

THE JEWS OF PAWTUCKET AND CENTRAL FALLS PART I

BY ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

The Pawtucket-Central Falls City Directory for 1869 listed one Jewish-owned business in the shopping district of Pawtucket: Schwartz and Lederer, 56½ Main Street, dealers in fancy and dry goods. The enterprise stocked shawls, cloaks, silks, zephyr, worsteds, and ladies' and gentlemen's furnishings. Its partners, Joseph Schwartz and Ludwig Lederer, lived at 58 Mill Street and at the corner of Mill and Exchange streets respectively.

These "pioneer" Jews, and those who followed them, were like other Jews who migrated to urban areas all over the United States, particularly in the latter part of the 19th and in the early part of the 20th centuries. Some were reformed; but most were Orthodox, some more observant than others. Some joined Socialist groups — the so-called intelligentsia — where they discussed social and political issues, and concerned themselves little with the synagogue. The religious founded and remained loyal to just one synagogue, Congregation Ohave Sholam. As was traditional, these Jews created a whole network of social and charitable organizations. On a personal level they helped each other in times of sickness and distress, and they celebrated together. But for the most part they were businessmen, small and large, and it was in this arena that these Jews contributed to the economic growth of Pawtucket and Central Falls.

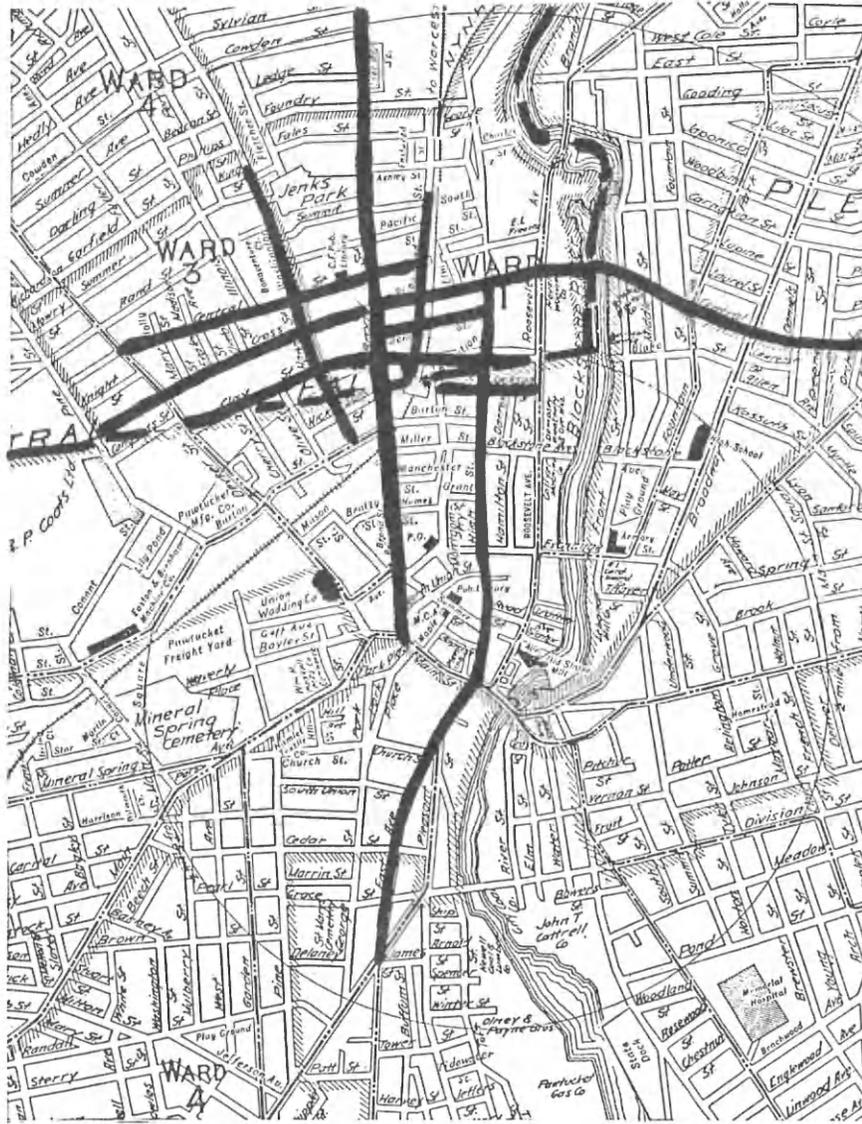
As the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in America, Pawtucket had a long history of attracting skilled craftsmen, artisans, and investors. These people took advantage of the area's waterfall, navigable river, and close-by iron deposits and turned it into a shipbuilding and ironworking town. Those who followed converted these assets into a textile and textile machinery manufacturing center, although metal and ironworking continued to remain an important part of the economy. The construction of the Blackstone Canal and the Providence & Worcester Railroad, both of which passed

through Pawtucket and adjacent Central Falls via a spur line that crossed the Blackstone River spanned by a "tin bridge,"¹ gave added impetus to business and encouraged many manufacturers to locate there.²

By 1869, Pawtucket showed evidence of becoming a city, advanced by increased population and significantly augmented urban services. A rather large and distinct commercial district with stores that rivaled those of Providence emerged along Main, Mill and Pleasant streets. A library, chartered in 1852, and a public high school catered to its educational needs. Gas lights replaced oil street lamps, horsecars, drawn along tracks laid down on Main and Pine streets and Pawtucket Avenue, all led into Providence. Several distinguished church buildings graced an otherwise dreary industrial skyline.³ On April 1, 1885 the town was incorporated as a city, and befitting its industrial base elected Frederick C. Sayles of the W. F. & F. C. Sayles firm, owners of the giant Saylesville Bleaching Co. and Lorraine Woolen Mills, its first mayor.⁴ Additionally, since Providence had annexed a huge chunk of land from North Providence in 1874, the cities of Pawtucket and Providence now abutted. It was only two miles between the Jewish community in Providence's North End and the center of Pawtucket traveling by way of North Main Street and Pawtucket Avenue.

