

Michael Globus, circa 1910.



Halpern family in surrey, 1914. L. to r , Daughters Etta and Tillie; Ethel Halpern holding baby, Gertrude; Ezra Halpern; son Harry.

JEWISH FARMERS IN RHODE ISLAND AND NEARBY MASSACHUSETTS

BY ELEANOR F. HORVITZ AND GERALDINE S. FOSTER

INTRODUCTION

As we look at the history of the Jews in Rhode Island, the words *farm* and *farmer* seldom appear. The immigrants and their descendants generally chose occupations and professions other than agriculture even when they settled in suburban or rural areas. A closer study indicates that a small number of Jews — less than ten families that we know of — did try their hand at farming in Rhode Island.* The earliest known to us was Abraham Shoshansky in 1889 in Foster. A family member said of him that each year he raised an excellent crop of rocks.¹

More numerous were the Jewish farmers and their families who settled in nearby Massachusetts after the turn of this century. Whether Rhode Island farmers were more reluctant to sell their land or, as one wag put it, there were more played-out farms to unload in the Bay State is not known. Suffice it to say, by 1920, there were at least twenty families actively engaged in agriculture in towns such as Taunton, Raynham, Dartmouth, Seekonk, Norton, Attleboro, and Franklin. For the purpose of this study we shall consider those Massachusetts farms where there are ties and connections to Rhode Island's Jewish community.

In Czarist Russia and in other parts of Eastern Europe, most Jews lived in the *shtetlach*** and, where permitted, in the towns and cities of the Pale of Settlement.*** During the early years of the nineteenth century the Czar initiated a movement to settle Jews on the land within the Pale and beyond. The process accelerated as the population expanded and the Russian economy deteriorated. Many Jews found themselves forced out of their traditional occupations. As a result, by the middle of that century, a goodly segment of the unemployed had turned to agriculture, particularly dairy or truck farming. They could thus earn a living on a small plot of land they either owned—or more likely—rented. Jewish farming settlements were found in parts of the Ukraine and White Russia, as well as in Poland, Galicia (Austria), and areas of Romania.²

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*"Chartered Organizations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 2, p. 71, contains a listing for the incorporation on June 9, 1916, of the "South County Agricultural Club, Harry Broadman, Max L. Grant *et al.* For promoting charitable tendencies, encouraging literary and social efforts, and advancing agricultural pursuits." No further information is available on this organization.

**Jewish small towns (Yiddish)

***Area within the Western border of Czarist Russia where Jews were permitted to live.

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Some of those opting for a life on the farm in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, therefore, had already had farming experience in Europe which enabled them to succeed in their new homeland.

BARON MAURICE DE HIRSCH AND JEWISH AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

The name of Baron Maurice de Hirsch holds an eminent place in the annals of Jewish philanthropy. His generosity made it possible for millions of Jews throughout the world to escape from oppression and poverty, to build lives with dignity

Baron de Hirsch (1831-1896) was the scion of a family of Jewish court bankers in Germany. His wife, Clara Bischoffsheim, (1833-1899), was the daughter of a senator in the German parliament and a partner in a prominent banking house. However, the Baron did not become a partner in the family business but preferred to follow his own interests. As a result of pioneering ventures in a railroad and in industry, he amassed a great personal fortune.³

Through his travels to Turkey on behalf of his business interests, Baron de Hirsch became aware of the deplorable situations of oriental Jews, and in cooperation with the Alliance Israelite Universelle he established schools, many of them trade schools. However, by the 1880s, he turned his attention to the miserable social and economic conditions of the Jews of Eastern Europe. Convinced that modern secular education could ameliorate their predicament, he offered to finance an educational system for Jews. His offer was rejected because he would not allow the Czarist officials complete control over the allocation of the money. Thereafter he established and funded two organizations designed to aid in the mass emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe and their resettlement in South America, the United States, and Canada: The Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) [*sic*] for South American resettlement and the Baron de Hirsch Fund for North American resettlement. It should be noted that in all his philanthropic undertakings, his wife Clara played a very active role. From her early years, she had involved herself in such activities, first by assisting her father and then in her own right. She continued her good works following her marriage by interesting her husband in this area as well as engaging in her own projects. She was a very clever and accomplished woman and an excellent linguist. After the death of their only child, Lucien, the Baron devoted his entire fortune to his philanthropic interests.

A subsidiary of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, the Jewish Agricultural (and Industrial) Aid Society, was chartered in New York in 1900 to teach East European Jewish immigrants how to farm "as free farmers on their own soil."⁴ The society encouraged the formation of cooperatives, but its services were available to individuals as well. Among these services were aid in locating a farm, generally an abandoned one; Yiddish speaking agents and specialists who travelled throughout a region, *e.g.*, New England, New Jersey, and New York, to advise on crops and modern techniques; *The Jewish Farmer*, a Yiddish-English language monthly; and loans on generous

terms for seed, machinery, livestock, or help in difficult times.

It was through the aegis of the Jewish Agricultural Society that a number of families resettled in nearby Massachusetts and in Rhode Island. Four of these families settled close to each other in Attleboro — the Fine, Friedman, Rubin, and Globus families.

THE FINE FARM

In the Attleboro Directory of 1907 one finds the following listing:

Fine, Abram, farmer, Slater, 2nd beyond Smith Street

Fine, Charles, farmer, Smith Street, 1st from Taunton Road.

According to Samuel Fine,⁵ his father, Charles, was actually the first Jewish farmer in the area. Abram Fine, Charles' father, tried farming for a short time after his son moved to Massachusetts, but it did not suit him. Instead he opened a grocery store in Attleboro after selling his land to Michael Globus.

Abram and Charles had no real experience with farming. Charles was a *yeshiva** student in his native Russia. As was customary in Eastern Europe, advanced yeshiva students often spent holidays in rural areas where they conducted religious services in communities too small or too poor to afford the offices of a resident rabbi. It was also customary for the student to receive room and board at various homes within the community. While boarding at a farm, Charles met Bluma, who became his wife.

Because of the threat of army conscription, according to his son Samuel, Charles decided to emigrate and in 1900 arrived in New York. He found work as a painter; a year later he was able to send for his wife and children. There were three children, three others having died in Russia at a tender age. Four more would be born in the United States.

Bluma did not like New York. When a serious accident left Charles Fine handicapped and unable to resume his work as a painter, she insisted that they leave the city. Somehow they had heard of the Jewish Agricultural Society (Samuel Fine is not certain how), and they applied for assistance in securing a farm. An agent of the society had located two abandoned farms in Attleboro. He brought Charles Fine to see one of them in the autumn of 1903. Viewing the apple trees with their abundance of apples, Charles said, "Good, now we will have plenty to eat."⁶ He purchased the 60 acres and farmhouse for \$700.

In the middle of February, 1904, the family left New York by train to begin their new life on the farm. The weather was bitter cold. Deep snow covered the ground, Samuel Fine recalled. The seller of the property was supposed to meet them at the station. but they found no one there. They waited and waited, bundled against the cold. Finally, the gentleman, a neighbor, did arrive in a horse drawn sleigh to

*An institution of higher Talmudic learning (Hebrew)

transport them and their possessions to their new home.

The farmhouse, long unused, was in dilapidated condition with no heat, uneven floors, chinks in the walls, and water available only at an outside well. However, a kitchen stove did work, and with the help of their neighbor they found wood with which to build a fire.

Samuel Fine, who was six years old at that time, recalled that the family struggled through the winter with barely enough to sustain them. Originally, he said, his uncle Samuel (Charles' brother) had planned to farm with Charles, but when it became apparent that the rocky soil would not yield a living for both, Samuel left to take up the occupation of paperhanger.

That first spring, under Bluma Fine's direction and with her expertise, they planted vegetables for their own table plus potatoes that they could store for the winter months. Charles Fine bought a cow to provide them with milk, but this plenty was short-lived; the cow choked on an apple. A second cow was purchased, and over time more were added. Within the next few years, the farm began to yield sufficient produce for the family's use and to sell. Chickens were added, and leftover bread from Abraham Fine's bread route fed them. As the herd of cows increased, Charles Fine bought a milk route. Samuel well remembered "doing the route" with his father, delivering milk and fresh eggs. Fields of hay were planted to provide fodder for the cows. Farm buildings were repaired and new ones built, but the farmhouse was never modernized during Charles and Bluma's lifetime. In addition to Charles, Bluma, the two daughters and five sons, hired hands also lived on the farm.

When Charles Fine and his family moved to the farm there were already several Jewish families living in Attleboro, as well as North and South Attleboro. (Attleboro Directories 1897-1909). Very shortly after their arrival in the town, he began to lead a *minyan*.*

According to Samuel Fine, people called his father *rabbi* although he was never ordained. However, he was learned and knowledgeable as a result of his studies in the yeshiva. "He ran the services, he married people, he buried people," Samuel Fine stated. "He rented space above a candy store at Emory and Pleasant Streets, which was used for a *shul*.** It was the forerunner of the Agudas Achim Congregation."

THE FRIEDMAN FARM

For Samuel Friedman, a farm was home. He had grown up on his parents' dairy farm in Russia, according to his daughter Anna Friedman Globus.⁷ However, as the situation for Jews became increasingly difficult, Samuel Friedman and his wife, Fannie, decided to emigrate. Like so many others, Mr. Friedman came to the United States alone in order to earn enough money to pay for the passage of his family. He found work in Hartford, Connecticut, where his brother had already settled. Within

*A quorum, the number of males needed to hold religious services (Hebrew)

**Synagogue (Yiddish)

a few years, he was able to send for his wife. Since Mrs. Friedman had relatives in Pawtucket, they moved to the neighboring town of Central Falls, where Anna was born in 1904. There were four children — three girls and a boy.

With the assistance of the Jewish Agricultural Society, the family purchased a farm in Attleboro. Gradually Mr. Friedman built up a herd of dairy cows. In the spring, vegetables were planted to be sold during the summer months at a stand on Attleboro Common, and baby chicks were purchased from the Rubin Farm in Norton, Massachusetts. Melvin Globus⁸ remembers as a little boy accompanying his grandfather on his route in Pawtucket, where he would deliver, on order, fresh-killed chickens dressed by Mrs. Friedman, eggs, and vegetables in season.

All the children were required to work on the farm. The girls had the special chore of helping to milk the cows. Although their father had milking machines, it was their job to “strip” the udders of the milk that the machines could not get. There were also hired hands to assist with the work on the farm. In the wintertime, when there was comparatively more leisure time, the children enjoyed skating. One of the fields would be flooded and, when it froze, it provided them with a private skating rink. It was, according to Mrs. Globus, the only recreation allowed.

“My folks were well-to-do for farmers,” Mrs. Globus recalled. The family home had central heating and a bathroom paneled in wood. They had a telephone, a party line of course. Someone always picked up the telephone, no matter for whom it was ringing. Mr. Friedman had an artesian well, the water from which he shared with neighbors during times of drought. On Saturday nights other Jewish farmers in the neighborhood came to the Friedmans’ house to drink glasses of tea with lemon, discuss farm prices and reminisce about the old country. On weekends, particularly in the summer, relatives — aunts, uncles, cousins — came to the farm to visit. Although they were always welcome, sometimes they strained the facilities. For example, one relative’s family included six children. Since everyone could not be accommodated in the house, either the boys or the girls would sleep in the barn.

Samuel Friedman was an early president of the Agudas Achim Synagogue. Anna Globus remembered that the family attended services and took an active part in the affairs of the congregation. The Friedman children were instructed in Hebrew and prayers by Mrs. Friedman’s brother. After her marriage Anna Globus served as president of the sisterhood. Anna Globus stated that she felt very fortunate to have lived on a farm. “You learn to care for others,” she said, “and to have respect for older people. It was a good life.”

THE RUBIN FARM

The saga of the Rubin Farm began when Yaacov Yoshua Dreizenstock purchased the venerable Seth Hodges family colonial homestead on East Hodges Street, Norton, Massachusetts, in 1908.

