



**RHODE ISLAND
JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES**

VOLUME 11 NOVEMBER 1991 NUMBER 1

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FRONT COVER

Wedding picture of Isaac and Betty Woolf, 1894. See pp. 51, 81-82.

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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FROM THE EDITOR

Notes on the *Notes*

This issue's article on "Summers Along Upper Narragansett Bay" is the beginning of what we hope will be a series of articles on the summer vacation places of Rhode Island Jews. The next article will cover the South County area and Newport. We urge readers with old memories of these resort areas to share them with the authors, Eleanor Horvitz and Geraldine Foster.

The connection between Brown University and these *Notes* continues to be strong. In addition to the faculty members such as Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider who provide articles as well as helpful counsel and suggestions, we have been able to arrange for editorial assistance from student interns in the Brown Student Alumni Network. This year's intern was Jeremy Kaplan, author of the article on the Benefit Street area Jewish community.

The editor is also greatly helped by many volunteers who have offered assistance this year with research, editing, typing, running errands, and proofreading. Special thanks are due to Stanley Abrams, Aaron Cohen, Maurice B. Cohen, Geraldine S. Foster, Bonnie N. and Seebert J. Goldowsky, Rosalind Gorin, Violet Halpert, Eleanor F. Horvitz, Robert Kotlen, Bernard Kusinitz, Barbara Levine, Martha Mitchell, Charlotte Penn, Toby Rossner, Alvin Rubin, Jerome B. Spunt, and Lynn and Samuel Stepak. We also thank the volunteer writers of articles in the *Notes* and the many people who provided information.

One of the pleasures of being editor of the *Notes* is getting to know so many more people in our community, both of the present and the past. A sad duty, though, is compiling the Necrology of members who have died each year. As you will see by this issue's long list, 1991 was a year of great loss for our members, their families, the Jewish community of Rhode Island, and, indeed, for the entire state.

Judith Weiss Cohen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION TO LOUIS I. SWEET	9
THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION	11
SUMMERS ALONG UPPER NARRAGANSETT BAY, 1910-1938	14
<i>by Eleanor F. Horvitz and Geraldine S. Foster</i>	
<i>THE JEWISH HERALD — "HAPPENINGS OF INTEREST IN THE WOMEN'S WORLD"</i> AT UPPER BAY VACATION PLACES	36
RHODE ISLAND PLACES WITH JEWISH NAMES	40
<i>by Eleanor F. Horvitz</i>	
THE BENEFIT STREET AND LIPPITT HILL JEWISH COMMUNITY, 1900-1940	46
<i>by Jeremy Kaplan</i>	
MEMORIES OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD IN THE BENEFIT STREET AREA	60
<i>by Florence Zinn Krantz</i>	
DR. SEEBERT GOLDOWSKY RECOGNITION DAY	62
THE PORTUGUESE — RHODE ISLAND JEWISH LINK	
PORTUGUESE CONSUL TO RHODE ISLAND SPEAKS TO JEWISH COMMUNITY	67
THE ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES SOCIETY	69
<i>by Alvin F. Rubin</i>	
RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF NEWPORT JEWRY PRIOR TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION	71
<i>by Martin T. Aron</i>	
REFLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS	
THE TWELVE-BRANCH CHANDELIER IN TOURO SYNAGOGUE	78
<i>by Bernard Kusinitz</i>	
A MEMORY OF MY MOTHER WRITING A SPEECH	81
<i>by Ruth Woolf Adelson</i>	
BOOK REVIEW: <i>A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership, the Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El) Providence, Rhode Island</i> , by Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D.	83
<i>by Bernard Wax</i>	
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES	86
<i>by Seebert J. Goldowsky, M. D.</i>	
THIRTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION	88
NECROLOGY	90
ERRATA AND ADDENDA	100
FUNDS AND BEQUESTS	101
LIFE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION	102

DEDICATION

LOUIS I. SWEET
1906—1991



Louis I. Sweet, around 1983.

Resolution adopted by the Executive Committee of the
Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association
October 9, 1991

Whereas Louis I. Sweet undertook, in the early 1960s, when David C. Adelman, the founder, became ill, to manage the administrative and financial affairs of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association in order to help maintain the Association as a viable organization. His efforts played a major role in the continuation of the Association during a difficult period.

Whereas Louis I. Sweet served the Association as a member of the Executive Committee from 1958 to 1988 and was named an honorary member of the Executive Committee in 1988. In these offices he worked for the Association with efficiency, effectiveness, and good judgment.

Whereas Louis I. Sweet's beloved and devoted wife, Jennie (Jeanne) Sweet also served the Association with distinction and was Treasurer from 1962 to 1978.

Whereas Louis I. Sweet will be sorely missed by the Association because he was kind, honest, straightforward, and always a man of his word and because of his great contributions to the success of the organization.

Therefore, do we, the members of the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, dedicate the first issue of the eleventh volume of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* to his blessed memory.

THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The year 1991 marks the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. To look back at how this organization was started, the Editor could find no better way than to reprint part of an article by our distinguished Editor Emeritus, Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., that appeared in the 1974 issue of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* (Volume 6, Number 4, pp. 622-628). Here is the early history of the Association, which had seventeen members in 1951 and has grown to 582 members in 1991.

LOCAL JEWISH HISTORY — THE RHODE ISLAND EXPERIENCE BY SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

I have been asked to describe the activities of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. While local and regional history has been an active concern of interested groups since the earliest days of the Republic, local ethnic history has had a small constituency. Pursuit of local Jewish history has always been an incidental interest of the American Jewish Historical Society and its members. But until recent years there has been no organized effort to develop it as a finite discipline. Some Jews have felt that there was no place for this seemingly parochial type of activity, while others were in fact openly hostile. Encouragement in Rhode Island, however, was forthcoming from the local professional historians such as Clifford P. Monahan, formerly Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, and Albert T. Klyberg, the present Director. They have supported the concept enthusiastically, feeling that local ethnic historical groups, such as the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, could develop significant aspects of local history. Thus a dimension and depth could be added to the total picture of local history which the resources of the state historical society did not permit it to explore.

The Association was chartered on September 11, 1951 in order "To procure, collect and preserve books, pamphlets, letters, manuscripts, prints, photographs, paintings and any other historical material relating to the history of the Jews of Rhode Island; to encourage and promote the study of such history by lectures and otherwise; and to publish and diffuse information as to such history." ... [The seven original incorporators were David C. Adelman, Alter Boyman, William G. Braude, Israel J. Kapstein, Arthur J. Levy, Matilda J. Pincus, and Beryl Segal.]

The three basic functions specified in the articles of incorporation are collecting, study, and publication. Our current goals are in full harmony with the original objectives.

The founding father was the late David C. Adelman, who conceived and agitated for the establishment of the organization. To him must go the lion's share of credit for his insight in perceiving the importance of local ethnic history and for bringing

to realization the formation of a group for that purpose. There is little doubt that this organization, although still only twenty-three years old, was the first in the country devoted to the scientific study of local Jewish history, and was possibly the first seriously to pursue local ethnic history of any category. The idea is now spreading — there are a dozen or so active local Jewish history groups in the United States — and two colleges in our own area, Rhode Island College and Providence College, are actively encouraging other ethnic groups to follow the same path. There are organizations in Rhode Island sponsored by the Italians, the Portuguese, the Irish, and the French Canadians, among others, all important ethnic enclaves in the population of southeastern New England.

David C. Adelman was an astute and prominent attorney and a talented amateur historian. He was incisive, scholarly, and articulate. He wrote well and recorded the results of his researches in a lucid, graceful prose, sometimes acerbic, but more often softened by touches of irony or humor.

The first meeting of the incorporators was held on November 20, 1951 in the historic John Brown House in Providence, the headquarters of the Rhode Island Historical Society. The original seven incorporators became the first officers and Executive committee and David C. Adelman the first president. An arrangement was made with the Rhode Island Historical Society to use its quarters as a meeting place and mailing address. The first formal meeting, at which David C. Adelman presided, was held at the Historical Society quarters on February 12, 1953. The timing was felicitous, although not entirely without forethought, since it enabled the Association to play a significant role in the celebration in 1954 of a dual anniversary, the centennial of the first Jewish congregation in Providence and the Tercentenary of the arrival of Jews in what was destined to become the United States. Four years after their arrival in North America a small group had in 1658 found their way to Newport, Rhode Island.

Adelman, in his opening remarks, described the genesis of his interest in Rhode Island Jewish history:

"This occasion is for me the fruition of a seed casually planted in my youth when I began to collect books. Eager but inexperienced, I had no goal and proceeded like a grasshopper. Trial and error proved to be painful financially and compelled me to concentrate. I chose to collect Rhode Island Americana and at first, subconsciously, but later deliberately, searched for Jewish historical items. This search extended over many years and disclosed that the history of the Jews of Newport had been minutely examined by many Jewish historians who contributed to the publications of the American Jewish Historical Society. Errors had been made and were being perpetuated by repetition, such as the exaggeration of the Jewish population of Colonial Newport, the statement that Abraham Campanall had been made a freeman, and the Jew, James Lucena, had been made a citizen while Aaron Lopez

had been denied naturalization a year later. The incontrovertible facts show that the Jewish population of Colonial Newport never exceeded, if it ever reached two hundred, that Abraham Campanall was not made a freeman but was given a license to conduct a tavern and that James Lucena represented himself as a Portuguese and took the oath 'upon the true faith of a Christian'."

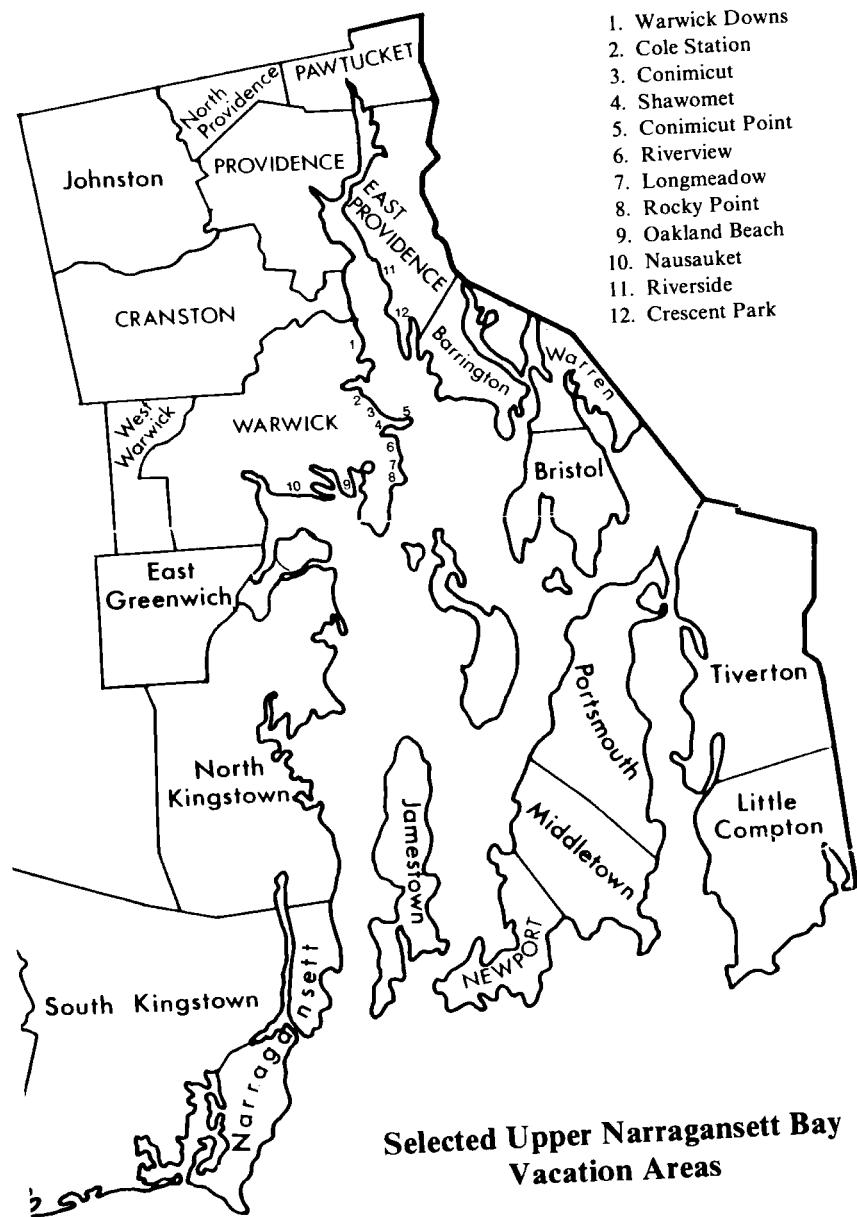
This is a fair example of his vigorous prose, his legal orientation, and his frequent recourse to court records and public documents. He soon came to realize that the great Jewish migrations of the nineteenth century had been largely ignored in relation to Rhode Island history. Three years earlier, at the suggestion of Rabbi Braude, he had undertaken the writing of a history of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David in anticipation of its 100th anniversary. He was frustrated by the difficulty of locating documents and in fact by the loss of twenty-five years of records in a fire. This considerable hiatus led of necessity to a search of public records. "While such a search is soul satisfying", he wrote, "it imposes a great tax upon the time and resources of the individual. ... I resolved that the time had come to repair the damage of the past and to lay a solid foundation for the future." Discussions with a small group of knowledgeable and sympathetic persons led to the incorporation of the Association. He kept a weather eye on the accuracy of accounts of the Newport Era and continued to write brief essays about that period, but his major effort was now directed to research on the Providence period which began about 1838. In this connection he was to make fundamental and substantial contributions.

The first issue of *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, which he edited, appeared in, or at least was dated June 1954, midway in the Tercentenary year. This maiden effort consisted of 76 pages on slick paper

The Association's growing reputation in the community has produced a dividend of considerable importance. A new and spacious Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island was dedicated in June of 1971. An attached annex, to be the headquarters of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, is currently rapidly nearing completion. A suite of rooms has been set aside in this new building to be the headquarters of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. We expect to move into these new modern air-conditioned quarters this fall or winter.

Thus, despite many exigencies, we believe that the vision perceived by David Adelman more than two decades ago is now a reality — a healthy organization, a successful publication, and spanking new quarters.





SUMMERS ALONG UPPER NARRAGANSETT BAY

1910 — 1938

BY GERALDINE S. FOSTER & ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

For the East European Jews who came to Rhode Island in the years from 1880 to 1914, the idea of a summer vacation home or, for that matter, a vacation, was something quite new, beyond their personal experience. Wealthy people in the old country went to a *dacha* (villa), a resort by the sea, or the countryside, where they could enjoy the pleasures of life away from the heat of the city in summer. However, for the impoverished, oppressed residents of the *shtetl* (townlet) or crowded urban quarters, activities of this sort were reserved for others. Here in their new home in America they learned what their fellow Jews from western Europe who had preceded them had already learned. A vacation was one of the possibilities America offered, and living in Rhode Island made a vacation home by the sea feasible even for those of modest means. It might be a summer rental of the most primitive sort, but a vacation lay within reach, often just a trolley ride away.

The upper reaches of Narragansett Bay, to the east and west of Providence,* sheltered many seaside communities where a family could spend the hot months in the healthy environment of the ocean shore. Although the communities lacked the cachet and the broad sandy beaches of Narragansett or Newport, they had their own attractions. If the beaches were narrow and stony, if seaweed accumulated at the shore and jellyfish often came in on the tide, still the water was clear and not too deep even at high tide. Children could swim and play with a minimum of supervision. All those interviewed for this survey used the same word, *safe*, in describing not only the swimming areas but the entire locale as well.

Who among the very early Jewish settlers in Rhode Island may have summered at any of these seaside communities along the upper Bay is not known. A search of archival materials yielded no information, while municipal directories offered no clues since they did not indicate seasonal occupancy, particularly of summer rentals. Available information suggests that it was in the years following World War I that Jews began to come to these shore areas in increasing numbers, but they were also a presence, albeit small, in the prior years.

BEGINNINGS

One summer around 1910** Ethel Reffkin Gertsacov accepted the invitation of Bess Finberg to visit with her children for a few weeks at Old Buttonwoods.¹ On the last day of her stay, she decided to take a walk along the shore while awaiting the

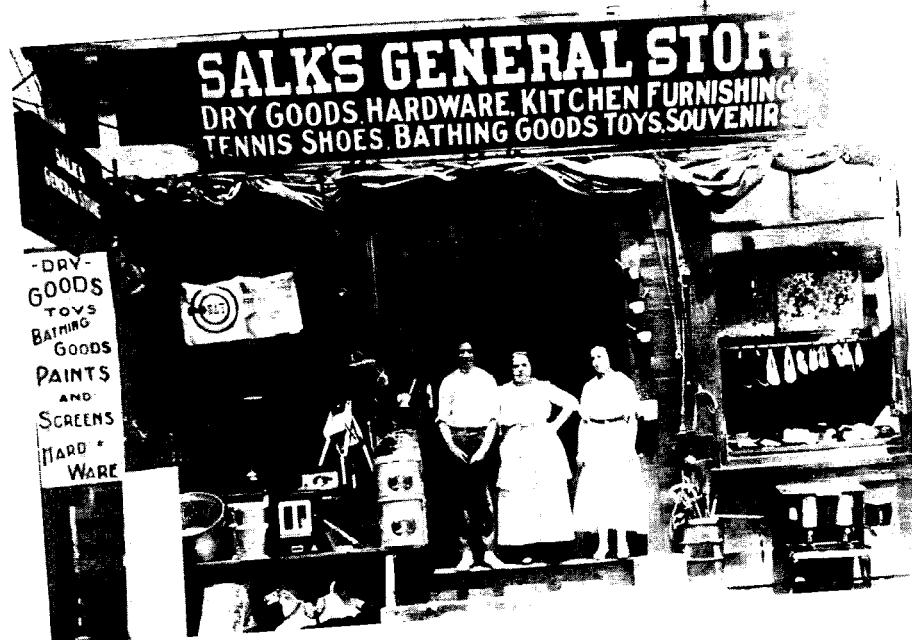
*Future issues of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* will have articles on other Jewish vacation places in Rhode Island.

**Exact date unknown.

Eleanor Horvitz is Librarian-Archivist and Geraldine Foster is a past-president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.



Betty Basok Kotlen and her father,
George Basok, in front of their cottage
at Nausauket, July 4, 1937.



Salk's General Store, 799 West Shore Road, Oakland Beach, 1920.

van to take her family and their goods back to their city home. Since the tide was low, she could cross Baker's Creek, which she did for the first time. From its farther bank, she saw Nausauket; it fascinated her. There beside the water she found two houses, one a large farmhouse. So taken was she with the place that she knocked on the door to ask the owner if he rented rooms. The reply, according to Ethel's daughter, Irma Gersacov Slavit, was, "Well, we never have, and we don't have a stove." Unfazed, she responded, "Then I'll buy a [kerosene] stove." They concluded their arrangements, and, when the van arrived in Buttonwoods to bring her and her children home, Mrs. Gertsacov sent word to her husband on the unexpected change in plans and then rerouted the movers to Nausauket, where they spent the remainder of the summer, and many summers to come. It was the beginning of a summer colony that attracted members of the Gertsacov's extended family as well as other Jewish families.

On a summer day in 1916, sixteen-year-old Samuel Salk filled a container with an assortment of items from his father's dry goods store at 249 Plain Street near Willard Avenue in Providence and boarded a trolley for Oakland Beach. He did not go swimming that day. He walked the length of the beach selling his wares.

By the end of the day he had sold his entire stock. As a result of his son's successful venture, Hyman Salk rented a store the following year and opened a business there. This was the beginning of the Salk enterprises in Oakland Beach and Conimicut.²

A bill of sale from Frederick Goodison of Providence to Jacob Horvitz of Providence testified to the sale to the latter of a five-room, two-story cottage on the shore of Warwick Downs, Warwick, Rhode Island. Mr. Horvitz paid the sum of five hundred dollars to Mr. Goodison; Maurice Robinson notarized the transaction on April 15, 1919.

The property included the cottage known as "The Maples" and all furnishings and furniture therein plus a shack measuring twelve feet by sixteen feet to the rear of the house, but not the land, which remained in the domain of the town of Warwick. Within a few years of the purchase, the town gave notice that the land was needed for other purposes and offered to move the house elsewhere. The Horvitz family, however, decided to leave the area and sold the cottage. Thereafter they rented homes in Conimicut, Shawomet, Riverview, and Conimicut Point.³

The Barrington Directory of 1922 records the name of Simon Klein with an asterisk beside it, indicating summer residence. His address was given as both on Governor Bradford Drive and Oak Bluffs Road during the following years through 1927. His was apparently the first Jewish name among the seasonal residents. Providence City Directories of corresponding years list Simon Klein as living on Hidden Street.

Jews began to buy and build summer homes in Barrington around 1922, after the



Fannie Horvitz and her daughter Celia, "The Maples," Warwick Downs, 1922.

purchase of the Fales Estate by Herman Rosner, Dr. Ilie Berger, Abraham Weiner, and Philip Weinstein, according to Evelyn Berger Hendel,⁴ and the purchase of the Easton Estate by Herman Rosner, according to Eleanor Turoff Radin.⁵ Mr. Rosner was instrumental in the development of both properties, said Jack Temkin. He characterized the Barrington summer colony as "a microcosm of the state. There was the Providence plat, the Pawtucket plat, the Central Falls plat, and the Woonsocket plat," as Jews from those communities tended to purchase property (or in rare instances rent) near their city neighbors.⁶

Jacob Sonkin built his family's home on Vohlander Street in Shawomet in 1924. He chose that area because other Pawtucket people were already living there. Residents of Providence also had beach houses in Shawomet, but in a separate enclave. Edith Sonkin Gordon said that most of their friends came either from Pawtucket or Central Falls.⁷

LIVING QUARTERS

The summer homes ran the gamut from primitive to magnificent; from very simple cabins on cinder blocks to spacious, shingled houses with full cellars and large porches. The amenities also ranged from the basic (water pumps, outhouses, ice boxes, and kerosene stoves) to all the comforts of a modern 1920s style home



The Brodsky family, Conimicut, 1926. Front row, l. to r., Richard Brodsky, Sarah Brodsky, Ann Brodsky Musen, Fannie Bender (sister of Sarah Brodsky), Florence Bender, Max Bender. Back row, Ben Bender.

with indoor plumbing, icebox, kerosene stove, radio, and phonograph. Refrigerators and gas stoves began to appear in the next decade, the late 1930s; telephones were in short supply.