Central Falls had its own history. It, too, owed its growth to its water power and to the textile and metal firms it spawned there. These industries, like those in adjacent Pawtucket, served as the cornerstone for the city's economy throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. It generated educational institutions such as Lincoln High School in 1889, provided recreational facilities in the four-acre Jenks Park on Broad Street, established churches and organizations, and converted streets into thriving commercial thoroughfares. Growth and maturity, as elsewhere, triggered incorporation as a city on March 18, 1895, officially severing its ties to the town of Lincoln.⁵ And like Providence and Pawtucket, Central Falls and Pawtucket shared streets such as Broad and Dexter even though Main Street in Pawtucket became Mill Street once it entered Central Falls. These two abutting communities recognized no boundary when it came to social interaction, commercial transaction, or the movement of workers from one community to the other. This relationship, too, existed between the Jews of Providence and Pawtucket.

Central Falls and Pawtucket also experienced virtually identical population compositions. In the early years of the 19th century, the population of both towns was predominantly native born and protestant, although English and Scottish immigrants, the wet nurses of the textile industry, could be found there. With construction of the canal and railroad, Irish workers remained behind and traded a shovel for a loom. The French Canadians followed, but of the two towns Central Falls attracted a larger



PAWTUCKET-CENTRAL FALLS, 1935

Blackened streets mark areas of Jewish settlements.

number of them. The steady arrival of additional immigrants elevated Central Falls' population to 9,000 by 1870 — 40 percent of them foreign born. As the trickle turned to a tide at the turn of the century, immigrants from all corners of the globe converged and established their ethnic neighborhoods as best they could in these towns. One section of Central Falls, variably called "Bowery" or "Falesville" became one of the most cosmopolitan sections as "Poles, Hebrews, French, Germans, Irish, Scotch, English, and Syrians" lived side by side and worked "in the factories of the city or in the neighboring city of Pawtucket."⁶ By 1900 one could also count Portuguese, Scandanavians, and Italians among its members.⁷ A decade later the combined total of the foreign born and native-born children of foreign or mixed parentage made up 80 percent of the population of Central Falls and 70 percent of the population of Pawtucket.⁸ Both communities had become microcosms of the world's nationalities, and Central Falls the most densely settled community in the nation.

Within this heterogeneous mass of humanity lived about three percent of the state's Jewish population. Some of these Jews had moved into Central Falls as early as 1880, but unlike their Irish and French Canadian counterparts, seldom worked in its mills and factories. Instead, many invested a small amount of capital in a horse and wagon and turned to peddling. For the most part German, these Jews were joined in the 1890s and after by Jews from Eastern Europe escaping pogroms, poor crops, and compulsory military service.

Some of the German Jews opened businesses in Pawtucket but had their residences in other cities such as Providence or as far away as New York City. Few had anything to do with the Jewish residents of Pawtucket; some even worshiped at Temple Beth-El in Providence.⁹ As Diana Feital Goldstein recalled:¹⁰

There were some wealthy Jewish people in business in the early days, the real Deutch [German] . . . a Mrs. Simon who had a big store, Mr. Cohen, the Shartenberg's. Mr. Cohen, who had his shoe store on Main Street, was so wonderful. He was not aloof like the other German Jews. He was an aristocratic man, but you'd never know it. He would sit with my father and they would talk and talk and compare notes.

Jacob Shartenberg became one of the most prominent of the German Jews. He first appears in the 1882 *Pawtucket-Central Falls City Directory* as proprietor of the New Idea Store on 96 Main Street while boarding at the Benedict House. The following year he was listed under dry goods and did business at 30 Elm Street. By 1886 he had moved to a home at 427 Main Street; and by 1890 he evidently had acquired a partner because the firm was



Pawtucket's Main Street, looking west from Slater Trust Co., (1916).
(Photo courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi x3 510).

again listed as the New Idea Store, located in the Weeden Building at 264-270 Main Street, under the name of Shartenberg and Robinson, owners.

Although a resident of Pawtucket, Shartenberg joined the Reformed Jews of Providence and participated in the dedication ceremonies of the congregation's temple, Sons of Israel and David.¹¹ Shartenberg was also instrumental in founding the Retail Merchants' Association of Pawtucket in 1899, serving as its first president. Six years later this Association became the Pawtucket Chamber of Commerce.

The New Idea Store anchored Pawtucket's retail district, and Main Street housed small and large Jewish businesses. Although no specific Jewish residential section existed, with the exception of the area around Jackson, High, and Darrow streets where the congregation Ohave Sholam later built a synagogue, the closest to it might have been the area along the Pawtucket-Central Falls border. Here on Central, Broad and Dexter streets, Jewish grocery, butcher, and other stores catered to both communities' Jewish residents. As Jack Cokin recalled:¹²

I had an aunt who lived on a street where the city line went through her house. Our family did our shopping at Radkin's on Central Street. The butcher, the delicatessen, everything was on that street.