The Russian-Jewish origins of Yaacov Dreizenstock bore no resemblance to those of the Yankee Hodges family who had tilled the soil of the Norton farm for many generations. Yaacov was born into a very poor family, and his grandson Ralph Rubin said, "when he was single he was one of those who pulled the barges on the Volga River." But he also learned the trade of baker from his father, Abraham. He married Esther Faige Likudo in Russia and they had three children, two sons, David and Solomon (Sam) and a daughter, Ada (Fruma Chaya). Eventually the family migrated to London where they lived for a few years. They left from Liverpool for New York on July 12, 1902, arriving in New York City on July 25, 1902, on the vessel *S.S. New England*. After what might have been a few years in New York, Yaacov Dreizenstock left for Norton. A loan from the Baron de Hirsch Foundation made it possible for him to purchase the Hodges farm. It is interesting to note that his half-brother, Zalmon Faretz Dreizenstock, bought a colonial home and farm in East Greenbush, New York, also through a loan from the Baron de Hirsch Foundation.

Joseph Rubin had served his hitch in the Czar's army, then worked in the woods of Riga, Latvia, as a lumberjack during the time of the Russian-Japanese war. Since Joseph was reluctant to serve in that war, "he borrowed a passport," and with several friends crossed the border into Germany and emigrated to the United States. In New York he visited a family he had known in Riga and there met Ada Dreizenstock. They eventually married and opened a candy store in Brooklyn. Joseph seemed to have also used his skills as a carpenter. Why they left Brooklyn for Brockton, Massachusetts, is not known by the family.

Yaacov and Esther Dreizenstock were running their farm in Norton while the Rubins were in Brockton, probably in 1906-1909, where they had a candy store and Joseph also worked as a carpenter. But Ada's parents needed help on their farm, so Ada and Joseph sold their store and moved in with the Dreizenstocks on the farm. There was no history of farming in the family. Joseph Rubin's father had run a barroom, and Ada's father had been a baker.

Living conditions in the home of these two families probably differed little from those of the colonial pioneer families who had first built the house. Ralph Rubin, who grew up in the old homestead, described it:

The farmhouse was an old cracker-box style with hand-hewn rafters and old wooden pegs holding it. There was no way to insulate because there was no space between the plaster on the inside and the shingles on the outside. There was no electricity. Kerosene lamps provided all lighting. Plumbing was non-existent. Outhouses served as toilet facilities. For a long time water was brought into the home from an outside well.

The farm consisted of about 75 acres, of which 25 acres of tillable soil were cleared by hand and by using dynamite. The outer buildings consisted of two silos, the dairy where Ada bottled the milk, the hen houses and the ice house. There was

a brooder (a house for raising baby chicks).

A deed records the sale of the Hodges property to Joseph and Ada Rubin by Jacob and Esther Dreizenstock on December 16, 1910. The parents, upon this sale, built a dairy farm and house about four miles from the Rubin family. In 1924 Esther and Jacob Dreizenstock built a Victorian-style home on a dairy farm in Taunton.

The Rubins had four sons: Abraham, Arthur, Ralph, and Lewis. As the Rubin boys grew older they had assigned chores on the farm. The chores included working in the ice house. In the winter, ice in the pond was cut and stored in sawdust where it stayed frozen throughout the rest of the seasons. The boys also worked in one of the silos where grain was piled on raised platforms to keep the mice and rats away. There were hen houses to be tended. Hay and grain were raised. Eventually the Rubins sold off all their cows and concentrated on market gardening of cucumbers, corn, and cabbage. At the height of the season, for about two weeks, they would take about 120 bushels a day of each crop to the Boston market. Raising chickens was the other large activity of the farm, and eggs were sold at wholesale.

Arthur Rubin was in the fruit business in Middlebury, Massachusetts, but found being in business by himself very grueling and decided to go back to farming. He bought a piece of land next to one worked by Ralph. Ralph had volunteered to return to the farm after his mother died in June, 1947. His father had been living alone in the house and the farm was deteriorating. When Arthur had to go to the hospital, Ralph helped out, and then joined Arthur in his farm, giving up his own farm where he had been raising chickens. Abraham worked as a baker during his lifetime, and Lewis Rubin became an attorney.

THE MICHAEL GLOBUS ANDE JOSEPH GLOBUS FARMS

Michael Globus had been a farmer in Russia, according to a family genealogical history cited by his granddaughter Sylvia Globus Knell.¹⁰ It was not a likely occupation for the son of a surgeon in Eastern Europe, but one he preferred, so that, soon after his arrival in the United States, he sought a farm to purchase.

According to Mrs. Knell, Mr. Globus's first wife died in Europe, leaving him with twin daughters, Lilli (Lillian) and Ida to raise. He subsequently married Saina, anglicized to Jennie, a woman twenty years his junior. She gave birth to four sons in five years, one of whom died at a young age in America.

Wealthy relatives in New York, the Altschulers, paid for Globus' passage and that of the twins in 1906. They were most anxious for him to remain in New York and enter business. However, he wanted to farm and, through the efforts of the Jewish Agricultural Society, he found his farm in Attleboro the following year. The price was \$700. Jennie and the four boys left Russia and joined him and the twins when the sale was complete. Mrs. Knell described their possessions when they moved into the farmhouse as "one bed, one chair, and one rooster The farmhouse had a

central cook-stove in a large kitchen, a water pump, outdoor plumbing, and no electricity. They survived by buying apples from the Friedmans and buying stale bread.⁷ In referring to those early years, Michael Globus said in an interview published in *The Providence Sunday Journal*¹¹ that

... the twins had to go to work in a mill (the Lorraine Mills) to help support the family, while the boys, though young, helped with the farm work.

When the twins visited the farm, they walked the eight miles each way from Pawtucket and back to save the trolley fare. Their father always made certain there was a package of vegetables and some eggs for them to take back to their home.

With acquisition of additional land purchased from Abram Fine, the farm grew in size to a total of one hundred acres. The soil, however, was very rocky with some swampy areas, thus rendering a goodly portion of it untillable. Farm crops included hay and corn to feed the herd of 30 to 40 dairy cows and vegetables. Eventually chickens were added.

It was Joseph Globus, father of Sylvia Knell, who changed the emphasis of the farm from dairy cattle, a marginal enterprise at best, to raising chickens. Dr. Morris Povar¹² remembered his uncle Michael Globus as a hard-working, studious, well-read man, a philosopher. His cousin Joseph was a scientific farmer on the cutting edge of genetics in improving poultry and egg production and later in cattle breeding, for which he won wide recognition. He also developed a new breed of chicken, the Glo-White. Although Joseph Globus attended Brown University and Massachusetts State College (now the University of Massachusetts), he did not complete his studies. He felt obliged to return to the farm to ease his father's burdens.

Dr. Povar described the farmhouse as having two stories, the upper story a sleeping loft. Downstairs there was a large main room and three bedrooms. Meals were served at a large dining room table that could accommodate twelve to sixteen people easily. When all the relatives gathered, the children always ate first, then the adults.

Mrs. Knell recalled that table as well, and her grandmother's kitchen.¹³

It was like open house all the time. My mother and grandmother did all the cooking. There was a long table, always covered with a white tablecloth. Lloyd (Turoff) and I would crawl under the table and be hidden by the cloth to get away from everyone at the table.

Adding to the numbers at the table were the children of Michael's twin daughters, both of whom had died of cancer.

The Globus family participated in the minyan and belonged to the synagogue after it was organized. Joseph Globus also served as a president of the synagogue

Brotherhood. According to Sylvia Knell, both her grandfather and her father impressed on the children the importance of their Jewish heritage.

THE ATTLEBORO AND TAUNTON JEWISH FARMERS ASSOCIATION

In discussing life on the farm in the first decades of this century, Samuel Fine¹⁴ mentioned the Attleboro and Taunton Jewish Farmers Association of Massachusetts, of which his father was president. At the monthly meetings, conducted in Yiddish, the members discussed common problems and learned about new methods of farming. Fine knew of no minutes or records, saying that these were not people concerned about such formalities.

Further inquiries proved fruitless, nor would it be possible to consult the archives of the national organization, the Jewish Agricultural Society, of which the Massachusetts group was an affiliate. A letter from Dr. Nathan Kaganoff of the American Historical Society, July 26, 1990, stated that all records of the Jewish Agricultural Society had been destroyed some years ago. However, Sylvia Globus Knell's photocopy of a 1921 article in *The Providence Sunday Journal*¹⁵ supplied information about the Massachusetts organization. Fortunately, she had saved it because of photos and an interview with her grandfather Michael Globus.

By 1920, the farms seemed to have become well established and even prospering, according to the article. Under a headline "National Society Aids Jewish Farmers" and a sub-head "New England Lands Returned to Productiveness and Decaying Homes Restored Through Financial Assistance of the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural Fund," the article described the work of the Jewish Agricultural Society as well as the accomplishments of the national convention of Jewish farmers recently held in New York City under the auspices of the Society. It also described the activities of the local affiliate, the Attleboro and Taunton Jewish Farmers Association. The officers of the Association were Charles Fine, president; Benjamin Davis of Taunton, secretary and delegate to the above-mentioned national convention; and Samuel Friedman, treasurer. The 40 members of the organization included owners of farms located in the vicinities of Attleboro through to Taunton and Raynham. Included also were the Rubin Farm in Norton and the contributions of Joseph Rubin during the formative years of the organization. The exact date of the organization's founding is not given but the article implies that it was about ten years old in 1921.

"The local organization was formed," Mr. Samuel Friedman said, "so that we could help ourselves." In addition to monthly meetings with speakers on a variety of subjects of interest to the membership, there was also the benefit of cooperative purchase of items such as fertilizer, lime, seeds, and hay. Once the cooperative buying even included a carload of cows. The association also arranged for a cooperative produce market on Attleboro Common each summer for twelve weeks. It proved a successful venture.

One of the most interesting features of the Attleboro and Taunton Jewish Farmers Association was the formation of its own credit union to assist its members with temporary loans. The Jewish Agricultural Society loaned the local group \$1,000 at two percent interest, and each member bought shares at five dollars each. until \$1500 in additional funds was raised. From this pool, short term loans could be granted at low interest with the proviso that the loans be repaid promptly. Mr. Friedman stated the credit union was incorporated by the State of Massachusetts and was capitalized at \$5,000. (A search found no record of incorporation.)

All the men interviewed for the newspaper article were most enthusiastic about the work of Jewish Agricultural Society, about the Attleboro and Taunton affiliate, and about farming. The last paragraph, though, said:

The lack of trolley service due to the abandonment of some of the car lines has served to prevent some of the meetings of the local organization, and the departure of some of the members for other lines of business has reduced the membership, but it is still very active ...

No information is available on the disposition of the funds of the credit union or on how long the Association continued to function.

THE GOLDMAN FARM

The origin of the present Greylawn Farms and Greylawn Foods and its distribution and warehouse centers can be traced to Samuel Goldman, who emigrated from Russia to Rhode Island. According to Sanford Goldman, his son,¹⁶ he started a poultry business which he named the South End Live Poultry Market (1900) on Gay Street. His home and business at that time were in North Providence, but he later moved to Providence and lived on Charles Street. Samuel had six children: two sons, Frank and Sanford, and four daughters. Samuel died when Sanford was only 16.

In 1935, Frank Goldman bought a few acres of land on what was called the Greylawn Plat in Warwick. On the land was a large chicken coop. Because of the name of the plat, the business was called the Greylawn Farm. Sanford joined him on the farm where they raised chickens and produced eggs. They also raised goats (unlike any other of the farms researched) and sold goats' milk. Sanford raised a steer which they slaughtered for their own use. Vegetables were planted, and during the harvest season the children had a stand outside the farm where they sold some of the vegetables, but most of the produce was for their own use.

Sanford related that a customer would come to the farm and pick out the live chicken he wanted to buy. In the back of the chicken coops was the slaughter area where the chicken was killed by a *shochet**, plucked and custom dressed. At the slaughterhouse on Gay Street in South Providence chickens were also slaughtered by a *shochet*. A slaughterhouse on Charles Street was used for chickens which were

*One who slaughters animals for food in accordance with Jewish ritual (Hebrew)

sold to wholesale stores and were not Kosher. The slaughterhouse on Dean Street (1940-1970) also was not Kosher.

Sanford worked on the farm until he retired in 1985. He and his brother did not really consider themselves farmers but operators of an urban poultry business. Whatever it was called, Sanford and Frank worked very hard for many years to maintain and run their establishment. Frank Goldman died on July 4, 1977.