Vivian Orodener Kolodny described their house on Conimicut Point as a small four-room house with unfinished interior. One could see the frame of the structure as well as the timbers of the roof through the spaces in the ceiling. Curtains hung at the doorways to the bedrooms for a modicum of privacy. An icebox provided refrigeration, while a gas stove served for cooking, with an attached heating unit for keeping the chill out of the rooms when needed. Although crowded and unpretentious, it was the locus of many happy hours for the family plus "Bubbe."**⁸

The Brodsky home in Conimicut, purchased in 1923, was a very small, four-room cabin; the interior walls were unfinished and did not reach the ceiling. One could hear everything that went on in the next rooms. The kitchen had one counter built across the window, and a kerosene stove. Anna Brodsky Musen's mother baked cakes and cookies in a small oven "like a little box" that would be set over one of the burners. Except for the addition of a room and bathroom six years later, the house remained that way until her father decided to winterize it in 1939. Her parents "did

*Grandmother (Yiddish).

not want a fancy place," she said. "They just wanted a place to go in the summer, and certainly the many relatives who came to spend their vacation with us did not mind. The main thing was to enjoy the sun and the beach."⁹ Many summer residents agreed with her statement. The simple life did present its own problems, however. "If you did not prime the pump the night before, you didn't have any water in the morning," stated Freda Ernstof Rosenberg in speaking of the cottage her parents, Perl and Samuel H. Ernstof, rented in Longmeadow for seven summers beginning in 1916. When they first moved in, there was an outhouse to be reckoned with and a kerosene stove.

Neighbors advised the Ernstofs that they had no need for electricity. Then an aunt who had come to visit decided to iron some clothes. To heat the iron, she had to light the kerosene stove. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the ensuing explosion, but after that episode the Ernstofs installed electricity.¹⁰

Robert Kotlen's grandfather, Simon Kotlen, owned a "two-decker" house in Conimicut. During the 1930s, when he was growing up, his family occupied the second floor apartment for part of the summer. It was sparsely furnished and very plain. Wallpaper covered the beaverboard partitions which had warped from the ocean air. The house lacked indoor plumbing until the year when the two-seater outhouse in the yard collapsed.¹¹

B. Ruby Winnerman's mother rented a cottage in Riverside. Although the rental of fifty dollars entitled the family to a whole year of occupancy, they spent only the months of school vacation there. The house had no indoor plumbing and no shower. The family improvised a shower by hanging a can with a hole punched in it, then threading the garden hose through the hole. There were no telephones in private homes in their area of Riverside at the time the Winnermans lived there, but there was a phone in a nearby drug store. On the rare occasions when one might have an urgent call, the druggist or clerk would take the message and give it to whoever was walking by at the time, who in turn would relay it to the proper person.¹²

In contrast to their rented quarters in Longmeadow, the Ernstof home in Conimicut, purchased in 1923, was large, well-appointed, and suitable for winter occupancy. It boasted three upstairs bedrooms and full bath, a tremendous kitchen in which they never ate, a dining room, and large living room with beamed ceiling and fireplace. The fireplace was a blessing for Freda Rosenberg during the summer of 1938. It rained continuously the first two weeks of her stay. Thanks to the heat from a fire laid in the hearth, she could dry her infant son's diapers, which were draped over a clothesline stretching from one end of the living room to the other.¹³

The Blacher home on Bay View Avenue and Prospect Street in Oakland Beach was spacious enough to house four families in great comfort according to Doris Fain Hirsch¹⁴ (daughter of B. Alfred and Tillie (Blacher) Fain) and Pearl Burbill Lavine.¹⁵ In addition there were sleeping quarters on the third floor for the maids. "Having

twelve people sit down to dinner was nothing," Doris Hirsch stated. The house, purchased in 1921, had porches on three sides. A lawn reached to the bay and a private beach. It was suitable for year-round use, since it had a full cellar and heating system, but was occupied only in the summer. A large barn behind the house served as a garage and was later remodeled to include a shower room and dressing area. Although the house had indoor plumbing, a working pump remained in the yard. It was there that Doris Hirsch remembered her grandmother Lena Blacher carefully washing the fruit and vegetables she prepared for their meals.

On the other side of Oakland Beach Avenue, the Nathan Fain family had their "compound." Dora Fain Paster stated that her family first moved to Oakland Beach when she was in her late teens, about 1919. They were the first of the Fain family to do so. They were later joined by the families of Barnet, Reuben, and Alfred Fain. The latter stayed only for a few years before moving to Riverview.¹⁶

Some summer Oakland Beach vacationers stayed at the Pleasant View Hotel, where individuals or families could rent rooms for short periods of time or on a seasonal basis. The *Jewish Herald* Personal and Social Column of July 10, 1931, edited by Pauline Chorney, lists Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Rosen and Mr. and Mrs. Philip Zawatsky as guests of the hotel.



Oakland Beach Furnishing Company, Arthur Winkleman and Samuel Finkelstein store.

The cottages in Barrington were for the most part occupied by their owners, described by Jack Temkin as generally middle class to well-to-do financially, and were built with the latest amenities available at that time. The interiors were finished, most often with plasterboard, and there were small front porches for sitting and socializing. Although the cottages had indoor plumbing and hot water provided by a vulcan heater, most had outside showers for use after a visit to the beach. The reason was pragmatic, said Eleanor Radin.¹⁷ Allowing the water to run freely from an outside shower eased the burden on the individual cesspools to which each house was connected.

The Heller family bought their four-bedroom cottage in 1925 from their cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Gerson Ride, for four thousand dollars. Rita Heller Millen said her parents, Abraham and Bessie Heller, first decided to buy a home in Barrington because she was a sickly child for whom the doctor prescribed salt air as a cure-all. An aunt and uncle, Leah and Samuel Michaelson, had purchased a cottage in that area the year before and Rita stayed with them. Herman Rosner proposed to build a house for Mr. and Mrs. Heller next door to the Michaelsons, but Mrs. Heller insisted that she had to have closets. Indeed, in most of the houses closet space came as a premium. As the Ride's house was for sale, and it had very large closets, the purchase was made.¹⁸

Dr. Nathaniel Robinson wrote of the purchase by his family of a house and adjacent land facing Barrington Beach in 1925 or 1926, a property they owned and lived in for five summers. Their house was one of the few places in Barrington where rooms were rented out to other summer vacationers. The Robinsions also operated a small refreshment stand across the road from which they sold soda, hot dogs, ice cream, candy, and other light refreshments.¹⁹ Rita Millen stated that the Robinsions also sold milk, bread, and some canned goods, eliminating the need for a trip to the center of town when one ran out of such necessities. In bad weather the stand did not open, but food items were still sold at the "round house," as the Robinson house was called.

Eleanor Turoff Radin's parents discovered Barrington Beach when they lived on their Seekonk farm.²⁰ Her father, an architect, built three houses on Highland Avenue, one for her grandparents, Max and Jennie Polinoff, and the others for a Sugarman and a Goldberg family. The children formed close friendships, and even today when they meet they still refer to the houses by the original owners' names, such as the Goldberg house, no matter how many times the houses may have changed hands. The Turoff-Radin house is surrounded by a grove of oak trees with a spring, hammock, outdoor fireplace, and large picnic table for family gatherings.²¹

RHYTHMS OF THE SEASON

Memorial Day weekend figured prominently in planning for the season by the sea, especially for property owners. It was about that time that most families went

to inspect their homes for possible ravages of the winter, to mow the lawns, and to clean away the accumulations of dust and cobwebs. Rita Millen recalled how her family spent the three days at the various tasks. Pillows and mattresses required airing, while windows needed washing. The awnings went up, and the furniture covers came off. Walls and floors were cleaned and mopped. In between came explorations of the beach and visits with others who had come with their parents to "open their houses."

However, the season really began the day school ended. Each year, first at Conimicut and later in Riverview, Vivian Kolodny stated, her father packed up his truck with the clothes and canned goods and assorted items to supplement the furniture and household goods already at their summer home. The children sat in the back on the stuff being moved. "It was a real treat."

Anna Musen remembered moving day as a "pain in the neck," a *shlep*.²¹ Each year her mother would say, "I hate this" but continued the practice for many years. Claire Ernstof's mother also wondered why they were always "shlepping" things down when the house was completely furnished and all they needed were linens and clothes.

Summers on the shores of upper Narragansett Bay were idyllic, according to those interviewed. Freed from school, schedules, and restrictions imposed by life in a city, young people spent happy days at the beach or exploring the neighborhood. In the words of Anna Musen, they were wonderful times. "I always had playmates. There was always something to do." A field was always available for a ballgame, or a porch could be found where youngsters could play card games or just sit and talk. They learned the pleasures of creating their own plays and games; they enjoyed the luxury of minimal adult supervision. Throughout the interviews came the refrain, "Things were different then. Parents did not have to worry about all the dangers."²²

SUMMER FUN

"We had the freedom to roam in those days," stated Jack Temkin.

Freedom to roam meant—for Eleanor Radin and her friends—being able to walk to Maple Avenue in the center of Barrington to buy penny candy or for Rita Millen and her cousins and friends to explore the coastal and inland areas of the town. It also allowed Vivian Kolodny and friends to ride their bikes to Rocky Point from Riverview without undue parental concern for their well-being. Or Ralph Einstein, with his brother Ted on the handle bars, could ride to Rocky Point from Shawomet or could canvass households, selling *The Saturday Evening Post*.²³

In Conimicut children as young as eight and nine years old were able to go to the beach or play in a vacant field or pick wild blueberries, taking care to be home by the time the 6:00 p.m. siren sounded from the firehouse.

*Drag (Yiddish)

Irving R. Levine, NBC economic correspondent, said about his family summers in a house at Barrington Beach: "I remember the screened-in porch, trudging every day to the beach, and picking buckets of blueberries and getting all scratched up."²⁴

Freedom to roam also included — within limits — the bay as well as the land. Each of the Temkin boys had a boat which was kept on the beach in front of their home: Jack a motorboat, Noah a rowboat, and Martin a sailboat, from which they explored the sea around them.

Robert Kotlen's grandfather built him a small boat, about five feet in length, painted red with yellow trim and with his initials, *R.K.*, on the stern. Mr. Kotlen also made a trailer to enable Robert to pull the boat the two or three blocks to the beach. Since there were no oarlocks, he had to paddle his way along the shore.²⁵

The summer that David and Abraham Horvitz were seven and nine years old, respectively, they and their thirteen-year-old uncle decided to build a boat. After studying other craft, they used canvas to cover barrel staves bound with hoops, which they then sealed with tar. After a great deal of work they felt confident enough for the launch. As they guided the boat into shallow water, they were elated that it stayed afloat. A few moments later it sank. It was amazing how a deserted shore suddenly became crowded with spectators watching this catastrophe. Undaunted, the three mariners retrieved their boat and remedied the problem with additional coats of tar. The now seaworthy craft afforded them a summer of pleasure. However, sometime during the winter the boat, which had been stored in the garage of The Maples, their cottage, was stolen. The Horvitz boys suspected that it was the work of the neighborhood boys who caused them trouble because they were Jewish. Sure enough, in the yard of one of the troublemakers they found their boat and retrieved it for another summer of enjoyment. The following year the same thing happened again, but this time they could not find it. It was gone.²⁶

At Conimicut Celia Horvitz Zuckerberg enjoyed the company of her young cousin who lived with the family in the summer. They had a circle of friends. Together they sunned themselves, they swam, they played croquet and other outdoor games. To cope with boredom on rainy days, the two cousins started a newspaper called "The Pumpkin Seed," a name inspired by the quantity of pumpkin seeds they consumed that summer. On its pages appeared articles about the fictitious happenings and the latest news of a mythical kingdom they created. They conferred titles on their friends and included them in the news of the realm. The issues of "The Pumpkin Seed" coincided with spells of rainy weather during that summer.²⁷

Each year the Heller children produced a play which they had written. The lot next door was their stage, the trees their scenery. It was a grand production involving most of the young people in the neighborhood. As a result, their parents were very happy to pay the admission price to see their offspring as actors. It guaranteed a full house. To supplement the income from the play, Mrs. Heller baked cupcakes which

were sold before the play and during intermission.

Across the road from the Jewish-owned summer homes on lower Bay Road stood a large, fully furnished but unoccupied house, a magnet for adventurous children. On rainy days Rita Millen, her sister, Selma Halpern, and friends would pack lunches and candy bars, sneak into the house, and spend the time telling ghost stories. The dark, shuttered mansion provided a wonderful backdrop for scary stories.

On Sundays Doris Fain Hirsch and her family enjoyed a special treat — homemade ice cream. She recalled cranking the handle of the ice cream maker. It was one of their traditions like salmon, peas, and mashed potatoes on the Fourth of July. However, as tasty as the homemade treat was, there was a special pleasure of "forbidden fruit" in buying an ice cream cone. Her grandmother, who was very scrupulous in her observance of *kashrut*,* did not consider ice cream kosher and frowned on its consumption by her family.

Doris Hirsch used to practice her piano lessons daily at the upright piano at the yacht club. Although her family were not members, her mother was able to arrange for the practice session, following which Doris would get her treat. Another feature of Doris Hirsch's day was the walk to the post office for the mail, since there was no home delivery. She was always dressed for the occasion in starched dress and Mary Jane shoes.

Each year, as soon as her family arrived in Oakland Beach, Mrs. Hirsch recalled, they made root beer. After the brew was poured into bottles, the fun part for the children followed. They were allowed to work the capping machine to seal the bottles. However, it was four long weeks before the root beer was ready for sampling.

Rita Millen still remembers the great Barrington explosion. Next door to their cottage was Robert Griffith's beach complex — a pavilion, cabanas, bathhouses available for rental, and a large hall with juke box where summer people went for a bit of excitement. One of the renters was Mrs. Sarah Gregerman and her family. Each year Mrs. Gregerman made root beer and stored it in their cabana, a routine until one year the root beer exploded, spraying bottle caps like champagne corks everywhere. The mishap underscored the perils of home bottling.

There was trolley service from Providence to Conimicut Point, but its route was not always convenient for those living along the shore. "Everyone hitchhiked because the trolley was some distance away," according to Claire Ernstof. She told how, at age thirteen, she and her friend Mildred Rosenberg would go to the top of her street in Conimicut and hitch a ride to Providence. Since their destination was the Albee Stock Company for a theatre production, they "would get all dressed up." After the performance they had refreshments at Gibson's downtown and then met

*Religious law of cleanliness (Hebrew)

either her father or someone's relative for a ride back.

The Ernstofs had a victrola in their living room, a natural magnet for the young people at the beach. On Saturdays when her mother went to work in the family business, Claire, her brother, and their friends had dance parties that were enjoyed by all.

A popular summer activity in Nausauket was quahaugging, according to Irma Slavit. The mollusks were also prevalent and popular in Conimicut. Anna Musen told of hunting for them, but her mother did not allow them to be brought into the house because they were not kosher. Instead they were given to an Italian neighbor down the street.

COMPANY

Having company was a fact of life for most of the families by the shore. Jack Temkin felt that his folks thrived on all the company. They had "lots of visitors" — family outings every weekend. Many cousins, from as far as New York, came to stay on vacation.

Rita Heller Millen and her sister Selma Heller Halpern said: "Bea Miller [Beatrice Wattman Miller, also a summer resident in Barrington] used to say that if you saw someone walking with a suitcase, they were going to the 'Heller Hotel.' We had loads of company, cousins by the dozens. My father had a brother in Central Falls with six children. Every two weeks two of them would come down. And there were cousins from out of state who would visit. Our house had eight rooms, a porch, and one bathroom. Everyone had to double up, and there were still people sleeping downstairs. All the girls went into the bathroom at one time. The same with the boys. You slept wherever you found a place. I [Selma] slept on two chairs. On Friday afternoons our mother washed the kitchen floor, and children were not allowed in the house. When we came up from the beach for lunch, she handed us sandwiches and milk through the open door at the back of the house. We had to eat in the backyard."

"Our tiny house was always brimming with company," said Anna Musen. "Not overnight company. Week by week company. My father had a large family — four brothers and three sisters — and they all had families. They lived in New York and would take turns coming to visit the 'rich' brother who had a summer place. There was so much company that my father had to build an addition to the house. On those days that my mother did get to go to the beach, she had to leave by 3:00 p.m. to start cooking dinner, while the company remained by the water enjoying their vacation."

The Winnermans also had a great deal of company. Ruby Winnerman retained memories of her mother going out to purchase fish in order to make a huge chowder of fish and potatoes for the many people visiting them. Sometimes they picnicked at the beach. Then they would fill their washtubs with ice to keep the food from

spoiling for their outing.

"In Conimicut Point we had company who came for the day," Vivian Kolodny recalled. "The house was so small there was no room for overnight company. In Riverview we had even more day company, but only some cousins would stay over." However, each year her parents would have a party for the members of the Farband (the Jewish Workers Alliance). All the members came out for the day. "It was a great occasion to me," she recalled. "Nothing formal was organized. People brought their own lunches, and they just came to enjoy an outing together. The Farband members impressed me greatly. They were important people in the community, like Alter Boyman."

"Our house was a gathering place. My parents loved company," Claire Ernstof and Freda Rosenberg stated. "It was always open house at the Ernstofs, and Mother was always serving cake and coffee." Claire Ernstof added that she would have five girl friends stay over on weekends. Mattresses were turned from the beds onto the floor so that there was sleeping room for all of them. When Claire, after attending a Junior Hadassah conference at the Biltmore Hotel, arrived home with six unexpected guests from out of town, her mother was totally unfazed. Freda Rosenberg commented that they could never figure out how her mother always managed to find the food in her kitchen with its limited storage facilities and icebox to feed all the people who came. Even after she bought a refrigerator in 1933, it was amazing how she could produce meals from nowhere. "I remember her at 11:00 at night disappearing from a card game or a conversation to bake cookies for the guests."

TRADESMEN

Food shopping at the summer places was made easier by the tradesmen who came into the neighborhoods to sell their wares. Bakers, milkmen, fruit and vegetable vendors, the egg man, and fishmongers regularly made the rounds of the beach areas. However, at first, kosher meat and some other kosher products had to be brought back from the city. An order was usually placed early in the day at the appropriate stores and picked up later in the afternoon by Father or a neighbor. Ruby Winnerman stated that her mother shopped after work for the products she needed and brought their food with her on the trolley. Being strictly observant of *kashrut*, she bought only in stores selling kosher food.

It did not take long for the Jewish bakers and grocers to begin regular routes in the shore communities as more and more of their customers began spending their summers away from the city, but it was a while before the kosher butchers began deliveries. Eleanor Radin spoke of her uncle David Malin, a grocer, who owned a summer cottage in Barrington. He made it a practice to drive to customers' homes, where he opened the back door of his truck to sell dairy items and canned goods from the miniature store inside. Howard Lewis, who visited his grandparents, Mr. and

Mrs. Philip Finklestein, in Barrington, remembered that as a child he and his friends would follow the Korb Bakery truck and "snitch a jelly doughnut" from the trays when the driver was busy.²⁸ Other bakers mentioned who delivered were Sweet's and August. Also named were Robert Fain, who had a grocery route in Conimicut and surrounding areas, while Morris Eisenstadt provided fresh fruits and vegetables in Barrington.

A most important person in the days before refrigerators became common household fixtures was the iceman who called at any home where his card was displayed in a window. The card indicated that ice was needed and the size of the block requested. On hot days, Eleanor Radin remembered, "we children would run after the truck and be grateful for any chip of ice he would give us."

Lester Kessler reminisced about the years when he had a delivery route. After he obtained his driver's license at sixteen, he earned money for college tuition by delivering baked goods for Kessler's Bakery during the summer months and dairy products such as whitefish and cheese. The route to his regular customers covered Oakland Beach, Cole Station, Conimicut, Shawomet, Longmeadow, and Conimicut Point and ended in Nausauket. From 1936 to 1939 he performed a very necessary service for the Jewish summer residents and earned enough money for college.²⁹

ADULTS

During the work days of the week, the beach communities were populated mainly by women and children, as the men drove off to work early in the morning in the family cars. It was not always an easy commute. Gertrude Fruit Pansey recalled that it took her father one hour to reach his business in Pawtucket from their cottage in Shawomet.³⁰

Evenings and weekends were the time for the men to relax. For Vivian Kolodny's father it meant going for a swim — whether the tide was high or low — as soon as he arrived home, and then tending to his vegetable garden. He was very proud of his tomatoes and corn, which he shared with relatives and friends. Anna Musen's father also raised vegetables, and he kept chickens as well in order to have fresh eggs. When the Brodskys purchased a refrigerator for their summer home, Mr. Brodsky put the old icebox in the yard and used it as a hen coop. He took great pleasure in collecting the eggs every day.

Father's homecoming was eagerly awaited, particularly by the children, who often waited at a short distance from home to spot the car. Sometimes there was an opportunity to stand on the running board and hang precariously onto the strut between the open windows for dear life on the short distance home.

Alex Rumpler's homecoming to Barrington each evening was happily awaited by his wife and two sons, and by the family's pet duck, which Leonard Rumpler had

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BY SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

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1. *Working Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1944-1960*, by Gary Gerstle. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Sydney, paperback, 1991, 356 pages.

Items too numerous to mention. There are many footnotes and also sections in the index on "Lawrence Spitz," "Jews," and "Providence." Spitz was a feisty and controversial figure in both the Rhode Island and national labor movements.

2. *Jewish Heroes of America*, by Seymour Brody. Shapolsky Publishers, Inc., New York, paperback, 1991, 202 pages.

Pages 19, 20. Judah Touro, philanthropist and soldier.

Pages 53, 54. Sergeant Leopold Karpeles received the Congressional Medal of Honor in the Civil War.

3. *Guide to German Historical Sources in North American Libraries and Archives*, by Anne Hope and Jörg Nagler. German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., paperback, 1991, 198 pages.

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Page 4. Advertisement, M. Levine & Co., Furrier.

