner started his own sales business to sell directly to the stores.

Harold Weiner, in 1936, opened a factory in Toronto to sell jewelry in the British Empire. He stayed a year, until war was imminent and the British government placed an embargo on jewelry. He then turned the Toronto plant over to two employees and returned to Rhode Island, where he still operates Albert Manufacturing Company.

During World War II Albert Manufacturing was heavily engaged in production of bullet dies for the war effort.

CLOVER BEAD JEWELRY COMPANY

Solomon and Samuel Kipnis, two immigrants from Russia, began their business careers peddling low-cost costume jewelry from a pushcart on the Lower East Side of New York in the early 1900s. They later opened a store at 141 Orchard Street in New York. The imitation pearls used at that time were manufactured in Germany from wax and were very breakable. When the Kipnis brothers discovered that better quality, longer lasting imitation pearls were being made in Japan, they decided to begin importing the new pearls and to manufacture costume jewelry themselves. They named their new business the Clover Bead Novelty Company.

In February of 1934 the brothers moved their factory from New York to 7 Beverly Street in Providence, Rhode Island. Samuel remained in New York and operated the sales office there. Solomon moved to Rhode Island to manage the factory, which manufactured mostly sterling silver chains. The business was moved to Sabin Street, Pawtucket, in 1942 and renamed the Clover Bead Jewelry Company.

Irving Newman, a nephew of the Kipnis Brothers, managed the retail division of
the company in New York. In 1942 he moved to Rhode Island to become superintendent and head of personnel for Clover Bead. He relocated his family to Pawtucket a year later.

Clover Bead manufactured costume jewelry, employing 200 to 300 people until the end of World War II, when the business expanded to 800 people working two shifts.

The business was sold in the late 1960s.98

TRIFARI, KRUSMAN & FISHEL

Trifari, Krussman & Fishel was originally a New York company, founded in 1925. Its main business was the manufacture of hair ornaments and jeweled shoe buckles. In the mid-thirties the company established a small manufacturing facility in Providence on Clifford Street. Of the founding members, only Fishel, who was born in Rhode Island, was Jewish.

W. Irving Wolf, an industrial engineer with a degree from the University of Pennsylvania, became involved with Trifari in 1938 at the suggestion of the Manufacturers Hanover Bank, New York City.

In 1939 the jewelers' union representing the Trifari New York workers wanted the company to close its Providence operations, which were non-union. During arbitration proceedings Trifari offered not to operate its Rhode Island plant unless the New York factory was operating a full 40-hour week. The union refused this offer and, before arbitration proceedings were completed, called a strike. Because of this unusual and unprecedented procedure, the arbitrator told the union he hoped it would lose. Trifari packed up and moved all of its operations to 162 Clifford Street, Providence. Meanwhile, in New York, the union sued in Federal court and lost.

In 1946 Fortune described Trifari as "the top costume-jewelry house as to style. ... Trifari confines itself to the higher-priced lines — from about $10 up."

Wolf left Trifari in 1944, returning to New York as a consultant to a large
women’s underwear manufacturing company. In 1948 he was recruited by Royal 
Little to return to Rhode Island as president of Ostby & Barton, a manufacturer of 
precious metal rings owned by the Rhode Island Charities Trust.

Wolf Sr. retired from Ostby & Barton in the early 1950s, succeeded as president 
by Edwin B. Krause. He later started two other jewelry businesses, Wolco and Selfit 
Ring.

W. Irving Wolf Jr. joined Trifari in 1940, becoming president in 1977. At the 
beginning of World War II, when base metals were difficult to obtain, the firm used 
sterling silver for its jewelry. Wolf Jr. then turned to the manufacture of bullet 
punches and dies for torpedoes. He was drafted in 1942, but was sent home five 
weeks later to find and train a replacement for the defense operation at Trifari, 
returning to the armed services after eight months.

Wolf Jr. was president of the Manufacturing jewelers and Silversmiths of 
America from 1970 to 1972. He retired from Trifari in 1981.71 

S. RAPAPORTE & CO.

Samuel Rapaporte Jr. was born in Providence in 1902. He began his long career 
in the jewelry industry as a boy, working after school for his uncles, the Fosters, in 
the Theodore W. Foster and Brothers Jewelry Company. In 1938 he founded his 
own business, S. Rapaporte & Co., which manufactured costume jewelry from 
original designs. The business started on Chestnut Street in Providence, but moved 
to Attleboro, Massachusetts, in the 1940s.