THE SKLUT FARM

It is difficult to visualize a dairy farm on a residential street off Reservoir Avenue. But there was one in a very different Cranston from the city that now exists. The year was 1910 when William and Pearl Sklut purchased a two-tenement house on 76 Sabra Street.¹⁷ Mr. Sklut converted that house to a one-family farm house with the first floor as the family's living quarters. Additional work on the house included an extra large porch to accommodate an invalid daughter. The second floor was converted to a synagogue.

During the early teens of the twentieth century a number of Jewish families lived in the Cranston area. The closest synagogue was in the Willard Avenue district of South Providence, which in the pre-automobile era was a considerable distance away. Thus Mr. Sklut's area for worship filled a definite need. He had brought a Torah with him from Europe. He made a small *bima*.^{*} Tables and benches were placed around the room. An area in back of this large room was set aside for the women. During the High Holidays the Jewish families gathered in this room. Although Mr. Sklut was well versed in Hebrew, a rabbi was hired to conduct the service.

Mr. Sklut's venture into farming was rather brief and a largely unsuccessful interlude in his business career as a tailor. According to his two daughters, Zelda Hittner and Stella Sklut, he had no farming background. Mr. Sklut had married at the age of 18; his bride was 16. The couple lived in Russia, near the Polish border, where a son and daughter were born. William Sklut left the family to seek his fortune in the United States. After he was established, he sent for his wife, the children and his wife's mother. Mrs. Sklut's father had died when she was a little girl and her mother had always lived with the family. Eight children were born to William and Pearl; one died at the age of six.

But how did William Sklut become a dairy farmer? He had operated a small tailor shop in Olneyville, Rhode Island. His sister, Mary, and her husband, David Gerson, lived in Canada. Although Gerson also was a tailor, he had a "hankering" to be a farmer. He moved to Cranston where he purchased a farm, just one block from the Sklut home. In the interim William had an accident to one eye when he was hit by a stone, resulting in the loss of sight in that eye. Persuaded by David Gerson, he gave up his tailoring business and invested in three cows to start his own dairy business.

^{*}Platform in a synagogue from which the Torah is read (Hebrew)

There was a barn on the property for the three cows and a great deal of open space in the sparsely settled area for grazing.

On the Sklut property there was also a large open lot, but the family did not use this for farming. Instead they would picnic in the area, setting up a large table and chairs when the weather was clement. The oldest sister helped milk the cows. As the youngest children, Stella and Zelda's role was to watch over the cows in the nearby pastures where they grazed. A neighbor's child taunted the little girls tending the cows, shouting to them, "Oh, look at the little shepherdesses!" Stella and Zelda did not take kindly to this comment, considering it an insult. They felt that their job was a very boring one, and one day they had a fight while minding the cows. Without thinking of their responsibility, they ran home, leaving the cows to fend for themselves. Untended, the animals ran onto a property nearby and proceeded to eat up the vegetable garden. The irate neighbor stormed over to Mr. Sklut and said, "Get your bloody cows out of my bloody yard, or I'll call the bloody cops." "Of course," Stella said, "My father had to pay for the damage."

Stella did not recall how the milk was processed and marketed, but she remembered that it was her job to bring milk to a Hirschfield family who had a little grocery store in their home. Mrs. Sklut died in 1943, Mr. Sklut in 1957. Stella, who inherited the home, sold it in 1965. William Sklut had been a dairy farmer for only about five years, probably from 1915 to 1920. However, it would seem that the whole family must have breathed a collective sigh of relief when he sold the cows and returned to Olneyville to reopen his tailoring business.

THE HALPERN FARM

It is understandable that Ezra Halpern wanted to buy a farm when he migrated to the United States. He had been brought up on a successful farm in Austria-Hungary, now Romania. He migrated to Boston to seek his fortune, leaving his wife, Ethel, and Harry, his son, and two daughters, Etta and Tillie (Toby). Two years later Ezra purchased a 150 to 200 acre farm in Ashland, Massachusetts, and sent for his family. Another daughter, Gertrude, was born in this country.

Harry Halpern, who was six years old when the family moved to the farm in 1914, has vivid recollections of it.¹⁸ There were several buildings: a sprawling two-story farmhouse with many rooms, chicken coops, barns, pig pens, sheds for the horses, and much land. Conditions were primitive — outhouses, no electricity, no plumbing, no running water. He described how his mother carried water — a bucket in each hand — from a well.

The Halperns grew cabbages, sweet corn, cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, and radishes. Some of the vegetables were sold to a canning factory four miles from where the farm was located. Other vegetables were brought to the market in Boston, the 27-mile trip taking eight hours by horse and buggy.

On the farm were horses, cattle, chickens, goats, and sheep, and kennels for the dogs. Harry Halpern assumed his chores on the farm early in his life. He learned to milk the cows, to brush and comb them, and to clean out the barns. His sisters, too, had their chores. Two hired men who lived nearby, Polish men, helped with the work on the farm.

Harry Halpern hastened to describe the good times. When cutting the hay, the kids would slide down the hay loft. In the winter there were sleigh rides and sledding. "It was a natural life," he maintained, in a beautiful unspoiled rural area where deer could be seen running around the back of the barn, and the rippling of the brook could be heard. The next neighbor was about a half mile away, and the children played together.

The farm was near an Army camp which was mobilized in 1918. Halpern remembered the soldiers practicing on the old dusty road as they prepared to go overseas. Ezra, according to his son, was basically a cattle dealer who knew a great deal about cattle. He could recognize a pregnant cow and could ascertain a cow's exact weight. He kept all his business records in the back of a checkbook. His son remembered traveling to cattle auctions in Vermont with his father.

Ezra was somewhat capable of treating sick animals, but on occasion had to turn to a veterinarian. Harry also recalled that the family doctor lived several miles away and had to be fetched, by horse and buggy, if someone in the family were ill. Harry Halpern's reminiscences include waking up on an extremely cold morning and hating to get out of the featherbed covering him as the house was heated only by a kitchen stove.

When Harry Halpern was in grammar school the family sold the farm. In partnership with a cousin his father opened a small meat market in Milford. He pursued various occupations, all related. He was in the provision business, making frankfurters, salamis, etc., with a partner. At one point he had another farm in Bellingham, Massachusetts.

Although Harry Halpern did not receive any religious education, there being no facilities available, he grew up in a home where he learned about Jewish life and Jewish observances. Through his father's example, he also learned about assisting others. His father assumed the responsibility of helping bring to this country any of his *landsleit** who wanted to emigrate, of helping them find places to live and jobs, of easing their resettlement.

The Halpern family moved to Woonsocket in 1923.

THE TUROFF FARMS

For information on the two farms purchased by Anshel and Mary Turoff, the first in Norton, Massachusetts, the second in Seekonk, Massachusetts, there are three

*Fellow countrymen (Yiddish)

sources: copies of original deeds of purchase and sale; an oral history recorded by Betty Turoff Skolnikowf, daughter of Anshel and Mary; and an autobiography written by another of the children, the oldest son, Joseph.¹⁹

Joseph wrote, "I came from a higher middle class family from a large city in Russia," and said that the Turoff family were well-educated. Anshel and Mary had five children: Joseph, Henry, Betty, Natalie, and Madeline. Anshel was a young Zionist active in the then Palestine movement and was the youngest delegate from his district to the first Zionist Congress, Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. He owned a textile business, and Mary, his wife, owned a shop employing fifteen women in the manufacture of shirts, lingerie, and bridal gowns.

Joseph described the pogroms through which they lived. The fear of the sons' being taken to the Russian army prompted the family to emigrate. The first to leave Russia was Joseph, who had married, his bride being only 16 years old. In the oral history of his great-aunt Betty recorded by Michael Radin, she described how Joe arrived in New York wearing his "best clothes," the tails and top hat which he had worn at his wedding. When they went to Brooklyn to stay with his uncle, the children in the neighborhood ran after this odd looking man.

Anshel next left for the United States to make arrangements for the rest of his family. Although he had always lived in the city, he had a great desire to be a farmer. He belonged to a movement called Territorialism which was under the leadership of prominent Zionists. Its purpose was for Jews to cultivate the land of whatever country to which they migrated in order to prove to the world that Jews were capable of being real farmers. Anshel had wanted to emigrate to Palestine, but his wife wanted to go to America where she had a sister and some cousins. Once in the United States he and Joseph traveled to Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts to inspect farms to which HIAS had referred them.

Meanwhile, Mary and the other children were waiting in Russia until Henry finished high school. They had purchased their tickets well in advance. However, World War I erupted, and additional money was required for passage. Mary wired Anshel, whom she fortunately was able to reach in New York, and he sent her the additional money, just in time, for the next ship was taken over by Germany. Their ship had to take a circuitous route in order to avoid the Germans. The journey took three weeks, and, because they were all seasick after the third day, with the exception of Henry, he enjoyed everyone's desserts, Betty remembered. Instead of Ellis Island, they landed at a pier in New York harbor. After an overnight stay with the Brooklyn uncle, they went directly to the farm. Betty's mother, Mary, also made her first appearance in the new land wearing her best clothes, a gown and large wide-brimmed hat.

As recorded in the original deed of June 24, 1914, the land Joseph Turoff bought from Susan M. Mace and Albert E. Mace of Norton, Bristol County, Massachusetts,

was situated in Norton, "lying on both sides of Worcester Street between Valentine's corner and Mansfield town line." The premises were sold subject to a mortgage in the sum of \$2,000 payable to the Attleboro Savings and Loan Association.

On the same day another deed recorded the information that Joseph Turoff of Norton sold the same land and buildings to Anshel and Mary Turoff, with all encumbrances thereon. Further documentation reveals that on August 31, 1914, Anshel Turoff turned over to his wife the same property for one dollar.

Joseph Turoff described in detail how they purchased this farm and the problems they encountered:

... after visiting many states and inspecting many farms primarily that were neglected by the gentile owners who inherited these farms, we selected a farm in the state of Massachusetts near the City of Attleboro, not knowing the language and not having friends who could advise us we fell victims to many unscrupulous deals in some we were fortunate in most others we lost, all father brought with him, our first encounter was with the farmer from whom we bought the farm even though I studied the English language mainly in grammar but to speak or having a conversation that was another matter, so when the farmer offered to us 68 acres we agreed and took him for his word, as naturally we expected that we bought 68 acres and when he showed to us the boundary he pointed to us that a parcel nearest to the main highway did not belong to him but when he came to the settlement for the farm and father asked the lawyer to translate word for word the meaning of each word, when it came to explain the word more or less it can mean more than 68 acres or less than 68 acres, so then father said he does not want more, nor does he want less than the specified 68 acres and this is what he expected to get needless to say that the parcel the farmer said did not belong to him was in the 68 acres, he could not back out so we closed the deal to our satisfaction.

Joseph also described the problem they encountered with poultry.

... at that time we late for planting, but we had quite a number of poultry, but it was not enough to supplement our income, so we bought more hens from unscrupulous dealer, and ourselves not knowing a good ones from bad ones, not only we had a rough deal but our good ones became diseased though the ones we bought and we lost again, so when winter came and no income came in I went to work in a nearby jewlery factory.*

The Turoff farm was known as the Bonnie Brook Farm. Betty described it as "a real farm, with a little brook, house, horses, chickens and cows." "Nothing is now left," she said. Betty's anecdotes about the farm were often humorous. Her brother Henry adopted one of the calves, which for some unexplainable reason, was named

*Any incorrect spellings were in the original autobiography.

"Henry the Pig." This rambunctious animal could never be contained and escaped from any fence or restraint. There was also the story of Henry and the skunk. One day he went into the woods and came back with a beautiful animal with a white stripe. He put it in a crate, but the animal became angry and used the weapon used by skunks over the ages. It sprayed as it escaped, and the trail of odor which it left behind affected people for miles around. The Turoff family could not even use their home for a while.

Joseph commented that "life on the farm was far from the illusion father had on his mind, to work and prove to the Gentile world that the Jews would be the kind of people that will make their living from agricultural enterprises, instead of the enforced way by many countries that forbid the Jews to be farmers." The Turoffs grew vegetables and sold milk from the cows, but mostly concentrated on raising chickens and producing eggs. According to Joseph, they had a difficult time financially and had to seek other ways to supplement their livelihood. Because of the growing demands of the family, coping with real agronomic problems, and fighting with nature as every farmer must, they had to turn to other forms of help. Joseph recalled that a number of friends and relatives vacationed on the farm, at eight dollars per week, which included three meals a day.