Streets named Cross, Clay, Jencks, Broad, Pine, Mill, Fales, and Hawes also housed Jews. Jewish-owned stores, some exclusively kosher, were interspersed. Often a family lived in the same dwelling as their store, either upstairs or in rear rooms. For the majority of residents, rented tenement flats rather than home ownership was probably the rule in the early years since over 70 percent of all dwelling units in Central Falls in 1920 were rental units.¹³ Clearly, these early Jews were the nucleus and acted as magnets in attracting others. In response to the question, "Why did your family settle in Pawtucket or Central Falls?" the majority of those interviewed answered that a relative was living in those communities. Others found economic opportunities more enticing there than elsewhere. In time, a chain migration was well under way, and the process linked together family members scattered throughout the eastern seaboard. More Jews seemed to have arrived first in Central Falls, undoubtedly attracted by its larger and more cohesive Jewish population. Tillie Vascofritz remembered her family boarding in the Rosenfeld house on Cross Street where she was born. Abraham Goodman, leaving his wife and daughter in Russia, came to Central Falls because of his wife's sister and brother-in-law, the Feital's were there. He, too, moved into the Rosenfeld's house. Harry Goldberg was told by his relative in Pawtucket that he could make a better living there than in New York City where he worked in a market. Joseph Farber's decision to

locate in Pawtucket was somewhat extraordinary. Born in Austria, he had immigrated to New York at the age of fourteen around 1884. After an unfortunate real estate experience several years later, he answered an advertisement selling a business in Pawtucket. When he and his brother Samuel arrived in Rhode Island, the man had decided not to sell. Pleased with the area, they stayed and opened a sheet metal shop in Pawtucket.¹⁴

Making a living sufficient to satisfy the needs of the whole family was not always possible. While some became economically secure early on, others struggled. Sam Shlevin recalled:¹⁵

My father never had any money, was always a rag peddler. He always bought a horse that was blind because it was cheaper . . . I was about six or seven years old, and I sold newspapers. I was the only newsboy allowed to sell opposite Sam Feital [he had the largest newsstand in downtown Pawtucket]. I sold the papers on Saturday, and on Sunday I went to Memorial Hospital. I got such wonderful tips . . . I worked from the day I was able. . . I felt that I was never a youngster. I had to work. As a result, I was part of a grown-up family.

While Shlevin was denied a normal childhood, Tillie Vascovitz never felt “deprived of anything” growing up in Pawtucket at that time. Her father was a butcher, but his business often kept him from the family. “The only time our family sat down to a complete meal was Friday nights when the butcher shop was closed,” she recalled. “Other nights you got your supper when Ma, who worked in the business all my father’s life, had time to come upstairs to make it.” Yet even she was not spared from helping out in the store after school.¹⁶ Jack Cokin’s first memory of a house was a tenement flat owned by Peney Feital, consisting of a living room, dining room, kitchen, and three bedrooms. “I think most of the Jews I knew in our circle,” he remembered, “were quite comfortable. I didn’t know of any that were really poor. When I became active in the Gemileth Chesed, I realized that there were people who had to borrow money . . .”¹⁷

The need to communicate effectively in the home, in the shop, and in the larger community exposed these immigrants’ varied levels of literacy. Most of those interviewed recalled that only Yiddish was spoken in the home and the Jewish paper was received daily. Yet the push to become Americanized forced them to learn English and become functionally literate. Tillie Vascovitz’s father never attended school in America but he “wrote quite well. He taught himself to write, mostly phonetically. Both my parents were self-taught.” While her grandmother spoke only Yiddish, her parents spoke both Yiddish and English in the home.¹⁸ Jack Cokin remembered that his father was so anxious to learn English that he “would sit with the *Pawtucket*

Times and copy the first page,” in the office of his furniture business. His mother “read a lot and had a good vocabulary.”¹⁹ Although local papers were well subscribed, the New York City published *Forward* became the favorite Yiddish newspaper. Among the Jewish women the *Bintel Brief* [Bundle of Letters] column became a favorite. Written by readers, many of them women, these letters focused on immigrant problems and asked the editor for advice. “Our upstairs neighbor would bring the paper down to my mother to read with her These letters were their soap opera.”²⁰

Despite the congested housing, struggle for economic security, and mastery of communication skills, these Jews did not seem to have eloiigned themselves from recreation. Outings of all sorts were a favorite pastime, particularly spending a day or more at a neighboring farm owned by a Jewish relative or friend. Most frequently noted in these interviews were the Fine, Friedman, and Globus farms in Attleboro, and the Horvitz and Gleckman farms near Baker’s Corner in Seekonk, Massachusetts.

The latter two became sites for many Jewish picnics. The owners of the Globus farm took in boarders. Guests were served at a kitchen table that accommodated as many as twenty people. Fine’s farm rented cottages which Jack Cokin, a relative of the owners of the farm, described as so luxurious that “after we vacated one which we had occupied, it became a chicken coop.”²¹ The Gleckman farm was a favorite for the Fourth of July holiday and for watching fireworks.²²

Families often shared their outings. Gathering on Sundays or holidays at a home, they would travel together out of the city. Gertrude Goldstein Hak fondly recalled her experiences:²³

We traveled, for example, to Newport in three or four cars. We always went together in a caravan The families would travel with full meals packed in the carriers which were located on the running boards. Sometimes we would stop to picnic at the Vanderbilt farms in Foster [Rhode Island]. The preparation of cooking those meals would take the entire day.

While in the cities, Jewish boys and girls played the same games and pursued the same sports as others. They sledged on hills near St. Paul’s Church and on East Avenue in Pawtucket, played pick-up games in Park Place and on the streets, and organized sports in the Pawtucket Boys Club after it opened in 1902, although none of the sports was organized for Jewish children. In Central Falls, a favorite playground was St. George’s lot.