Page 63. Mr. and Mrs. Sigmund L. (Bertha Vollmer) Lederer.

Page 68. Mrs Caesar (Marion L. Simons) Misch. Clubs: MacDowell Club, Metacomet Golf Club, Rhode Island Women's Club, Providence Plantations Club.

Page 78. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph (Alice Murr) Samuels. Clubs (Mr.): Commercial Club, Edgewood Yacht Club, Metacomet golf Club, Town Criers, Kernwood Club of Boston. Daughter, Bertha Carol Samuels.

brought home at the close of the school year. "It was," said Mr. Rumpler, "an unusual creature. When I would be coming up Bluff road, that duck would be at the edge of the road waiting for me. Then he would follow me home." At the end of the summer season, the duck was given to a neighboring farmer, because they could not keep him at their Pawtucket home.³¹

Eleanor Radin has fond memories of her father sharing his love for fishing with her. "I had a fishing rod put in my hands practically from the time I could stand up. I remember at night with my father. He would make walking sticks for us to be used if we came across any snakes or skunks. He was a great nature lover and raised me not to be afraid of either skunks or snakes."

Another facet of the after work hours was the *minyan** — one held at the Ernstof home in Conimicut and another at the home of Philip Abraams in Barrington. Mr. Abraams had a Torah in his home.** Jack Temkin recalled how his grandfather, George Pullman, read the weekly portion from the scroll on Shabbat mornings.

At night, after dinner, it was not difficult to find a card game, according to everyone interviewed. If not planned in advance, joining a game required only that one take a short stroll. One could always find a place at the table. Eleanor Radin, remembering her childhood in Barrington, said, "At night the men played cards. There was always a poker or a pinochle game going. All the cottages had front porches where the games usually took place. In the morning we children would crawl under the porch to find coins which had fallen through the slats of the flooring. We made out all right."

For the non-card players, there were discussion (often heated but always friendly) of current events or political philosophies. Anna Musen stated that the neighbors congregated on the wide front porch of her parents' cottage at night. "I would be fascinated listening to their talk. They had such interesting conversations on a wide range of subjects. They were not particularly intellectual people, but they were aware of many things and interested in what was happening in the world." Ralph Einstein recalled the discussions his father had with his friends Harry M. Fruit and Joseph M. Erenfrucht. When the subject turned to the merits of Zionism vs. Socialism, the debate became "hot and heavy." The argument was never really resolved but ended amicably with a cold drink.

Although it was more usual during the 1920s and '30s for mothers to remain at home, Doris Hirsch's mother "went to business" every day while Doris stayed at the summer home with her grandmother, aunts, cousins, and a maid. Anna Musen's mother worked in the family store. Esther Adler, a close family friend, looked after Anna and her brother while her mother was away. Perl Ernstof, mother of Claire

*A quorum, consisting of at least ten men (Hebrew)

**The wooden case that held the Torah is now in the possession of the RIJHA, a gift in December, 1984, from Eleanor Turoff Radin.

Ernstof and Freda Ernstof Rosenberg, also worked outside the home. Richa Winnerman, widowed at a young age, took the trolley each day from Riverside to her job at the Bourne Rubber Co., near Trinity Square, while her daughter Ruby cared for her brother and two sisters.

For the women who remained at home, a goodly portion of the morning was given over to daily household chores, and then it was time to go to the beach. Edith Gordon said that in Shawomet they went swimming only when the tide was high. "Mrs. Norman [Mae (Mrs. Harry) Norman] would inform the neighborhood that the tide was in by calling out, 'Everyone come to the beach.'"³²

Whenever they went to the shore, the mothers, particularly mothers of younger children, came equipped with blanket, beach chair, towels, extra child-sized bathing suits, and, of course, food. Ralph Einstein described the fruit and sandwiches as always sandy. The women congregated on the shore to chat, to socialize, but mainly to keep watch. "The mothers were always hovering over us. I only saw this through the eyes of a child, but here were these women with children, year after year, the same families — our sharing, our togetherness down at the beach," Eleanor Radin recalled.

The sense of togetherness extended to all social occasions. Neighbors came together for beach parties and cookouts, events involving both the children and adults. Couples met for informal visits and evenings out. Every Saturday night during the summer, Mr. and Mrs. Rumpler said, they and a group of friends who had beach homes in Barrington went to the Warren Inn for dinner and dancing. Several of those interviewed spoke of Saturday night bridge clubs that met in turn at the various homes. To quote Alex Rumpler: "We had a nice community there [Barrington]. Life was carefree." The same could also be said of the other beach communities along the upper Bay.

Yet the needs of the Jewish community in Rhode Island and overseas were never out of mind. Jack Temkin recalled that his father, Charles Temkin; his grandfather, George Pullman; Samuel Michaelson; and Abraham Heller used to go out collecting money each summer in Barrington for the Jewish National Fund.

The women, though, carried on the bulk of the fund-raising activities. Anna Musen spoke of her mother's close friend, Esther Adler, as a "do-gooder" in the finest sense. Each year she held a bridge to benefit Pioneer Women* activities in what was then Palestine. "Esther, my mother, Jessie Gordon, and Celia [Mrs. Max] Brown started early in the summer preparing for the event. They sold tickets; they baked. Esther had at least twenty tables for cards spread out on her lawn. We all had to pitch in to welcome and serve the players. That bridge constituted the social event of the year." Leah Michaelson held a fund-raising tea at her home in Barrington each year for Providence Hadassah. A bridge held in Barrington during the summer of

*Now Na' Amat.

1927 earned \$46.50 for the Pawtucket-Central Falls Hadassah.³³ Mrs. Samuel Ernstof annually chaired a major fund-raising affair in Conimicut for the benefit of the Jewish Home for the Aged by the Jewish Home for the Aged Association and the Ladies' Union Aid Association. The women found time during those carefree days for serious undertakings.

OF CARNIVALS AND FIRECRACKERS

Sunny days were spent out of doors, but what did one do on a rainy day? Or for a change of pace? In several of the communities, the public library provided one answer to the round of checkers, lotto, and cards. Going to the movies offered another source of entertainment. Movies were shown several times a week at the Shawomet Chapel, while Barrington people went to the theater in Warren. Pearl Lavine recalled the hall in Oakland Beach where silent films, complete with piano accompaniment, could be enjoyed. The audience sat on wooden benches and stamped their feet when the feature began. Oakland Beach could also boast of a wooden boardwalk next to the yacht club, a bowling alley, and a dance hall above the lanes. The dance hall and bowling alley were popular with the "younger set." Another feature was the amusement park with its "dobby horses," the "Whip," and ferris wheel among its attractions.³⁴

Opposite each other on the Bay, Crescent Park and Rocky Point, with their giant midways and roller coasters, lured residents from nearby summer places. Anna Musen said, "We went to Rocky Point at least two or three times each summer. That was the highlight of the summer. When we were young, my parents took us. When we got older, we would bike over. I liked the rides, especially the 'Dodge 'ems' and the Penny Arcade." "From Riverside it was a three-mile walk to Crescent Park," said Miriam Berman Strauss, "and we would walk there sometimes in the evenings. I remember the carousel and the rides."³⁵ Crescent Park also attracted the residents of the Barrington summer colony.

Itinerant carnivals, sometimes held in connection with churches or other organizations, traveled to various shore areas of Warwick. Consisting mainly of a ferris wheel, some rides, about ten or twelve booths — spin-a-wheel, use a popgun, win a prize — they were very popular with youngsters, who happily patronized the stands selling cotton candy and junk food of all sorts. Included among the attractions was the inevitable Bingo game.

Fourth of July was a special time at the beach communities. Cookouts, barbecues, and entertaining company were the order of the day. In the evening, both Rocky Point and Crescent Park sponsored extravagant fireworks displays, the rockets and flares shooting out over the Bay to the delighted applause of the spectators there and at nearby beaches.

It was not uncommon for private individuals to shoot off their own fireworks for

the enjoyment of their families and the neighbors. In Conimicut every year the fire department made a huge bonfire of railroad ties and scrap wood. The pile of discards rose twelve to fifteen feet in the air. To a child, Robert Kotlen commented, it seemed at least four stories high. Everyone came to watch in fascination as the flames crackled and consumed the pile, sending up sparks high into the air.

Coda

Aerial photos of Oakland Beach on the morning after the devastating hurricane of September 21, 1938, showed just how extensive the damage to the area had been. *New England Hurricane* showed a picture of the destruction with the comment: "... stone and frame alike yielded. Cement foundations were ripped up and scrambled in meaningless forms on the land's surface."³⁶ The beautiful Blacher home was completely washed away. Not a timber or a teacup remained, nothing left but a large hole in the ground. Now, even the land is under water.

Of the Orodener home at Conimicut Point, only the cement shower pad and the front steps testified that a house once stood there. Indeed, nothing was left of the street. Mr. Orodener placed on their lot two large shipping crates in which a Jewish refugee couple from Nazi Germany had packed their belongings when they emigrated to the United States. These crates served as shelter during day trips to the Conimicut Point beach until the Orodeners bought a cottage at Riverview.

The Levitt cottage in Conimicut faced the water, its broad expanse of lawn stretching to the beach. All but about ten feet disappeared, leaving the house perched on a small lot. The Levitt property was sold to a neighbor who levelled the house in order to have a large side yard at his waterfront property. Just a short distance inland, the Ernstof, Kotlen, and Brodsky residences remained unharmed. These three houses still stand and are now year-round homes.

Although only two houses along the beachfront at Shawomet remained standing, the Gordon and Fruit homes suffered little damage. Some of the rubble from Shawomet washed ashore at Annawomscut Beach in West Barrington. Like all the other Warwick waterfront communities, Shawomet lost its summer residents in the years following World War II and the decade of the 1950s.

Eleanor Turoff Radin remembered experiencing the hurricane of 1938 when she was a child on Fales Avenue in Barrington. "I was here alone with my mother, Ruth Turoff. There were no houses around except for one house up the hill, a small bungalow across the street. At that time all this land was quite barren. My father was in the city with my brother Lloyd. My mother was holding me in an old wicker rocking chair trying to comfort me. The electricity was off, the telephone service was not working. I can remember seeing the garage go up in the air and disappear. It was a terrifying time."

The hurricane of 1938 caused little damage in the Barrington Beach enclave, but

time and demographics brought change. Of the once thriving summer colony, perhaps three or four cottages remain as they were, with their owners coming for the summer season. Jack Temkin remains a summer resident, as does Beatrice (Mrs. Myer) Miller. Rita Millen, Eleanor Radin, Arthur Richter, and Zelda Horvitz now live in Barrington twelve months of the year in their families' former summer cottages.

The busiest years of the Jewish summer colonies in the upper Narragansett Bay area were during the '20s, '30s, and '40s. For example, the demise of Nausauket as a resort, Irma Gersacov Slavit said, "began when people started sending their children to summer camps. Then, during the housing shortage after World War II, people who couldn't find affordable houses anywhere bought summer cottages, partially or completely winterized them, and lived there year-round."³⁷ Another factor contributing to the decrease in popularity of the upper Narragansett Bay communities after World War II was that lower Bay areas such as Narragansett Pier and Newport became more fashionable and attainable. Thus ended a lively chapter in the history of the Jews in Rhode Island.



Ruth Turoff, holding her daughter Eleanor Turoff Radin, with her nephew Gil Lipton, who spent summers with the Turoff family at their Barrington Beach house, around 1937.

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- ³ Interview with Dr. Abraham Horvitz, August 15, 1991.
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- ²⁹ Interview with Lester Kessler, October 3, 1991.
- ³⁰ Interview with Gertrude Fruit Pansey, October 2, 1991.
- ³¹ Interview with Celia and Alex Rumpler, June 24, 1991.

³² Gordon, *ibid.*

³³ Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Vol. 10, No. 4, November 1990, p. 505.

³⁴ Lavine, *ibid.*

³⁵ Interview with Miriam Berman Strauss, July 19, 1991.

³⁶ *New England Hurricane*, Written and compiled by members of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration; Hale, Cushman and Flint; Boston, 1938.

APPENDIX
The Jewish Herald, Providence, Rhode Island
Happenings of Interest in the Women's World
Pauline Chorney, Women's News Editor
Personal and Social

JULY 10, 1931

Mrs. Louis Smira and family of Lenox avenue are at their summer home on the North Shore, Shawomet.

* * *

Mrs. Racheal Mistowsky of Pequot avenue, Oakland Beach, is entertaining Mr. and Mrs. Charles Coken, this week.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Awerman of Creighton street are entertaining Miss Hanna Awerman of New York City at their summer home in Riverside.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Abrams of Fourth street entertained several friends at their summer home on Shore avenue, Shawomet, with a frankfurter roast on Sunday in honor of the 13th birthday of their daughter, Sarah.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Posner of Detroit avenue and Mr. and Mrs. John Lisker of Lexington avenue were the guests last week of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lazarus of Shawomet.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Kopelman of Riverside entertained last week Mr. and Mrs. Harry Gollis and family of Fall River.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Julius Rosenberg and family of Dickens street are at Conimicut for the summer season.

* * *

Late arrivals at Shawomet include Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Markowitz and family of Georgia avenue.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Priest of Hope street are at Conimicut for the season.

* * *

Announcement has been made of the engagement of Miss I. Edythe Karp, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Karp, of Blue Hill avenue, Dorchester, to Norman L. Feinberg, son of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Feinberg, of Creighton street.

A dinner was given on Sunday in honor of the couple by Mr. and Mrs. Feinberg, in Barrington, where they are spending the summer. Covers were laid for 20 guests from Dorchester, Roxbury and Providence.

Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Copeland and daughters, the Misses Flora and Gladys Copeland, of Lippitt street, are occupying their cottage on Royal avenue, Conimicut.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Zawatsky of this city are staying at the Pleasant View Hotel, Oakland Beach.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Malin of this city have opened their cottage on Pequot avenue, Oakland Beach, for the summer.

* * *

Mrs. Joseph Koplan and daughter, Pearl, of Colfax street, were the weekend guests of Mrs. Rose Koplan, of Riverside.

* * *

Leonard Kwasha, Abe Horowitz, Miss Beatrice Goldman and Miss Helen Isenberg of Providence and Paul Dubovick of Fall River were recent guests of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Shatz of Riverside.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Morris Blazar of Pinehurst avenue had as guests last week at their cottage in Riverside, Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Charney and family of Payton street, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Horowitz and family and David and Nathan Linder of Prospect street.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Horvitz and family of Gallatin street have opened their cottage on Royal avenue, Conimicut.

* * *

Max and Joseph Weintraub of New York City were holiday guests of Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Sharp at Conimicut.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Blumenthal of Hope street have opened their cottage in Conimicut and are entertaining as guests their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. David Halpert and children, of New Bedford, Mass.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Krasnow, who have opened their cottage at Conimicut, entertained over the holidays Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Goldberg of Warrington street, Mr. and Mrs. Haskell Hyman of Miller avenue and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Krasnow.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Colitz and family of Gallatin street have opened their home at Nausauket for the summer months.

Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Ladd of Gay street are guests at the Pleasant View Hotel in Oakland Beach.

JULY 31, 1931

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Finberg of Shawomet entertained at bridge last Tuesday, Mr. and Mrs. Harry M. Fruit, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fruit of Pawtucket, Mrs. Harry Schleifer and Mrs. Maurice Baker of this city.

Mrs. Harry Fruit won first prize.

* * *

The Misses Lillian and Miriam Berman of Riverside entertained at a bridge on Wednesday evening in honor of Mrs. Max Herman of Montreal, Canada, at their home on Sabins Point.

Prizes were won by Miss Anne Saslaw of West Barrington and Miss Elsie Strasmich of Riverside. Miss Kae Rubinovitz of Camp street assisted the hostesses while serving.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Bornstein of Pequot avenue, Oakland Beach, entertained during the past week, Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Williams, Mrs. Charles Adelberg, Mrs. Max Mushnick, Herman and Fred Mushnick of this city and Mr. and Mrs. Samuel L. Levine of Pawtucket.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Posner, Miss Beatrice Posner and Samuel Posner of Detroit avenue, were the guests Tuesday of Mr. and Mrs. Herman Lazarus of Shawomet.

* * *

Samuel H. Kushner, Harold Roth, Milton Bettle and George Sholovitz are spending the summer at their cottage on Dudley avenue, Conimicut.

* * *

Mrs. Joseph Comisky entertained at dinner on last Thursday evening at her summer home in Barrington in honor of Miss B. Pansy Snell, who was married on Sunday. Several business acquaintances of Miss Snell attended.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Schultz of Riverside had as guests the past week, Miss Lillian Rosenberg of Hollidaysburg, Pa., and Miss Rose Cantoff of Douglas avenue.

* * *

Mrs. Harry Gleckman and son, Paul, are at their home in Woonsocket after spending two weeks at My Office Cottage on Sea View drive, Oakland Beach.

* * *

Mr. Sidney Broadman of New York City was the week-end guest of Dr. and Mrs. Harry Broadman of Shawomet Beach.

Plans are being completed by Mrs. Louis Smira of Shawomet avenue, Shawomet Beach, for the annual bridge to be held for the benefit of the Women's Pioneer Club on Tuesday, Aug. 11.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Austin and family of Shawomet are entertaining for two weeks, Mr. Irving Blum of New Haven, Conn.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Leo Bromberg of Sabins Point, Riverside, entertained last week Mr. and Mrs. William Saltzman of Worcester.

* * *

Miss Sophia Horovitz of Sabins Point, Riverside, entertained on Saturday the employees of the Pioneer Watch Case Company.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Ketinoff, of Island Park have as their guest, Mr. Michael Slavin of Santa Barbara, California.

* * *

Mrs. Morris Mellion and Mrs. Horowitz will give a bridge on Tuesday afternoon for the benefit of the Jewish Home for the aged on Mrs. Mellion's lawn on White avenue, Riverside.

Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Koppelman of Bluff street, Riverside, entertained the following guests last Sunday:

Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Gallis and Ida, Sara and Lester Gallis of Fall River; Mr. and Mrs. Harry Roy and daughter, Betty; Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Schnopf, Mr. and Mrs. J. Kramer and Mrs. William Gestman of this city and Mrs. Lena Ubinsky and Miss Elsie Ubinsky of New York City.

* * *

The Misses Anna Kopit and Rose Dunder, David Cohen and Irving Kopit of this city were the guests on Tuesday of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Austin of Shawomet.

Editor's Note: The original was copied without spelling or capitalization corrections.

Isaac Solomon, c. 1920 (see p. 42).



RHODE ISLAND PLACES WITH JEWISH NAMES BY ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

STREETS CRANSTON

Shirley Boulevard — In Auburn section, from Pontiac Avenue to Auburn Street. Named by Benjamin Rakatansky in honor of his daughter Shirley (Mrs. Sumner Halsband), at that time the youngest child in the Rakatansky family. In the middle 1920s Rakatansky developed the area for twenty houses from a rhubarb farm. Ira Rakatansky, his son, (Interview July 27, 1991) remembers watching the horses pulling plows to remove the loam from the field before the construction of the houses began.

PAWTUCKET

Newman Road — From Alfred Stone Road to Oak Hill Avenue. Named by developer David Newman, who built eight houses there in 1988 and 1989. Newman is a Holocaust survivor and president of the Holocaust Survivors of Rhode Island.

NEWPORT

Jew Street — Area between Kay Street and around Memorial Boulevard, near old colonial Jewish cemetery and present location of Hotel Viking. Later named South Touro Street and now a part of Bellevue Avenue. "Called Jew Street for the eminent men of that religion who were to do so much for Newport." (Florence Simister, *Streets of the City*, Vol. 10, p. 167.)

Touro Street — from Spring Street to junction of Kay Street and Bellevue. Formerly called Griffin Street. Named after Abraham Touro at the Newport Town Meeting held August 31, 1824, in the old courthouse. The resolution stated that "Whereas Abraham Touro a Native of this Town and later of Boston in the State of Massachusetts deceased in his last Will and Testament devised to the Municipal Authority of this Town a very ample fund for the purpose of repairing and preserving the street leading from the Jews Burying Ground to the Main Street, we therefore voted and resolved in testimony of gratitude and esteem for the memory of the said Abraham Touro that the street from Spring Street easterly heretofore called Griffin Street be hereafter known and called by the name of Touro Street." (Minute Book, Amended, April 10, 1821-June, 1834.)

NORTH PROVIDENCE

Zipporah Street — In Allendale section, from 429 Woonasquatucket Avenue to Manning Street. No information is available on how the street was named. In the Bible Zipporah was the wife of Moses. The name *Zipporah* means bird in Hebrew.

Eleanor Horvitz is Librarian-Archivist of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Vol. 11, No. 1, November, 1991

PROVIDENCE

Eaton Street — From Douglas Avenue to Smith Street. Named for Jacob A. Eaton, 1871-1921, prominent state legislator. Eaton represented the North End in the Rhode Island General Assembly. His funeral was the largest for a public man in Rhode Island in eleven years. *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 4, No.3, November 1965, pp. 289-299.

Golemba Street — From Bogman Street to Public Street. Frank Golemba owned a grocery store at 83 Gay Street, corner of Willard. *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 7, No. 2, November 1976, p. 202.

Richter Street — From Smith Street to Chalkstone Avenue, in North End. Named for Max J. Richter, who lived on 64 Eaton Street. He developed Richter Street and built a number of houses there around 1930-31, during the Depression.

Solomon Lane — South from 45 Olney Street. Named for Isaac Solomon, who lived in a house (no longer in existence) on the lane from about 1900 until his death in 1920. His wife, Rose, lived in the house about another five years. Solomon immigrated to the United States in 1874 and became a peddler around the South County area, living first in East Greenwich. Isaac and Rose Solomon had five children, Sadie, Lewis, Jennie, John,* and Benjamin. Benjamin Solomon married Dorothy Silverman, and Jennie Solomon married Dorothy's brother, Herman Silverman. Therefore, the children of Herman and Jennie, and of Benjamin and Dorothy, had the same grandparents. Isaac Solomon opened a clothing store in East Greenwich in 1878, and in 1908 the Silvermans opened a family footwear and women's wear store nearby. In 1968 they moved into the same building with an opening between the two businesses. (Interview with Howard Silverman, son — and one of five children — of Herman and Jennie Silverman, July 31, 1991).

