



**RHODE ISLAND
JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES**

VOLUME 2 DECEMBER, 1957 NUMBER 3

FRONT COVER

MAX B. GOMBERG, M.D., 1875-1934

Poet and editor of *The Organ*. Founder and first
president of the JACOBI MEDICAL CLUB.

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3

DECEMBER, 1957



RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Headquarters at The Rhode Island Historical Society

52 POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE 6, RHODE ISLAND

Copyrighted January, 1958 by the
RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
52 POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

TABLE OF CONTENTS

JEW IN MEDICINE IN RHODE ISLAND	151
by Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D.	
A GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY	193
A JEWISH WEDDING	208
NOTES	210
NECROLOGY	211
ERRATA	212

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

DAVID C. ADELMAN	President
BERYL SEGAL	Vice President
JEROME B. SPUNT	Secretary
DAVID SWARTZ	Treasurer
FRED ABRAMS	PROFESSOR ISRAEL J. KAPSTEIN
ALTER BOYMAN	ARTHUR J. LEVY, Esq.
MRS. CHARLES POTTER	SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.
Rabbi WILLIAM G. BRAUDE, Ph.D., D.D.	

DAVID C. ADELMAN, *Editor*

MRS. JACOB M. MONDSHEIN, *Assistant Secretary*

Printed in the U.S.A.

by the ROGER WILLIAMS PRESS, Providence, Rhode Island

JEWES IN MEDICINE IN RHODE ISLAND

by SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

Read in part at the Annual Meeting of the Association, April 25, 1957

MR. PRESIDENT, MEMBERS and GUESTS:

I should like to take this opportunity to pay my personal respects to Mr. Adelman. I think it's only fair to acknowledge that without his firm persuasion this investigation would most probably not have been undertaken. I should like further to express my appreciation for his assistance in making available a considerable amount of source material and in providing technical advice, without which my problems would undoubtedly have been far more burdensome.

In presenting the subject tonight it will be necessary, because of the limitations of time, to omit much of the background and biographical material which has been prepared.

* * *

ALTHOUGH no Jew is known to have practiced medicine in Rhode Island before 1875, Jewish physicians had appeared in the Western Hemisphere in very early times. A Jewish physician named Juan Alvarez, a Marrano, was burned at the stake in Lima, Peru in 1580. Another, Alvaro Nunez, suffered a similar fate at La Plata in 1582. One Francisco Maldonado de Silva, also a Marrano physician of Lima, Peru, denounced by a member of his own family for professing Judaism, was imprisoned for thirteen years and was finally burned at the stake on January 23, 1639.

The first in present day America of whom I have found mention was Jacob Lumbrozo. He was born in Lisbon of Portuguese-Jewish parentage. After a sojourn in Holland, he emigrated to Maryland in 1656. He began at once the practice of medicine, being not only one of the first Jews to settle in that locality, but also the first physician to practice there. In 1658 he had a brush with the law over a charge of blasphemy, but through a stroke of good fortune he was released in a general amnesty. He was allowed in time to engage in planting and in commerce, and gained some prominence in these pursuits. He was known to have done business with London and to have been commissioned as an Indian trader. He disappeared from the scene sometime subsequent to 1665.

As time went on Jewish physicians located in the various colonies in increasing numbers. A Dr. Nunez (Samuel Nunez Ribiero) who had been court physician at Lisbon began practice in Savannah, Georgia in 1773. About this time a Dr. Siccary, a Portuguese Jew, appeared in Virginia. He is credited by Thacher¹ with having introduced the tomato in the colonies. Dr. Isaac Woolin arrived in New York in 1740 and advertised that he had served in "his Imperial Majesties' Army as chirurgeon four years."² There were Jewish doctors in New York from this time forward.

In the year 1747 a Dr. Isaac Cohen announced his arrival in Lancaster in Pennsylvania as follows: "Dr. Isaac Cohen from Hamburg in Germany, who studied seven years in the City of Copenhagen, informs the public that he has lately arrived in Lancaster, where he intends to practice physic and the art of healing, at the house of John Hatz, inn-keeper . . . N.B. Poor persons cured gratis if they can show a certificate from a clergyman that they are really poor. He expects letters addressed to him to be postpaid and those who live at a distance and desire his aid will please send a horse for him."³