After the opening in the early 1920s of Ohawe Sholam Synagogue on High and Jackson streets, Jewish teenagers used its basement for social activities. Junior B’nai B’rith sponsored Sunday night dances, alternating

weekly between one held in Woonsocket and one held in Pawtucket. Since city ordinances prohibited music and dancing on Sundays, black curtains were hung to darken the hall to the outside. People would come from all over, recalled Diana Feital Goldstein, because it was the largest Jewish hall in which to congregate. They also staged plays and held Sunday night parties in people's homes.²⁴ For large events, such as a wedding or *Bar Mitzvah*, the women — mostly friends and relatives — would prepare the food, each her own specialty. Some of these affairs might be held in the yard where Japanese lanterns hung as decorations. On occasion, a hall might be hired. A family named Pearlman from High Street organized themselves as a *Klezmer** and played for such events.

Providence had an active theatre district, and when it brought in Jewish shows from elsewhere, Pawtucket and Central Falls Jews dressed for the occasion and rode streetcars to Providence. A trip to New York City to attend the wedding of a relative was always a momentous occasion. For these, families boarded a steamer of the Fall River Line in Providence, payed fifty cents per ticket, and sailed to the big affair. These trips often reunited members of extended families scattered throughout the East.

As young Jews, most of the interviewees were either too occupied or too immature to fully recognize currents of anti-Semitism. "I remember one particular kid because I chased him when he called me a 'dirty Jew', but this was an isolated case . . . I can't remember any problems at school, perhaps because it was too obvious, at least to me."²⁵ Celia Farber Rumpler and Jacob Goodman never encountered anti-Semitism, not in the high school which Rumpler attended nor in the mostly Irish neighborhood where Goodman lived. Most of the reports indicated that the greatest fear came from Polish youth. Living on Lawrence Street, Jack Cokin had to walk by a Polish bakery on the way to Hebrew school. "There were always Polish kids who lived in that house, and they would always give the Jewish kids a hard time."²⁶ Gertrude Goldberg Hak also experienced trouble on the way to Hebrew school with Polish children, but not from those from their neighborhood. Occasionally it would lead to a fight, but "we always fought back." During Easter, a holiday when Jews were once again accused of killing Christ, Jews became nervous. "We children were kept inside the house . . . in case there might be some trouble with our Polish neighbors. Of course, nothing ever happened."²⁷

Sam Shlevin's experience was similar:²⁸

At three o'clock the Jewish kids would be assaulted by the Poles. After they finished Hebrew school and had supper, the

*An informal group of musicians playing traditional folk music and songs.

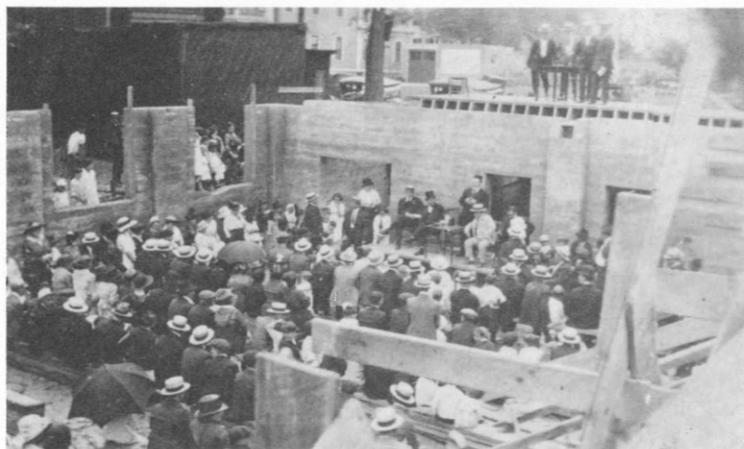
same Jewish and Polish boys would play basketball, at the Boys Club. In my mind, that was superficial anti-Semitism . . . It had no real meaning. For here we would play basketball together, swim together right after we just had a fight. Out teams were called the Jewish Ha'coah and the Polish Aces. You couldn't get a seat at those games for they were the two best teams. That neighborhood of minorities — Poles, Jews, Irish — we managed to get along together.

The Pawtucket-Central Falls Jewish community grew to such proportion that serious efforts were launched in the 1890s to establish systematic worship. Congregation Ohave Sholam, also known as Ahavath Sholom, an orthodox synagogue originated in this context. Then, a few men gathered for daily prayers in a small hall near Jencks, Cross, and Central streets, the Jewish area of Central Falls. On April 10, 1905, Abraham Berick, Reuben Bloomberg, Isaac Brown, Harry Cassock and Morris Levenson signed the original papers of incorporation for the purpose of "maintaining and conducting a house of worship of the Orthodox Hebrew religion in Pawtucket, Rhode Island and of transporting business." With money undoubtedly saved from a ten cent membership fee imposed on themselves earlier, these Jews purchased a two-family house at 230 North Main Street in Pawtucket. On the first floor lived the family of Charles Kalman, later occupied by teachers in the Hebrew school; on the second, alterations produced a small synagogue and a meeting room that was also used as a *Talmud Torah*, or Hebrew school. It became the center of the Jewish community, and springing from it were many institutions such as the Hebrew Free Assisting Association. Although conservatives tried to start another temple, their efforts never came to fruition. Thus, Ohave Sholam remained the only synagogue serving the Jews of both communities.²⁹

Inadequate for the growing Jewish population's services for high holy days, the congregation often held services at other facilities: the Polish Hall on Central Street, the Pastime Theatre on the corner of High and Exchange streets, the Cottrell Building and another structure on East Avenue in downtown Pawtucket. The Grand Army Hall was used for about ten years. These services were well remembered by Diana Goldstein. Men sat in front of the dividing line, and the women in back of it. "We kids," she recalled:³⁰

had a wonderful time, playing outside during services. We also loved looking at the different uniforms from the wars which were in the Hall, as well as at the guns and swords. They were stored in back so that the stage could be used for services. I remember one day the kids got dressed up in the uniforms and went floating across the stage, clanging the swords at their sides.