Joseph wrote that they were never compensated enough for the vegetables they brought to market, as the farmers were not organized and the wholesalers and commission dealers took advantage of their ignorance. In order to earn more money, Joseph and his own family left the farm. He took various jobs, but as World War I was coming to an end, his father asked him to return, saying that conditions had improved on the farm and that he was not capable of running it by himself. Joseph returned, and they increased their stock, purchasing more cows and poultry. Joseph established a butter-and-egg and poultry route, even buying from other farms to replenish the demand he created. Competition soon put an end to his prosperity, and he again took a job off the farm.

Once more his father asked him to come back to the farm, and he did. But not long after that, the family decided to sell the farm. Mary Turoff, owner of record of the Norton farm, sold it to Tony Chikowsky and Woicech Maslek on April 18, 1921. One of the reasons for selling the farm, according to Joseph, was that his father was concerned that his daughters were becoming older and "no boys came to the farm." The family moved to Boston, where Anshel made several bad investments through some unscrupulous people. After losing some of his money, Anshel, with Joseph, decided to look for another farm. This time they bought a farm that was not so isolated. The farm property was principally in the town of Seekonk, Massachusetts, with a portion in East Providence, Rhode Island. There were approximately 43 acres to this farm, which was bought from Clara E. Cooper on June 13, 1921. Meanwhile Henry had graduated from Carnegie Tech and had married.

Betty Turoff Skolnikowf described the house on the Seekonk farm as a house of the Colonial period with fireplaces in every room. It had an inside toilet and electricity. On the property were several chicken coops. Lights were kept on at all times for the chicks that were being raised. The property also included four bungalows. "Where I slept," Betty said, "my head was in Massachusetts and my feet in Rhode Island." A row of poplar trees divided their farm from the next.

As Joseph related, it did not seem to matter that they had moved closer to the city for, "the boys from the city were still scarce." Mary's relatives from Philadelphia encouraged them to move to Philadelphia. There Joseph started a wholesale and retail business in poultry, butter, and eggs. From his autobiography it is apparent that he had many different business experiences and moved a great deal throughout his lifetime.

On February 21, 1924, Anshel Turoff sold the Seekonk farm to Manoog G. Haytian and Karekin G. Haytian. The Turoff farms, which Anshel Turoff had envisioned with such idealism, lasted for only ten years. Anshel died in 1929, five years after the sale of the Seekonk farm.

THE HOROWITZ-HOWITT FARM

Jacob Horowitz had a farm on Pine Street in Seekonk. It is not known whether he and his brother Harry had any contact with farming in Austria.²⁰

Harry and his wife, Sadie (Spilke) migrated to New York. Harry worked as a plumber and changed his last name to Howitt, rationalizing that he could not be admitted to the Plumbers' Union in New York if he had a Jewish-sounding name. Thus the two brothers were known by different last names, Jacob as Horowitz and Harry as Howitt.

On one of his visits to his brother Jacob in Seekonk, Harry and his wife decided to purchase a farm in Seekonk. Sadie had lived in Poland and had grown up on a farm in that country. Jacob sold his farm to his brother, and moved to Liberty, New York, where he purchased another farm.

Harry, Sadie, and their children moved to their new home in 1915. Harry also opened a small plumbing shop in Pawtucket, leaving the operation of the farm to Sadie. The wife of their son, Julius, (Shirley Bertman Howitt) recalled that the farmhouse was quite primitive. Originally water was pumped in the yard, but by the time Julius and Shirley were married in 1948 a pump was installed in the kitchen sink. An outhouse still was in use, located in the breezeway between the farm and house.

Mrs. Howitt remembered that relatives from New York visited the farm in the summer. She recalled hearing about the financial hardships associated with the farm, especially during the Depression. The family had to borrow money from the Federal Land Bank. The farmhouse survived two hurricanes, but at last it was in

such poor shape that Julius Howitt had the Seekonk Fire Department destroy it.

Julius went into the excavating business, and his son, Steven, became associated in the business with his father. Julius bought the Gleckman farm [See next section.] and experimented with growing and planting sea grass on that land. Steven Howitt has continued with that work. Julius died January 22, 1988, at the age of 76.

GLECKMAN FARM

The Gleckman Farm was located across the way from the Horowitz-Howitt farm, at Baker's Corner in Seekonk.²¹ The original owner was Yehudi Gleckman, who had three wives and numerous offspring. Relatives and neighbors described this familiar character who drove his horse and buggy from his Seekonk farm into Pawtucket. His faithful dog would run beside his wagon, refusing to ride in it.

Yehudi earned his living by selling milk from the farm cows. The large acreage contained a rather dilapidated farmhouse with a series of ramshackle barns. Gleckman relatives reminisced about visiting the farm's excellent picnic areas, traveling from Pawtucket and Providence by way of trolley cars.

Yehudi was killed at the age of 90 when the door to a barn he was leaving fell on him. His son Louis continued to live on the farm, earning a meager living. Toward the end of his stay on the farm, he was helped financially by money paid to him by the builders of the new Ledgemont Country Club in Seekonk, who obtained landfill from his property. Louis died in Connecticut at the age of 90 on May 13, 1990.

THE FEINMAN FARMS

Joseph Feinman was different from the other Jewish farmers in this study, who were one-farm owners, in that he owned or rented a number of farms.²² Unlike some Jews who became farmers with no experience in poultry or cattle raising, Joseph Feinman was the son of a man who had earned his living by dealing in cattle. His father was a drover (one who drives cattle — a cattle dealer). It was his job to follow the soldiers in the Russian army with cattle which could be slaughtered as needed. Since refrigeration was not available, this method assured fresh meat. By the age of twelve Joseph had learned the trade of butcher.

Joseph was the only son of seven children, all born in Russia. Two older sisters emigrated to the United States and settled in the Newport area. He joined his sisters, living with one who was married to a baker. His first job was with a man who was called a provisioner (supplier of food). He traveled with him, helped with the slaughtering, and visited several different farms as they bought and sold cattle.

According to his son, David, who lives in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Joseph's first farm in the early 1920s was leased in the Wakefield area. During that period cows were milked by hand and horses pulled the tractors. He transported the milk himself to an East Greenwich dairy. He also leased a farm in Perryville, Rhode Island.

In the periods between farming, Joseph Feinman worked as a butcher in Newport and Providence.

The first farm he purchased was in Jamestown at Mackerel Cove. It was a 194-year-old farm of 103 acres. There were two houses on the farm, which had been operating since the American Revolution. Milk from the cows was transported by truck and then by ferry for sale to the dairies. David remembered that corn was raised for fodder and that sweet corn and green beans were raised for sale for human consumption. He recalled customers at Narragansett Pier whom they supplied, particularly a stand called Aunt Carrie's. Eventually he sold the farm to a wealthy couple who restored the original farmhouse. The last farm which Joseph Feinman owned was in Portsmouth, purchased in the late 1940s. This was basically a dairy farm, with milk stored in tanks to be picked up by Hood's Dairy. This farm was sold to developers for house lots in the 1960s.

Feinman was married to Tillie Broadman, who had come to this country at the age of one and a half; she was completely Americanized when she married. They had three children: David, Earl, and a daughter, Selma. Tillie Feinman had a difficult role as a hard-driving farmer's wife. Joseph Feinman was a very hard-working man who worked from 4:00 A.M. to day's end, about 6:00 P.M. He expected his sons to work with him on the farm and to be as dedicated as he was. Both sons matriculated at Rhode Island State College (now the University of Rhode Island) where they majored in agricultural and animal husbandry. Earl became a county agent for animal husbandry in Cooperstown, New York.

When asked about recreation or a social life, David answered that the only time his parents had any time off from work was during the years his father worked as a butcher. Then he had time free when the store was closed for Sabbath and the Jewish holidays. He had few interests outside of his work, and the only organizations to which he belonged were connected with farming, such as the Dairy Improvement Society, the Farmers' Cooperative, and the Milk Producers' Cooperative.

Tillie Feinman died in 1973, and Joseph Feinman in 1980.

THE FRADIN FARM

When Charles Fradin came to this country, he had already acquired a great deal of experience in agriculture. According to his daughter-in-law Dorothy Fradin,²³ he had been a manager of a large farm belonging to a *poretz** in Russia. Charles and Bella Fradin first farmed in South Providence for a short time and then moved to the Hughesdale section of Cranston. There they established the Tobey Farm Dairy.** Milk produced there was sold on a route through South Providence.

*Landowner or lord (Yiddish)

**Listed in the Rhode Island Businesses Section, Providence City Directory, 1917.

Their son, Hyman Fradin, went to a one-room schoolhouse where he was the only boy in his class at graduation. Dorothy Fradin recalled his descriptions of how ice was cut from the pond on their property each winter and stored for refrigeration.

Details on the farm, its size, and its operations are not available since Hyman Fradin no longer lived on the farm when he and Dorothy were married.

GARELICK FARMS

For most of the Jews who established farms in the first decades of this century, farming was a way of life as well as a livelihood. Thirty years later, the emphasis had changed. The farm, a pleasant place to live or visit, was primarily a business that did not engage all the members of a family.

In 1931 Israel and Max Garelick purchased a farm in Franklin, Massachusetts, from the Ray family.²⁴ According to Elinor Garelick Zelkind, Israel's daughter, originally it was more like a gentleman's farm, an estate rather than a working farm. Her father and uncle had bought a "location," an excellent site for their business interests — buying and selling cattle and producing milk. Max Garelick was the "inside man," supervising the daily operations of the dairy farm while Israel Garelick would travel, often as far as Vermont and New York State, buying and selling cattle.

The Garelick family had settled in Woonsocket soon after their arrival from Russia shortly after 1900. Israel Garelick started in the cattle business as a very young man with one cow. Mrs. Zelkind stated:

He would walk from one farm to another, going from Woonsocket to Bellingham. He sold the first cow, bought another, and continued until he had enough money to buy a pickup truck. Then he could expand his business.

It grew sufficiently to necessitate the purchase of a farm. According to a history of Garelick Farms, published in the company "Newsletter," at one point (exact date not given, but prior to 1947) the Garelick brothers "maintained a herd of almost one thousand cows, grazing and milking them at five different farm locations." At first they sold the milk to others in the dairy business who had processing plants. When they could no longer find a large company to buy their milk, they decided to open their own plant. In 1947, the company was incorporated and headed by Israel Garelick.

The two Garelick brothers married two sisters from Boston. After the purchase of the farm "they lived together separately" in the mansion that was part of the original estate, each family occupying one floor. Mrs. Zelkind was one of five children (four girls and one boy); there were also four cousins. "In lieu of privacy we had the affection and warmth and security of growing up in an extended family. If I did not like what my mother was making for dinner, I would eat at my aunt's

house upstairs. She made things she considered indigenous to the country, like root beer and doughnuts.”

From time to time, relatives came to work at the Garelick farm, and they lived in apartments in the wings of the huge main house. There were also apartments on another part of the property for farm workers and their families, and a boarding house for those who were single. A woman was hired to take care of their meals and the farm workers' cleaning and laundry as well.

The girls were not allowed to milk the cows or do agricultural chores. However, Mrs. Zelkind worked in the office. Her brother Daniel (he died in 1968 at forty-three) worked in the fields. Even while a student at Harvard he continued to bale hay, handle cows, and participate in the workings of the farm.

Israel Garelick enjoyed his work very much. He was involved in the buying and selling of cattle; he also knew a great deal about animal husbandry. Mrs. Zelkind remembers her father going off early in the morning to cattle auctions; she also recalls his assisting at the birth of calves and ministering to sick cows. Because of the nature of his work, he kept irregular hours, but at whatever hour he came home, Mrs. Zelkind said, her mother had dinner waiting for him.

COHN FARM

Hyman Cohn was a “commuting farmer,” in the words of his daughter, Marcia Cohn Cohen.²⁵ He lived in Providence and traveled the eighteen miles to Lafayette in the town of North Kingstown, Rhode Island, where he owned about sixty-five acres of land on which he kept up to one hundred head of cattle. Most were milk cows whose produce was sold to Hood's Dairy. A foreman and hired hands lived on the farm and took care of the animals as well as the planting and harvesting of the corn and hay. In addition, there was a special pasture in Saunderstown where dry cows were kept. Although Mr. Cohn did not visit the farm every day, he spoke with the foreman every morning (except Shabbat) to discuss what needed to be done and what had been done. He regularly traveled throughout Rhode Island and the northern New England states buying and selling cattle.