A Dr. Nathan Levy practiced in Charleston, South Carolina as early as 1772. An interesting character of this period was Dr. Isaac Levy of Cahokia on the Mississippi. He had lived so long among the French that he had become one of them and took a French wife. In addition to the practice of medicine he was a merchant, Indian trader, banker, and a purveyor to the Virginia troops in the Illinois country. He was known to have been active during the period 1779-1786. Col. Solomon Bush of Continental Army fame, a native of Philadelphia, is known to have practiced medicine in London for some years after the war, but there is no record of his having done so in Philadelphia. Dr. David de Isaac Cohen Nassy was the first Jewish physician to practice in Philadelphia arriving in 1792. A trained and respected man of science, he was elected to the American Philosophical Society shortly after his arrival. He took a very active part in the catastrophic yellow fever epidemic of 1793. His *Medical Observations on the Yellow Fever* (Philadelphia 1793) was the first Jewish medical publication in America. Ahead of his time, he was opposed to the harsh treatment of that disease by bleeding and purging with calomel and jalap as recommended by Dr. Benjamin Rush. In 1825 two Jewish physicians, Isaac Hays and Manuel Phillips, were known to be practicing in Philadelphia.

It is of interest that a number of these early practitioners were educated in this country. There were two methods of obtaining a medical

education, through apprenticeship, or by formal education. It was not uncommon to combine the two methods. A letter quoted by Marcus⁴ in "Early American Jewry" throws a little oblique illumination on the subject. Aaron Hart of Three Rivers in Canada made inquiries of Eleazar Levy in New York regarding the education of his son for a career in medicine. The latter wrote (on June 4, 1794): "I am favor'd with yours of 29th April regarding your son Benj. If you intend him for a doctor, he should have the Latin language in some degree of perfection. Therefore not a day should be lost to put him to a Latin school and that can be done under your own eye at Montreal or Quebec Seminary, tho' I believe his cousin, Barnard Judah, is to be a doctor without Latin. He is with Doctor Bard [a prominent New York physician and first professor of the theory and practice of physic at Columbia and later at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and also family physician for George Washington] where he is fully employ'd in carry'g out medecines, and he has an uncle who, if you will believe what some of his good family say, he was eminent in his proffession in England. Inclosed is one of his advertisem'ts. All over this continent a practitioner, of what is called a D'r, is included an apothecary, a surgeon, and physician. This can be learn'd in N. York, Philadelphia, etc., and can be learned equally as well in Quebec or Montreal where there are equal as good practitioners as here. You will be at less expense, and he be under the superintendence of his parents and family, and that he stands much in need of" Although Benjamin did not pursue the study of medicine, Aaron Hart's wish for a doctor in the family was fulfilled when his daughter Catherine married Cousin Barnard (Bernard Samuel Judah) in 1897. I have been unable to find any reference to the later professional career of Dr. Judah, although he resided in New York as late as 1827. In that year he traveled to Indiana to visit his son Samuel, a prominent attorney in that state.⁵

The quality of the education of some of the earlier Jewish physicians is rather surprising. Excluding those who claimed to have acquired training in the Continental universities, the following are of interest. Dr. Isaac Abrahams, a noted New York physician of the latter part of the 18th century, graduated from Columbia with an A.B. in 1774. Although the nature of his medical training could not be ascertained, it is known that he was the first Jewish graduate of Columbia and certainly one of the earliest of any American college.⁶

Dr. Moses Sheftall of Savannah, Georgia, son of the Revolutionary patriot Mordicai Sheftall, was born in that city in 1769. A student of

the eminent Dr. Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia during the academic years 1790-91 and 1791-92, he was the first Jew to receive a formal medical education in America. Although Dr. Rush was at that time Professor of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, there is no record of Sheftall's ever having matriculated there. I have, in fact, been unable to verify that he possessed the degree of Doctor of Medicine. He served as a member of the Georgia legislature and was an incorporator of the Georgia Medical Society in 1804.

Dr. Jacob de la Motta, born in Savannah, Georgia in 1789, graduated from the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania prior to 1810. Son of a Revolutionary officer, Capt. Emanuel de la Motta, he served as an army surgeon in the War of 1812, became secretary of the South Carolina Medical Society in 1824, and a corresponding member of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Paris in 1836.

Dr. Jonas Horwitz, a medical graduate at the University of Pennsylvania in 1815, served as a surgeon to the Maryland Militia in the Mexican War. He gained a considerable reputation as a linguist and orientalist, and resided in Baltimore until his death in 1852.

Dr. Isaac Hays, born in 1796, received an A.B. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1816 and an M.D. in 1820. A distinguished member of his profession in Philadelphia, he was one of the earliest practitioners to specialize in diseases of the eye. He was a founder of the Franklin Institute and of the American Medical Association.