The religious education received by those interviewed was vividly recalled. Several remembered their teachers at the Hebrew school: Mr. Miller, Mr. Goldstein, and Mr. Goldman. The latter taught students the Hebrew alphabet and how to read from the *siddur*, a volume containing daily prayers. Two classes were needed to accommodate the students, one right after public school, the other toward evening. Mr. Goldman was also a memorable character who expected disciplined students, taught them through repetition and rote memorization, cracked and ate Indian nuts during class, and was not unwilling to use a long stick or cat-o-nine tails to secure the attention of his young pupils. "We were taught all kinds of prayers. There was a prayer for every occasion, but we were never taught the meaning of the words. It didn't materialize into anything," remembered Diana Goldstein. But, she said, he would "go over and over the same thing. This way you'd automatically get to know the *siddur* A boy would be taught *Humash** in preparation for his *Bar Mitzvah*."³¹ Another remembered the smell of oranges, occasionally eaten by Mr. Goldman, because "an orange was a rare thing in some of our homes You learned to read Hebrew, but you never learned anything about it. All they were interested in doing was to teach you to *daven* [to pray]. I don't think the teachers were capable of teaching you anything more."³² Still, education triumphed despite its peculiarities because parents instilled in their children the love of learning and the obligation to participate in religious services at the synagogue.



Rabbi Hayim D. Bachrach speaking at the building site of Congregation Ohave Sholam, summer 1920.

(Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, donation of Jeannette F. Ritter).

*The five books of the Pentateuch or Torah of the "written law."

By 1915 approximately 350 Jewish families lived in the area, and the two-story tenement synagogue had clearly outlived its usefulness. The untiring efforts of Henry Friedman, Samuel Finn, and Sam Cokin secured land for a new synagogue at the corner of High and Jackson streets in Pawtucket. Construction started in 1918 and was brought to completion in 1921. Friedman, in the retail fur business, actively raised funds for the building and became the first president of the congregation.³³ Sam Shlevin remembers how men of the congregation raised money by going to the Morris Plan, a loan company, borrowing \$200 on their own endorsement, and paying it back at a dollar a week. Once completed, the synagogue seated about 408, contained a vestry, kitchen, chapel, and a rabbi's study. To the rear, an apartment house was remodeled for a large Hebrew school. Membership dues for the approximately one hundred families stood at \$75 per year.³⁴ Several families who lived in Ashton and Valley Falls, Rhode Island, joined. For high holy days they brought their own candles to bless and stayed at the home of relatives or friends.

The spiritual center of the community also spawned a host of organizations such as the Ladies Hebrew Aid Society and the Sisterhood, to name but a few. Chartered on May 21, 1915, the Ladies Aid Society dedicated itself to "rendering assistance to needy or indigent persons and for carrying on work of a charitable and benevolent character."³⁵ Until the new synagogue was erected, the organization held its meeting in an upstairs room of the Grand Army Hall. Meetings frequently were conducted in Yiddish, and because so many members could not read or write English, those who could were elected to officer positions of secretary and treasurer. The contributions of this organization to the synagogue and the Jewish community was illustrated in a letter written in 1964 by Mrs. Morris Sholes to Mrs. Abraham Mal:³⁶

My husband and I moved with our children to Pawtucket where we found a small but vigorous Jewish community, which held its services in the Pawtucket Grand Army Hall. The Ladies' Aid as the women's auxiliary was known, gave active and enthusiastic support to the organizers of the new congregation. Mr. Eisenberg and his building committee bought the site . . . from Frank Crook. At the time of the purchase the property consisted of an old theatre and a house. The theatre was torn down to make room for the synagogue and the house was move to the back in order to house the Talmud Torah. It was the Ladies Aid who purchased the cornerstone of the synagogue. The parchment listing the names of the members of the organization rests within the cornerstone. Thus, the Ladies Aid of more than forty years ago built the

foundation on which the dreams of this present Sisterhood could be realized. When the building was completed, the Ladies' Aid bought the key to the synagogue. So the women of my generation helped to open and keep open the doors to Jewish tradition, culture and learning in the Pawtucket community.

During my term as president of the Ladies' aid a committee composed of Mrs. Samuel Finn, Mrs. Morris Carlin and myself selected and purchased the large sterling silver and crystal chandelier for the sanctuary. It contained 152 bulbs, each bulb representing one member of the Ladies' Aid at the time the chandelier was purchased.

The Sisterhood, an outgrowth of the Ladies Hebrew Aid Society, was chartered on May 1, 1935 as the Sisterhood of Ahavath Sholom of Pawtucket and Central Falls. Its charter was signed by: Sophie Tesler, Pearl E. Curran, Rebecca Luber, Rose M. Brown, Anna Handler, Bertha Berkelhammer, and Eva Hak. It was commonly known as the Ladies Aid and Sisterhood*. The synagogue was also the meeting place for the Men's Club, the Jewish Couples of Pawtucket (JCOP), the Youth Group, the Young Marrieds of Ohawe Sholam, and the Junior Congregation. Additionally, associated with it was an active Sunday-Hebrew School and a Hebrew High School. The Jewish War Veterans and the Gemileth Chesed also used its hall.