Marcia Cohen described her father's schedule. He rose at 4:00 a.m. and left home by 5:00 a.m. to begin his day's work. On those days when he planned to spend more time on the farm than on the road, he made a number of stops at other farms along the way to check their herds, perhaps to do some business, and would not arrive in Lafayette before about 1:00 p.m. But on Fridays he was home well before sundown in order to go to the synagogue and properly usher in the Shabbat.

Hyman Cohn came to the United States about the time of World War I to avoid being drafted into the Russian army. No sooner had he become an American citizen than he was drafted into the U.S. army. However, on the day he was due to report to Fort Devens peace was declared.

Mrs. Cohen is uncertain how her father acquired his knowledge of farming or whether he or his family was engaged in agriculture in Europe. He was, she said, a good farmer, who knew cattle, who knew how to take care of the sick ones and how to assist with the births.

On Sundays in summer, Mrs. Cohen recalled, her father enjoyed bringing guests to the farm. Often they went blueberry picking, which could be difficult because cows roaming the fields would knock over the pails and quickly eat the spilled berries. Cohn also enjoyed sharing with his friends the vegetables grown on the farm for family consumption.

All week long, Marcia Cohen recalled, her father wore overalls and a work shirt. On Shabbat, however, he dressed in a dark suit and white shirt. His neighbors in Providence called him the banker of Lancaster Street. On Shabbat morning, he was neither farmer nor banker but an Orthodox Jew walking to the synagogue to pray.

Mr. Cohn regularly brought cattle to the slaughterhouse in Brighton, Massachusetts. On Tuesday nights, Marcia Cohen recounted, he would come home after dark and park his truck in the driveway on Dana Street, behind the family house on Lancaster Street. What most of the neighbors did not know was that there were usually three to four cows in the back of the parked truck. Mr. Cohn would leave for Brighton very early in the morning while it was still dark. Since cows "moo" and become active only when there is light, the secret remained safe, and those who knew did not object.

The Cohn family did not live on the family farm in Lafayette, Rhode Island, but they almost became summer residents. Gertrude Cohn, who came from New York City, was not a person who would be comfortable living on a farm, according to her daughter Marcia Cohn Cohen. She enjoyed the cultural and social opportunities that were part of city life. Hyman Cohn also preferred to live in Providence. However, Mrs. Cohen related, since she was rather frail while growing up, her mother decided that she needed the fresh air of the country, at least during the summer months. Then, too, their property was well situated to allow day trips to Narragansett Pier. So, a house was built at a distance from the barns, and that summer, when Marcia Cohen was about ten, they became residents on the farm.

Mr. Cohn had a prize bull, a huge animal, who was his pet, trained to respond to his commands. Mrs. Cohn, however, was afraid of him. The bull, who had free run of the farm, would stand outside the house and watch the family eat breakfast, making Mrs. Cohn rather uneasy. Then, one morning she came into the kitchen and went over to the sink. There, poking his head into the open window was the bull, all 2500 pounds of him, his nose ring gleaming in the sunlight. Mrs. Cohn immediately packed their bags and never again lived on the farm.

DICKENS FARM

Unique to this study is the farm of Bernice and Irving Dickens, who concentrated on one product — turkeys. Called the Belwing Turkey Farm, it is still in operation in Seekonk, Massachusetts.

The Dickenses were the most recent of those included in this article to venture into farming. Irving, a plumber, and his wife, Bernice, moved to Rehoboth in 1944. They started raising dogs for sale, then changed to raising turkeys. Quoted in a *Providence Journal-Bulletin* article,²⁶ Dickens said: "The first year we sold 600 birds. The Elks bought them for the Thanksgiving baskets they made up for the poor of the area." That was the beginning of what has been a lucrative business, selling up to 5000 turkeys a year to people from all over Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

Their busiest time, of course, is Thanksgiving and Christmas but the work of raising and caring for the birds goes on every day. "Sort of retired" to Irving Dickens means that other farmers raise some of his turkeys. The turkeys are slaughtered at a federally inspected plant near Boston. He commented that few people now buy live turkeys to take home.

The Belwing Farm has always been a family-run business. Their son, Stuart, and two daughters, Roslyn and Phyllis, grew up helping out on the farm. With professions of their own, the women still come home to help out during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

FARM VISITORS

Before television, before organized recreation, and before the individual activities of a mobile society, families spent their Sundays and holidays together. One of the favorite pastimes was the visit to the country and to the farm. Dr. Irving Beck recalled,²⁷ "going into the country for fresh air and the raw eggs."

The Beck family, among others, held picnics on a spacious stretch of land, Lubofsky's Farm at 187 Pleasant Street in Cranston. Actually it was not a farm at all but a large piece of land with a grove on Spectacle Pond, ideal for picnics. Not only individual families but also groups of families and organizations held their outings on this land. It was a chance for *landsleit* to play at sports and to discuss pertinent issues.

A wonderful description of a picnic on a farm is contained in an article by Samuel Altman entitled "Fifty Years in South Providence" translated from the Yiddish by Beryl Segal.²⁸

I remember the picnics in the summertime. One such picnic is particularly remembered because of the large number of people and the wonderful atmosphere which prevailed. It was held on Turoff's Farm. The day was sunny, and the people who gathered there were in a festive mood. It seemed as if half of the town were there on the farm. The picnic was converted into

a grand mass meeting, with speeches and singing. The sun poured down her warmth on the people who stood and listened intently, and down on the trees of the farm. It was a picnic never to be forgotten.

The Rubin family had its share of visitors from the city who enjoyed using the facilities, picnicking, cooking on the premises, and picking blueberries.²⁹ One visitor, a young man who was a contemporary of the Rubin boys, participated in the farming chores. On one occasion he spent a week at the farm, but enthusiasm waned when he was faced with a whole week of such arduous chores as cleaning the barn. An interesting story is told by Lewis Rubin that, during World War II when labor was scarce, the girls from nearby Wheaton College offered their services to help with the harvesting at the farm. Archie Finklestein and his sister, Pearl Finklestein Braude, also recalled day trips to the Rubin Farm in Norton.³⁰

The Michael Globus farm attracted many visitors. Sundays Mrs. Globus served very generously to all who sat in her kitchen. There was much spirited conversation in Yiddish and in English. Eleanor Turoff Radin³¹ has vivid memories of visiting with her family on this farm, where her long friendship with Michael's granddaughter, Sylvia Globus Knell, began.

Dr. Morris Povar³² also recalled the Globus house full of visitors. It was after 1922 that he remembered visiting with his mother, a sister of Michael Globus. A brother of Globus, a physician, insisted that all the children in the family spend summers in the country until the advent of cool weather as a prevention against contracting polio. Dr. Povar had many fond memories of the farm. It was his duty to fill the water cans for the chickens left on range in the pasture. Later in the afternoon, as a special treat, he might be allowed to sit in the back of the Model T pickup truck to regulate the stream of grain to feed the chickens. The chickens would flock to the truck and follow the stream. In addition, he helped Joseph Globus keep records on the laying chickens. A major project each year was the cutting of hay and the silage of corn.

Harry Halpern remembered,³³ "There were so many of the *mishpocheh** who visited the farm. One aunt and uncle stayed two years, but finally left for there was not room for two women in the kitchen." Shirley Howitt remembered³⁴ visitors from New York to her mother-in-law's farm in Seekonk.

Dr. Beck recalled³⁵ that, as a child, he and his family vacationed on the Turoff farm for a week. Joseph Turoff in his autobiography referred to the financial hardship the family was experiencing and of the necessity of taking in boarders to supplement the farm income.

Several families from the Pawtucket-Central Falls area described their excursions to farms in an article in the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. Volume 9, No. 2, November 1984, P. 168:

*Family (Hebrew)

Outings of all sorts were a favorite pastime, particularly spending a day or more at a neighboring farm owned by a Jewish relative or friend. Most frequently noted in interviews were the Fine, Friedman, and Globus farms in Attleboro, and the Horvitz and Gleckman farms near Baker's Corner in Seekonk, Massachusetts.

The latter two become sites for many Jewish picnics. The owners of the Globus farm took in boarders. Guests were served at a kitchen table that accommodated as many as twenty people. Fine's farm rented cottages which Jack Cokin, a relative of the owners of the farm, described as so luxurious that, "after we had vacated one which we had occupied, it became a chicken coop." The Gleckman farm was a favorite for the Fourth of July holiday and for watching fireworks.

Another group of visitors to the farms rented rooms from the families. Some did their own cooking; others came as boarders and were served their meals.

Lillian Horvitz Levitt³⁶ spent several summers as a child with her mother and brother on a farm in Seekonk owned by the Klein family, who rented rooms in their home. Her mother cooked in the common kitchen. For a city girl this was her first exposure to chickens and cows and eating fresh vegetables such as corn and peas right from the gardens. Mr. Horvitz stayed in the city to work, but on weekends Mr. Klein, who commuted from his window-washing business in South Providence, brought Mr. Horvitz to spend the weekend on the farm. The accommodations, Lillian Levitt recalled, were rather primitive and had outhouse facilities.

At the same time that the Horvitz family were vacationing at Klein's Farm in Seekonk, Massachusetts, Pearl Finklestein Braude, together with her mother, father, sister, and brother, were also "roomers" at the farm.³⁷ Their accommodations were different from those occupied by the Horvitz family; the Finklesteins rented cabins on the farm property. Pearl Braude vividly recalled that period in her life:

We called it Klein's Farm, but in retrospect it really wasn't much of a farm. There were no silos stored with grain, no huge crops, no potato fields. To be sure, there were potatoes grown in patches; there was corn, but not acres of it; there were fruit trees, but not whole orchards. There were perhaps three or four cows, one or two horses, a single rooster strutting his daily rounds among his harem of hens, six or seven ducks and geese, two pigs, one dog, and a family of cats. Mr. Klein built cabins and rented them to six or seven Jewish families from Providence. He supplied his summer guests with fresh garden vegetables, fresh fruits, milk, butter, and cheese from his cows, and, on Friday, *Erev Shabbat*,* a chicken for every pot. At the end of the week, Mr. Klein hitched his horse or horses to his wagon, and whatever was left over of the vegetables he would sell to nearby

*Eve of Sabbath (Hebrew)

residents in Seekonk and Rehoboth.

The Kleins lived in a large, three-story, frame house. The clapboards were painted white. The Klein house was perched on a slight incline overlooking an open space — a sort of campus. Facing the back of the house at about 50 feet stood cabins grouped haphazardly in a semicircle.

At back of the house, the barn and barnyard stood to the far left. Barley, feeding grain for the chickens and ducks, and hay were stored in the barn. There was a hayloft where the Klein boys climbed up to hoist and pitch the hay for the horses. Below were stalls for the horses and cows. I can't remember where the wagon was kept, but I would think during inclement weather there must have been space for it inside. To the left of the barn was the chicken coop where one heard cackling of hens all day. They laid their eggs in the coop but were free to roam around the barnyard. Outside the coop were long narrow feeding and watering troughs. Often, we helped the Klein girls throw feed in the troughs and watched the chickens run to satisfy their hunger. Not far was a well from which water was pumped. Attached to the well was a huge metal dipper. We all used the same dipper to drink the icy liquid, which jetted in fits and starts and then came gushing out of the well.

We occupied three cabins. (My parents always referred to them as *shacks*.) My brother Archie had one by himself, and, I believe, any extra room was used to store coats and other necessities. Next was the shack where my older sister, Marian, and I slept. Finally came the shack for my mother and father.

My father, and, I suppose, all the other fathers and husbands came to Klein's farm only on weekends. For my father the weekend was a very short one. He ran a grocery store on the corner of Hope and John Streets across from Saint Joseph's Catholic Church and parochial school. Most of the other men arrived at Klein's Friday night. My father did manage to get a helper but usually did not arrive until some time Saturday afternoon. He came by streetcar laden with goodies. Sometimes, I was permitted to walk down the dirt road with my brother and sister to meet him at Sheldon's Corner in Rehoboth.

We came to Klein's Farm as soon as my brother's and sister's school summer vacation began. I guess we came by streetcar because at that time, about 1921 or 1922, we did not yet own an automobile. We loaded all our belongings in large bundles and wicker baskets and made the eight-and-a-half mile journey to Klein's Farm. We got off at the stop at Sheldon's Corner, and Mr. Klein and/or his sons would be there to meet us with the wagon and take us down the dirt road to the farm site.