Dr. Daniel Peixotto of New York was born in Holland in 1800. After receiving his early education in Curaçao, he graduated with an A.B. from Columbia at the age of 16, and received his M.D. from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York in 1819. He received an A.M. from Columbia in 1823. He practiced in New York until his death in 1843. For several years he was professor of the theory and practice of medicine at Willoughby University on Lake Erie. This later became the Medical Department of Ohio State University. He served as president of the New York County Medical Society.

Dr. Joshua Cohen, born in Richmond, Virginia in 1801, moved to Baltimore in 1808. He received his M.D. from the University of Maryland in 1823 and later studied in the office of Dr. Nathaniel Potter. A pioneer specialist in diseases of the ear, he served as both treasurer and president of the Medical and Surgical Faculty of the University of Maryland. He also became professor of minerology at his Alma Mater. He died in 1870.

Dr. David de Leon, born in South Carolina in 1813, received his

medical education at the University of Pennsylvania where he graduated in 1836. Two years after graduation he entered military service and served as assistant surgeon in the Mexican War. On two occasions he led cavalry charges after the commanding officer had been wounded. He later organized the Medical Department of the Confederate forces and became the first Surgeon General of the Confederacy.

Dr. Phillip De Young, born in 1809 in New Hanover, Pennsylvania, received his M.D., with highest honors, from the University of Pennsylvania in 1838. He attained distinction in his profession before his death in 1890.

Dr. Joel Hart of New York, although not a graduate of an American school, is of interest. Born in Philadelphia in 1784, he studied medicine at the Royal College of Surgery in London where he graduated prior to 1806. He was an incorporator and trustee of the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons and a founder of the medical society of the County of New York. He was appointed by President Madison as United States consul to Leith, Scotland from 1807 to 1832. He died in 1842.

Manly Emanuel, a native of England, born in the year 1795, was a graduate of St. George's Hospital in London. He began practice in Philadelphia about 1816. He served as president of the Pennsylvania Medical Society for 16 years. He passed from the scene in 1880. The first graduate of a Canadian medical school was Philip Hart of Montreal, who received his M.D. at McGill in 1835.

The above roster, although certainly not complete, is a fairly representative list of the more distinguished of the American Jewish physicians of the period. These men, well-educated as they were, contributed freely to the medical literature, participated in commercial and public affairs and were a credit to the profession and to their people.

The participation of Jewish physicians as medical officers in the various wars is an interesting story. The following brief summary will suffice. Dr. Moses Bloomfield served as a surgeon with the Revolutionary armies. Drs. Jacob de la Motta, Abraham de Leon, Manuel Phillips and Moses Sheftall participated in the War of 1812. Isaac M. Lyons and Moses Albert Levy were surgeons-general in the forces of General Green and General Sam Houston respectively in the Texas-Mexican War. Drs. David de Leon, Jonas Horwitz, and Israel Moses served in the Mexican War. In the Civil War the participants are too numerous to mention. A check of the writings of Kagan and Simon Wolf indicates that there were some forty Jewish physicians serving as military surgeons

with the various forces. Dr. David de Leon, previously mentioned, became Surgeon-General of the Confederate Forces and his assistant was Dr. I. Baruch. Dr. Morris J. Asch served as Surgeon on the staff of Major General Phil Sheridan. Dr. Israel Moses, a veteran of the Mexican War, as previously noted, and later to be an attending surgeon at the new Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, was appointed surgeon of the United States Volunteers and was placed in charge of camp hospitals in the Army of the Potomac.

Worthy of mention, not only in his own right, but also because he was the father of Bernard Baruch, was Dr. Simon Baruch. Born in Prussia in 1840, he studied at the Medical College of South Carolina and at Virginia Medical College, from which he received his degree in 1862. He volunteered as an assistant surgeon with South Carolina troops, eventually attaining the rank of surgeon. Under Lee with the Army of Northern Virginia, he was captured twice, at South Mountain and at Gettysburg. In the latter phases of the conflict, he was in command of a general hospital at Thomasville, North Carolina. After the War he became prominent in South Carolina medicine, serving as president of the state medical society and as chairman of the state board of health. Later in the century he transferred his activities to New York City; here he became an eminent and influential member of the profession. Among his numerous contributions to the medical literature the most important was his pioneer work in the clinical diagnosis of appendicitis.

Dr. Marx E. Cohen, age 21, served as a captain of South Carolina infantry and was killed in action under heroic circumstances. The only New Englander recorded, however, was Dr. Nathan Meyer of Connecticut, who served as surgeon in the Fourth Connecticut Regiment.