“One of his great assets was his feeling for art,” Rapaporte’s widow, Rieka 
Rapaporte, said. “He was an astute businessman using his innate good taste and love 
of antiques to revamp or restyle items he saw in Europe. His product was so good 
Trifari became interested.”72

“In the early 1940s he began a long relationship producing fashion jewelry for 
Trifari, Krussman and Fishel, a relationship that lasted due to Mr. Rapaporte’s 
innovative designs and techniques.”73 During World War II, Rapaporte converted 
his equipment and presses to the manufacture of bandages and other surgical 
supplies for the armed services. He resumed jewelry manufacturing after the war. 
In the ’60s he joined with the Trifari Company to become the original suppliers of 
fashion jewelry to the Avon Products Company. S. Rapaporte & Co. was sold in 
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Information for this section also from interviews with Julia Jacobson, November 17, 1989, and James Genser, December 16, 1989.

Interview with Harold Weiner, ibid.

Information for this section from interview with Lillian Newman Schwartz, October 17, 1989.

Fortune, December, 1946.

Information for this section from interview with W. Irving Wolf, Jr., May 17, 1989.

Interview with Rieka Rapaporte, May 24, 1989.

SOCIETY WEDDING

By SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M. D.

One of the earliest social events in the Providence Jewish community that had the trappings of "high society" and received commensurate coverage in the Providence newspapers was the elaborate wedding in 1892 of Flora S. Dimond and Louis Lyons. Born in Providence, Flora was the daughter of Leopold and Johanna Abrams Dimond. In her early twenties, Flora was a singer of some talent and was a member of the choir and had rendered a solo at the recent dedication (1890) of the new Friendship Street Synagogue of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Reform).

Although not yet at the height of his merchandizing career, Leopold Dimond, at the time of the wedding, was obviously prospering in his dry goods business at Randall Square in Providence. Lyons, at the time of the wedding, was in the textile business, although he would later be successful in jewelry manufacturing, a dominant industry in the Providence area. At the time of the wedding he was twenty-four years old.

After a description of the wedding and its attendant activities, further facts concerning the cast of characters will be provided. The following account of the ceremony and entertainment is extracted from The Providence Journal, Thursday, June 9, 1892.

JUNE WEDDINGS

Lyons-Dimond

The most fashionable event of the season in Hebrew social circles was the marriage of Mr. Louis Lyons, senior member of the firm of Lyons & Brown, of the Berinek Knitting Company, to Miss Flora Dimond, daughter of Mr. Leopold Dimond, the well-known dealer in dry goods on Randall Square, which occurred yesterday afternoon at 5 o'clock in the Jewish Temple on Friendship Street. The popularity of the contracting parties, not only in Providence and vicinity, but also in New York and Boston, was attested by the brilliant and representative gathering in the Synagogue, which filled the auditorium, choir gallery and corridors to repletion an hour before the ceremony was solemnized. Shortly after 5 o'clock the bridal party formed in the vestibule and proceeded to the altar, to the music of the Swedish Wedding March, in the following order: Ushers, Joseph Cohen, Maurice Dimond, Louis Green and Israel Strauss; Henry Shartenberg and Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky is Editor Emeritus of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes. This paper is a by-product of the author's forthcoming book, A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership: The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El), Providence, Rhode Island, to be published by the Congregation and now in press.

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Mrs. Shartenberg, grandmother to the bride; Mr. Louis Lyons, the bridegroom, and Mrs. Shartenberg; Mr. Shartenberg and Mrs. Leopold Dimond, mother of the bride; bridesmaids and groomsmen, Mr. Abe Dimond, brother of the bride, and Miss Pearl Kautowitz of Boston; Louis Rosenfield and Miss Gertrude Schumann of Providence; Mr. David Bernkopf and Miss Millie Frank of Providence; Miss Flora Dimond, the bride, and her father, Mr. Leopold Dimond; maid of honor, Miss Jeanette Lederer, and Master Henry Dimond. The party moved slowly down the main aisle and took positions upon a dais in front of the altar, where they were met by Rev. Dr. Lasker of Boston, the officiating clergyman. The altar and the chancel were handsomely decorated with ferns, plants and smilax by florist Johnson, and the body of the house reserved for the guests, 200 in number, was separated by white satin ribbon bands, which extended across the tops of the pews on opposite sides of the aisles. The altar and the auditorium was brilliantly lighted, and the rich toilettes of the ladies beside their escorts in conventional full dress contributed to the attractiveness of the nuptial celebration. Rev. Dr. Lasker invoked divine blessing, and soprano and tenor solos by Mrs. G. E. C. Buttington and Mr. Fred S. Gardiner were given during the performance of the ritual of the church. The ceremonial of drinking the wine and the words of counsel supplemented by the solemnization of the vows formed a most impressive feature, and then the bridal party in reverse order returned to their carriages, and followed by the guests drove to the Trocadero, where the reception and wedding supper were given. The bride's gown was of white corded silk, falling in a long court train from a Watteau pleat from the back of the bodice. The front edge of the skirt is finished with a deep band of pearl passementerie. A girdle of pearls ornamented the front of the pointed low-cut bodice. The elbow sleeves are finished with Valenciennes lace and pearl epaulettes. A long reel of white tulle was fastened with orchids and a diamond and pearl pendant, the gift of the groom, adorned her neck.