The first order of business was to set up the huge Army and Navy surplus tent my father bought after World War I. The men of the Klein family and any other male summer residents my father could press into service helped to put up the main staves and drive the pegs into the ground, stabilizing the heavy canvas. To my four- (or five-) year-old eyes, the tent was enormous and seemed to reach the sky! It served as my mother's makeshift kitchen. Pots and utensils were hung on the canvas walls. My mother prepared her family's meals on a small table and sometimes we ate there. But most often we ate outside, sitting down on benches around a huge community table. I suppose one of the reasons we didn't eat inside the tent was because as one entered there was always the odor of kerosene. My mother cooked on little kerosene burners. They had mica windows which were always black and had to be constantly cleaned.

When the fruit trees ripened, all the boys — the summer visitors and Klein boys alike — would climb the branches to pick their quotas. We girls, gazing up, longed to climb too, but were never allowed to. We had to content ourselves with the fruit dropped down in baskets. The fruits from the uppermost branches were always the sweetest, the first to become red-cheeked, being closest to the sun. The boys competed with each other to get those first. Each family was allowed at least a sample of the favored fruit. Did any peach, apple, or cherry ever taste as good?

Thus, some Jewish owned farms provided recreation and vacation facilities to urban, hard-working immigrant families, a respite in the country.

THE FARMER'S WIFE

For the early Jewish farmers, farming was more than a livelihood. It was a way of life in which all the members of the family participated. The men worked in the fields and with the livestock; perhaps there was also a milk, egg, or vegetable delivery route as an outlet for the produce. Children, too, had their chores. On the shoulders of the wife fell the responsibilities for tending the household and caring for the children plus assisting with a variety of tasks about the farm. Often her help and, in some cases, her expertise, made the difference between economic survival or failure.

Samuel Fine, who was six years old when his family moved to Attleboro, recalls that they struggled through the first winter with barely enough to sustain them. In the spring, however, under his mother's tutelage, they planted vegetables for their table as well as potatoes they could store for use during the winter months. Bluma Fine's early experience in farming in Russia stood them in good stead. She knew what to do and how to do it. Pearl Fine stated that her mother-in-law was "a fantastic person." Bluma did the cooking and cleaning and washing (using a washboard and tub) for her family of nine. She also prepared the meals for the hired hands. When

needed, she worked in the fields. If there was trouble with a cow giving birth, she could handle that situation, just as she could revive sick chickens. When their flock of poultry had grown sufficiently to permit a poultry business, Charles, being a *shochet*, slaughtered the chickens. Bluma cleaned and dressed them.

After Samuel and Pearl were married in 1927, Bluma took her new daughter-in-law, a city girl from Worcester, in hand and taught her about life on the farm. As Pearl Fine said,

I become a farmer's wife with no previous experience. I learned very quickly. I cleaned the barn. I milked cows. I cleaned chicken coops. I dressed chickens. I gathered eggs. I worked in the field.... My mother-in-law inspired me by her example.³⁸

In the Sklut family, it was Mrs. Sklut's mother, Dora Benamovitz, who had farming experience.³⁹ According to her granddaughters Zelda Hittner and Stella Sklut, *Bubbe*,* while very young, had worked in the fields in Russia, and she, of all the family, enjoyed gardening. On one of the lots adjacent to their home, she raised vegetables for the family. Her granddaughters remembered with pleasure the tasty cucumbers she grew on their property. It was *Bubbe*, according to her grandson Harry Sklut, who supervised the milking of cows, and it was she who ran the household. "She was," he added, "the whole *macher*** in the family." It was said with affection and admiration.

Sadie Howitt had also grown up on a farm.⁴⁰ When she and her husband purchased his brother's acreage in Seekonk, it was she who took charge of operating the farm, while he opened a small plumbing shop in Pawtucket. According to her daughter-in-law Shirley Bertman Howitt, it was a truck farm on which she grew vegetables for their own use and corn and tomatoes for sale at their own stand or to a small store nearby. When her youngest child was two years old, Sadie found herself in the position of single parent. All the responsibility for raising and supporting her four children now fell on her shoulders. The farm became the sole — often meager — means of income. With the assistance of hired help, in the face of the Great Depression, she managed to continue its operation.

To accomplish what they did, women on the farm had to work long days at arduous tasks, often in conditions that may be described as inconvenient at best. They needed tremendous resources of energy. Harry Halpern⁴¹ still marvels at how much his mother did. In addition to housekeeping, cooking, and laundry, she made her own butter and sour cream.

Ralph Rubin⁴² described his mother's days with deep admiration for the activity she crammed into them. Each morning and evening Ada Rubin milked, by hand,

*Grandmother (Yiddish)

**Influential person (Yiddish)

seventeen cows. In boiling water she washed the two hundred bottles that would hold the milk her husband delivered on his daily route in Taunton. She washed the clothes at a nearby brook and prepared the hearty meals needed to feed her family, which included four growing boys, as well as a hired hand.

Ada Rubin had abilities in many areas. Ralph Rubin cited this example. When laying chickens were no longer producing, they were sold. When buyers came to remove the chickens, his mother could calculate in her head the difference between the weight of the chickens and the weight of the crates. Her calculation, he hastened to add, even included fractions. When salesmen stopped at her home, she enjoyed talking about politics, and one of her relatives said she never forgot how Ada could discuss Nietzsche and his philosophy. Ralph commented that Ada was "fifty years ahead of her time." He believed that "she wanted to become a doctor, and she must have been very frustrated by her life on the farm for she was very intelligent."

Preparing three meals each day for a family often augmented by additional workers consumed a great deal of the routine of the farm women. Added to this were problems of food storage and preservation. At harvest, time had to be found for canning fruits and vegetables or preparing them in some other fashion for use during the winter seasons. Daily cooking was not an easy task, since it involved using a coal or wood-burning stove. Yet from the interviews, it is apparent that, despite all the difficulties, delicious meals came out of those kitchens. Sylvia Globus Knell⁴³ remembered the wonderful food prepared by her grandmother on her coal stove. Eleanor Turoff Radin⁴⁴ recalled the marvelous *kneidlach** Saina Globus made and the cherries preserved for the innumerable glasses of tea served during the Saturday night get-togethers with the neighboring Jewish farm families.

By the 1930s, a change had taken place. The newer farms were considered by their owners as places where one earned one's livelihood, not necessarily where the family lived. The farm no longer engaged all the members of the family or depended on women sharing in the physical labor. For example, the Garelick family lived on a farm but was not a farm family. Neither Mrs. Garelick nor her daughters participated in the work of the farm. Although very much occupied with her home and raising five children, Mrs. Garelick could afford the time to pursue her own interests. As an adult she decided to take piano lessons,⁴⁵ and she learned to play well. She was a gracious hostess whose home was always open to friends and relatives or for community functions. Mrs. Zelkind told of Sundays when their table was always set for company, since their farm was a pleasant drive from the city. Her mother and aunt did all the cooking for the guests, who could number as many as twenty-five.

Mrs. Garelick also took an active role in a number of organizations, including Hadassah, B'nai Israel Synagogue in Woonsocket, and, most notably, the *chevra*

*Matzoh balls (Yiddish)

*kadisha** of Woonsocket. When her children could not understand why she participated in this organization, she explained to them that it was the ultimate *mitzvah*, or good deed.**

EDUCATION

Going to school, getting an education, played a major role in the lives of the second generation of the farming families. Briggs Corners School was the elementary school attended by the Attleboro group. Then it was on to Attleboro High School and, for most of them, higher education. Getting to school was not easy. It meant trolley rides or a long hike, and in winter a walk in the snow. Ralph Rubin and his brothers attended a one-room schoolhouse in Norton. He recalled that it contained all eight grades, taught by one teacher, and a total student body of twenty-four. Despite its size, he felt that he received an excellent education there. "You couldn't help but absorb the information you heard the teacher share with a student in an upper grade." This knowledge enabled him to skip some grades and to graduate at age sixteen from Norton High School. He and his three brothers all went on to universities.⁴⁶

Henry Halpern⁴⁷ attended a primary school two stories high, with one teacher to three classes. In retrospect, he stated that he had an adequate education. In order to get to school, he and his sisters went in a "school barge" which accommodated five or six children. It was not unlike a large surrey with fringe on top. The driver was a neighbor, John Pataldi, who liked children and took very good care of his charges. He supplied them with blankets in cold weather. Mr. Halpern also remembered that Mr. Pataldi, who owned a small apple orchard, stored apples in winter for the children to have with the dry lunches they brought to school.

The Halperns were the only Jewish family in the area. When Henry Halpern started school, he experienced his first taste of anti-Semitism. He vividly remembered the opening day, when the children called him derogatory names and even beat him up once or twice. He added that he beat the others up in return.

The Garelick cousins did not have similar experiences, although they were probably the only Jewish children in their school. On the contrary, according to Elinor Zelkind, the other students respected them because they did well. However, because of the distance they lived from school, they could not walk home with classmates or play with neighborhood children. Instead, they enjoyed their own company and always found something to do by using their imaginations.⁴⁸

The school day was a long one for the cousins. To get to school, they had to be ready early in the morning. Since there was no school bus available to them, arrangements were made for an inter-city bus to stop across the road from the farm.

*Burial society (Hebrew)

**Literally, commandment (Hebrew)

Each morning one youngster would keep a lookout and shout, "The bus!" when it approached. At the word, the others came flying out of the house with books and lunches. Because they could not readily come home for the noon meal as all the other students did, they remained in the school building all day and then had to catch a bus again to bring them home. It was all part of the adventure of going to school.

However, the prized education was not always easy to achieve. Samuel Fine⁴⁹ related that he had to leave school for a time after the eighth grade because his parents needed him so desperately on the farm and his older brothers needed the opportunity to go to the university to work toward their degrees. After two years he was able to return to high school, graduate, and enter Massachusetts State College. Meanwhile, his brother Saul, who had been teaching animal husbandry at Ohio State College, had received an appointment to the faculty of Oregon State College, and suggested that Samuel transfer there. The tuition would be minimal. His mother encouraged him to go. His leaving meant that his brothers Ben and Dave would have to alternate one year on the farm and one year at school. Unfortunately, Saul died very suddenly that year, and Samuel returned to the farm. When his friend Joseph Globus suggested that they study nights, he agreed to the idea. As Samuel Fine said, "I went to college for fifteen years, but I never got a degree. I did get an education."

At the fiftieth reunion of Joseph Globus's class at Attleboro High School, his classmates received him warmly and enjoyed his interesting reminiscences and conversation. "But," said Sylvia Knell,⁵⁰ "my father commented to me afterward that they were not so nice to him during his years in high school. They would make fun of him when he could not find the right word in English. He was frequently tardy for class since before going to school he had to milk the cows, make the milk deliveries, and then return home to change his clothes so that he would not present the image of a farmer. He was always immaculate." When Mrs. Knell went to Attleboro High School, one of her teachers had also taught her father. Indeed, Joseph Globus had told her how kind and understanding this teacher had been to him. She always covered for him when he was late for school.

Mrs. Knell felt certain that the major reason her father, a veteran, had joined the American Legion and took an active part in their activities was his desire to show the others that Jews fought in the war and that Jews did participate. Joseph Globus played in the Legion's bugle corps. On Memorial Day, as he marched in the parade through Attleboro, his two young daughters would join him for part of the route. Mrs. Knell recalled her feeling of pride when he was chosen to speak on Memorial Day at Briggs Corner School.

Ralph Rubin did not feel any anti-Semitism though his family were the only Jews in Norton for many years. On the contrary, he stated, they were very much involved in the affairs of the town and always accepted. Mr. Rubin was a teacher in the middle school for many years and served as president of the Norton Historical Society. His

brother Lewis practiced law and served as town moderator and member of the town council.⁵¹

Samuel Fine⁵² stated that neither he nor the members of his family encountered anti-Semitism. They were very active in their community for many years and always felt part of it. His brother Hyman served on the school committee, and, after his death, a new school was named for him. (It should be noted that two schools in Attleboro were named for Jewish residents of the town. One is the Hyman Fine School, the other the Joseph Finberg School.)