One other subject, the matter of Jewish sponsored hospitals, will be touched upon before going on to our main theme. The first Jewish hospital in the United States was the Mount Sinai Hospital of New York. It was incorporated in 1852 as Jews' Hospital and received its first patient in 1855. The only Jew on the original attending staff was Israel Moses, mentioned above. An expert surgeon, well educated and well trained for his time, he was a graduate of Columbia College, A.B., 1841. He received his M.A. from the same school in 1844 and his M.D. from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1845. He served an internship at the New York Hospital. Dr. Mark Blumenthal was appointed "attending and resident Physician." The hospital adopted its more familiar name in 1856. In rapid succession Jewish hospitals ap-

peared in New Orleans (Touro Infirmary), Cincinnati, Baltimore, Chicago and Philadelphia.

The matters discussed above have been well documented in excellent monographs. Some of the publications, however, are not readily accessible. It has been deemed worthwhile to review this material because of its inherent interest, and also to place in better perspective the facts which we shall record.

* * *

The reasons for the late advent of Jewish professional men to New England is not a matter which we need explore. It would seem to be related in part, however, to the small size of the Jewish communities in the area. In the Golden Age of Newport the Jewish population of that town was probably less than two hundred.⁷ I have found no mention of any Jewish physician practicing in New England before the Civil War. Dr. Morris Kinstler,⁸ a graduate of the University of Warsaw, probably the first Jewish physician to practice in Boston, maintained an office there in 1867.

It was not until eight years after that date that Dr. Bernard Cohen, pioneer Jewish physician of Providence, opened his office. According to his death certificate he was born in Poland in 1833 of "German parentage." A medical graduate of the University of Warsaw in 1859, he was listed as practicing "regular," i.e. allopathic medicine. He resided in Providence from 1875 to 1891, practicing variously at 303, 347, and 402 North Main Street. In *The Providence Journal* for Thursday, January 15, 1891 appeared the following item: "*Sudden Death*. Dr. B. Cohen, a practising Jewish physician, died suddenly at his home, on Star Street, Tuesday night, from the effects of an apoplectic stroke. He was out attending a patient about 9 o'clock in the evening when stricken, and was taken to his home, where he expired shortly after." His death is recorded as of January 14, 1891. He was buried in the old Moshassuck Cemetery in Lonsdale, Rhode Island, where his grave can still be seen.

In the Providence directory for 1890, a Mrs. Rosalie Friedman of 363 North Main Street was listed as a physician. I suspect she was a midwife. In 1892 she was listed at 27 Mill Street as both physician and upholsterer, but no listing appeared in 1893. According to her death certificate, she was born in 1857, place not stated, and died on May 10, 1920 at 305 North Main Street as a result of accidental burning. No further information on Mrs. Friedman is at hand.

Dr. Saul Lewanda was a practitioner in Providence from 1891 to 1917. It would appear from information available in various medical directories, that he was not a graduate of a medical school. His listing in the *American Medical Association Directory for 1912* contained the following notation: "Licensed by virtue of a certain number of years of practice. In practice before passage of present law. Information received does not show graduation." Examination and licensing of physicians by the State of Rhode Island was initiated in 1895. According to naturalization records, he came to the United States from Russia in 1882 and received his citizenship in 1893. In this listing his name was spelled Lewando. His first office was at 398 North Main Street, following which he practiced at various locations in the North End of Providence.⁹ His name appeared initially as Dr. Samuel Lewanda, but was changed to Saul some time about 1894. For a brief period in 1905, he appears to have maintained an office in Warren. Between 1913 and 1915, during which period he was located at 111 State Street and later at 119 State Street, he was also listed as a druggist at 182 Charles Street. His wife, Feba Lewanda, is listed in 1906 and 1907 as a "Doctress." I am uninformed as to the exact significance of the term, although it is defined in *The Oxford Universal Dictionary* simply as a "female doctor." At any rate she is known to have functioned as a midwife. As recently as 1902 she had been conducting a millinery business at 256 Charles Street. She was among the early proponents of a Jewish hospital. Dr. Lewanda himself, having had no formal training in medicine, was one of a small group of practitioners from Europe who had acquired in various and sundry ways sufficient knowledge to get by. He removed to Pittsburgh in 1917, after which his activities are not a matter of record locally.

Dr. Leo Lauer, a graduate of the University of Vienna in 1893, had an office at 403 Pine Street in 1895. During the years 1901 through 1904 he is known to have practiced at 65½ John Street and 242 North Main Street. Before the close of 1905 he had removed to Austria. No further information is available, but he is presumed to have been Jewish.