The bridesmaids were attired in rich, China white silks, en train, point lace trimmings, with draperies and flowers to match their characteristic tastes. Miss Kautowitz wore Empire drapery of old rose, and carried a bouquet of variegated pinks. Miss Rosenfield's drapery was of lavender mousseline de soie with diamond ornaments, and carried a bouquet of heliotrope. Miss Frank wore yellow ribbon drapery, and carried a bouquet of choice flowers. Miss Schuman's draperies were of Nile green ribbon, and she carried a basket of mignonette. Each of the bridesmaids wore Grecian [tiaras] of white rolled ribbon, with clusters of lilies of the valley as the crown pieces. They also wore souvenirs presented by the bridegroom, consisting of rings set in turquoise and pearl, in love-knot design. The little maid of honor wore white China silk with tulle drapery, white ribbon bows, and carried a basket of moss rosebuds. Mrs. Dimond wore a silver grey Bengaline flounced with black lace and trimmed with silver passementerie and diamond ornaments. Mrs. Shartenburg wore a black...
Pompadour silk, flowered in lavender, with jet trimmings and diamond ornaments. Each of the groomsmen wore souvenirs presented by the bride, in the form of scarf pins in the design of a crescent and arrow, set in pearls. The reception was held in the Trocadero at 6:30 o’clock, and after the presentations were over, the master of ceremonies, Mr. Alex Strauss, invited the company to the supper hall. Caterer George A. Harris of Boston served an elaborate menu in which rare dishes in great variety were interspersed with choice wines and relishes in elegant style. Toastmaster Strauss then read a series of congratulatory telegrams from different parts of the country, and toasted Rabbi Lasher, Mr. Leopold Dimond, the bridegroom, and president Leopold Hartmann of the Temple committee. The latter, in behalf of the congregation, presented the bride with a superb gold-lined silver service and salver, for the reception of which Mr. Lyons conveyed the thanks of his wife. There was a season of festivity by the older folks which participated in the banquet, and then they repaired to the dance hall, where Reeves’s Orchestra had invited the younger element to the waltz, lancers, schottische, and other fashionable figures. This reception was specially designed for the friends of the bridal couple, and until midnight the hall presented an animated and picturesque spectacle. Then they were bidden to partake of a supper specially prepared by caterer Harris. Mr. and Mrs. Lyons made their adieux in order to catch the midnight train for New York and Washington, where they will spend their honeymoon. During the afternoon the wedding presents were exhibited at the residence of the bride’s parents on Friendship Street, and a magnificent array of silverware, bric-a-brac, and a miscellaneous collection of household ornaments and utensils, invited critical appreciation for their value and beauty. The festivities were prolonged to a late hour, and Mr. and Mrs. Dimond were the recipients of cordial congratulations upon the splendid success which had crowned the nuptial celebration, and which in point of social distinction and completeness stamped it as one of the most notable events in Hebraic circles ever chronicled in the city’s social life.*

Leopold Dimond, father of the bride, was born in New York City on January 27, 1845, the son of Jacob and August Dimond. He moved to Providence at the age of eighteen, probably to join relatives already living there. He early engaged in the dry goods business on a small scale, first appearing in The Providence Directory in 1872, where his first venture was listed at 170 Charles Street in the Hedley block. As business thrived, he erected and occupied a building on Randall Square in the North End of Providence. He maintained a dry goods business in Randall Square for the next twenty years. In 1895 he operated dry goods and ladies’ garment stores at 281 Atwells Avenue on Federal Hill and 299 Westminster Street in downtown Providence.

In 1898 the O’Gorman Company entered the department store business at 244 Westminster Street. Dimond leased the departments selling women’s garments of

*Any incorrect spellings were in the original newspaper clipping quoted.
all sorts. He had similar interests in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1901 Dimond assumed control of the entire business, which had become one of the city's largest department stores. By this time his sons had joined the organization. In 1908 the company was incorporated as L. Dimond and Sons, Incorporated, "To engage in the business of manufacturing, buying and selling ready-to-wear garments and other personal property."

Although active in public affairs, Dimond's only elective office was one term in the House of Representatives of the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1894. According to his obituary: "In store matters he was better known as a friend than as an employer, having always a smile and a pleasant word for all his workers." The story continued: "He never forgot those who worked with him and encouraged him in the 'little North End store.'"