Touro Street — From Branch Avenue to Silver Spring Street. Named for Judah Touro. Simister, *Streets of the City*, Vol. 3, p. 113.

PARKS, BRIDGES, AND BUILDINGS

Getelle Apartments — Five apartment buildings in Providence, numbers 35 to 67 on Thackeray Street, which runs from Melrose Street to Elmwood Avenue. The apartments were built in the early 1940s by contractor Laurence Paolino to help meet the need for housing for the veterans returning from World War II. He named the buildings in honor of his wife Gertrude, nee Commoner, whose first husband was Samuel Greenberg. Mrs. Paolino's Jewish name was Gittel, but her daughter Esther (Mrs. Samuel Chester) suggested the "fancy" spelling for the name plaque he had carved in stone. A large proportion of the first residents of the apartments were young Jewish couples, and they jokingly called the area "Gittel's Ghetto."

*John Solomon was secretary of the General Jewish Committee during the 1920s. See pp. 47-48.

Rhode Island Places With Jewish Names

Lederer Building — 139 Westminster Street, corner of Clemence Street, Providence. A three-story brick block erected in 1908 by William Williams of Providence for the Lederer Realty Company. (*Board of Trade Journal*, V. 19, p. 525 and V. 20, p. 338.)

Lopez Wharf — At 203 Thames Street, Newport. Named for Aaron Lopez, an importer and exporter who owned many ships for the West Indies trade. He had a store and warehouse on the wharf. The wharf is now privately owned. (*Streets of the City*, Vol. 6, p. 201).

The Miriam Hospital — Summit Avenue, Providence, original building on Parade Street. "... the source of the hospital's name is the Biblical Miriam who cared for her brother Moses and guided him to maturity." *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 3, November 1989, p. 364.

Caesar Misch Building — 398-402 Westminster Street, corner of Empire Street, Providence. The land was purchased by Caesar Misch from the Jones Estate Company in 1900. The six-story building housed a clothing store and headquarters for stores owned by Misch in ten other cities. *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 8, No. 2, November 1980, p. 10.

Morris B. and Nellie Sholes Memorial Bridge — Airport connector bridge (Rhode Island Bridge 733) passing over Post Road in Warwick. The bridge was dedicated on June 24, 1984, in memory of Morris B. and Nellie Sholes, who were active in religious, social, and philanthropic affairs. They owned and operated roller skating rinks in Warwick. The first, in Oakland Beach, was destroyed in the 1938 hurricane. The second, the Sholes Hillsgrove Country Club, was a popular spot from the 1940s to the 1960s. The bridge and airport connector road to Route 95 were built in the side yard of the Sholes home. *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 9, No. 3, November 1985, p. 221.

Touro Park — Located on Bellevue Avenue, Newport. "This park contains the Old Stone Mill and the statues of Commodore Matthew C. Perry and William Ellery Channing. It is named for the Touro family, prominent Jewish merchants of Portuguese descent, who endowed the Jewish cemetery and Synagogue." (Handbook of Historical Sites of Rhode Island, p. 71, published by Department of Public Schools, Providence - 1936.)

SQUARES DEDICATED TO JEWISH RHODE ISLAND SERVICEMEN
WHO DIED IN AMERICAN WARS

WORLD WAR I

Jack Cleinman Square, Hope and Olney Streets, Providence.

Jack Cleinman was born in Russia in 1896 and immigrated to the United States with his family when he was thirteen years old. He was sent to active combat in France in June, 1918, less than two months after he entered the service as a private in the 310th Infantry 78th Division. On August 9 he was wounded and shell shocked while engaged in combat at St. Mihiel. On August 21 he was discharged from the hospital and sent back into combat. He was killed October 20, 1918, at Bois des Loges during the Meuse Argonne Offensive, one of the savage battles of World War I.

Abraham W. Sydney Square, Orms Street and Douglas Avenue, Providence.
Abraham Sydney was born August 15, 1894. He served in Medical Unit A. E. 7, Evacuation Hospital #5, and died on December 19, 1918, at Dunkirk, France.

WORLD WAR II

Providence Squares

Bard-Primack Square, Smith Street and Oakland Avenue.

Saul I. Bard: He was born on November 15, 1925. An Infantryman, Private First Class Bard was killed in Germany during the Battle of the Bulge on December 16, 1944.

Myer Primack: Myer Primack was born on July 12, 1915. He served in the U.S. Air Corps. He was accidentally wounded and died in January of 1943 while in training at the Army Air Base in Waterboro, South Carolina.

Cutler-Suvall Square, Rochambeau Avenue and Camp Street.

David B. Cutler: He was born April 12, 1918, and killed in action December 26, 1944, at the Battle of the Bulge.

Abner D. Suvall: Born September 29, 1921, he served in the U.S. Army Air Force and won the Bronze Star for distinguished service. He was killed in action May 10, 1944, at Makin Atoll in the Gilbert Islands.

Jacobson-Gorodetsky Square, Broad, Ruby, Broom, and Fisk Streets.

Sidney C. Jacobson: Born December 18, 1918, he was a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, attached to the Eighth Air Force in England. Killed near Croningen, Holland, on December 22, 1943.

Edward Gorodetsky: He was born on July 20, 1914, and was in the U.S. Army, serving at Baguio, Philippines. He died March 1945, on a prison ship transporting prisoners from Prison Camp #2 to the Japanese mainland. His body was never recovered, and he was reported missing in action.

Harvey A. Max Square, Morris Avenue and Sessions Street.

Harvey A. Max was born April 28, 1924. In January 1944 he graduated from the Army Air Force Navigation School. He was assigned to a bomber unit of the 13th Air Force in the Pacific theater. He flew 38 successful missions and needed just two more to become eligible to return to the United States when he was shot down on his 39th mission over Nicholas Field in Manila and reported missing on January 8, 1945.

Sock-Smith Square, Doyle Avenue and Hope Street.

Philip Sock: He was born November 30, 1915, and entered the Army in June, 1941. He saw action in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy and was killed on February 22, 1945, when a plane collided with the truck he was operating.

Abraham L. Smith: He was born February 27, 1922, and enlisted in the Army in August 1942. He left for Europe in October 1944 with the 9th Army, 84th Division, 334th Infantry, and saw action in France, Holland, Belgium, and Germany. He was reported missing January 22, 1945, and returned to action on February 8, 1945. He was killed March 4, 1945, near St. Sorns, Germany, during an artillery barrage.

Pawtucket Squares**Israel J. Korenbaum Memorial Square**, Corner of East Avenue and Pleasant Street.

Israel Korenbaum was born January 25, 1908. He was a First Lieutenant, 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Division, and was wounded in action in Italy. He died at home on September 22, 1946.

Reback-Winsten Post Square, Raleigh, Oak Hill, and Scott Streets.

Sanford A. Reback: Born June 6, 1917. A Second Lieutenant in the Army Air Force, he was a navigator on his first mission when his plane was shot down over the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania. He was listed as missing in action on August 4, 1943, and his death was confirmed later.

Saul Winsten: Born May 12, 1918. A lieutenant, he served as Property and Legal Officer at Otis Field, Massachusetts. He was killed August 3, 1943, in a plane crash over Rhode Island.

KOREAN WAR**Alfred Silver Square**, Oakland Avenue and Sparrow Street, Providence.

Alfred Silver was born on March 28, 1928. The first Jewish serviceman from Rhode Island to die in the Korean War, he was killed in action on August 27, 1951.



Lynn Faber Stepak, counselor at the Jewish Community Center summer day camp at the back of the Center building, with a camper, around 1938. Her brother, Samuel, is the child going down the slide.



THE BENEFIT STREET AND LIPPITT HILL JEWISH COMMUNITY, 1900-1940

BY JEREMY KAPLAN

Around the turn of the century, eastern European and Russian Jews immigrated in substantial numbers to the United States. In Providence, a large number settled in the North End and South Providence areas. As the first or second generation immigrants became more affluent, they migrated in increasing numbers to Benefit Street and surrounding areas, making the East Side by the 1930s "the dominant force in Jewish life in Providence."¹ The Jews settled in among the wealthier Protestants of the Prospect Street area, the Blacks on "Lippitt Hill," now University Heights on the other side of Olney Street, and the Irish living in the East Side.² As the community grew, so did Jewish institutions, stores, and religious and community ties. The second or third generation immigrants of the Benefit Street area, the ones who provided the content of this study, grew up in the 1920s and '30s in a distinctly culturally Jewish neighborhood, with ever-increasing amounts of Americanization.

GEOGRAPHY OF AREA

The Jewish area of this study centers around Benefit Street and includes Pratt, North Main, Congdon, Bowen, Halsey, Olney, Jenckes, and Wheaton Streets. The approximate borders on Benefit Street are Olney Street on the North and Angell Street on the south.³ Prospect Street defined the eastern border of the community, while North Main Street defined the western border. These boundaries are not exclusive for this study, however. "Lippitt Hill," sketchily defined as the area between Olney Street and Doyle Avenue, also saw the arrival of Jewish settlers.⁴ Residents of these two areas interacted both socially and commercially.

The houses closest to North Main Street, including Benefit and Pratt Streets, were some of the first ones on the East Side to be occupied by Jews.⁵ The houses were small, with two stories, and relatively inexpensive to buy. Having been built in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many were in poor condition.⁶ As the second and third generation Jews began living farther up the hill, the houses of choice became triple-decker tenement houses, defined as "a deep, narrow, three-story structure with three identical living units, one to a floor."⁷ Three-deckers had been "built all over metropolitan Providence during the early decades of this century for speculation or rent income. They were popular because of economy of street frontage."⁸ The newer, perhaps more desirable, houses in the Benefit Street area were built predominantly in the 1920s and were the "third wave" of houses in the area.⁹ Although the housing conditions varied, Edward Sanderson describes the settled Jews as "middle-income," and as "making a move up."¹⁰

John A. Solomon* and his wife, Eva Robbins Solomon, both native-born Americans, bought a triple-decker on Prospect Street in 1919. Solomon, who owned

*See p. 42.

a men's furnishings store on Randall Square, supplemented his income with rent from two tenements in his house. He was able to offer his three children a good education and carry on a cultured life-style, including theater and concert attendance as well as music lessons for all the children. Even when he lost his business during the Depression and was forced to take a job at Kennedy's clothing store, the rental income enabled the Solomons to continue to maintain their standard of living.¹¹

The area was not entirely Jewish, however. Prospect Street was where many Protestants lived. Here were private estates, with large lawns, closed-off fencing, and widow's walks on the roof-tops. The wealthier Jews did not live in big houses in the early days, recalls Sherwin Kapstein. Protestants also lived among Jews on Benefit Street. There were a few Blacks in the Benefit Street area, but the majority lived in the area around Lippitt, Howell, and North Main Streets.¹²

The Congdon Street Baptist Church where Blacks worshipped was built in 1874 and is still active. There was little inter-racial contact, Kapstein recalls, but also little racial tension.

Sidney Long recalled living on 78 Benefit Street across from the old JCC (Jewish Community Center), from 1924 when he was 10 years old to World War II. Benefit Street had brick sidewalks. The street lights were upright lanterns, with carbon rods providing the bright light in the bell-shaped covering. He remembers that the reason his family moved away from Benefit Street was that there was no available parking on the street and the commercial lots were costly and inconvenient.¹³ Sherwin Kapstein, who lived farther east, at 138 Congdon Street, for ten years from his birth in 1917, remembers that Pratt Street was muddy, unpaved. Jenckes Street was also unfinished, and, because of the steep hill, one could drive down it only if one was willing to "take one's life into one's hands."

The layout of the area, especially east of Benefit Street, well suited the life of a growing, energetic child. The Jenckes and Halsey Street hills provided a form of sledding entertainment, and Kapstein recalls the many times he slid down them. Jenckes Street provided the ultimate test of courage, but, fortunately, cars that might have hit the children were few and far between. The hills were not the only danger for a child in the community, Kapstein recalls fondly. There were pear, cherry, and apple trees in the neighborhood to fall out of.

Another test of bravery was the low but heavy iron fence that acted as a vital retaining barrier, below Congdon Street, at the site of the Roger Williams statue (erected later in 1936), for persons who enjoyed looking from this height over the city and the beautiful State House below. "Fearless kids from the area climbed the fence very carefully while firmly grasping, hand over hand, the heavy iron pickets and walked the thin edge of the massive stone wall that separated Prospect Terrace from Wheaton Street far below. I must confess that I was never that brave," said Kapstein.

The neighborhood was also an area for playing games, Kapstein recalls. The "Pratt Lots" were vacant lots on Pratt Street, where he and his friends played baseball, football, and other sports. Often the ball rolled down the hill, if not into the bushes. The surface was full of rocks and glass, as well as overgrown weeds. For a level and safer play area, the "Pratt Street kids" took advantage of Moses Brown School's athletic facilities. "The walk [to Lloyd Avenue], to me, was a long one."¹⁴

At the site where Hope High School stands used to be a reservoir. Harold Leavitt, born in 1913, recalls the high fence, always locked, that surrounded the site. He and his friends would frequently climb over the fence, for the excitement, to dare each other. When he was around five or six years old, at Yom Kippur the Jewish people picked the reservoir to pray and throw their sins into the water.¹⁵

SCHOOLS

Most children in the Benefit Street area attended the same schools through high-school. These included the Benefit Street Elementary School, the Doyle Avenue Grammar School, Nathan Bishop Junior High, and the old Hope Street High School (located at the present site of Alumni East Apartments on Hope Street, across from the present Hope High School*).

The most memorable event for Kapstein at the Benefit Street School was story time. Two or three classes would be joined, and Miss Parmenter, a teacher, would tell and act out stories, not reading them from a book. Peter Pan was Kapstein's favorite. The students at Benefit from the immediate area would run down Jenckes Street to Pratt, to Halsey, and finally to the school on the corner of Halsey and Benefit Streets, Kapstein remembers.¹⁶

Sidney Long likewise has a specific memory of elementary school: the fire drills. There were no electric alarm signals. Instead, someone played "Stars and Stripes Forever" on the big piano in the hallway, while the children marched in time to the tune, down the hallways and outside. The years were about 1924 to 1926, Long recalls.¹⁷

Agnes Garfinkel Gertsacov, born in 1900, attended the Benefit Street School during the "tremendous influx" of Eastern European Jews in the early part of the twentieth century. In the third and fourth grades, she remembers the older immigrants who had to learn to speak English. They were tall boys, huge to the young girl, who could barely fit into their seats. They had attended the Gymnasium in Europe. About two weeks after they came, they would leave, later to become doctors, lawyers and other prominent people, says Gertsacov.¹⁸

The Doyle Avenue Grammar School, grades five and six, was basically the same, a little larger, more formal, and more diversified (Kapstein). The students were mainly Jewish and Irish, with some Blacks. At Nathan Bishop Junior High, Kapstein continued to participate in sports. He fondly remembers his friends from

* Built 1939.

many ethnic groups. The soccer team members were mainly Portuguese students from Fox Point.¹⁹

Another school attended by some children in the area was the Workmen's Circle School on Benefit Street, near the Armory, which opened in 1924 and operated until the Depression. Classes met afternoons after school and Saturdays, four times a week. The curriculum included Yiddish literature and Jewish history, with instruction in Yiddish and English. The school had a strong emphasis on teaching the ideals of the labor movement and raised money for philanthropies, including workers in need of help. Beryl Segal, a president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, was the teacher for some time.

A very different type of schooling was provided by the Cathedral of St. John (Episcopal), 271 North Main Street. Rose-Anna Woleon Halpert remembered attending classes that the Cathedral conducted for the neighborhood children, most of whom were Jewish, in such subjects as etiquette and table setting. Mrs. Halpert was born in 1901 on Pratt Street and then moved to a house on North Main Street. Her father died when she was six years old, and she and her mother moved to the house at the corner of Benefit and North Main Streets.²⁰

COMMUNITY LIFE

Long's aunt ran a hairdressing shop in her house at 78 Benefit Street. A couple of times a year his cousins from New York, who had previously tried to enter show-business and failed, entertained the customers at the parlor. Long remembers his whole family going in for free haircuts. The cousins sang, played the piano, and danced. People not getting cuts would play poker, always for small stakes. Long remembers the players bluffing and cursing at one another, but all in good humor. People told dirty jokes, which Long was not allowed to hear. However, not only did he manage to hear the jokes, he also understood them, he recalls triumphantly.

One social event that Long was not allowed to be a part of was an informal series of Shakespeare plays held in the basement of a WASP neighbor's house on Benefit Street. Looking through the window, Long was surprised to see adults dressed in costumes, even though he understood that they were acting out a play. They did not allow him inside.²¹

Another social center for the community was the Katz cigarette shop on North Main street. At 5:00 p.m., right after work, all the men, including Gerstacov's father, Israel Garfinkel, and, occasionally, she herself, would congregate at the store, making and smoking cigarettes.

Around 1907, people in the neighborhood, the ones who could afford it, began to buy cars — Fords. To start the cars one had to turn the crank in the front. Often the car would stall, and one would have to crank again. Gertsacov remembers that many people's shoulders would get "knocked out" just from starting their cars. Her family

did not own a car.

Gertsacov recalls the vegetable peddlers who come to sell their goods, arriving by horse and wagon. The buyers would "dicker," bargain with the venders, because "if you didn't dicker, you would lose face [in the community]". This practice has its origin in Europe, says Gerstacov. She remembers that tomatoes were about five cents a pound, but then again, "who had five cents in those days?"²² Kapstein remembers the ice cream man, also arriving in horse and wagon. Ice cream was about three to five cents in the 1920s, he recalls.²³

The first floor of the house at 98 Benefit street was occupied by a tinsmith and roofer named Isaac Woolf and his wife, Betty. Ruth Adelson, the fourth of six children of Isaac and Betty Woolf, born in 1905, remembered that Ignatz (Izzy) Weiss, a tailor, rented the second floor and was a close friend of the family. Woolf's business was very successful and enabled him to move around 1910 to a house at 321 Hope Street, which he had built around 1907. The Hope Street house, next door to the old Hope Street High School, was at the end of the trolley line from downtown, Adelson recalls. Adelson described her parents as "very community minded." Isaac Woolf was a founder of the Jewish Community Center and Temple Emanu-El, and Betty Woolf was the first president of the Ladies Union Aid Association of The Jewish Home for the Aged and a president of the Montefiore Lodge Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association.²⁴ (See front cover and pp. 71-82.)

Along Bowen Street across from the Sullivan-Dorr mansion at 109 Benefit Street was a barn with cows. At three or four in the afternoon, Gertsacov would "run with a pail to get some milk. Who knew pasteurized back then?" Triple-decker houses were later built at the site of the barn.²⁵

Dr. Irving Beck lived on Carrington Avenue between Camp and Hope streets, from his birth in 1911. The location was ethnically diverse, with Jews, Irish, Blacks, and Protestants. Dr. Beck remembers that some Blacks were considered financially better off than the Jews at that time and held mostly service-sector and civil service jobs. Next door to Dr. Beck were two Black families who owned their own houses and some other land. One was a letter carrier, the other a Pullman porter. Their incomes were "fairly good, and steady," according to Dr. Beck. Dr. Beck described Jewish jobs as "uncertain." However, Blacks were prevented from climbing the social ladder, and Dr. Beck remembers being surprised when he saw a Black girl, a friend of his, a graduate of Hope High School, running an elevator in the Outlet Department Store. He was told that this was the best job a Black girl could get at that time. Dr. Beck said that there was "no resentment" between Blacks and Jews at that time, at least in his area. He remembers walking to school with Bill Turner, a Black child who lived on Hope Street.²⁶

Kapstein also played sports with Blacks and remembers that race was never an issue. Lafayette Adams, a friend of Kapsteins during junior high, visited at his

house, and they played miniature hockey and other sports in the cellar. He remembers only friendly reactions of his parents toward Adams and his other friends. Throughout his high school career, Kapstein remembers only a consistent, friendly attitude toward non-Jews.

Many other Jews lived in the Benefit Street area. Elizabeth Guny lived at 117 Benefit Street, corner of Bowen, from 1920 to 1984 and was called the Mayor of Benefit Street.²⁷ Harry and Clara Fink lived on Pratt Street, then Lippitt Street, then Bowen Street near Pratt Street. Isaac and Rose Solomon lived on Solomon Lane, off Olney Street (see p. 40). Benjamin D. Basok and his wife, Sarah, owned a large house at 102 Halsey Street. He was a founder and trustee of Temple Emanu-El and treasurer of the Touro Fraternal Association for 25 years. He had two sons, Arthur, who died young, and George, who lived in the house with his wife, Sally Cooper Basok. Their daughter, Betty Basok Kotlen, was born there.²⁸

Rebecca Brosofsky's husband, Hyman, came to this country, "was here a year, when he took me over," she said in a taped interview in 1983 with her grandson, James Gershman, at The Jewish Home, when she was about ninety-four years old.²⁹

She landed in Charlestown, Boston, with a year-old baby on Rosh Hashanah, 1914. "Moved to Pratt Street to a house with rats, it was something terrible, no warm water, had cold water. Warmed water in a pan, *oy vay*.* Stayed there a couple of months, then moved across street, third floor, a kitchen, it was different there, it was very clean, hot water, eleven dollars a month." The family later moved to the second floor of that house, then to Carrington Avenue. In 1924 they moved to Hope Street. Hyman Brosofsky had a one-man business for roofing and gutter work at 1 Benefit Street. Their children were Aaron and Murry Brosofsky and Helen Brosofsky Gershman.

Mary Golden lived at 67 Bowen Street from 1920 to 1965.³⁰ Louis Hayman lived at 71 Bowen Street from 1920 to 1977.³¹ The Lobel family, including Morris and wife Anna, lived at 25 Wheaton Street from 1925 to 1983.³²

HOME LIFE

Sidney Long was never aware of the Depression as a child. His father had a dry-cleaning business in South Providence, which did very well. Even during the '30s, he would get \$3.50 for cleaning a suit. His mother did not work. Because of the business, there was always food on the table. He saw people selling apples on the street and heard Roosevelt talk, but the reality of the situation did not make a strong impression.