A complete record of the rabbis who served the congregation is not available; however, some recollections indicate that rabbinical spiritual leadership was sporadic. A Rabbi Lakeb tended to the congregation in 1924, and the following year Rabbi Abraham Schisgall was brought by a member of the congregation. Rabbi Schisgall came from Slutsk, Russia, and remained at his post for approximately seven years. Rabbi Gold and Rabbi Rakovsky followed. In 1940, Rabbi Aaron Goldin assumed the spiritual leadership. He ministered to a congregation that had grown to around three hundred families, and high holy service brought nearly eight hundred people to the synagogue, some sitting in the aisles.³⁷ After his departure in the early 1960s, members conducted services themselves, with the exception of 1964-1966 when Rabbi Joseph M. Rothberger conducted services. For high holy days, rabbis from elsewhere were called to Ohawe Sholam.

During Rabbi Rothberger's tenure elaborate plans for a new synagogue and school were advanced. It was to be erected on East Avenue between Lowden Street and Glenwood Avenue, and it was to have the finest religious school in the area. The new location was to accomodate those congregation

*See Appendix A for a complete list of the original officers and members of the Ladies Aid Society.

members who were moving out of the old neighborhood toward Providence and elsewhere in Pawtucket. The land had been purchased by men of the congregation, including Max Alperin, Dr. Charles Jagolinzer, Samuel Shlevin, and Charles Steingold, and they became stockholders of the Conservative Blackstone Valley Temple-Center. The synagogue was given a five year option to build, providing \$150,000 was raised during that period. A conservative-orthodox tug-of-war ensued with one faction favoring a conservative temple. This doomed the grandiose plan of Rabbi Rothberger for a Blackstone Valley Temple-Center.³⁸

In the interim Ohawe Sholam celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1968 in grand style, receiving greetings from Governor John Chafee, Mayor Robert Burns of Pawtucket, Abraham M. Mal, president of the synagogue, and other dignitaries. Rabbi Chaim Raizman was formally installed during the celebration.³⁹ Shortly thereafter a new building committee, consisting of Carl Passman, chairman, Ralph Buckler, Herman Geller, Ed Gershman, Dr. Hyman Lillian and Hilton Rosen was established, and Alexander Rumpel served as architectural advisor. A much more modest building was planned and the congregation was to be orthodox. Funding for the over \$200,000 structure was partially provided by the sale of the old High and Jackson street synagogue. In 1979 ground was broken, and in 1981 the new synagogue was dedicated. The present members are working to revitalize the active Ohawe Sholam congregation of the past.⁴⁰

The synagogue was unquestionably the center of the Pawtucket-Central Falls Jewish community, unrivaled by any other organization. But as with all communities, organizations emerged to meet the needs of a diversified population. As early as December 18, 1890 the Pawtucket Hebrew Benevolent Association was formed to "unite fraternally all men professing the Jewish religion, and to assist them when sick or in distress."⁴¹ The Pawtucket Assisting Association of 1915 and the Brotherhood Assisting Association of Pawtucket and Central Falls of 1920 also engaged in charitable work. The Pawtucket and Central Falls Junk Peddlers Association helped "members in sickness or distress" after its founding on April 26, 1915.⁴² Women, too, had their benevolent association in the Pawtucket chapter, Council of Jewish Women, established on March 17, 1916 as an educational, social, and charitable organization. Its charter was signed by Eva Harriet, Sophie Zarchen, Freda Halpert, Sophia Levy, and Esther Brown.⁴³

Another fascinating women's organization, one still active in the 1980s, is called the Pawtucket Hadassah. Julius G. Robinson delegate to the National Zionist Convention of 1924 held in New York City, and secretary of the Zionist Organization of Pawtucket and Central Falls, heard Henrietta Szold, the founder of Hadassah, speak at the convention. Back in Rhode Island, this inspiration produced a chapter of Hadassah in Pawtucket on

December 18, 1924. That evening in a meeting hall of Ohave Sholam, officers were elected, and his wife chosen president. On the 25th Anniversary of the organization she made the following remarks:⁴⁴

The work was difficult. We had to educate the community to the need. Money was scarce . . . our first project was a sewing group . . . We made hospital shirts, some of our members made every stitch by hand. We started the collection of milk bottles and the Jewish National Fund blue boxes that we put into the homes . . . The women did not have cars and they walked many miles collecting the filled bottles and boxes with nickles and quarters . . . We had a cultural group where we discussed current events . . . We had no quotas in the beginning but we raised money through rummage sales, home and public bridges . . . food sales.

During World War II the organization worked for Palestine and for America, and with the formation of Israel in 1948 it assumed still heavier financial commitments for which it won national honors.

As always, Hebrew education was as important for these Jews as for others. The Samuel H. Zucker Hebrew Education Association supported religious education throughout Pawtucket and Central Falls. Its headquarters at 70 East Avenue, Pawtucket was the site for an elaborate dedication ceremony on December 20, 1914 of a Holy Scroll, a gift of Mrs. S. H. Zucker in memory of her parents. Jews from Providence and throughout the Blackstone Valley attended. Harry Cutler gave the chief address, a children's chorus sang, a string orchestra played several selections, and Rabbi Israel S. Rubinstein of the Sons of Zion Congregation of Providence performed the religious rites.⁴⁵ The Hebrew Institute of Pawtucket and Central Falls, organized on December 21, 1917, labored for the cause of education, religious training of children and adults, and to make Jews useful citizens.⁴⁶