Dimond was a member of many charitable organizations, "although the extent of his gifts will probably never be known." He was a member of the Masonic Redwood Lodge, No.35. A.F. and A.M. and was for many years a trustee or officer of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El), serving as president of the congregation in 1897-1898.

For several years prior to his death, Dimond's sons, Abraham, M. Maurice, and Henry, were in partnership with him. He had been in failing health for a number of years and had been confined to bed for the last five months of his life. He died at home on February 24, 1911, in his 67th year. He was survived by his three sons; his widow, Johanna Abrams Dimond; and daughter, Flora S. Dimond Lyons. On the very day of his death The Evening Bulletin (Providence) carried one and two-thirds pages of advertisements for Dimond's, "Rhode Island's Fast Growing Store." It boasted entrances on Westminster, Weybosset and Snow Streets, a considerable spread.

Johanna Dimond, the same age as her husband, survived him by three years, dying unexpectedly in Frankfort, Germany, on April 18, 1894. She had been a very active member of the Montefiore Lodge Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association.

Louis Lyons,* born in London, England in 1868, came to Providence in 1889 at the age of twenty-one. As stated in the account of his wedding, he was in 1892 a senior member of the firm of Lyons & Brown of the Berinek Knitting Company. In later years he prospered in the jewelry manufacturing business, a staple industry in Rhode Island, and by 1900 was located at 101 Sabin Street in Providence, known as the Manufacturers' Building, a center of jewelry manufacturing. The Lyons Manufacturing Company was incorporated in 1906 with Louis Lyons as president.

and treasurer and was capitalized at $100,000. It was listed as "manufacturing jewelers and ring-makers." In later years (1931) his business was listed as Louis Lyons & Company, Jewelry, at 385 Westminster Street.

With the Great Depression, the jewelry industry came upon hard times. The Lyons enterprise was not listed after 1932, and in 1933 Lyons was recorded as "Insurance Agent" at 111 Westminster Street. The 1934 Providence Directory listed him as general manager and treasurer of the LaSalle Ring Company, Inc., at 107 Stewart Street in Providence, another jewelry factory area. This was seemingly a belated appearance in the Directory, indications being that Lyons had left Providence during 1933. He joined his family in Hollywood, California, where he spent the last five years of his life. He died there on November 3, 1938, in his seventy-first year.

Lyons had been a congregant, trustee, officer, and honorary trustee of Temple Beth-El over a period of 44 years. He served as chairman of the Religious School Committee for 25 years and was president of the Congregation from 1920 to 1927, the fourth longest tenure. He was survived by his wife, Flora L. Dimond Lyons; an only son, Stanley; a sister, Rose Lyons of London; and two grandchildren, Joan B. and Louis Lyons, all of Hollywood, where he was buried. A memorial service was held for him at Temple Beth-El on Broad Street on Friday evening, November 11, 1938. David C. Adelman and Adolph Meller paid tribute to his memory. Lyons was a member of the Masonic Redwood Lodge, No.35, A.F. and A.M.9

Flora L. Dimond Lyons survived her husband by eight years. She died in Hollywood, California, on March 8, 1946, and was buried there with her husband. Her main interest had been the Temple Sisterhood. Her only son, Stanley, had died some seven years earlier. She was survived by her daughter-in-law, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Both Flora and Louis Lyons are memorialized at Temple Beth-El.10

NOTES


2. The Shartenberg family of Pawtucket, particularly Jacob, were prominent in Temple Beth-El affairs. For many years, from as early as the 1880s to the post-World War II era, the family engaged in the retail dry goods and department store business in Pawtucket (New Idea Store, 1885, and Shartenberg & Robinson, 1890, both in the Wooden Building on Main Street in Pawtucket, R.I.). See "Jewish
3 The Rev. Dr. Raphael Lasker, a native of Posone in Russian Poland, was spiritual leader of Congregation Chabe Shalom of Boston, Massachusetts. He had participated in the dedication of the Friendship Street synagogue two years earlier. Temple Beth-El at the time was between rabbis. Rabbi Morris Seider had recently left Providence, and a successor, (Rabbi David Blaustein), had not yet been selected.

4 Alexander Strauss, a clothing merchant in Pawtucket, rose to the rank of major in Co. A, First Battalion, Rhode Island Cavalry. He was president of Temple Beth-El from 1879 to 1895. See front cover of Volume 2, Number 2, of Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes (id: front cover, May 1957).

5 Obituary of Leopold Dimond, The Evening Bulletin (Providence, R.I.), Saturday February 25, 1911. Also Providence City Directories.


9 Ibid.