Agnes Gertsacov's parents arrived in America before the turn of the century. There were four girls and a baby boy at the time. The family had to steal across the Russian border, leaving behind their small houses with built in wood-burning stoves, which were useless to them since the landlord would not allow them to chop

*Oh, pain (Literal), Yiddish expression of woe.

down their trees. Gerstacov's mother, who owned an inn, told her of the Russian soldiers, who came in, got drunk, and then destroyed the tavern.

Gertsacov's father did not earn much money for the family, once in America. She described him as a "scholar, not a wage-earner." He helped new Jewish immigrants in the area to find jobs, tenement homes, and material goods such as stoves and orange crates to sit on. Her mother, Tillie Orleck Garfinkel, worked in the American Screw Factory from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Gerstacov described her mother's work as difficult and uncertain, since there were no labor laws, and one was constantly afraid of being "sacked."

Agnes herself worked for three dollars a week when she was 16 and 17 years old as a salesgirl at Dimond's department store on Westminster Street. She never felt poor. Her family led a secure life, owned their own house, always had food on the table, she still remembers. When she asked her father for money, he would always oblige.

The Garfinkel house, at 24 Wheaton Street, had a well, perhaps a hundred years old, in the backyard. In the summer, she and her sisters took the cover off the well and pulled the spring water up in a bucket. Only years later did she find out that a well has to be cleaned regularly. She said of her childhood: "You led a very innocent life."³³

For some children at the time, the origin of their parents helped create a generation gap. Sidney Long remembers feeling this cultural difference between his American background and his father's Russian one. His father immigrated at age 13, working in America to bring his whole family over. He often told Sidney about the pogroms, about the destruction done by Russian soldiers.³⁴

JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE

The first-generation immigrants of the East side practiced their Orthodox Judaism primarily in the Orms Street and Howell Street Synagogues. Orms Street Synagogue started on Canal Street on March 2, 1875, with the name B'nai Zion, "Sons of Zion."³⁵ It moved to Orms Street in 1892.³⁶ Howell Street Shul, Congregation Ahavath Shalom, started in 1903.³⁷

As the Providence immigrants raised their children in the American setting, their traditional Orthodox Judaism of early 20th century Russia was faced with a challenge. As Grossfield states: "The East Siders wanted more traditional Judaism than that provided by a Reform institution, but the immigrant Orthodox institutions were too alien from their American lifestyle."³⁸ The answer was the conservative Temple Emanu-el, built in 1926.³⁹

Helene Alper Hill, who lived on Olney street from 1918 to 1938, recalls⁴⁰ the time when the first rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, Israel M. Goldman, stayed at her house. She was eight years old. Her biggest impression was that the rabbi was clean shaven,

unlike the heavily bearded rabbis and cantors at the Howell Shul, who were “very foreign looking.” It was easier for her and her parents to relate to the new rabbi, she recalls.

Dr. Irving Beck recalls that Howell Street Shul began to seem “outdated” to many. The gender separation became more and more unacceptable, and fewer and fewer people understood the Hebrew prayers. Once the content of the prayers became less clear, their relevance to the immigrants’ lives weakened, said Beck.⁴¹

Jewish education for the younger generation varied in formality. Sidney Green went to *Cheder*, after-school Hebrew classes, in preparation for the Bar-Mitzvah. Green attended the classes at Howell Street Shul, from age 10 to 13. Although Green never considered himself or his family very religious, he accepted the classes and ritual as “part of my Jewish upbringing.”⁴² Other residents of the area, like Sidney Long, had private Hebrew lessons at home weekly for twenty-five cents.⁴³

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

The Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island was founded in October, 1925, on 65 Benefit Street, near Star Street.⁴⁴ It served as an educational, social, and religious center, and as a means of unifying the community.⁴⁵

For Michael Fink, the Community Center, where he went to Sunday School, was a “liberating experience.” Here, he became a more independent, thinking person, with the help of two teachers. The first, Florence Parker Simister, who had a radio show called “Streets of the City,” staged short skits with the students. Fink remembers standing on the stage, with Simister putting make-up on him, “a *tallis*,^{*} a *yarmulke*,^{**} and feeling like a star.” The other teacher, Rosalea Elowitz Cohn, broadened Fink’s concept of Judaism, religion, and critical thought. A high school student, she taught the Bible in an historical, allegorical manner. (Fink’s grandparents, Zelig and Becky Fink, lived on Pratt Street, near Jenckes.)⁴⁶

Although Dr. Beck participated in a non-Jewish Boy Scout troop, he remembered that there were few Jews and some discrimination. The Jewish troop established at the JCC enabled Jewish boys to be free of such discrimination, as well as enabling them to practice Judaism without hindrance.

The JCC was also the meeting place for the Rhode Island Jewish Youth Federation, created by Milton and Dorothy Scribner in 1936. It was an organization composed of representatives of the Jewish youth groups, mostly from temples, such as Beth-El, Emanu-El, and Beth-Israel, and from B’nai-Brith. Scribner sought to eliminate scheduling conflicts and initiate social and educational programs through this central body. The participants were in the high-school and early college years.⁴⁷

Sidney Green was one of the early members of the Olympic Club, the first club

**Tallis*, prayer shawl.

***Yarmulke*, skull cap.

founded at the JCC, in 1927. The club sponsored competitions with other clubs at the JCC. The Center, for Green and his close circle of friends, was a "second home," and was always bustling with youngsters involved in either organized activities or recreational play.⁴⁸

STORES

On the southern border of the Benefit Street community lay North Main Street, the commercial center of the area. The street was a mixture of small, run-down private homes and small businesses.

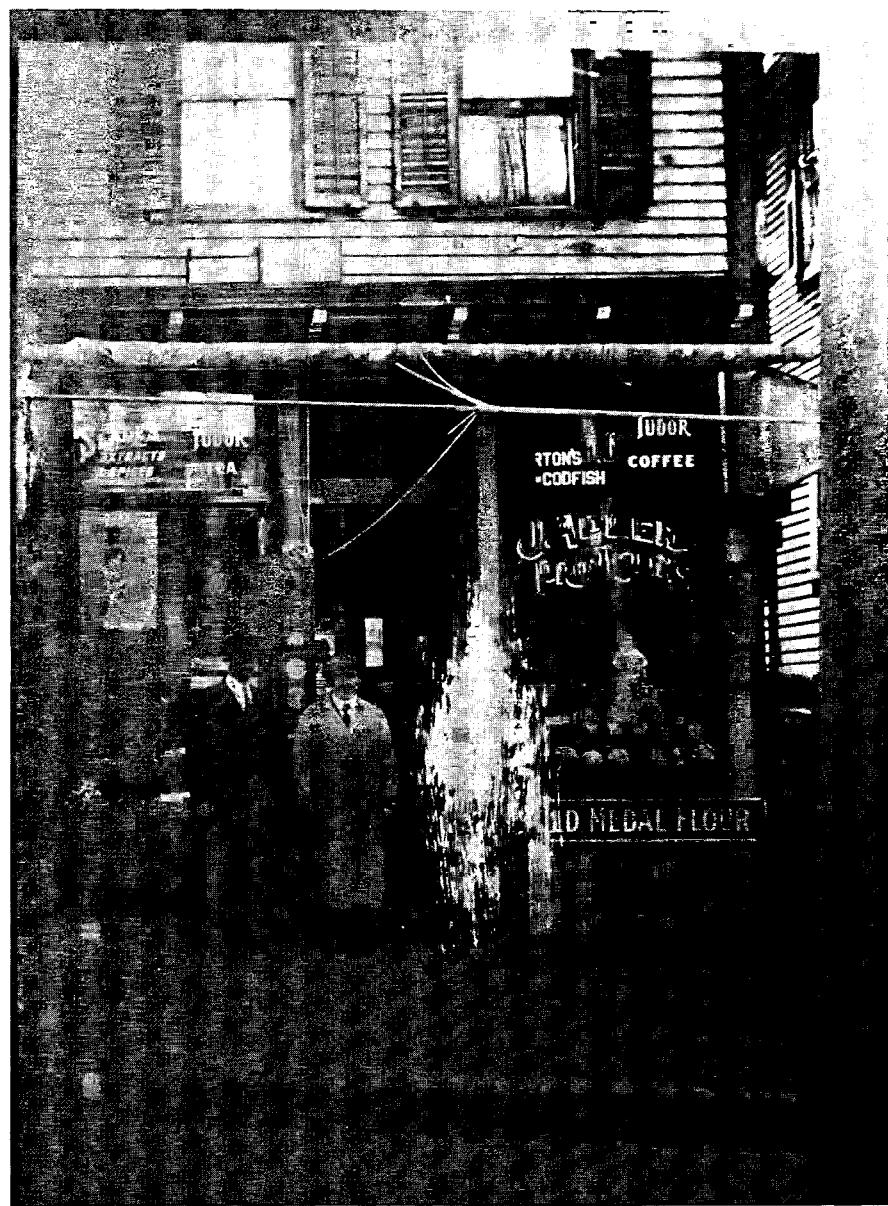
Cohen's and Davis's delicatessens were two of the most popular stores in the community. Cohen's, located at 416 North Main on Constitution Hill, was "one of the best delis in Rhode Island. It was a hangout for local teenagers, a place to eat and socialize," said Sidney Green.⁴⁹ Morris Cohen owned and lived above the store. He ran it until his death in 1936. (His son Joe [Joseph Ress] did not continue the business.) The deli used to make its own kosher pickled baby watermelons and tomatoes, Joan Reeves recalls. Morris was very generous when making sandwiches, despite the warnings given by wife, Bessie.⁵⁰ Davis's Deli was located on 339 North Main, at the corner of Star Street, from 1937 to 1950.⁵¹

Green remembers Sweet's and Kloner's bakeries on North Main Street. [John Sweet, baker, 629 North Main Street, 1929 to 1939, and Solomon Kloner, first at 370 North Main, then at number 363.] Green also remembers Goldberg's drugstore, which was at 4 Benefit Street, across from the Benefit Street school, from 1915 to 1966. He recalls the owner as the "neighborhood family doctor" as well as the pharmacist. Said Green: "He would dispense advice — for free, unlike today."⁵²

Dr. Beck's grandfather, Noah Temkin, owned a grocery store at 475 North Main Street from 1907 to 1924. His six sons all worked in the store at one time or another. Around 1914 he bought a car, to make home deliveries. The store was non-kosher, but sold typical Eastern European household food items, such as pickled herring. After Temkin closed the market, four of his sons started Temkin Tobacco Company.⁵³

North Main, said Gertsacov, was "a busy, busy street." The William Rabinovitz [later Rabinowitz] family owned a big men's clothing store at number 214. Sam Bander worked in the store, selling suits, and also played the fiddle for many of the Jewish weddings in the area. Gerstacov remembers hearing him many times. At 286 North Main Street was a jewelry store owned by a Mr. Benjamin and Mr. [John] Nelson, recalls Gertsacov.

Jacob Lubar owned a ladies' tailor shop at 335 North Main. Samuel Lubar (later Luber) was listed in the Providence Business Directory for 1895 as a hairdresser at 351 North Main, then listed in later years as a barber at several other locations on the street. "He had two sons, Dave and Abe. Dave became a podiatrist. Abe, who



Joseph Adler store on Olney Street, 1903. Joseph Adler, father of Walter Adler (see p. 90), is in the center of the picture. The man at the left is unidentified. The photograph appears to have been damaged many years ago.

attended Brown University [Class of 1914], wore a derby on the side of his head and smoked a cigar. He loved to see the horses race at Narragansett Park. Often there was a sign in the barbershop window that read: 'We cannot shave your faces — we've gone to the races.'⁵⁴

Zlata Bromberg, whose husband Max was a Hebrew teacher, opened a grocery-variety store at 532 North Main Street in 1910. In 1915 it moved to Jenckes Street and a year later to 44 Pratt Street, where it stayed until its closing in 1925. Samuel Faber owned S. Faber, Remnants, first at 526 North Main Street, then at 281. Barnet Rosen, Drygoods, was at 369 North Main and then became Rosen Brothers, Drygoods, at 360 North Main.⁵⁵

THE DECLINE OF THE COMMUNITY

As the Jews in the Benefit Street community gained more affluence, they moved even farther east.

By 1920, the Jewish population of Doyle Avenue and Pleasant Street had increased, and many other East Side streets began to acquire Jewish residents. ... Streets which are further east, such as Summit, Taft, and Morris Avenues, began to have Jewish residents in the mid-to-late 1920s, and their Jewish population continued to grow into the 1930s. Thus while sizeable Jewish populations remained on Pratt and Lippitt Streets, the heart of the Jewish community was moving further east.⁵⁶

With monetary gain, however, came nostalgia and a sense of loss for some of the inhabitants. Later in life, Gertsacov realized that the community and store life meant a lot to her childhood: "At the time, it didn't mean much to me, but looking back, it must have been a dream land."⁵⁷



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

¹ Grossfield, "A Theory of American Life," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Volume 10, Number 4, November 1990, pp. 414-415.

² Interview with Sherwin Kapstein, August 8, 1991.

³ Interview with William McKenzie Woodward, August 8, 1991.

⁴ Grossfield, *ibid.* p. 416

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Interview with Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, August 23, 1991.

⁷ Sanderson, Statement to Providence Zoning Board of Review, May 3, 1989.

⁸ Seebert J. Goldowsky, "Letters to the Editor," *Providence Journal*, November 12, 1991.

⁹ Sanderson interview, August 23, 1991.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Patricia Raub, "Another Pattern of Urban Living: Multifamily Housing in Providence, 1890-1930," *Rhode Island History*, Vol. 48, No. 1, February 1990, p. 14, and interview with Fredda (Solomon) Heyman Galkin, November 24, 1991.

¹² Kapstein, *ibid.*

¹³ Interview with Sidney Long, August 12, 1991.

¹⁴ Kapstein, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Interview with Harold Leavitt, August 8, 1991.

¹⁶ Kapstein, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Long, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Interview with Agnes Garfinkel Gertsacov, August 10, 1991.

¹⁹ Kapstein, *ibid.*

²⁰ Interview with Violet Halpert, September 4, 1991.

²¹ Long, *ibid.*

²² Gertsacov, *ibid.*

²³ Kapstein, *ibid.*

²⁴ Interview with Ruth Adelson, August 20, 1991.

²⁵ Gertsacov, *ibid.*

²⁶ Interview with Dr. Irving Beck, August 12, 1991.

²⁷ "History of Ownership of the Subject Properties," Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, and Interview with Woodward, July 8, 1991.

²⁸ Interview with Betty Kotlen, September 9, 1991.

²⁹ Tape on file at the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Library.

³⁰ "History of Ownership ... ", *ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Gertsacov, *ibid.*

³⁴ Long, *ibid.*

³⁵ *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 2, Number 1, June 1956, p. 22.

³⁶ Sanderson, *ibid.*

³⁷ *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 4, Number 3, November 1965, p. 257.

³⁸ Grossfield, *ibid.*, p. 425.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Interview with Helene Hill, August 13, 1991.

⁴¹ Beck, *ibid.*

⁴² Green, *ibid.*

⁴³ Long, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Eleanor Horvitz, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 6, Number 2, 1972, p. 152.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴⁶ Interview with Michael Fink, August 8, 1991.

⁴⁷ Interview with Milton and Dorothy Scribner, August 15, 1991.

⁴⁸ Green, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Green, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Interview with Joan Reeves, daughter of Joseph Ress and granddaughter of Morris Cohen, August 20,

1991.

⁵¹ Providence Business Directory, 1936.

⁵² Green, *ibid.*

⁵³ Beck, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Gertsacov, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Providence Business Directory.

⁵⁶ Grossfield, *ibid.*, p. 416.

⁵⁷ Gertsacov, *ibid.*

MEMORIES OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD NEAR THE BENEFIT STREET AREA

BY FLORENCE ZINN KRANTZ

We lived in three small rooms in back of Mama's store (266 Charles Street) that had been converted by the landlord from the front parlor. It was a shabby street. The houses of six flats, three in front and three in the rear, leaned precariously towards each other, separated only by a narrow alley through which you reached the back door and the rear flats. The flats rented for eight dollars for the rear ones and ten for the others, but because ours included a business establishment, the rent was fifteen dollars. The flats were lighted by kerosene lamps and heated by coal. The other pre-school children and I wrote on the sidewalk with chalk and played jacks, hopscotch, and other street games. In this barren environment where there wasn't a blade of grass or a tree, we found friendship and excitement.

In 1921 we moved to Scott Street, which was a block above Benefit Street. Our flat was a converted one of four of a schoolhouse. We had to walk up numerous steps to the house. The pathway was paved with gravestones of the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1922 we moved from there to Benefit Street where we had our first electric lights.

My family consisted of my parents and three sisters (the last sister was born in 1924). From the age of 8 to 13 years, an impressionable time in a child's life, this home of a kitchen, two bedrooms, a bathroom or toilet (I cannot remember which) and a parlor with a fireplace, was the center of my existence. Although there was a school across the street, I attended Doyle Ave. school. I would call for my friend who lived on North Main Street and we occasionally stopped to buy a cookie at the bakery or a piece of candy at the grocery store which had a candy case.

Next door to our house was another house that had a store in the front, evidently converted from the "parlor." This must have been #16. Next to that was a home for "Wayward Girls;" perhaps it was the House of Good Shepherd. In front of this building was an iron rail fence. In order to have the penny for the piece of candy or cookie, I would stand in front of the fence to wait for one of the "wayward girls" (mostly unmarried and pregnant) who would lean out of the second-story window, to ask me to run an errand for them, usually to buy cigarettes in the nearby store. As I was thin, I was able to sidle through the opening between the rails and take the dime that was wrapped in paper and lowered from the window with a string. After completing my errand, I would tie the cord around the cigarettes which would be hauled up. My reward of a penny would be thrown down to me.

I believe the rent was about \$14 a month but we did have to provide our own heat. Mama would order coal which cost about \$12 a ton and which would have to be carried by the teamster in bushel baskets to the rear of the house and thrown through the cellar window that was above our coal bin. Each tenant had a lock on the door

of the bin to prevent one's supply being appropriated by a neighbor.

The front of the house was about three steps up from the sidewalk (this was called the stoop), but the back of the house was about three stories tall as the foundation came up from the rise on top of North Main Street, which was below. The area was devoid of any grass or trees. Clotheslines stretched in the back yard to a pole.

Mama had a business, a small candy and grocery store where she sold on credit to families as poor as we were. There was a big grey ledger with a page for each customer. The customers each had a little book where Mama entered the date and amount of the sale. On Saturday afternoons the customers settled their accounts. It was a black day when someone who owed a few dollars moved away, silently, in the middle of the night. In this small milieu I wondered how someone could disappear so completely from the face of the earth.

Most of the day trade was slack, enabling Mama to do her sewing, housework, and cooking. Twice a day she did a rushing business selling candy to schoolchildren. Mama had no patience waiting for the great decision of her customers as to how they should spend the penny they each had. Sometimes two children in a family had to share one penny. That meant picking out candy that sold at two pieces for one cent. There usually was an argument: "You chose yesterday. It's my turn today."

An incident which is a vivid memory is when I awoke one morning to find the rest of the family asleep although it was past breakfast time. I could not rouse them and called a neighbor who had a telephone (a rarity although you could get a four-party line for \$2.25 a month) who called the police. The family was suffering from coal gas inhalation and were told to stand in front of an open window and breathe deeply. It was bitterly cold and the entire flat had to be heated by the coal stove which was in the kitchen. Papa had made a fire in the fireplace but the flue was defective. Of course, there was no thought of suing the landlord. A poor person was always the victim. When there was no work, papa was laid off without pay; when he was sick there were no sick benefits, no union, no recourse. When he was injured on the job, the compensation was just a few dollars a week. Mama had to resort to her sewing machine to augment the family income. Somehow we survived, but only the ones who were strong. Early deaths of parents were common as were those of children.

The house at 14 Benefit Street, in dilapidated condition, was remodelled into cooperative apartments in 1981.



DR. SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY RECOGNITION DAY

March 16, 1991, was proclaimed Dr. Seebert Goldowsky Recognition Day in the State of Rhode Island by Governor Bruce Sundlun. The proclamation stated that Dr. Goldowsky, Past President of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and Editor Emeritus of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, was honored for his service "as a physician for 37 years, exhibiting patience, understanding and compassion to those who have sought help from his healing hands;" as editor of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* for 27 years "in his continuing effort to aid in the advancement of medicine, ... and his pursuit of the knowledge of the past" as a past president and long-standing board member of the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies and a trustee of the American Jewish Historical Society." The proclamation also stated that Dr. Goldowsky is the beloved husband of Gertrude (Bonnie) Nisson Goldowsky and the brother-in-law of Dr. Maurice Adelman of precious memory.

Dr. Goldowsky was also honored in 1991 by a festschrift, an edition of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* with essays by colleagues and admirers paying him tribute. The April issue of the Journal was dedicated to Dr. Goldowsky with "profound gratitude ... for his immense gifts he has bestowed upon all of us."¹

Milton W. Hamolsky, M. D., Chief Administrator, Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline, and Professor of Medical Science Emeritus, Brown University, cited Dr. Goldowsky in the tribute issue as "medical statesman, acknowledged leader in each of his undertakings, scholar, historian, bibliophile, medical politician in the most noble aspects of that phrase, the Dean of Rhode Island Jewish history."²

Hugo Taussig, M. D., Clinical Assistant Professor in Psychiatry at the Brown University Medical Program, contributed an article honoring Dr. Goldowsky in which he described a university for Jewish students conducted in Bucharest, Romania, from 1941 to 1944 when, under the Fascist regime, Jews were not permitted to attend or teach in any public schools. He concluded the essay by saying:

It is hoped that this story will please Dr. Goldowsky, a scholar of the history of medicine and of the Jews. He, of all people, will not be surprised to find yet another example of the unremitting, unconditional love of the book, that has sustained the Jewish people through millennia of persecution; learning as an obligation and as a thing of joy, regardless of circumstances, however dire they may be. And he might like to add this vignette to his erudite knowledge of the long line of illustrious predecessors whose love of learning expressed itself in the humane art of practicing the science of medicine.³

* * *

Excerpts from speech by Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., at the meeting of the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies on March 16, 1991, Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky Recognition Day:

Goldowsky Recognition Day

THE GENESIS OF AN AMATEUR HISTORIAN,
OR RUMINATIONS ON HOW I GOT THAT WAY

I was born in Olneyville in 1907, the year of a great depression, or, as they called it in those days, a panic. I have often wondered if this somehow affected my subconscious. The house at 595 Broadway, Providence, where I was born, was across the street from St. Mary's Church. You will find no plaque on the house because it was taken down for an approach to the Olneyville Expressway. Olneyville in those days was an Irish neighborhood, and we were the only Jewish family in a sea of Hibernians.