One of the most important organizations was the Gemileth Chesed Association of Pawtucket and Central Falls. It was organized on October 13, 1909 and began to officially function the following year. This Hebrew Free Loan Association loaned funds without interest to newly arrived immigrants, men in economic difficulty, and to widows with children to support.⁴⁷ During the period from 1922 to 1928, the Association charged its members \$3 per year, and in the 1926 calendar year alone loaned \$17,880 to 104 recipients.⁴⁸

Additional organizations consisted of the B'nai B'rith Lodge No. 899, named after Henry Friedman, a successful fur salesman who had moved to

Pawtucket from New York, the Jewish War Veterans which assumed the name of Reback-Winston Post No. 406, and various philanthropic organizations as a need arose. The B'nai B'rith Lodge was considered one of the more progressive: it had its own drill team, uniforms, and marching formations. Its installation team traveled throughout New England and New York to install at various lodges.⁴⁹ The organization had degree teams, like Masonic organizations, and consistently won national prizes.⁵⁰ The Reback-Winston Post, named after two veterans, was chartered on May 8, 1946. A plaque listing the names of those who served in World War II hangs in a meeting room of Congregation Ohave Sholam in Pawtucket. The United Jewish Appeal of the Blackstone Valley, composed of businessmen and residents of Pawtucket and Central Falls, has generated an impressive record of contributions.

These institutions, as those in other communities throughout America, succeeded in retaining elements of the people's collective Jewish traditions and at the same time directed them toward an embrace of American opportunity. After all, it was the lure of religious freedom, of preservation of heritage, tradition, and history, that brought them here. Once in Pawtucket and Central Falls they experienced fully the lure of America. It allowed these Jews a life far more complete than anything expected and far more open than they envisioned. Some of them resisted the temptation and forestalled absorption, but in the end the process gradually eroded their ways — the fabric of their collectivity, the bond of common experience, the sharing of language. Still, Jews in these communities remained Jews, their institutions survived and even multiplied, and their religion was kept alive by their synagogue and Hebrew school*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Geraldine Foster for assisting me by conducting several oral history interviews, and the following persons for their cooperation and kind assistance: Jack Cokin, Claire Ernstof, Thomas Gleckman, Diana Feital Goldstein, Jacob Goodman, Gertrude Goldberg Hak, Carl Passman, Celia Farber Rumpler, Alexander Rumpler, Madeline Bogin Sanek, Samuel Shlevin, and Tillie Vine Vascovitiz.

Eleanor F. Horvitz

*Part II of this history, focused primarily on occupations, merchants, businesses, manufacturers, and professions, will be published in the next volume of this journal.

APPENDIX A

OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE LADIES AID SOCIETY
CONGREGATION OHAWA SHOLAM
MAY 21, 1915¹

Possible Officers

Kittie Heller
Elizabeth Karlin
Gertrude Friedman
Fannie Juster
Hattie Kalman

Members

Ray August	Sarah Rosenfield	Fannie Eisenberg
Annie Cokin	Esther Slifkin	Pearl Horowitz
Anna Feital	Baily Weisman	Sarah Levine
Annie Gabor	Bertha Law	Mrs. Nathanson
Adele Kalman	(Chairlady)	Anna Sonkin
Dora Mogileftkin	Rebecca Bogen	Sophie Frucht
Fannie Plotkin	Anna Dimeberg	Mary Jaffee
Mammie Silver	Ruth Fishman	Annie Levine
Bessie Vine	Mary Kalman	Rose Needle
Jennie Robinson	Rose Kaplan	Kate Sinelnicoff
Sadie Bellon	Mary Morgan	Sarah Tesler
Sadie Cohen	Julia Rosenfield	Rose Mogileftkin
Bessie Feital	Anna Selzen	Miss Bessie Kalman
Anna Glickman	Sophie Derber	Miss Annie Kalman
Rose Karnovsky	Rebecca Finn	Mr. Goodman*
Adele Mogileftkin	Lizzie Chernack	Mr. Charles Kalman*
	Anna Weisman	

¹These names were taken from the Charter of the Ladies Aid Society, Congregation Ohawa Sholam, Pawtucket, R.I., Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives, Providence, Rhode Island.

*Note the inclusion of two males.