A family physician still remembered by many was Dr. Aaron Markoff. Born in Russia in 1856, he received his medical education at the University of Tomsk in Siberia from which he graduated in 1880. He came to America some time in 1889 and by 1896 had established a practice at 786 Potters Avenue. He became a naturalized citizen in 1898. Some time prior to 1904 he had relocated at 618 North Main Street and practiced there until his retirement in 1921. He died at

Miami, Florida on April 8, 1921 at the age of sixty-five.

Dr. Max B. (for Ben Zev Issumar) Gomberg was a colorful personality of this period. He was born in Elisavetgrad, Russia on April 2, 1875. He came to America with his family at the age of eight years, and made his home in Providence. He attended the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine from which he graduated in 1895. Shortly after graduation he opened an office at 214 Benefit Street. Except for a brief sojourn at 32 Hammond Street, he practiced at various addresses on Benefit Street and elsewhere in the North End.¹⁰ Finally about 1925 he moved to 94 Homer Street where he resided until his death, although he continued to maintain a separate office. He was a member of the Rhode Island Medical Society, to which he was elected in 1896, the Providence Medical Association, the James Tyson Medical Society and a founder of the Jacobi Medical Club. At one time he was a visiting physician at the old Providence Dispensary and was on the original staff of Miriam Hospital, where he served as visiting physician in the Department of Medicine. At the age of thirty-seven he married Bertha Caroline Wayss, eighteen, the daughter of Christian and Bertha Wayss. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Myron E. Genter of Methodist-Episcopal Church. He adhered in later years, it is said, to Unitarian principles, but reverted to the Orthodox Jewish faith before he died. Dr. Gomberg contributed at least one paper to the medical literature. On September 3, 1903 he read before the Newport Meeting of the Rhode Island Medical Society a paper titled, "An Exclusive Milk Diet in the Treatment of Disease." This appeared subsequently in the *Providence Medical Journal*.¹¹ A skillful chess player and reputed to be of championship calibre at the local level, he was a member of the Providence Chess Club and of the Rhode Island Chess Players Association. Among his other activities he was an early and active participant in Boy Scout affairs and was also a pioneer and ardent Zionist. On January 15, 1897 an interesting letter with a strangely modern theme appeared in *The Organ*,¹² a biweekly publication of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David:

214 BENEFIT STREET
PROVIDENCE, R. I.
January 7, 1897

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ORGAN

DEAR SIR: — The Talmud says, "Man is born with his hands clenched; he dies with his hands wide open. Entering life he desires

to grasp everything; leaving the world, all that he possessed has passed away.”

It is strange indeed that men endowed with reason should pursue, with the utmost diligence, wealth, temporal power, or social preferences, and should endeavor to acquire that form of happiness which one turn of fortune's wheel might destroy forever. Stranger still it is that men should neglect the cultivation of mind and morals upon which their usefulness and happiness chiefly depend.

The principles of Judaism are not hereditary. They must be acquired to be appreciated. Our religion, moreover, is not a mirage of sparkling streams in the parched desert, beautiful to the eye, inviting to the thirsty soul, but inaccessible. It is rather a well, deep, pure and inexhaustible, out of which, whoever cares, may draw the element to quench his thirst for truth and inspiration.

So many diverse religious influences are nowadays brought to bear upon the minds and hearts of the growing generation, that, in self-defense and justification, the principles of Judaism should be inculcated during the ages of childhood and early youth, before ambition, competition and the stern realities of life incline the untrained mind exclusively toward temporal affairs and personal interests. True experience and observation teach that even the best of men acquire a very chaotic notion of moral and religious duties, where they are obliged to choose in the confusion and hurry of civil, political and religious strife. A sound foundation of religious faith is absolutely essential to the future welfare and success of every boy and girl.

These thoughts suggested themselves to my mind one Sunday as I sat in Rabbi Blaustein's class-room and observed the interest the teacher and scholar alike manifested in the history and laws of Israel.

I trust that the parents appreciate the privileges, which are accorded the children, of discussing the ennobling sentiments of the Bible and Talmud under the tuition of so eminent a scholar of Hebrew literature and talmudic law.

Yours faithfully,
M. B. GOMBERG, M.D.