I believe there is a genetic factor in my knack for writing. My father, who came to this country at age nine and probably had no more than two years of high school, wrote impeccable English with a fine and ornate script. As a youngster he was an avid reader; he waded through all of Charles Dickens and sampled many more of the great Victorian novelists.

He conducted a detective agency for the jewelry industry. He told me that he edited and corrected the atrocious English of his operatives' reports, and I would see him type them by hunt and peck before submitting them to his clients. He read three newspapers, a Boston, New York, and Providence paper, every day. As an example of his elegant prose, I shall read to you his only last will and testament, written two years before he passed away in 1936. I am sure that he had a premonition of his coming demise:

To my children, Eleanor Lillian, Beatrice, and Seebert Jay.
This is not a legally executed document, because I have no worldly goods to leave to my family.

I have all my life striven to win that which money cannot buy and which no stock market could wipe out, to wit, a good name. So if I have failed in that, my life was a complete bankrupt.

I hardly know anything more despicable than selfishness. I despise the man who lives only for himself. So if you, my good children, wish to cherish my memory, do not fail to discharge the debt you owe to God's distressed children in the way of alleviating their suffering.

Your loving father,
Bernard M. Goldowsky

Very little in my education would suggest that in my declining years my primary avocation would be the writing of American history. In my early years we moved to Baker Street, which was off upper Broad Street near Roger Williams Park. The only American history I was ever exposed to was at Broad Street Grammar School. We learned about such things as Washington crossing the Delaware, Connecticut's Nathan Hale and his famous words, Lincoln's Gettysburg address, and "Remember the Maine."

Classical High School offered no American history at all, while in college I had other matters to be concerned with. At Classical we studied only ancient history, beginning with the early days of Iraq and ending with the fall of Rome. I remember that one of Saddam Hussein's predecessors wrote the first by-laws and another saw some strange writing on the wall. At Brown we studied European history, a required course, from the fall of Rome to the outbreak of World War I.

So far as English writing is concerned, I received a solid grounding from some female battle-axes at Broad Street School and Classical. I remember that in my four years at Classical in sixteen quarters I received fifteen A's and one B in my senior year. In the latter instance my home room teacher called me to her desk and asked if we spoke English at home. I blushed and answered "Yes," but even in my immaturity I resented the implications.

At Brown I received an A in my first semester of theme writing, which entitled me to skip the otherwise required second semester. With much glee I took a course in bacteriology instead. In general, I considered writing an unpleasant chore, and history, which consisted mainly of memorizing endless dates, an unmitigated bore.

I consider that my five years of Latin, five years of German, and four years of French, together with exposure to the splendors of English literature at Classical and at Brown, had a distinctly positive influence on my understanding of sentence structure, use of vocabulary, rhythm, and style, and avoidance of awkward constructions and solecisms.

I wrote my first medical paper, together with my resident, during my surgical internship in 1934. It was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which nowadays would be considered quite an accomplishment. During the ensuing 50-odd years I wrote some sixteen medical papers published in various other journals, including the *Journal of the Mount Sinai Hospital* in New York, *The Journal of Pediatrics*, two in *The American Journal of Surgery*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, several in the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, and an editorial in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

My first paper on medical history, as I was approaching my 50th birthday, was an extended essay in three parts appearing in the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* in 1956, titled "The Beginnings of Medical Education in Rhode Island." This paper resulted in my growing interest in Usher Parsons. Some time during the early 1950s George Potter, then chief editorial writer of *The Providence Journal*, showed me a slender volume, which turned out to be a brief history of the Medical School in Brown University, which existed from 1811 to 1827. It was written by Dr. Charles Parsons, the son of Usher Parsons, professor of anatomy and surgery in the Medical School. This book was also my introduction to the medical history of Rhode Island. Did you know that John Clarke, whom Roger Williams sent to England to obtain our famous state charter, was also our first physician? As I read it, I felt that the elder

Parsons deserved a full-length biography. That dream came to pass only 35 years later in 1988 with the publication of my full-length biography of Parsons by the Countway Library at Harvard Medical School and the Rhode Island Publications Society, *Yankee Surgeon, The Life and Times of Usher Parsons, 1788-1868.*

During the ensuing years I wrote a series of brief medical historical and biographical sketches for the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* and edited and wrote one-third of the history of the Rhode Island Medical Society, founded in 1812.

When the editor of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, John Donnelly, became ill and was failing during the latter 1950s, I helped with the editing and wrote editorials and book reviews. After he died I was asked to become editor in 1961.

The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, chartered in 1951, began publishing the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* in 1954. The founder and editor, David C. Adelman, having heard of my tentative probings in medical history, asked me to write several papers for the *Notes*. After Adelman became terminally ill, I became editor for the *Notes*.

In summary, I edited the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* for 27 years and the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* for 18 years. I was meticulous in my editing and tolerated no indifferent or sloppy writing. It often meant correcting grammar or re-writing. No one ever complained.

My latest major opus (and probably my last), released this year, is a 500-page history of Temple Beth-El of Providence, going back to its early beginnings in 1854 and extending to a year or so ago.

What advice and counsel can I, a rank amateur, give to others who may wish to follow this tortuous path? First, learn to write grammatically and cogently. Don't ever use popular jargon, such as *this point in time*. Write and rewrite, read and reread, correct and polish. Insist on clarity, and try to put yourself in the position of your reader. Make sure that any items, places, abbreviations, acronyms, or persons that you mention are as clear to the reader as they are to you. Regardless of the subject, seek to write with character and style. I have learned much from editors with whom I have worked. I have discovered that when an editor writes, he too needs an editor.

If you are writing history, do the bulk of your own research and do it before you begin writing. Don't depend on anyone or any previous source — check all references if you can. Inaccuracies will come back to haunt you. No matter how hard you try, there will inevitably be some. Be sure you have a cogent objective, and plan your project at least in your own mind.

Don't write an extended history until you have a commitment that someone will publish it. Otherwise it will end up in the garbage or with your papers in some dusty library. It almost happened to me!

I am sure that I have left untouched many significant items or concepts, but that is because I am after all an amateur.



NOTES

¹ *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, Vol. 74, No. 4, April 1991, p. 150.

² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

THE PORTUGUESE—RHODE ISLAND JEWISH LINK
PORTUGUESE CONSUL TO RHODE ISLAND SPEAKS TO
JEWISH COMMUNITY

Statement by João L. Laranjeira de Abreu, Consul of Portugal in the State of Rhode Island, at the midwinter meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, December 12, 1990.

Portugal is a country where a people's personality has been shaped by three main streams of cultures, namely, the Celtic, the Arab, and the Jewish. Thanks to them, our people was able to distinguish themselves among other human societies. We have once been a world superpower, and we have crossed the oceans far beyond the physical and intellectual horizon of Europeans. By doing so, the Portuguese people have claimed the discovery of more than two-thirds of the so-called "new lands and continents."

We have done our good share in the contribution for a modern and increasingly close network of reciprocal influences and intellectual exchange. People today may seek different forms of fulfillment, see the world in different terms and have unequal chances of success and failure, but they feel more and more strongly that they share a common destiny.

I feel proud to recognize that the Portuguese diaspora has contributed a great deal in this process. However, within the Portuguese "diaspora" there is another remarkable one: the Portuguese-Jewish diaspora. Portuguese Jews developed the strong concept of family ties in our society and have enlightened the way to our sailors and adventurers throughout the world by developing the science of naval charts, by providing good captains and crews, and by establishing commercial centers in other continents.

When disgrace occurred in our society with the implementation of Inquisition mentality, the Portuguese-Jewish diaspora began, writing jubilant pages in an almost unknown book of history. The Portuguese synagogues in Amsterdam, in Curaçao, in St. Thomas (Virgin Islands), in Newport, and in New Amsterdam (later New York) are only some good examples of this unwritten book. Other examples are not to be forgotten, such as the Portuguese-Jewish community in Bulgaria and our brothers in Turkey.

Nowadays, Portuguese people are finally able to say they live in a democracy. After a long, very long period of our history we now have begun a new era of freedom. And, people start asking themselves some good questions about their heritage and their roots. Accordingly the President of the Portuguese Republic, Dr. Mario Soares, whom I have the honor to represent in the State of Rhode island, has been our first head of state who recently, and publicly, has presented official apologies for the Portuguese-Jewish persecution.

By doing so, in Portugal, in Amsterdam, and in Newport*, he has pushed forward the process of reconciliation and reunion between Portuguese people and Portuguese-Jewish descendants around the world.

We have long and hard work ahead of us. We have to encourage, among other things, those of us who are willing to investigate the lost pages of our common history book. And Mrs. Carolina Matos** is by all means an example of success in that task and one of the best.

One last word: the Portuguese community in the State of Rhode Island is involved in a process of self-promotion within this society. Many groups, like some 62 Portuguese-American institutions in Rhode Island, are working together for that purpose. I wish we could see another institution joining the process. I mean an institution representing the voice of the Portuguese-Jewish descendants in this State. The day this institution is created, please let me inscribe my name, because I feel, in my heart, the call of my Portuguese-Jewish ancestors.

*Editor's Note: See President Soares's statement, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Volume 10, Number 3, Part B, pp. 350-353.

**Carolina Matos, Editor of *The Portuguese American*, Providence, was the speaker at the midwinter meeting.

THE PORTUGUESE—RHODE ISLAND JEWISH LINK
THE ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES SOCIETY
BY ALVIN F. RUBIN

The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was the catalyst for the birth of the Aristides de Sousa Mendes Society, one of the few such organizations in the world, at the Association's December 1990 meeting. Carolina Matos, meeting speaker, Editor of the *Portuguese American Journal*, and João Luis Laranjeira de Abreu, Portuguese Consul in Rhode Island, asked me if it would be possible to create an interfaith society of people interested in the history and culture of the descendants of Iberian Jews.

The Society was incorporated in Rhode Island on April 1, 1991, and named in honor of Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a descendant of Portuguese Jews who was raised in the Catholic faith. Mendes was the Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux, France, during World War II and, at great risk to his life, issued many thousands of passports to Jews. He was expelled from the diplomatic corps and later died in poverty. In 1967 Yad Vashem, the Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Israel, posthumously awarded the Portuguese diplomat a gold medal and planted a tree in his memory in the Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem.

The objectives of the Society are:

- 1) To collect data, artifacts, oral histories, music, literature, and art pertaining to Crypto-Judaism;
- 2) To research the genealogy and diaspora of the descendants of Iberian Jews;
- 3) To study the heritage, history, and culture of Crypto-Judaism;
- 4) To promote friendship between descendants of Iberian Jews and the Jewish community.

The founders of the Society are:

João Luis Laranjeira de Abreu, Consul of Portugal in Rhode Island; Honorary Chairman of the Executive Board;

Alvin F. Rubin, President; Adjunct Assistant Professor of Gerontology at the University of Rhode Island; Executive Committee Member, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association;

Carolina Matos, Vice President for Rhode Island; Editor of the *Portuguese American Journal*;

Ronald Schneider, M.D., Vice President for Massachusetts; Adjunct Professor at Brown University Medical School;

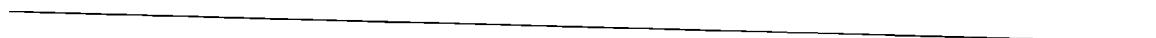
Miguel Antonio Bensaude, Vice President for Washington, D.C.; International Business Consultant;

Anna Maria Parahnos-Hafeli Amaral, Corresponding Secretary; research assistant;

Alan Axelrod, Treasurer; Executive Board member, Jewish Federation of Rhode Island.

Members of the Executive Board are Bernard Kusinitz, Historian of Touro Synagogue; past president, Congregation Jeshuat Israel, Newport; First Vice President, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association; Joseph V. Puleo, Jr., printer and antiquarian; Dr. David Gitlitz, Professor of Spanish and former Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Rhode Island; Sarah Toste Amaral, former administrator of the town of Bristol; Ada Jill Schneider, poet; past president, Sisterhood, Temple Beth El, Fall River, Massachusetts; Sidney Helbraun, Assistant Rabbi, Temple Beth-El, Providence; Jose A.S. Baptista, publisher of the *Portuguese American Journal*; Robert Silva, attorney, President, the Portuguese Cultural Foundation; Freeman Morey Cardoza, Sergeant, U.S. Air Force, Retired; Michael Fink, Professor of English, Rhode Island School of Design; Thomas Benros, educator and poet; and Howard Gold, production engineer.

The Aristides de Sousa Mendes Society is believed to be one of the few of its kind anywhere. The Beit Sephardim Society in Cordoba, Spain, was created in 1974, and more recently, the Society for the Study of Crypto-Judaism was founded on the West Coast under the leadership of Rabbi Joshua Stampfer.



RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF NEWPORT JEWRY PRIOR TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

BY MARTIN W. ARON

Many settlers of Newport's Jewish community who immigrated to the British colony of Rhode Island were of Sephardic origin, from Portugal and Spain. Since the Holy Inquisition had prevented the practice of religious beliefs other than Catholicism, Jews were converted to Christianity, exiled, or observed Judaism in secrecy in order to avoid being burned at the stake. By contrast, Jewish settlers of Newport were permitted openly to uphold the customs and traditions of their religion, although it was not until about a decade before the American Revolution that the Jewish community began to flourish and built its synagogue. The Newport community provides a portrait of colonial Jewish life and the rituals that have sustained Jewish communities throughout the centuries.

The Jews who established the Newport synagogue were among the first of their persuasion to distinguish themselves in Rhode Island, mainly as merchant-shippers. They were not, however, the first Jewish settlers of this colony. The first came from Barbados while still another group came from Curaçao in 1694. Evidence relating to Newport's Jewish burial grounds further indicates that "grantees of the cemetery in 1678 were Barbadian Jews," who were also builders of Newport's first community.¹ Early Jewish settlers of Newport, however, had not maintained a continuous community, as very few Jews had lived in Newport between 1690 and 1750. Organized religious activity was minimal during this time, since religious services had been held in private homes.²

The wake of Jewish immigration in Newport between 1745-1760 brought settlers from Spain, Portugal, Jamaica, and New York and resulted in a much larger Jewish community than that of the previous century.³ The census taken by order of the General Assembly in 1774 had indicated that there were at least 158 Jews in Newport, which most likely would have represented about half the population of American Jewry only a century prior to the census.

The Jewish immigrants from Portugal and Spain experienced persecution in their homelands. Under the Inquisition, Aaron Lopez and R. Rivera were forced to maintain a Christian identity and live in constant fear of being prosecuted by the Church for their beliefs. Less than one month before Lopez had arrived in Newport, forty-five persons had been condemned by the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Lisbon for the crime of "Judaizing."⁴

In Newport, however, Jews who had witnessed the effects of the Inquisition were permitted to practice their religion in an unrestricted manner.⁵ Once the synagogue was established⁶ in 1763, it remained the center of Jewish religious activity until the

Martin W. Aron, an attorney practicing in Short Hills, New Jersey, received his J.D. from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University, in 1984.

Revolution, when the British occupation of Newport caused the Jewish community to disperse. Various religious activities, such as the baking of Passover matzos and the certification of kosher meat, were performed without restrictions.⁷

In fact, in 1684, prior to any significant Jewish immigration in Newport, the General Assembly of the Colony appeared to have declared rights of equal protection, although perhaps not political equality, to its Jewish residents:

Voted, in answer to the petition of Simon Medus, David Brown and associates, being Jews, presented to this Assembly, bearing date June the 24th, 1684, we declare that they may expect as good protection here, as any stranger, being not of our nation, residing amongst us in his Majesty's Colony ought to have, being obedient to his Majesty's laws.⁸

In addition to the granting of this petition, the religious tolerance of Colonial Newport was evidenced by its refusal to take part in the persecution of Quakers, that no law "prevent[ed] any one from declaring by words, etc., their minds and understanding concerning the things and ways of God."⁹

In the Mishna, an important source of Jewish law, it is maintained that "the world rests on three foundations: the Torah, the divine service, and the practices of lovingkindness between man and man." In focusing upon religious activity, these principles help us to understand better the Jewish community of colonial Newport. "Torah," may be thought of as religious education; "divine service" may be interpreted as worship, which includes other commandments corresponding to written law in the Old Testament; and "lovingkindness between man and man" refers to the obligation to help the less fortunate members of society through charity. Each of these activities was embodied in the religious complexion of the Newport community prior to the American Revolution.

Once the synagogue was established, it was the focal point of all activity that supported the religious world of Newport Jews. The children received their education in the Talmud Torah, the religious school that was part of the building. Both men and women worshipped in the synagogue, although separate seating was required in accordance with orthodox Jewish law. During services congregants made donations to a "well managed Charity Fund"¹⁰ that assisted immigrants with little money.¹¹ When the Newport congregation, Yeshuat Israel, had requested financial assistance from New York's congregation Shearith Israel for the building of the synagogue, they had indicated the purpose that this religious edifice was to serve.

... When we reflect on how much it is our Duty to Instruct children in the Path of Virtuous Religion, and how unhappy the portions must be of the children and parents who are through necessity educated in a place where they must remain almost totally uninstructed in our most Holy and Divine Law, our Rites and Ceremonies ... When we further reflect on how much it is our Duty to assist the

Distressed ... we can entertain no doubt of your Zeal to promote this good work.¹²

The Newport Jews viewed the synagogue as an institution where religious instruction should take place and as a center for the performance of rites and ceremonies. In addition to serving as a place of worship and education, the synagogue was a source of charity. Indeed, nearly all religious activity revolved around the synagogue, which has been described as Newport's vital organ of Jewish communal living.

Jewish religious activity in Newport, especially religious worship within the synagogue, had attracted the attention of Rev. Ezra Stiles, Minister of the Second Congregational Church (1755-78), who attended the synagogue frequently. Stiles collected a great amount of information regarding the Jewish community of Newport and became good friends with the Congregation's Rabbi, Isaac Carigal.

Stiles' interest in Newport's Jewish community was perhaps stimulated by the similarities which existed between Judaism and Christianity mainly through the Old Testament. The Minister must also have been aware of the effort of Puritan settlers to transpose their image of Palestine to the shores of New England. Like the Palestine of ancient times, the Puritans had derived their law from God's word as it is revealed in the Bible, including the Old Testament. In a sense, the Mosaic law was therefore understood, if not somewhat accepted by Christians of the Puritan community.

Evidence of the coexistence of Puritan and Jewish law was exhibited in 1675, in a lawsuit that had awarded two Jews 112 pounds in Boston. When the defendant had appealed the judgment of the authorities, one of the Jews, Rowland Gideon, had reminded the court that God had commanded "our Father [Moses] that the same Law should be for the stranger & sojourner as for the Issraellits," thus entitling him to the same justice as other inhabitants of the town.¹³

In response to their desire to follow God's Law closely, New England ministers, including Stiles, studied the Old Testament in the original Hebrew text "in order to illumine the finished resonances of the King James version of the Bible." The religious services of the Newport synagogue (conducted in Hebrew) provided the Newport Minister with the opportunity to supplement his knowledge of Hebrew and become better acquainted with his Jewish neighbors who were, in his estimation, "a chosen and favorite people of the most High, and the subjects of the peculiar Care of Heaven ..." Although the Newport Minister had felt that Judaism was a "false religion," he had indicated in his sermons that there should be a harmonious relationship between Christians and Jews and subsequently all would "partake ... with Israel in their future glorious state ..." ¹⁴

Stiles' view of activities which had occurred in the synagogue was obviously

influenced by his own religious background. As he attended services at the synagogue, the Minister had on one occasion tried to connect elements of Christian theology with Jewish religious practices:

Feb. 8, 1770 ... At the synagogue, where upon asking a little Jew Boy the use of the strings at the corner of the White Surplice worn by all Jews in their worship; —he said, they kissed their strings three times at the repetition of the great **שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל** * [sic.] or Hear o Israel the Lord our God is one Lord. Quere. Did this originally denote acknowledgement of Trinity in Unity?¹⁵

Since Jews traditionally kissed the strings or *tsitsith* three times, when discussing one God in prayer, Stiles had suspected that this was evidence of the Trinity in a Jewish religious practice. Acknowledgement of Trinity, of course, must have been furthest from the meaning of this prayer to Newport Jews, since it clearly proclaims the existence of only one God. Stiles' interpretation must be viewed as an attempt to confirm his own theological beliefs.

Members of Newport's Jewish Congregation would occasionally visit Stiles and discuss matters of religion, including the topic of the Messiah. Stiles was aware that a New York rabbi had predicted that the coming of the Messiah would occur in 1783. This prediction may have been the result of a numerical computation utilizing Hebrew known as Gematriya. A discussion with Abram Levi is recorded in the Minister's diary that mentions this prediction.

March 16, 1770 ... The Jew visited me again today. His name is Abraham Levi aet. 44 ... I showed him the computation made by a german Rabbi placing the Appearance of the Messiah 1783. He smiled and said they looked for him every day — I accidentally sneezed, and he prayed instantly. At Sunset he excused himself & rose up & went to my East Study Window & prayed by himself & then returned and sat down again to Discourse. He seems to be a man of Sobriety, spake of the Deity with uplifted hands and Eyes & with the most profound Reverence.¹⁶

From Stiles' description it appears that Levi was an observant Jew. The interruption of his conversation with the Minister for prayer would appear to be evidence of his devotion to prayer. Levi's confidence in the coming of the Messiah apparently reflected the attitude of other members of Newport's Jewish community. According to Stiles, Jews had opened their shutters and walked outside of their homes in prayer during thunderstorms anticipating the arrival of the Messiah.

Like Levi's interruption of his conversation with Stiles for prayer, the religious practices of Newport Jews on some occasions, particularly on Sabbath and festivals, were observed outside of the synagogue. Preparations on Friday evenings for the coming of the Sabbath and other holidays required Jews to leave work early or refrain from it altogether. As described by George Channing, author of *Early*

Shema, Hebrew. Deut. 6:4. A prayer which contains a basic tenet of the Jewish faith, i.e., the belief in one God.