IN RETROSPECT

Looking back on their experience of growing up on a farm, almost all those interviewed would have agreed with Harry Halpern when he stated that he was "very grateful for his farm upbringing.... It was a nice life" that taught him to be responsible, to work hard, and to see a job through. He continued, "You know a thing has to be done and you do it. You are tied to living things and have to take care of living things."⁵³

Ralph Rubin felt "blessed." "As I got older," he added, "I could lord it over the city kids. Let's see you plow a straight line. I never had an inferiority complex about being a farm boy."⁵⁴ Pearl Fine spoke for both her husband and herself when she said, "We have been very happy on the farm. Though I was a city girl from Worcester, I could never go back to the city. We love it here."⁵⁵

Elinor Zelkind expressed a regret that her children, who grew up in Woonsocket, did not have the pleasure of living on the farm as she did, of enjoying the pace of life there, of being attuned to the natural world. There was no need for planned activities; there was always something to do — tobogganing in the fields in winter or walking along the top of the farm's stone walls or picking berries. Her children did not do these kinds of things once they had moved to town.⁵⁶

Since Sylvia Knell wanted to become a teacher, when she went to college she gave no further thought to the farm or farming. However, she said, she was still a farmer at heart and felt regret that she had not followed in the footsteps of her father and grandfather. That part of her nature has now found expression in her gardening.⁵⁷

CODA

Only four of the farms surveyed above have remained wholly or partially in the hands of descendants of the original owners. All have undergone striking changes in their use and function.

Of the three farm families in Attleboro, the Fines alone are still engaged in agriculture. The original holdings were divided after their parents' death between Sam and Hyman, who previously had purchased his own acreage in Rehoboth. Sam and Pearl Fine still live on their property in the house built for them after their

wedding. Because of ill health, Sam had to retire from farming in 1938, while Pearl went to work for the Attleboro school lunch program; she retired as director. Hyman Fine took care of both farms for a time, but the work proved too much for him. The original farm became run-down. Now a greenhouse stands on the property. After Hyman's death, his daughter Ruth Handy inherited his farm interests. She and her husband have continued to tend the fields in Rehoboth and nearby and also grow flower seedlings in the greenhouse in Attleboro. They live in the original farm house, now modernized.

The other members of the family were not interested in farming. Benjamin Fine was education editor for the *New York Times*; David Fine was a lawyer residing out of state. Ann and Mary had married and were not interested in continuing on the farm.

After the death of Michael Globus in 1935, Joseph Globus remained on the farm and continued his highly successful research in poultry genetics and breeding. His two brothers chose other occupations: Hyman Globus became a businessman, Robert a veterinarian. When Joseph decided to direct his attention to dairy genetics, he sold the property, as it was unsuited for raising cattle. He purchased land in Rehoboth, where his achievements in herd improvement gained him national recognition. After Joseph Globus's death in 1969, the house and outbuildings and about thirty-two acres of land were sold. The buyer knocked down the coops on the property, keeping only the house. The remaining property, located on the other side of the road, remained in the family. The land is now rented to a farmer who uses the tillable area for crops such as hay and corn.

The Friedman farm was sold in 1967. Anna Friedman, married to Hyman Globus, lived in Attleboro. Mary Friedman, married to Robert Globus, resided in Connecticut. The Friedmans' son had left the farm at age seventeen to enter M.I.T.

The Rubin farm remains a working farm, although the fields are rented to others. Ellen Rubin O'Hearn and her family live in the Rubin-Driezenstock homestead, while Lawrence Rubin, a food broker, conducts his business from the adjacent farm once owned by his father, Arthur. Those fields lie fallow. Across the road stands the home of Ralph Rubin, next door to land owned by Avis Rubin Goldstein and her brother Lawrence.

The Turoff farms, which Anshel Turoff had envisioned with such idealism, came to an end in ten years. The Seekonk property was sold in 1929. Only the farmhouse remains.

William Sklut was a dairy farmer for perhaps five years. However, the Skluts remained in the converted two-family house in Cranston after Mr. Sklut opened his tailor shop in Olneyville Square.

Although it is no longer cultivated, portions of the Howitt farm remain in the possession of the family. According to Shirley Howitt, Mrs. Howitt gave up the dairy part of the farming when her son went in service and limited her farming to truck gardening some of the land. She gave up the farm in the 1940s.

Sanford Goldman retired in 1985. The Goldman farm land has been developed into house lots.

The Feinman farm in Portsmouth was sold to real estate developers in the 1960s, according to David Feinman. It is now a residential plat.

Hyman Cohn continued to supervise his dairy and cattle farm until the mid 1960s, according to his daughter Marcia Cohen, when ill health forced him to retire. Although he wished to sell the land as a working farm, no one was interested in the property as farm land. It was subsequently developed into home sites.

The Garelick farm is now the headquarters for the large and varied business enterprise known as Garelick Farms, Inc. In 1949, Israel Garelick was joined in his newly incorporated dairy company by his son Daniel and son-in-law Paul Bernon, husband of Elinor Garelick. Unfortunately, during the years of 1968 through 1970, Daniel Garelick, Paul Bernon, and Israel Garelick died. Elinor succeeded her late husband as president of Garelick Farms, Inc. When Lawrence Zelkind, her second husband, became president, she remained as chairman and treasurer. After Zelkind's death in 1985, Mrs. Zelkind's son Peter Bernon assumed the presidency. A second son, Alan Bernon, is executive vice-president.

The Belwing Farm continues in operation, although Irving Dickens "retired" in 1980. He now raises few of the turkeys he and his wife sell, relying on neighboring farmers for the birds.



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NOTES

¹ Interview with Sarah (Mrs. Joseph) Webber, July 19, 1976

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³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 506.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, p. 35.

⁵ Interview with Pearl and Samuel Fine, June 6, 1990.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Telephone interview with Anna Friedman Globus, June 9, 1990.

- ⁸ Telephone interview with Melvin Globus, May 27, 1990.
 - ⁹ Interview with Ralph Rubin and his nephew Alvin Rubin, May 17, 1990.
 - ¹⁰ Interview with Sylvia Globus Knell, July 5, 1990.
 - ¹¹ *The Providence Sunday Journal*, January 2, 1921, "National Society Aids Jewish Farmers."
 - ¹² Interview with Dr. Morris Povar, June 27, 1990.
 - ¹³ Knell, *ibid.*
 - ¹⁴ Fine, *ibid.*
 - ¹⁵ *Journal*, *ibid.*
 - ¹⁶ Telephone interview with Sanford Goldman, July 15, 1990.
 - ¹⁷ Interview with Zelda Hittner and Stella Sklut, May 10, 1990.
 - ¹⁸ Interview with Harry Halpern, August 22, 1990.
 - ¹⁹ These items are now in the archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.
 - ²⁰ Telephone interview with Shirley (Mrs. Julius) Howitt, June 21, 1990.
 - ²¹ Telephone interview with Thomas Gleckman, May 19, 1990.
 - ²² Telephone interview with David Feinman, July 2, 1990.
 - ²³ Telephone interview with Dorothy Fradin, May 16, 1990.
 - ²⁴ Interview with Elinor Garelick Zelkind, May 31, 1990.
 - ²⁵ Interview with Marcia Cohn Cohen, June 25, 1990.
 - ²⁶ *Providence Sunday Journal*, November 24, 1985.
 - ²⁷ Interview with Dr. Irving A. Beck, March 26, 1990.
 - ²⁸ Quoted in *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 7, p. 207.
 - ²⁹ Rubin, *ibid.*
 - ³⁰ Telephone interview with Pearl Finklestein Braude, June 25, 1990.
 - ³¹ Telephone interview with Eleanor Turoff Radin, June 20, 1990.
 - ³² Povar, *ibid.*
 - ³³ Halpern, *ibid.*
 - ³⁴ Howitt, *ibid.*
 - ³⁵ Beck, *ibid.*
 - ³⁶ Interview with Lillian Horvitz Levitt, June 2, 1990.
 - ³⁷ Written reminiscences by Pearl Finklestein Braude, 1990.
 - ³⁸ Pearl and Samuel Fine, *ibid.*
 - ³⁹ Hittner and Sklut, *ibid.*
 - ⁴⁰ Howitt, *ibid.*
 - ⁴¹ Halpern, *ibid.*
 - ⁴² Rubin, *ibid.*
 - ⁴³ Knell, *ibid.*
 - ⁴⁴ Radin, *ibid.*
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- ⁴⁶ Ralph Rubin, *ibid.*
 - ⁴⁷ Halpern, *ibid.*
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200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON LETTER

BY SUSANNAH MOORE

The 200th anniversary of the famous George Washington letter to the Touro congregation in Newport was celebrated August 17, 18, and 19, 1990, with a gala weekend organized by the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue National Historic Shrine, Inc. Over 500 persons attended.

George Washington's letter to Touro affirmed in strong language the principles of religious tolerance, brotherly love, and mutual respect that were subsequently elaborated in the Bill of Rights, then in the process of ratification. Every year since the early 1950s, Touro Synagogue has commemorated the anniversary of the letter with a special reading.

The weekend began on Friday evening with a special service at Touro conducted by Rabbi Dr. Chaim Shapiro, Touro spiritual leader, with guest speaker Rabbi Dr. Binyamin Walfish and guest cantor Bernard Beer. Seated in the President's Box alongside congregation president Bernard Kusnitz during the service was renowned actor and folk singer Theodore Bikel. Also on Friday evening Dr. Judith Laikin Elkin, first fellow chosen by the Touro National Heritage Trust, spoke on "The Jews and Their Encounter with the New World." [See the article "Jews and the Encounter with the New World," p. 482, below.]

On Saturday, after a morning service at the synagogue, a reenactment of Washington's visit to Newport took place, sponsored by the Rhode Island Heritage Commission. President Washington, who was played by actor William Sommerfield, and his party, in authentic colonial costume, arrived at Newport's Long Wharf aboard the sloop *Providence*. They also visited the festivities at the gala "Evening with the First President" on Saturday evening in Marble House, a former Vanderbilt mansion, where many members of the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue also wore colonial garb. The evening's program included entertainment by Theodore Bikel, an 18th century style magic show by magician Robert Olson, dancing, and a fireworks display.

A round table discussion on the future of religious freedom in the United States was held at the Viking Hotel in Newport on Sunday morning, August 19. The moderator was Ernest Frerichs, Chairman of Brown University's Department of Judaic Studies, and the participants were Robert Alley, professor of American Studies at the University of Richmond; Edd Doerr, Executive Director of Americans for Religious Liberty; Samuel Rabinove, Legal Director of the American Jewish Committee; and Edward Asner, noted actor and humanitarian. Mr. Alley

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cited the pivotal role of Roger Williams in establishing a climate that brought Jews and other oppressed people here more than a century before Washington's 1790 visit. Mr. Asner said, "This is a dangerous time for religious freedom, when Communism and other political systems are breaking down; we are going to see a greater and greater resort to fundamentalism, as we are seeing in the Islamic world." The discussion was followed by the Society brunch and annual general meeting.

On Sunday afternoon the ceremonies for the Bicentennial Reading of the George Washington letter began with a small contingent of the Newport Artillery, in authentic colonial uniforms, serving as a color guard flanking the path leading toward the Synagogue's entrance. The Master of Ceremonies was Tylor Field II, and the program was attended by Society members from as far away as Florida and Texas, honored guests and participants, and others. Music was provided by the U.S. Navy Band, Newport; baritone Newport native Ernest Triplett; and violinist Zina Schiff, accompanied by Judith Stillman at the piano.

The program included greetings from Rhode Island's Governor Edward D. DiPrete and Newport's Mayor Robert J. McKenna, ecumenical prayers, and a special letter from the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, presented by Mrs. Hope Alexander. Touro's Rabbi Emeritus, Theodore Lewis, gave brief remarks on the importance of George Washington's historic words.

Senator Claiborne Pell read a Senate resolution he sponsored, establishing Religious Freedom Week the third week of September 1990. Representative Claudine Schneider read messages from President George Bush and Vice-President Daniel Quayle. The President wrote, "... For two centuries, the words of George Washington have served as a reminder of our Nation's dedication to religious freedom and to religious tolerance. The members and friends of Touro Synagogue have made it their mission to foster those principles so eloquently expressed in George Washington's letter ... let each of us reaffirm our devotion to using our faith to express the noblest values of America so that together we can then serve the inalienable rights of man ..." Ms. Schneider also read greetings from former Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger, who said, "... let us join together in hope and prayer that the spirit that guided Moses, Joshua, David and Daniel in the affairs of state may guide leaders today, and the American people for another 200 years; and may the American people give 'to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance ...'"