Dr. Gomberg subsequently on November 12, 1897 became editor of that publication, and remained so until it was discontinued on July 8, 1898. It appears to have been a project of Rabbi David Blaustein, who left shortly thereafter to undertake new responsibilities in New York City. Dr. Gomberg was a man of learning and culture and his gentle and graceful hand can be discerned in its pages. He was a dabbler in poetry and at least three of his poems were published locally, probably privately, by Ye Franklin Printery. The titles of these poems were "Progress—A Wail of Pessimism," "The Lady of the Nightingale—A Song of Optimism," and "A Fool's Advice." A copy of the last named, copyrighted in September, 1911, can be found in the Harris Collection

of the John Hay Library at Brown University.¹³ A number of his poems appeared in *The Organ*, some under the pseudonym, Ben Zev Issumar, which was his Hebrew name. It is fitting to give a brief sample of his poetic style:

FAME

All vain ambitions end in sighs
When too forgetful of the chime
Tolling the fleeting hour of Time,
Man in his pride and passion dies.
Each throb of life is but the knell
That bids to life its last farewell.
The blushing flower hides from sight
Its sting the treacherous prickly thorn;
And follows fast the glow of morn
Dark, gloomy shadows of the night.
The pomp of fame unmixed with woe
Seek not, O mortal, here below!

BEN-ZEV-ISSUMAR¹⁴

Dr. Gomberg passed away on December 12, 1934 at Rhode Island Hospital, a victim of coronary occlusion and bronchopneumonia. He was buried from the Sugarman Funeral Home and his body lies in Swan Point Cemetery. His widow and two sons still survive.

Dr. Mark H. Plainfield, the son of Samuel and Rebecca (Flaxman) Yahrashvsky, was born in Russia on August 7, 1874. He was brought to this country at an early age. The following interesting item appears in the December, 1955 issue of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*:¹⁵

“The late Dr. Mark H. Plainfield changed his name from Yahrashvsky because, as a young man, in the heat of mid-summer, he went from one drug store to another in search of employment from early morning until late afternoon, before he met with success. His experience convinced him that his name was a commercial liability. On leaving the store, he looked up at the street sign which read ‘Plainfield,’ which he there and then adopted for his name.”

Dr. Plainfield attended Tufts College Medical School for three years, but there is no record of graduation. He obtained his Rhode Island license by examination in 1900. His first office was on Randall Street, but later he moved to Prairie Avenue where he practiced until his retirement in 1925. He is known to have been an avid collector of



RETENTION
OF
POISONS ELABORATED
IN THE
SYSTEM.

READ BY
MAX B. COMBERG
BEFORE THE
James Tyson Medical Society,
Philadelphia.
JANUARY 16, 1895.



This interesting and still valid contribution to medical literature was probably the first medical paper published by a Rhode Island Jewish physician.

antiques. He died at Miriam Hospital on August 30, 1953 of cerebral thrombosis and arteriosclerotic heart disease. Dr. Plainfield never married.

Dr. Hyman Chester, remembered as a family doctor by many still living, was born in Russia in 1873, the son of Eli M. and Rose Chester. He attended the Maryland Medical College in Baltimore, graduating in 1900 and received his medical license in 1901. In 1906 he was listed as a member of the Providence Medical Association, although at the time of his death he appears not to have been a member of the American Medical Association. He was medical examiner for the Independent Order Brith Abraham, Independent Order Sons of Jacob and the Young Men's Hebrew Association. His first recorded office was at 515 North Main Street, but later he practiced at 20 and 27 Benefit Street. He died on April 5, 1921, aged forty-eight.

Dr. Abraham Pincus Fishman, son of Pincus and Goldie Fishman, was born in Russia in 1881 or 1882. He attended Jefferson Medical College, graduating in 1904 and was licensed to practice in Rhode Island in the same year. Locating first at 22 Douglas Avenue, he later practiced at various addresses in the North End, the last being 145 Camp Street. Dr. Fishman was on the staff of Miriam Hospital and a member of the Providence Medical Association and of the Rhode Island Medical Society to which he was elected in 1907. He died at Miriam Hospital on June 24, 1934 of septicemia resulting from a puncture wound of the hand sustained while treating a patient with an abscess.

Dr. Harry Broadman, son of Henry and Rose Broadman, was born in Kiev, Russia in 1883. Attending Temple University, he graduated from Jefferson Medical College in 1910, and was licensed to practice medicine in Rhode Island the same year. Starting in general practice, he eventually limited his activities to gynecology and obstetrics. A member of the original staff of Miriam Hospital, he eventually attained the rank of visiting surgeon in gynecology and obstetrics. He was a member of the Providence Medical Association, the Rhode Island Medical Society, to which he was elected in 1916, the American Medical Association, and the New England Obstetrical and Gynecological Society. In his latter years he resided at 82 Eaton Street, but his office was located at 203 Thayer Street. He died on March 5, 1945 of arteriosclerotic heart disease in his sixty-second year.