Recollections of Newport:

My aged friend, 'an Israelite in whom there is no guile,' felt conscientiously bound to observe the "times and Seasons" peculiar to the Mosaic ritual. On Friday afternoons he left the counting room about 3 PM in winter and 5 in summer, in order to prepare for the due observance of the Sabbath on the morrow. Passover week, and the great day of Atonement, my friend would absent himself from business for two or three consecutive days

Channing mentions that his relationship with his Jewish co-worker was friendly. Non-Jews most likely respected such religious observances as long as one was "conscientious in making up to ... [one's] employers for ... [one's] absence on holy days."¹⁷ Channing's description of his Jewish friend and Stiles' description of Levi suggest that among the Jewish community of Newport there were many congregants who were attentive to the requirements of Jewish ritual practices.

Among the important rituals is the preparation of food in accordance with *kashrut*, kosher dietary restrictions. The Jews of Newport produced kosher food for their own use within the community and also for export to other Jews. Commercial records of Lopez, Rivera, and other Jewish merchants indicate that shipments of "Jew Beef" were sent to Barbados, while "Casher Fatt" and "Casher Tongues" were sent to Surinam. Since meat requires special preparation in order to be accepted as a kosher product, Jews who wished to observe kashrut required written certification that an appropriate authority had supervised the process. The following is an example of a Certificate of Kashrut translated from Portuguese:

I undersigned certify that 40 kegs of beef and two of geese pickled, that are shipped by Mr. David Lopez on the board of the brigantine called Hannah, Capt. Willm. Howland, from this port for Surinam, marked over the covers with the mark stamped Kosher* M.B. and inside four pieces of tape with the mark Kosher* on each cover, are Casser and that any Jew may without the least scruple eat of them; as they are prepared according to our holy law, and that this is true I sign this with my hand in Newport Rhode Island on the 23d of Elul of the year 5547 in the Holy Congregation Jeshuat Israel.¹⁸

If the majority of such products had come from Newport, the community must have considered the observance of kashrut to be an integral element of religious observance. Lopez had apparently kept a large supply of kosher food in his shop for his family and relatives.¹⁹ According to Jacob Marcus, author of *The Colonial American Jew*, kosher products were also purchased by gentiles in the West Indies, which was a major place of export for Newport merchants.²⁰ Since kosher foods were prepared under supervision they were often considered to be "superior in freshness and cleanliness to non-kosher foods."

The Jews of Newport continued to observe various religious activities in an unrestricted manner until 1776, when the British occupation of the town during the

Revolution caused the dispersion of this Jewish community. Many Jews had supported the Revolutionary cause, including Aaron Lopez, Isaac Lopez, and Moses Levy, who had opposed taxes of the imperial administration.²¹ Isaac Lopez successfully ran ships during the Revolution that evaded the blockade enforced by the British Navy.²² Aaron Lopez fled to Leicester, Massachusetts, to avoid the British, and Newport's Jewish community was not active again until later in the next century.



NOTES

- ¹ Jacob Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, Vol. 2, p. 874.
- ² Jacob Marcus, *American Jewry—18th Century Documents*, p. 93.
- ³ This reflects the increasing trend of Jewish immigration in 18th century colonial America. The two or three hundred Jews in the 17th century had become two to three thousand in the 1700s.
- ⁴ Jacob Marcus, *American Jewry—18th Century Documents*, p. 189.
- ⁵ Franklin Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, Vol 1, p. 6.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ George Mason, *Reminiscences of Newport*, p. 55.
- ⁸ John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, Vol. III, p. 160. See also Kohler, *The Jews in Newport*, p. 66.
- ⁹ Kohler, *The Jews in Newport*, p. 64, quoting Daly's *Settlement of the Jews in North America*. Roger Williams, the founder of the Colony of Rhode Island, had also proclaimed that principles of religious liberty included a harmonious relationship with Jews. *Ibid.* at p. 65.
- ¹⁰ Stiles indicates in his diary that Jews had offered money in synagogue by pleading "Chai Livre i.e. §16 or two dollars." The minister estimated that Mr. Aaron Lopez offered ten or a dozen of these Chai." (Vol. 1, p. 226)
- ¹¹ New York Jews also had maintained a Charity Fund. The contribution to the Newport Congregation was the result of a special collection taken in synagogue (see PAJHS 27:179).
- ¹² *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. 27, p. 178.
- ¹³ *Records of the Suffolk County Court*, 1671-1680. *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, Vol. 2, p. 624.
- ¹⁴ Franklin Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, Vol. 1, p. 391.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ¹⁷ George Channing, *Early Recollections of Newport*, p. 199.
- ¹⁸ *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. 27, pp. 457-58.
- ¹⁹ *Commerce of Rhode Island*, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. 9, pp. 211, 338.
- ²⁰ John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the colony of Rhode Island*, Vol. 6, pp. 379-80. By 1763, 150 of the 184 Newport vessels involved in foreign trade had cleared for West Indian ports.
- ²¹ Jacob R. Marcus, *American Jewry—18th Century Documents*, pp. 211, 212. Both Lopez and Levy were well-known Jewish merchants of Newport.

²² Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*, p. 64. By contrast, the Hart family were known to be Tories. On July 1, 1780 the General Assembly of Rhode Island confiscated property from three members of the Hart family due to their support for the British.

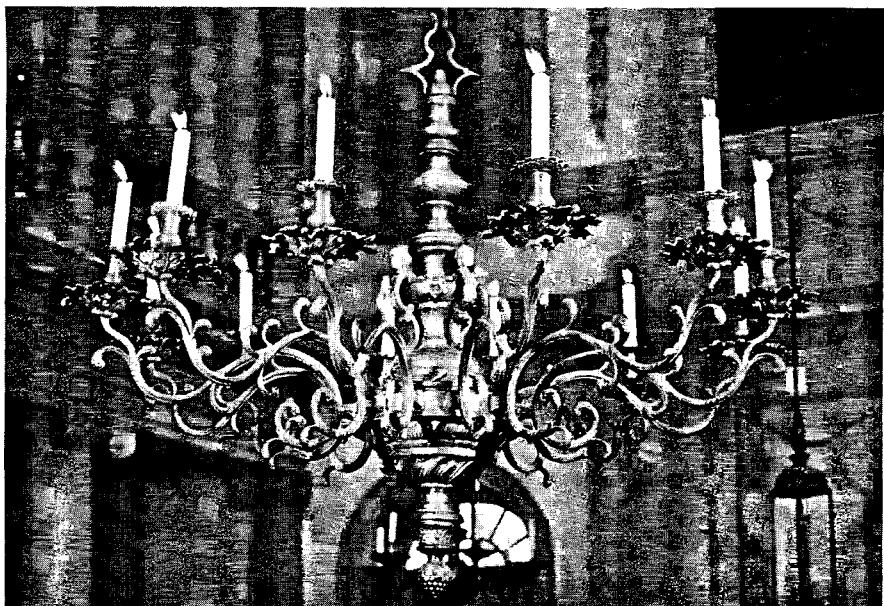
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Twelve-branch chandelier, Touro Synagogue, Newport.



Detail of four heads in twelve-branch chandelier, Touro Synagogue.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS
THE TWELVE-BRANCH CHANDELIER IN
TOURO SYNAGOGUE
BY BERNARD KUSINITZ

As historian of Touro Synagogue I began in 1989 the quest for information that would enable us to identify the twelve-branch chandelier in the Synagogue. The first step was to search its 104 parts for an identifying mark or initials of the artisan who created it. We had stripped the chandelier down to its component parts in the process of thoroughly cleaning and polishing it, under the supervision of Howard Newman, one of America's premier young sculptors.

After failing to find any such identification, we turned to the Newport Historical Society, the Redwood Library, and the Newport Art Museum, three of Newport's outstanding community resources on historic and cultural matters. While they could not help us, we were able to obtain names of several possible sources. Fortunately, we received the information we needed through the assistance of James Parker, Curator of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Milo Naeve, Field-McCormick Curator of American Arts, The Art Institute of Chicago. The following is a summary of our findings:

The chandelier is early 18th century. The decoration of the shaft is rather classical, a holdover from the Louis XIV period, but the arms and drip pans are sufficiently rococo in style to justify a date of about 1730, a date consistent with the origin of Touro Synagogue. It is too sophisticated to be colonial American.

The chandelier is French in inspiration if not in fact. Although all of Europe followed the French lead, the chandelier could have been produced elsewhere in northern Europe, The Netherlands, for example. Without further information, we cannot be more specific at this time. It was not new when donated by Jacob Polock, one of Newport's Jewish merchants, in 1769. It was expensive when bought and was probably bought from a site other than its place of production.

The four heads on the brackets attached to the stem gave rise to the tradition that they were monks' heads and that the chandelier therefore came from a Spanish monastery. However, they are not monks' heads and therefore the fixture did not necessarily come from a Spanish monastery. The heads are definitely of a Turkish or Near Eastern motif and, although no other example of this model is known, Turkish motifs were not unusual at the time and belonged to a decorative sub-style known as *Turquerie* which drew upon Turkish themes. The heads were probably cast from the same model but minor differences arose from the subsequent chasing of the bronze by the metal workers. Nevertheless, a close examination of the rear of the heads reveals a smartly coiffured style; the front shows a neatly trimmed

Bernard Kusinitz, Historian and Archivist of Touro Synagogue, is First Vice President of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Vol. 11, No. 1, November, 1991

mustache; and the side view shows earrings. Taken together, these features back up the opinion that they are not monks' heads.

* * *

Editor's Note: When Joseph V. Puleo, printer of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, who is also a member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and an antiquarian, saw the picture of the heads, he immediately said, "Those are Jews' hats." He had read about such hats in a copy he owns of a book published in 1694, *The Great Historical, Geographical and Poetical Dictionary; Being a Curious Miscellany of Sacred and Prophane History*, by Lewis Morerit, D.D. his Sixth Edition Corrected and Enlarged by Monsieur Le Clerk; in Two Volumes in Folio. London: Printed for Henry Rhodes, near Bride-Lane in Fleetstreet; Luke Meredith at the *Star* in St. Paul's Church-Yard; John Harris, at the *Harrow* in the Poultry; and Thomas Newborough, at the Golden-Ball in st. Paul's Church-Yard, Unpaginated.

In an article on *Judea* the book states:

In *Turky* there are two Sorts of *Jews*, viz. Such as are born in the Country, and Strangers, so called because their Ancestors came from *Spain* or *Portugal*. The former of these wear *Turbans* like the *Christians*, of diverse Colours; neither can they be distinguished from them, but by their Shooes, which are black, or Violet-colour; whereas those of the *Christians* are red, or yellow. The *Stranger-Jews* wear on their heads a certain Cap, like a *Spanish* hat, but without a Brim

...

Since the research by Kusinitz found a possible Turkish theme for the heads, it is possible that the chandelier heads not only do not represent monks, as has been widely believed, but may actually represent Jews.

★

In *Turky* there are two Sorts of *Jews*, viz. Such as are born in the Country, and Strangers, so called because their Ancestors came from *Spain* or *Portugal*. The former of these wear *Turbans* like the *Christians*, of divers Colours; neither can they be distinguished from them, but by their Shooes, which are black, or Violet-colour; whereas those of the *Christians* are red, or yellow. The *Stranger-Jews* wear on their Heads a certain Cap, like a *Spanish* Hat, but without a Brim; and they differ from the other in some Religious Customs and Ceremonies, and have their distinct Sepulchres. Most of these are found in great Numbers in most of the Cities of the *Turkish Empire*, especially those that are Places of great Trade; as, at *Smyrna*, *Aleppo*, *Grand Caire*, *Theffalonica*, &c.

Excerpt from article on *Jews*, *The Great Historical, Geographical and Political Dictionary*, London, 1694.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS
A MEMORY OF MY MOTHER WRITING A SPEECH
BY RUTH WOOLF ADELSON

I remember my mother, Betty (Mrs. Isaac) Woolf,* sitting at the kitchen table one day in 1939, writing a speech to be given at a meeting of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Jewish Home for the Aged on December 6.

My mother was to be Installing Officer for the day. She had composed an appropriate speech for the occasion, but she was unsure of her spelling and asked me to correct it. As I wrote, she said to me in Yiddish, "Watch your handwriting," for she considered my writing difficult to decipher.

A copy of the talk has recently been donated to the Archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. Here are my mother's words at the Jewish Home for the Aged:

Friends, Sisters, it feels like old home week to me as if I have been away for a long journey and upon my return find myself once again among my old and new colleagues and friends.

History repeats itself. It is a coincidence that on Dec. 8th, 1911, I was appointed by the L.U.A.A. [Ladies Union Aid Association] to act as chairman for a special meeting which was called for [the] purpose of raising funds for a building for our old and homeless people in our city.

The meeting was held in Dimond's Hall on Randall Sq. and was attended by over 300 women and men. At that meeting these scraps of papers contained my speech, I'll read to you in part — [missing].

The response was excellent. About 3000 [dollars] was raised then and there for the Bldg. located [at] 191 Orms [Street] where our old people were housed over 20 years.

Today Dec. 6th, 1939, 28 years later, I find myself in the beautiful auditorium of the Home for Aged installing the officers of the auxiliary of the L. [Ladies] association of the Home. Many incidents have transpired during joys and sorrows were experienced by good many of us. — but still the world goes on —. Tremendous strides have been made in the past 28 years in science, intellect and mode of living. But *alas* we must admit that our family ties have grown weaker, more indifferent and less concerned about those you call nearest and dearest.

Years ago when children applied for admission to the Home for their parents they were more or less apologetic about it. Today, they take it as a matter of fact. Well, they are no longer tolerable. One place for them and that is the Home. It is true that in many cases is paid full maintenance, but the majority are maintained as answers to the prayers forsake me not in my old age.

*See front cover and p. 51.

Therefore friends we have reasons to regard a day like today a sacred festival for more reasons than one primarily for the reason that we [are] mostly privileged to see that our brave beginning has been developed into so magnificent institution where we are privileged housing and comforting our aged, helpless fathers and mothers.

You women are the pillars of this association. You have given of your valuable time and effort so unselfishly. Your loyalty and capability is esteemed and appreciated by all. Therefore, have these offices been re-entrusted to you once again out of the goodness of your hearts you have accepted them.

God bless you and keep [you].



BOOK REVIEW

A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership, The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El) Providence, Rhode Island. Seebert J. Goldowsky, M. D. The Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, Providence. R. I. 1989. 530 pages, \$19.95.

BY BERNARD WAX

My contacts with Seebert Goldowsky go back over thirty years to 1959 when I first read his article on the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island. At that time I was working at the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield, Illinois. Little did I know that some seven years later I would be living in the garden of "Yidden," Brookline, Massachusetts, and serving as Director of the American Jewish Historical Society. I soon met Seebert and his wife, Bonnie, and I trust our friendship with them flourished. Therefore, these comments may be prejudiced, laden with admiration and affection for all that he has done and continues to do for my profession, the field of American Jewish history — and especially for that of American synagogue history.

Writing a synagogue history is more dangerous and hazardous than serving as a rabbi, executive director, or Hebrew school principal of a congregation of any form or variety; it is a "no-win" situation. The opportunities to make errors, slight congregants, forget contributions of all varieties, and misspell names are endless, and I am just listing a few of the hazards! In addition, everyone is an "expert" in the Jewish community; the phrase used by Carl Becker, the famous American History professor, "every man his own historian," goes double for the Jewish community. (In fact, this now sexist quotation is true for females as well, "every woman her own historian.") Nevertheless, Dr. Goldowsky has done his work well and has managed to survive, giving me and his readers an opportunity to praise him.

Why is it so important to write a history, a good history of a congregation? Of what value is it? What can we actually learn from the work? What is Dr. Goldowsky's legacy and gift to the community and to history?

Dr. Goldowsky has given a complete, holistic view of the congregation, almost to the present day, in fact, through his informative and insightful epilogue. The epilogue encompasses all varieties of the experiences at Temple Beth-El expressed in the preceding 500 pages and, as before, attends to matters outside the congregation, from the American Relief Committee to the Yom Kippur War, which deeply affected it. The volume adroitly and sympathetically covers both the interior and exterior of Temple Beth-El, the building and its architecture. Most importantly, though, it tells the stories of the rabbis, cantors, teachers, and lay leadership. We

Bernard Wax is the Director of Special Projects, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass. He presented a version of this review at Friday evening services at Temple Beth-El on February 1, 1991.

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Vol. 11, No. 1, November, 1991

learn of the demography — the age and nature of the membership — and the concern over the recent overall major decline of over twenty percent in Jewish population during the past twenty-five years. Nor does he fail to deal with economics and administration, both of which translate into services for people, including adult education programs, a library, musical events, and, I am happy to say, even archives and exhibit space, two tools which not only serve to preserve and tell a story but also encourage the continuity and dedication of a house of worship and its members.

I feel strongly about my view that a history of a congregation is one about people or should be about people. And this history certainly fulfills that mission and goal. To read the text is to be enlightened about the human condition. Neither strife, nor failings, nor foibles are ignored or washed away; they are met head-on. This is an honest history. It is a humorous one as well. I commend to the reader the footnotes as well as the text. One which comes to mind is that on pages 500 and 501, footnote 15:

Melvin L. Zurier, chairman of the Religious Practices Committee at the time, writes in a personal communication:

Prior to 1979 the committee's only meeting and report was about 1965, when it presented a Code of Funeral Practices, which the board approved and which is still in effect. One of the recommendations was the omission of flowers at temple funerals.

When a woman board member expressed her displeasure over the board's actions, her husband (also a board member) loyally proclaimed, "I don't care what the board says. I'll see to it that there are flowers at your funeral."

Several years ago, in a review essay appearing in *American Jewish History* entitled "From Beth Tefilah to Beth Midrash: Learning from Synagogue Histories," the reviewer noted that good, well-written, meaningful histories should provide an invaluable key to the character and duality of American Jewry and to the distinctiveness and tenacity of its communities. Such histories, he said, testify to communities and leaders whose dedication and achievements are the very fabric of American Jewish life.

This history succeeds in showing the unique achievements of Beth-El, including its far-reaching ideas for programming. The text provides an illuminating view of the congregation from within and without its membership. The photographs demonstrate the wide variety of activities and help preserve the visual record of important events. And even the data relating to the design and architecture of its edifice and sanctuary shed light upon the nature and purposes of the congregants. Never can I recall an author of a synagogue history who was so aware of the need for citing demographic changes and their effects upon the community. Finally, the care and attention given to the individuals mentioned — the rabbis, cantors, school

principals, youth group heads, even students — is remarkable. For once, as well, attention is paid to the wives of the rabbis, a truly special phenomenon! This is a complete congregational history.

Dr. Goldowsky's volume does these things and more — he succeeds in stressing the importance of continuity, leadership, and sense of community, all of which have made Temple Beth-El survive. He, too, succeeds in making it survive for all time through the printed word. He thereby provides a permanent record, not only of the congregation but also of the Jewish community of Providence, since the community's experiences have been inextricably bound up with Temple Beth-El, from the earliest days to the present.



Mr. and Mrs. Leon (Mildred Eidelberg) Samuels. Clubs: Edgewood Casino Club, Edgewood Yacht Club, Narragansett Pier Country Club, The Friars (New York). Daughter, Clair Juliet Samuels.

Page 90. Mrs. Benno (Emma Hahn) Wolf. Club: Rhode Island Women's Club. Daughter, Alice R. Wolf. Clubs: Chaminade Club, Rhode Island Women's Club.

Page 140. Advertisement, Crown Fur Shop (M. Simons).

Page 174. Rhode Island Women's Club: Mrs. Austin T. Levy.

Pages 184-188. Rotary Club of Providence: Charles J. Ephraimson, Max Potter.

Pages 188-190. Town Criers of Rhode Island: Joseph Bander, Simon Berks, Max L. Grant, Edgar J. Lownes, Fred A. Mack, Joseph Samuels, Leon Samuels, D. Gus Schneider, Archibald Silverman.

Pages 191-194. Turks Head Club: Edgar J. Lownes, Harold A. Braman, Harry Cutler, C. Joseph Fox, Harry Loeb Jacobs, Maurice J. Karpeles, Austin T. Levy, Edward B. Lederer, Irving R. Lederer, Walter S. Lederer, Austin T. Levy, Joseph Samuels.

Page 202. Yale Association of Rhode Island: Leon H. Semonoff.

Page 206. Advertisement, Little Fur Shop (Max Potter).

6. *America: History and Life*, Annual Index with list of Periodicals, Vol. 27, No. 5, 1990, soft cover, 519 pages. Published by ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, California, and Oxford, England.

Page 511. *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* is listed.

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
THIRTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING
MAY 5, 1991

The Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was called to order at 2:45 p.m. on Sunday, May 5, 1991, at the Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island by the chairperson for the day, Toby Rossner. She welcomed everyone and introduced President Robert Kotlen.

Mr. Kotlen reported that he had accomplished his planned goal during his term of office, to ensure the conservation of the Association's archival collection.

A motion was passed to waive the reading of the minutes of the last annual meeting. The Treasurer's report was read by Dorothy Horowitz, Treasurer, and approved. A copy is on file with this report.

Eleanor Horvitz, Librarian-Archivist, stated in her very interesting annual report that the Association has received many valuable memorabilia. She requested that the membership donate any material they have on the Jews of Rhode Island.

Judith Cohen, Editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, reported that copies of Volume 10, Number 4, were to be mailed very soon. Anyone wishing bound copies of the complete volume may call the office for information.

The Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, Ruth Fixler, presented the slate of officers for the year 1991-1992, as follows: President, Stanley Abrams; First Vice President, Bernard Kusinitz; Second Vice President, Aaron Cohen; Secretary, Ruth C. Fixler; Associate Secretary, Milton Lewis; Treasurer, Rosalind Gorin; and Associate Treasurer, Dr. Alfred Jaffe. The other members of the Executive Committee are listed in the slate attached to this report. There being no counter-nominations, a motion was made and passed to have the Secretary cast one ballot in favor of the slate.