As is traditional, the letter that prompted Washington's response, written by Moses Seixas (warden of Touro) in 1790, was read by a Seixas descendant. This year it was 17-year-old Joshua Seixas Fausty. Edward Asner then responded with Washington's reply, in which the first president borrowed the key phrases from Seixas. Edd Doerr spoke on "What Religious Freedom Means to Me." U. S. Representative Ronald K. Machtley gave the principal speech, pointing out Rhode

Island's pivotal role in the development of our national policy of religious freedom and Touro's place within that development.

Samuel Friedman, charter president of Friends of Touro Synagogue, was chairman of the 200th Anniversary Committee that planned the weekend events. Other members were co-chairperson Marcia Cohen, worship chairman Rabbi Chaim Shapiro, letter reading chairman Tylor Field, II, and David Bazarsky, Bernard E. Bell, Richard Carbotti, The Rev. Frank Carpenter, B. J. Clanton, Don Dailey, Karen Dannin, The Rev. Edward H. Flannery, John and Jane Goodman, Mary Lou Haas, Charlotte Penn, and Bella G. Werner, with the assistance of Kirsten Mann, Coordinator of Touro Synagogue.



JEWES AND THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE NEW WORLD

By JUDITH LAIKIN ELKIN

As we approach the Quincentenary of Columbus's voyage and of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the questions most frequently asked by Jews concern Christopher Columbus: Was he a Jew? was he a converso? was he a marrano?*

These are, quite simply, the wrong questions; their answers, if we had them, would tell us nothing. The search for Jews in the pages of history trivializes the past and diverts attention from the real questions which are far more interesting. Consider: If Columbus was a Jew by birth or conviction, why did he have to conceal that fact? Why was there a separate social class of conversos who had been baptized but who were prevented by Church and State from merging with the congregation of the Catholic faithful? Why was the Church in the business of manufacturing marranos? And why is the question still alive after all this time? These are the great questions of the period because their answers tell us so much about Spanish culture and the way in which it molded the developing mentality of Latin America. Concentrating our attention on Columbus's ancestry is a red herring that diverts our attention from the important issues.

1492 was not a year of celebration for Jews. It was the year of the expulsion from Spain, where Jews had lived for over a thousand years, from a time before Christians lived there. When Ferdinand and Isabel, the Catholic Kings, decreed that Jews must convert or leave the Kingdom, they split the Jewish people in two. Half of Spanish Jewry changed their religion in order to keep their homeland; half changed their homeland in order to keep their religion.

The conversos who remained in Spain expected that, in exchange for giving up their religion, they would win acceptance within general society. But what they

Dr. Elkin is the first Touro National Heritage Trust Fellow. She received a three-month fellowship in 1990-1991, administered by the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, for research on some aspect of the Jewish experience in the Western Hemisphere prior to ca. 1860. The Fellow was selected by an academic committee consisting of representatives of Brown University, the American Jewish Historical Society, Brandeis University, the Newport Historical Society, and the John Carter Brown Library, as well as a representative of the Executive Committee of the Touro National Heritage Trust. The Trust, founded in 1986 and associated with historic Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island, is dedicated to furthering understanding between Jews and Gentiles and to the constructive exchange of ideas on issues of concern to both communities through fellowships, seminars, symposia, lectures, and publications.

This article is based on Dr. Elkin's presentation in the Touro Synagogue during the bicentenary celebration of President Washington's letter on religious freedom. Elkin is the author of *Jews of the Latin American Republics* and co-editor, with Gilbert W. Merkx, of *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*. The founder of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association, she is presently a Research Scientist at the University of Michigan.

* A Jew is a person born of a Jewish mother and who has not converted to another religion. A converso is a person, originally Jewish or descended from Jews, who has been converted to the Catholic faith. A marrano is a converso who practiced Judaism secretly.

encountered was an increasingly hostile environment in which policies formerly directed against them as Jews were now redirected against them as conversos. Baptism was not allowed to become a permit to enter general society. Rather, it placed further burdens on them by bringing them under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. Being a Jew, prior to 1492, had not been a crime. After 1492, being a converso left one open to the accusation of practicing Judaism secretly, which was heresy, for which the penalty was death and expropriation of property. Furthermore, no sooner had conversion washed away the stain of a despised religion, than a new stain, that of their "infected race," was substituted. Because they could not show a certificate of *limpieza de sangre* (literally, "clean blood"), conversos were barred from holding public office, from entering the priesthood, riding a horse, wearing silk garments, owning slaves, or eating the foods to which they were accustomed. These laws of clean blood were the spiritual ancestors of the Nazis' Nuremberg Laws. The placing of legal and social disabilities on the conversos explains why Columbus, if he was descended from this class, would have gone to considerable pains to hide that fact.

The Jews who left Spain had to seek refuge in other countries at a time when most European monarchs did not permit Jews to live within their domains. These exiles went to Amsterdam or Hamburg or the Italian papal states, where a degree of religious toleration was promised; or to North Africa, where conditions were far more dubious, and in time to Turkey, whose Sultan, astounded at the wastage of their own citizens by the Catholic Kings, welcomed this educated and productive class of Spanish Jews.

The story of the Portuguese Jews is especially relevant to Americans, because most of the avowed or secret Jews who made it to America passed through Portugal first. So many Spanish Jews crossed into Portugal in 1492 that it is estimated that they comprised one-fifth of that country's population. Despite the promise of toleration, when King Manoel of Portugal engaged his son to a daughter of Ferdinand and Isabel, a condition of the marriage contract was that he expel these Jews from his kingdom. Unwilling to lose his useful new subjects, the king instead sealed the borders and ordered his army to convert all the Jews by force. That occurred in 1497.

One could imagine that America, the new-found-land, must have appeared as a godsend to these harrassed people. Suddenly, a totally new territory appeared from out of the ocean, where it might be possible to begin life anew. Unfortunately, for Jews, the idea of a *New World* was a delusion. The very first instruction sent by Queen Isabel to the first royal governor of the first colony, in 1502, stipulated that no Jew, Moor, nor one recently converted from those faiths, nor descendants of these or of any person burned at the stake, was to be allowed to enter the Indies. The same racist legislation that had barred conversos from entering their home societies was transferred intact to this so-called new world. From the start, to be a Jew in the

New World was a crime punishable by public lashing, deprivation of property, and perpetual imprisonment. To be a baptized Catholic suspected of following “the dead law of Moses” was a crime punished by being burnt alive at an auto-da-fe, an act of faith.

Incredibly, a handful of Jews and a considerable number of conversos found their way to the New World by various devices—procuring a false certificate of *limpieza de sangre* (literally, “clean blood”) from some complaisant priest, or buying an exemption from the king himself, who was not above replenishing his treasury in this way. These immigrants represented a mixture of human motivations. Some, like Jose Maldonado da Silva, must have hoped that, by travelling to the farthest reaches of Spanish authority (to the territory that is now Chile), they could continue to live secretly as Jews. Others, such as Luis de Carvajal, the Catholic governor of Nueva Leon, must have hoped that his converso relatives whom he brought over to Mexico would cease and desist from their judaizing and disappear without trace into the Old Christian frontier population. Still others, like Simon Vaez Sevilla, were motivated by a desire to share in the wealth and glory that awaited those courageous and canny enough to grasp it.

The Inquisition, with its informers, followed the Jews overseas. Through the same Edict of Faith that had been read for centuries in European churches, the faithful were warned under pain of excommunication that they must inform the Inquisitors of any judaizing practices they might see or hear about, such as changing one’s shirt on Friday, or observing the Fast of Esther, or cooking food in olive oil rather than in lard. The Edict was read to Spaniards and Indians alike, and one can only wonder what the Indians made of it, since they had never seen a Jew and had no idea what one was. Some kind of devil, they imagined, and that is the image of the *judío* (Jew) that went into their folklore.

Running like a scarlet thread through the sermons preached by the Dominican and Franciscan friars who were charged with evangelizing the Indians is the theme of the “perfidious Jew” who betrayed Jesus, taunted him with vinegar when he was thirsty, and who bore ultimate responsibility for his death. The calumnies heaped on the Jews—that they are heretics, blasphemers, conspirators, idolators—did not need to be invented by these sixteenth and seventeenth century monks and priests. They can be found in writings of the church fathers going all the way back to the third century of the Common Era. Continual accusations against “Jews” in the abstract prepared the way psychologically for the periodic public humiliations, whippings, and burnings at the stake which were carried out all over the Spanish kingdoms and which otherwise might have aroused compassion in the hearts of spectators. Also noteworthy was the Inquisitors’ exquisite attention to detail, such as the seating arrangements of the dignitaries assembled to watch prisoners being “relaxed” (in the peculiar terminology of the time) to the secular authorities for burning. These provincial monks were eager to demonstrate that their zeal and their style could

match anything the mother country had to offer.

Scholars have long discussed the motivations of the Spanish and Portuguese church and state in attacking Jews (who scarcely existed in the colonies) and conversos (whom they thereby prevented from assimilating to the rest of the Catholic population). Certainly, one reason was their understanding of what the Catholic faith required of them. Twentieth-century Christian theologians have come to accept the proposition that anti-Semitism was built into the interpretation of the Gospels from Paul onward. Another motivation was greed: arrests were invariably accompanied by the seizure of the prisoner's property, which accrued to the Holy Office (minus a share that went to the informer). Following an orgy of arrests of converso merchants in Lima in 1635, the local branch of the Inquisition emerged as the wealthiest in the world.

Another motivation had to do with the Indians. Because native Americans were so new to Catholicism, and because the first conquistadors and inquisitors tortured them so cruelly, the Spanish Crown withdrew them from the jurisdiction of the Inquisition. They could not be executed for maintaining their ancient customs, which included idolatry. Fortunately for the friars, there was another class of person that it was not only legal but meritorious to hunt down and burn: suspected Jews. Watching the spectacle of the autos-da-fe and listening to the sermons that promised death to heretics must have made a great impression on the newly-converted Indians.

As a result of Inquisition activities, Jews and Judaism were completely eliminated from the Spanish colonies by the eighteenth century. Some Jewish tradition, but no Jews, survived in Brazil. The only continuity between the hunted conversos of the colonial period and the contemporary Jewish populations of Mexico, Peru, or Brazil is the continuing popular perception of Jews as a mysterious and occult presence. "Accusing" a person of having converso ancestry is a common tactic used to discredit political enemies or undesirable prospective sons-in-law. Philo-Semites, in a kind of reaction formation, like to ascribe Jewish ancestry to anyone of outstanding intelligence, wealth, or accomplishment. That is no doubt the reason that speculation about Columbus's ancestry persists. Whether the speaker is pro- or anti-Jewish, the attitude is clearly racist.

The notion that Columbus was born a Jew flies in the face of all the evidence that he was born into a Catholic family of weavers in the city of Genoa. The notion that he was a marrano or crypto-Jew is simply preposterous: his journal and the observations of his contemporaries amply document Columbus's scrupulous observance of Catholic ritual. In the close quarters aboard ship, or lingering in the anterooms of royal palaces, it would have been impossible for him to observe any Jewish custom. On the contrary: toward the end of his life, he donned a Franciscan habit. The only possibility left open is that some ancestor somewhere in Columbus's

family tree may have been a Jew or converso. If that was the case, the family hid the fact so well that no one has successfully challenged their "clean blood" in 500 years of trying. To call Columbus a Jew or converso is to play the game of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, which never permitted persons of the remotest Jewish ancestry wholly to integrate into the community of humankind.

The search for Jewish ancestry for Columbus is particularly untimely now, during the run-up to the Quincentenary, when native Americans are calling attention to the fact that what we call the "discovery" of America was nothing of the sort. They object strongly to the notion that they were waiting to be discovered, that they were nothing until the white man came to confer civilization upon them. Recognizing that we have been ethnocentric in our view of 1492, we have dropped the word "discovery" from the quincentenary vocabulary, substituting the more neutral "encounter." Native Americans further remind us that the encounter between Europe and America led to the genocide of the Indians, a genocide that was in fact initiated by Christopher Columbus and his brother on the island of Hispaniola. This is a singularly unpropitious moment to claim Columbus as a Jew.



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