Although it is not our purpose to dwell upon those who are still living or who have strayed from these plantations, a number of practitioners

arriving during the immediately ensuing years will be mentioned, some but briefly, in order to preserve the continuity of the story and for the sake of completeness. Dr. Max Bakst, born in 1886, graduated from Long Island College Hospital in 1911 and was licensed to practice here in the same year. His office was located at 171 Broad Street, while his residence was at 171 Dudley Street. By 1914 he was no longer in Providence, having removed to Brooklyn, New York.

Dr. Harold Libby, our cultured and kindly colleague, born in 1885, was graduated from the Harvard Medical School in 1910. He also was licensed in Rhode Island in 1911. His office was first located at 630 Broad Street, and at a later date at 177 Prairie Avenue. Dr. Libby now limits his practice to obstetrics and gynecology. He is on the staffs of Miriam, Providence Lying-In and Rhode Island hospitals, and is a member of the Providence Medical Association, Rhode Island Medical Society, American Medical Association and the New England Obstetrical and Gynecological Society.

Dr. Anna Topaz, daughter of Harris and Bertha Topaz, was born in Kevne, Russia on March 23, 1872. After attending preparatory school in Kevne, she studied medicine at the University of Warsaw from which she graduated in 1894. After practicing medicine in her home town for a while, she came to America in 1900. Finding that her medical diploma was not acceptable to the Massachusetts State Board of Health, she entered Tufts College Medical School from which she graduated in 1903. After practicing in Boston for a time she went abroad in the year 1908 to study obstetrics and pediatrics at the Medical School of the University of Paris. She resumed her practice in Boston, but in 1912 removed to Providence. She was licensed in Rhode Island the same year and was elected to the Providence Medical Association in 1916. Her practice in Providence was largely devoted to obstetrics and gynecology. She was a member of the original staff of Miriam Hospital. For a number of years, particularly during the difficult period of World War II, she assumed the burdensome responsibility of the routine conduct of the ward obstetrical service. Although sometimes presenting a gruff exterior, Dr. Topaz was known to her patients and colleagues as a warm and sympathetic person. On the morning of June 19, 1945, in her seventy-fourth year, while on her way from her home to attend her daily duties at Miriam Hospital, she was involved in a streetcar accident, dying almost instantaneously of her injuries. Dr. Topaz never married.

Dr. Hattie Greenblatt (Wolfe) was born in Providence on June 15,

1892, the daughter of Berman and Lena Shagrin Greenblatt. After attending the public schools of Providence, she studied medicine at Tufts College Medical School where she was graduated in 1912. Upon completion of her internship in Boston, she practiced at 155 Benefit Street. Following her marriage to Samuel Wolfe she felt obliged to forego her medical career. She was not listed among the active members of the profession subsequent to 1921. She devoted the ensuing years to raising an excellent family. Following the death of Mr. Wolfe in 1943, she returned to her earlier vocation of medicine. She is presently on the staff of the Rhode Island State Hospital for Mental Diseases at Howard, Rhode Island.

Dr. Samuel Starr, son of David and Rebecca Stein Starr, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, December 31, 1884, receiving his preliminary education in the schools of that city. He studied at Harvard College where he received his B.S. Degree in 1907. He graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1910 and was licensed to practice in Rhode Island in 1912. He established his office at 522 Broad Street after interning at St. Joseph's Hospital in Providence. Dr. Starr eventually moved to 206 Waterman Street, where for many years he lived and had his office. In later years he limited his practice largely to psychiatry. He was a member of the Providence Medical Association and of the original staff of Miriam Hospital, where he eventually attained the rank of visiting psychiatrist. Dr. Starr died on New Year's Day in 1950 after a long illness. His widow survives.

Dr. Louis James Pobirs was one of that small number of practitioners who moved to greener pastures after a brief sojourn in Providence. Born in 1883, he graduated from Tufts College Medical School in 1910. He was licensed to practice in Rhode Island the same year. After interning at St. Joseph's Hospital in Providence, he opened an office at 730 Broad Street, later moving to 167 Prairie Avenue. He became a member of the Rhode Island Medical Society in 1912, but resigned in 1916, and resettled in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Still a resident of that community he has specialized in obstetrics and gynecology.