Stanley Abrams, newly installed President, commended the outgoing President, Robert Kotlen, for his outstanding work. He presented Mr. Kotlen with a gift and thanked him for all he had accomplished during his term. Mr. Abrams outlined his major goals for his presidency, which included attracting younger members to the Association and computerizing the Association records. He asked for help from the Executive Committee and other committees. He stated that the Association door is always open for volunteers and thanked everyone for helping to preserve our past.

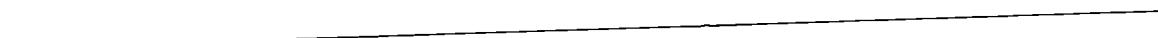
Mr. Abrams announced that the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association 40th anniversary year was to be dedicated to Seebert and Bonnie Goldowsky and Louis and Jeanne Sweet "for their unselfish efforts and long-term dedication to the Association." Certificates in their honor were presented.

Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting

Toby Rossner, Chairperson of the Annual Meeting, introduced Professor Robert G. Weisbord, Professor of History at the University of Rhode Island, who delivered the Twenty-first Annual David Charak Adelman lecture, on "Inquiries into Jewish History." It was a most interesting review of Jewish wanderings and the reasons that certain areas were or were not suitable for Jews seeking to escape persecution and harassment.

After a question and answer period, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. A collation and social hour followed.

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline Gereboff, Secretary



NECROLOGY — 1991

ADLER, WALTER, born in Providence, a son of the late Joseph and Rose (Pulver) Adler.

A founding partner of the law firm of Adler, Pollock & Sheehan, Mr. Adler practiced law in Providence from 1923 until he retired in 1972. He graduated from Brown University in 1918, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and was class orator and class secretary, a post he held until his death. He attended Harvard Business School and was a graduate of Harvard Law School.

Mr. Adler was an Army veteran of World War I and World War II. He was the first president and later honorary president of Rhode Island Camps, Inc., a nonsectarian camp for underprivileged children, and president of Big Brothers of Rhode Island. Active in many other organizations, he was a director of Narragansett Council, Boy Scouts of America; a director of Jewish Family Service, and president of the Legal Aid Society of Rhode Island. He served as president of Temple Beth-El and was an honorary life trustee.

Active in politics, Walter Adler was Assistant City Solicitor of the City of Providence from 1928 to 1931 and commissioner of the Bureau of Licenses from 1965 to 1967. He was the Republican candidate for attorney general in 1946.

Died in Providence on August 29, 1991, at the age of 94.

BROMSON, BESSIE, born in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, a daughter of the late Louis and Sarah (Rosenblatt) Darman.

She was a bookkeeper for the former S.H. Wintman Distributing Co., and a bookkeeper at the Jewish Home for the Aged for 13 years before her death.

Mrs. Bromson was a member of Temple Torat Yisrael and a past president of its Sisterhood. She held membership in the Providence Chapter of Hadassah, The Miriam Hospital Women's Association, and the Ladies Auxiliary of Jewish War Veterans Post No. 23.

Died in Providence on April 18, 1991, at the age of 85.

DARMAN, FRANCES, born in Worcester, Massachusetts, a daughter of the late Abraham and Marcia Cohan.

She was a member of and fund-raiser for the Woonsocket (R.I.) Hospital Aid Association, the Woonsocket Public Health Service, American Red Cross, Woonsocket Visiting Nurse Service, and Woonsocket Family and Child Service. She performed volunteer work for The Miriam Hospital and the

Jewish Home for the Aged. A member of the Congregation B'nai Israel, she was treasurer of Woonsocket Hadassah for 45 years.

Mrs. Darman was named B'nai B'rith Woman of the Year in Woonsocket in 1974.

Died in Woonsocket on April 3, 1991 at the age of 97.

FAIN, MIRIAM, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Jacob and Sarah Grossman.

She was a member of Temple Emanu-El, and a president of its Sisterhood. She was also a member of Hadassah, the Women's Association of the Jewish Home for the Aged, and The Miriam Hospital Women's Association. She was a Trustee of Insight.

During World War II Mrs. Fain was a volunteer driver for the American Red Cross. She was also a volunteer driver for the blind for many years.

Died in Providence on April 17, 1991, at the age of 87.

FISHBEIN, HYMAN, born in Russia, a son of the late Jacob and Deena (Wintman) Fishbein.

He was office manager of the former S.H. Wintman Co., Providence. Honorary Treasurer for Life of Temple Emanu-El, he was on its board of directors and vice president of the Temple's Men's Club. In 1983 he received a certificate of honor for his years of service to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He was a member of Touro Fraternal Association, the Redwood Lodge, AF&AM, and the Jewish Home for the Aged.

Mr. Fishbein was a founder of the Crestwood Country Club, Rehoboth, Mass., and served as president and vice president. He was a volunteer worker at The Miriam Hospital.

Died in Providence on May 8, 1991, at the age of 80.

FISHBEIN, JOSEPH G., born in Malden, Massachusetts, a son of the late Louis and Sarah (Miller) Fishbein.

He was a 1937 graduate of the former Rhode Island State College and a 1941 graduate of the Temple University School of Dentistry. He also graduated from the Northwestern University Graduate School of Dentistry in 1942.

Dr. Fishbein conducted his dental practice from 1941 to 1980. He was an Army veteran of World War II. A past president of Temple Emanu-El and a past president of its Men's Club, he was honored as the Men's Club "Man of Emanu-El." He also was chairman of the 50th anniversary celebration of Temple

Emanu-El and designed the Temple logo.

Active in many organizations, Dr. Fishbein was a member of the Board of Directors of the Bureau of Jewish Education, the Providence Hebrew Day School, Temple Beth Sholom, the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island. He was a member of the Providence Second Ward Democratic Committee for many years, the Aurora Civic Association, and the Ledgemont Country Club, Seekonk, Mass. Dr. Fishbein held membership in the Rhode Island Dental Society and the American Dental Association. He was a 32nd degree Mason and a member of Redwood Lodge 35, AF&AM.

Died in Providence on March 12, 1991, at the age of 78.

FISHBEIN, SYDNEY, born in Malden, Massachusetts, a son of the late Louis and Sarah (Miller) Fishbein.

Mr. Fishbein was a partner in the former Dorothy Kay Children's Shop for 24 years. He was a member of Temple Beth-El and an Army veteran of World War II. He attended Brown University and graduated in 1948 from Bryant College.

Died in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on July 17, 1991, at the age of 73.

JOSLIN, JUDGE ALFRED HAHN, born in Providence, son of the late Judge Philip J. and Dorothy (Aisenberg) Joslin.

Judge Joslin, widely respected as a legal scholar, was an associate justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court from 1963 to 1979. After his retirement from the bench, he served as counsel to the Providence law firm of Edwards & Angell until 1988.

In 1935 he graduated with high honors from Brown University, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He was a trustee of the Brown Corporation; was the first recipient of the Brown Sports Foundation Award, in 1984; won the Brown Bear Award in 1985, the highest award given by Brown for volunteer service; and was a Commencement chief marshal. He graduated from Harvard Law School with honors in 1938 and served as a lieutenant commander in the Navy in World War II.

Justice Joslin played a key role in the revitalization of Butler Hospital and served several terms as its president. In 1981 he became chairman of the Capital Center Commission. He was on the boards of directors of The Miriam Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital, Roger Williams Hospital, the Providence District Nursing Association, Children's Friend and Service, Jewish Family Service, and Lying-in Hospital (now Women & Infants Hospital).

He was a trustee of the Narragansett Council, Boy Scouts of America; the Greater Providence YMCA; United Fund of Rhode Island (now the United Way of Southeastern Rhode Island); and Temple Emanu-El. He was a member of the Hope Club, the University Club, and Temple Beth-El.

Among the honors he received were Big Brother of the Year in 1957, Jewish Man of the Year in 1963, election to the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame in 1982, and the outstanding service award of the Associated Alumni of Harvard University in 1987. On the 350th anniversary of Providence he was one of 350 people honored by the City of Providence.

Died in Providence on October 16, 1991, at the age of 77.

MARKS, MAX, born in New York, son of the late Louis and Rebecca Marks.

A graduate of New York University, Mr. Marks was a manager for several automobile companies in Rhode Island over a period of fifty years. He was an associate of Pawtucket-Central Falls Hadassah and a past president of the Rhode Island Used Car Association. He was a member of Roosevelt Lodge, AF&AM; Congregation Ohawe Sholam, and the Rhode Island Automobile Association.

Died in Providence, May 12, 1990, at the age of 79.

NATHAN, ERNEST, born in Augsburg, Germany, son of the late Rudolph and Lena (Bernheim) Nathan.

Mr. Nathan was the founder and former chief executive officer of Elmwood Sensors, Cranston. A graduate of the Institute of Textile Technology in Reutlingen, Germany, in 1926, he came to Rhode Island in 1929 to head the Warwick Chemical Company on a joint venture with Crompton Corporation and his family's chemical company, Chemisch Fabrik Pfersee, Augsburg, to make Impregnole, one of the first water repellents for fabric, which his family had developed in Germany. He was an American citizen before World War II and was able to sign affidavits for admission to the United States for at least 50 persons, including his entire family.

He sold the Warwick Company in 1946 to the Sun Chemical Corporation and served as its vice president from 1948 to 1951. From 1952 to 1954 he was executive vice president of the Palestine Economic Corporation and lived part-time in Israel, encouraging economic development there. He rejoined Crompton in 1954 and ran its Teflon Division in West Warwick, and in 1962 he bought Elmwood Sensors, which made bi-metallic disc thermostats. He developed the company internationally, with a second factory in Newcastle, England. He was sent on a series of trade missions to Scandinavian and Eastern European

countries by the U.S. Department of commerce in 1970 and 1971.

Mr. Nathan was a founding member of Larchmont Temple, Larchmont, New York, and a past president of Temple Beth-El, Providence. He was an honorary fellow and lifetime board member of Technion (Israel Institute of Technology) and a member of the social action committee of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. He served on the boards of the Jewish National Fund, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island. He was active with the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, the East Side YMCA, and the Brown University Medical School. He was a member of the first Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, the Chemists Club in New York, and the President's Council of Providence College.

Died November 2, 1991, at the age of 86.

PERCELAY, ABRAHAM, born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, a son of the late Max and Tille (Blake) Percelay.

Mr. Percelay was founder and operator for 40 years of the former Associated Textiles Co. plants. He was also founder and operator for 25 years of the former Associated Machinery Co., Pawtucket.

He was a member of Temple Emanu-El and a past board member. He was also a board member of The Miriam Hospital and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island. He was a supporter of the Providence Hebrew Day School and the Alperin-Schechter Day School, and was a member of the Ledgemont Country Club. He was a national patron of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and a member of Barney Merry Lodge, AF&AM, Pawtucket.

Died in Providence on October 9, 1991, at the age of 91.

PINKOS, J. WILLIAM, born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a son of the late Louis and Anna (Holzman) Pinkos.

Mr. Pinkos was affiliated with Elizabeth Webbing Mills in Pawtucket and associated companies for many years. He was a 1938 graduate of Harvard College. A member of the Harvard Club of Rhode Island, he was also a member of the University Club.

He served as an Army Air Force officer during World War II.

Mr. Pinkos was a former vice president and honorary life trustee of Temple Beth-El and was a trustee of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island. He was a member of the Miriam People at The Miriam Hospital and a volunteer for Meals on Wheels.

Died in Providence on May 31, 1991, at the age of 75.

Necrology

RESS, JOSEPH W., born in Providence, the son of Morris and Bessie (Flint) Ress.

Mr. Ress was especially active at Brown University, from which he graduated in 1926. He was a trustee of the University for 16 years and treasurer during the 1970s. He received an honorary degree from Brown and the Brown Bear Award, the highest alumni honor. He was chairman of the fund-raising campaign to establish a medical school at Brown.

Mr. Ress graduated from Harvard Law School in 1929 and practiced law for five years before going into business. He became president of the former E.A. Adams & Sons, Inc., jewelry manufacturers, in 1949 until he sold the business in 1981.

The United Way awarded him the Alexis De Tocqueville Award, the organization's highest honor. He was its campaign chairman in 1964 and chairman in 1965. He was one of the founders of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island and president from 1960 to 1964. He was a trustee of Temple Emanu-El, the Jewish Community Center, and the Jewish Home for the Aged.

Mr. Ress was a past president of The Miriam Hospital. He established the cardio-pulmonary laboratory and helped launch the first open-heart surgery program in Rhode Island. He also served as chairman of the Providence College President's Council, and on the state's Board of Governors for Higher Education.

He received many honors from organizations to which he gave devoted service. Among them were the national Herbert Lehman Israel Award in 1974 for outstanding service to Israel, the National Community Service Award of the New England Friends of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 1976, and the Annual Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1966.

Died in Providence on February 4, 1991, at the age of 86.

ROITMAN, ROSE, born in Pawtucket, she was the daughter of the late Israel and Celia (Seligson) Miller.

Mrs. Roitman was a magna cum laude graduate of Pembroke College in Brown University in 1931 and received a master's degree in bacteriology from Brown in 1932. She did research work for the State of New York, and during World War II was a volunteer Civil Defense instructor in emergency laboratory procedures at Brown University. She was the first laboratory volunteer at Rhode Island Hospital and was a volunteer worker at several other local hospitals. She was a member of Temple Beth-El.

Associated with the Roitman & Son, Inc., furniture store, she was a buyer of accessories and art objects during World War II.

Died in Providence on July 8, 1991, at the age of 81.

ROSENBERG, CHARLOTTE, born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a daughter of the late Joseph J. and Celia (Weinfield) Elowitz.

Mrs. Rosenberg was executive director of the Blackstone Valley United Jewish Appeal. She was a member of Temple Beth-El and its Sisterhood, Hadassah, the Women's Association of the Jewish Home for the Aged, and the National Council of Jewish Women. She worked as office manager for Dr. Ruth Triedman and Dr. Howard Triedman for 21 years before retiring in 1990.

Died in Providence on July 15, 1981, at the age of 67.

ROUSLIN, RICHARD B., born in Providence, a son of the late Dr. John J. Rouslin and Annette (Berger) Rouslin.

Dr. Rouslin, a dentist for 39 years, was a 1947 graduate of Rhode Island State College, now the University of Rhode Island, and a 1951 graduate of the Tufts University Dental School. He served in the Army Air Force in World War II.

He was a member of Temple Sinai and its Brotherhood, B'nai B'rith, and the Jewish War Veterans of Rhode Island. He served as vice president, secretary, and treasurer of the Kiwanis Club. He was a member of the Rhode Island Dental Society and served as vice president and treasurer.

Died in Providence on June 25, 1991, at the age of 66.

RUMPLER ALEXANDER, born in New York City, son of the late Max and Mollie (Kempler) Rumpler.

Mr. Rumpler moved to Rhode Island in 1924 and became vice president of the Farber Sheet Metal & Roofing company. He remembered working on the copper roofs of buildings in Providence, such as the old Custom House Building the Federal Building, the Old Post Office, and the State House Office Building. In 1925 he founded Builders Specialties Company in Pawtucket. He was the founder and owner of Industrial Specialties company and the former Machine Specialties company from 1946 to 1981. He was a Navy veteran of World War II.

Mr. Rumpler received a number of awards for his work with charitable and religious organizations. He received the National Community Service Award of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 1963, the 1971 National Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the Chairman's Award of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island in 1991 for more than 50 years of service.

Among the many offices he held in community organizations were campaign

chairman of the United Jewish Appeal in Pawtucket in 1939 and president of The Miriam Hospital, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, and the Jewish Children's Home of Rhode Island, now Camp Jori in Narragansett, R.I. He was vice president of Temple Emanu-El and the Henry Friedman Lodge of B'nai Brith Pawtucket. He served on the executive committee of the Pawtucket Boys' Club for many years was chairman of the United Way of Southeastern New England committee for managing the building and plant maintenance for all member agencies, and was a member of the Providence Building code Revision and the Rhode Island State Building Code Committees. Other of his memberships were the To Kalon Club in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, the Shriners, and the Ledgemont Country Club in Seekonk, Massachusetts. He was a 32nd-degree Mason.

Mr. Rumpler was noted for his service on the building committees which steered many community organizations through the development of their major building projects. Among these were the Meeting House at Temple Emanu-El, the Jewish Community Center, the 1966 addition to The Miriam Hospital, the Shalom Housing Apartments in Warwick, Rhode Island, the Jewish Chapel at Boy Scout Camp Yawgoog in Hopkinton, R.I., and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, for which he undertook the voluntary job of "Clerk-of-the-Works" at the age of 85.

Died in Providence, November 23, 1991, at the age of 94.

SHOLES, ANNA R., born in South Norwalk Connecticut, a daughter of the late Julius and Tillie Kohn.

Mrs. Sholes was a 1935 cum laude graduate of New York University. While teaching English and Latin in the Stamford public schools in the late 1930s, she pursued post-graduate studies at Columbia University.

In 1956-57 she was president of the Sisterhood of the former Temple Beth Israel.

She was a past Worthy Matron of the Hope Link Chapter of the Order of the Golden Chain. In 1966-67 she served as vice president of the Women's Association of the Jewish Home for the Aged and also served as a member of its Board for many years. Active in The Miriam Hospital Women's Association, Israel Bond Campaign, and Hadassah, she also served as president of the Roger Williams Chapter of B'nai B'rith. She was a member of Temple Torat Yisrael and its Sisterhood. She was a book reviewer and a speaker.

Died in Cranston, R.I., on March 28, 1991, at the age of 76.

SUGERMAN, NATHANIEL H., born in Providence, son of the late Samuel and Clara (Arends) Sugerman.

Mr. Sugerman was founder and president of the Providence Metallizing Company, Pawtucket, which he operated for 40 years. He was also founder and owner of the former Beatrix Jewelry company, Providence. He was a past president and co-founder of the Society of Vacuum Coaters and a member of the American Electroplating Society, the Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths Association, and Temple Beth-El.

He was an Army Air Force veteran of World War II. Mr. Sugerman held numerous patents in various fields of endeavor and was internationally recognized for his expertise in the metal finishing field.

Died in Boston, Mass., on January 23, 1991, at the age of 68.

SUNDEL, JACOB, born in Lithuania, a son of the late Oscar and Anna (Goldstein) Sundel.

He was a founder and owner of the key Container Corp., Pawtucket. He was a member of Temple Beth-El, Fall River, and the Jewish Home for the Aged in Fall River, Mass., and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island. Mr. Sundel was a member of the executive board of the United Jewish Appeal and the Alumni Association of Providence College. A past master of the Watuppa Masonic Lodge, he was also a member of the Ledgemont Country Club.

Died in Providence on June 18, 1991, at the age of 86.

SWEET, LOUIS I., born in Providence, a son of the late Jacob and Bella (Fromm) Sweet.

Mr. Sweet was general manager at I. Medoff Co., Woonsocket, for more than 50 years, retiring in 1973. He had owned a dry goods store in Apponaug, R.I., in 1929 before joining the Medoff organization's retail division and opening a chain of curtain and fabric stores named Gloraines.

He was a member of Congregation Sons of Jacob, Temple Emanu-El, and Temple Beth-El. He served as president and chairman of the Touro Fraternal Association and was president of the Spring class of 1950 of Roosevelt Lodge 42, AF&AM, and a 32nd degree Mason in the Palestine Temple and Scottish Rite.

He was a member of the United Commercial Travelers and the Henry Friedman Lodge of B'nai B'rith, and was a supporter of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island and the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island. Mr. Sweet also served as budget director and honorary member of the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. He was presi-

Necrology

dent of the Al Goldberg Memorial Foundation for Cantorial Training and Tuition Assistance and was a member of the Service Corps of Retired Executives of the Small Business Administration.

Died in Providence on September 5, 1991, at the age of 84.

WEBBER, SARAH O., born in Pawtucket, daughter of the late Max and Deborah (Shusansky) Olch.

Mrs. Webber was the first Jewish probation officer for the Rhode Island State Public Welfare Commission. She also worked as a bacteriologist at the Rhode Island State Laboratories. She attended the Rhode Island School of Design.

Mrs. Webber was prominent in musical and artistic organizations. A noted singer, Mrs. Webber was a founder, soloist, and president of the Kadimah Choral Society. She sang on local radio stations, taught voice, and was a soloist with the Providence Federal Orchestra. She was also an accomplished artist, whose work was often exhibited, one example being at the gallery of the Slater Mill Historic Site.

A president of the Chopin Club, Mrs. Webber was one of the founders and a president of the Providence Community Concerts Association. She also helped found the Rhode Island Fine Arts Council and was on its board of directors. She served on the Rhode Island Committee for the National Cultural Center, Washington, D.C., which became the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

During World War II Mrs. Webber served as an occupational therapist at the Newport Naval Hospital for the American Red Cross and was a member of the Volunteer Corps at Rhode Island Hospital. At the Butler Health Center Mrs. Webber was chairman of the Occupational Therapy volunteers for many years.

Mrs. Webber was a member of Temple Beth-El and a president of its Sisterhood. She was a member and past president of the Eden Garden Club and a member and docent of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art. She belonged to the Jewish Home for the Aged Women's Association and the National Council of Jewish Women and was a life member of The Miriam Hospital Women's Association. She was the widow of the late Dr. Joseph Webber.

Died in East Providence November 20, 1991, at the age of 90.

ZURIER, LILLIAN MATZNER, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Henry and Rosa Matzner.

She had lived in Passaic, New Jersey, since 1927.

Died in Passaic, New Jersey, on December 22, 1990, at the age of 85.

ERRATA AND ADDENDA

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 4

"Ida Katherine Colitz: A Providence Clubwoman's Diary"

Page 434, last line. Mrs. Summerfield [Lillie] was Mrs. Lester Summerfield.

"Harry S. Beck and Other Jewish Printers"

Page 497, last line, and page 498, first line, should read "and used the Cooper Press, owned by Myer Cooper. Pauline Chorney was secretary of the business."

Page 500, last line, and page 501, first line, should read "The story of Elizabeth [Temkin] Beck, who was one of a family of nine children, is one which deserves to be told on its own some day."

Page 520, lines 7-8, should read "Dr. Sharp graduated from Harvard College in 1921 and received a medical degree from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1925."

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Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

Chartered September 11, 1951



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Photo of Prof. Kapstein courtesy of John Forasté, Brown University