Dr. Simon Geilech Lenzner, born in 1889, graduated from the University of Maryland School of Medicine and College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1912. Following his internship, he opened an office at 58 Cranston Street, later moving to 578 Broad Street, where he lived and practiced for many years. He was licensed in Rhode Island in 1914. His practice was interrupted by the first World War in which he served with the American Expeditionary Forces in France. Dr. Lenz-

ner, still much a part of the local scene and long since limiting his practice to general surgery, was a member of the original staff of Miriam Hospital. An expert tennis player in his prime, he is still a golfer to be reckoned with.

In the annual report of Rhode Island Hospital for 1916 appeared the following interesting notation:

"In October 1916, since the end of the fiscal year a new department was created to be known as the Department of the X-ray. Dr. Isaac Gerber has been appointed as director of this department. . . . An X-ray Department, as separate from the Pathological Department, was established in consequence of the increasing importance of the X-ray in diagnosis and in therapeutics, and also because of the high degree of specialization required to get the full benefit of this agent. The development of X-ray methods has been so rapid that the best equipment of ten years ago is entirely antiquated today. A new and up-to-date equipment will be installed."

Dr. Isaac Gerber, son of Jacob and Ida Gerber, was born in Boston, Massachusetts on May 11, 1885. After attending the elementary schools and English High School in that city, he studied at Harvard College from which he was graduated in 1907. He received his medical degree *cum laude* at Harvard University Medical School in 1910. After interning at the Boston City Hospital for a year, he did postgraduate work at the University of Tuebingen, at Stuttgart and later at Berlin and Vienna. Dr. Gerber settled in Providence in 1914 and was licensed to practice here the same year. He was the first practitioner in Rhode Island to limit his practice to roentgenology.

He conducted the affairs of the X-ray Department until 1920 when he was elevated to the position of Consultant in the Department of the X ray. The annual report for that year contained the following statement:

"A reorganization of the X-ray Department and the installation of a new apparatus has been made necessary by the continued development of the applications of the X-Ray both to medicine and surgery. Originally the X-Ray work was under the direction of the pathologist and was regarded as a natural adjunct to the laboratory. It subsequently developed into a science by itself quite distinct from pathology both in purpose and technique. In 1916 the hospital was fortunate in securing the services of Dr. Isaac Gerber, who has rendered most valuable service in selecting and installing new apparatus, in directing the work of the department, and in personally diagnosing cases sent in from other departments of the hospital. Of late, however, the demands upon the department have so changed in character and increased in amount that they have become greater than a visiting man

can cope with, and indeed require practically the full time of a resident medical man specially trained as a Roentgenologist. Dr. James F. Boyd has been appointed to this position. . . . It would be very desirable to have a sufficient supply of radium in our institution to give proper treatment to the various forms of malignancy, especially in conjunction with X-Ray therapy. . . . That some cases were so treated is due to the kindness of the men in the Memorial Hospital in New York, the Huntington Hospital in Boston, and of Dr. Gerber of our own staff."

In the latter connection it is significant that he brought the first radium to Rhode Island for clinical use on patients.

Dr. Gerber was the first Jewish physician on the staff of Rhode Island Hospital.¹⁶ He developed a large private practice and was highly respected by his colleagues for his keen diagnostic acumen and his sound judgment as a consultant. His numerous contributions to the medical literature had earned for him an international reputation. He was best known locally for his work in connection with the treatment by X ray of acute septic infections.

Afflicted in his early forties by a spinal cord disease which resulted in a progressive paralysis of his legs, he was forced at first to use a cane, then crutches, and finally a wheelchair. From this point on "Isaac Gerber's struggle against infirmity [so stated a colleague]¹⁷ was on an epic scale. With the devoted support of his wife, Rose Albert Gerber, [whom he married on November 30, 1911] a scholar in her own right and a woman of charm and courage, he continued all his activities. For many years the short, sturdy man in the wheelchair remained a familiar sight at conferences and at nearly all regional meetings. To watch him at work, upright on his helpless legs, holding on to the fluoroscope with one hand and competently operating a spot film device with the other was an experience not easily forgotten."

The severe blow he suffered in 1943 upon the untimely death of his son at the age of twenty-five did not result immediately in any curtailment of his activities. Not only his indomitable courage, but his keen mind, pithy comments and intellectual stimulation were a constant source of inspiration to those who knew and worked with him. After an X-ray conference characterized by an unusual lack of difference of opinion, he exclaimed, "There is altogether too much agreement in this office today!"¹⁷

Besides being a consultant on the staff of every hospital in Rhode Island, he was a member of the Providence Medical Association, the Rhode Island Medical Society (of which he was vice-president in



ISAAC GERBER, M.D., 1885-1952