NOTES

- ¹It was known as "tin bridge" because it was constructed of wood and covered with tin. By 1876 it had been replaced by an iron structure but the original name was recalled by several interviewees.
- ²John William Haley, *History of Pawtucket, Central Falls, Lincoln and Cumberland, Rhode Island* (Pawtucket, 1937), 55; George H. Kellner and J. Stanley Lemons, *Rhode Island: The Independent State* (Woodland Hills, California, 1982), 56, 59-60.
- ³*Pawtucket, Rhode Island* (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission: Providence, 1978), 51.
- ⁴*Rhode Island Manual, 1931-1932* (Providence, 1932), 91.
- ⁵*Central Falls, Rhode Island* (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission: Providence, 1978), 25.
- ⁶"Anniversary and Industrial Edition," *Pawtucket Evening Times*, March 31, 1906.
- ⁷Susan Marie Boucher, *History of Pawtucket, 1635-1976* (Providence, 1976), 99.
- ⁸Kellner and Lemons, *Rhode Island*, 79.
- ⁹Oral history interview with Celia Farber Rumpler, conducted in the offices of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, Providence, R.I., July 10, 1984. This tape, and others cited below, are located in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives.
- ¹⁰Oral history interview with Diana Feital Goldstein, in her Providence home, July 15, 1984.
- ¹¹*Providence Journal*, December 8, 1890.
- ¹²Oral history interview with Jack Cokin, conducted by Geraldine Foster, in the home of Gertrude Goldberg Hak, Pawtucket, R.I., 1983.
- ¹³Kellner and Lemons, *Rhode Island*, 80.
- ¹⁴Celia Farber Rumpler interview; oral history interview with Tillie Vine Vascovitiz, conducted in the offices of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, July 12, 1984.
- ¹⁵Oral history interview with Sam Shlevin, conducted in his business office, Providence, R.I., July 11, 1984.
- ¹⁶Tillie Vine Vascovitiz interview.
- ¹⁷Jack Cokin interview.
- ¹⁸Tillie Vine Vascovitiz interview.
- ¹⁹Jack Cokin interview.
- ²⁰Diana Feital Goldstein interview; Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976), 533.
- ²¹Jack Cokin interview.
- ²²Diana Feital Goldstein interview.
- ²³Oral history interview with Gertrude Goldberg Hak, conducted by Geraldine Foster, in her home in Pawtucket, R.I., 1983.
- ²⁴Diana Feital Goldstein interview.
- ²⁵Tillie Vine Vascovitiz interview.
- ²⁶Jack Cokin interview; Celia Farber Rumpler interview; oral history interview with Jacob Goodman, conducted in his home in Pawtucket, R.I., July 3, 1984.
- ²⁷Diana Feital Goldstein interview.
- ²⁸Sam Shlevin interview.
- ²⁹"Anniversary Issue," *Pawtucket Times*, October 8, 1921.
- ³⁰Diana Feital Goldstein interview.
- ³¹*ibid.*
- ³²Sam Shlevin interview.
- ³³"Anniversary Issue," *Pawtucket Times*, October 8, 1921.
- ³⁴Sam Shlevin interview; *Rhode Island Herald*, April 5, 1968; "Anniversary Issue," *Pawtucket Times*, October 8, 1921.
- ³⁵Charter of the Ladies Aid Society, Congregation Ohawe Sholam, Pawtucket, R.I., May 21, 1915, located in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives.

³⁶*Rhode Island Herald*, April 5, 1968.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, October 25, 1979.

³⁹*Pawtucket Times*, April 8, 1968.

⁴⁰In response to the question, "Where were the Jews of Pawtucket and Central Falls buried?" information reveals not in their own cemetery. Only two Jews, Pauline, wife of Adolph Feder, and Emma, wife of Max Feder, both dated 1894, were buried in the interdenominational Moshassuck Cemetery in Central Falls even though the Congregation Sons of Israel and David of Providence purchased plots for the burial of non-members, relatives of members, and for charitable causes. Other Jewish congregations and organizations, too, purchased plots.

The Jews of Pawtucket and Central Falls used plots in the Jewish cemetery called Lincoln Park in Warwick, R.I. Four areas, purchased at various times and from different sources, are designated for Congregation Ohave Sholam of Pawtucket. See, "Jewish Cemeteries," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 3 (November, 1958), 63.

⁴¹The Pawtucket Hebrew Benevolent Association at the time of its charter included the following businessmen: S.J. Gunther, Max Feder, Samuel Paul, Morris Glickman, Barney Sentler, A. Goodman, Louis Berick, Abraham Berick, S. Needle, Louis Rosenberg, Morris Greenberg, and David Gilbert.

⁴²The Pawtucket and Central Falls Junk Peddlers Association at the time of its charter included the following peddlers: David Cohen, Harry Baker, Harry Goldberg, Barney Tetelbaum, Harry Steingold, Jacke Dimeberg, Jacob Goldstein, and Sam Sentler.

⁴³"Chartered Organizations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 2 (May 1956), 69.

⁴⁴Papers of Pawtucket-Central Falls Hadassah located in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives.

⁴⁵*Pawtucket Times*, September 21, 1914.

⁴⁶"Chartered Organizations," 75.

⁴⁷Benton H. Rosen, "The Gemiloth Chasodim of Rhode Island," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 5 (November, 1969), 287.

⁴⁸Account Book, 1922-1928, Gemileth Chesed Association of Pawtucket and Central Falls, located in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives.

⁴⁹Oral history interview with Alexander Rumpler, in the offices of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, July 10, 1984.

⁵⁰Sam Shlevin interview.

MASONRY AND THE COLONIAL JEWS OF NEWPORT

BY BERNARD KUSINITZ, M.D.

The evolution of Masonry in the Old World and its establishment in the New World is full of uncertainty. Some people trace its origins back to Solomon's Temple and to ancient Egypt, but most suggest that it rightfully belongs to the guilds of the Middle Ages. Likewise, some suggest that Masonry entered the New World in the 17th and 18th centuries at Nova Scotia or at Annapolis, Maryland. Henry W. Rugg in his book, *History of Freemasonry in Rhode Island*, stated that with the formation of the English Grand Lodge in 1717 in Massachusetts, "There has been a governing body of the Craft from which directly or indirectly all Masonic lodges in existence trace their origin." Actually, the undisputed historical beginning of duly authorized Masonry in the United States began in 1730 in both Philadelphia and Boston, and each city claims precedence. In Newport the first authorized lodge, St. John's Lodge No. 1, was established in 1749. However, if you grant the hypothesis that a veil of mystery and uncertainty clouded the European genesis and the American origin, then you should also be able to accept my findings that a form of Freemasonry was introduced and practiced by the first Jewish settlers of Newport as early as 1658. Consequently, one could argue that the first documentable instance of the practice of Freemasonry in the American colonies preceded others, and that it occurred nearly a century before its duly authorized counterparts. In short, the early history of Masonry in Rhode Island was directly related to the Jewish community of Newport.

Alvah H. Sanborn, a Mason, speaking on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Van Rensselaer Lodge of Perfection, Newport, in 1924, made the following comments:

Address delivered November 14, 1983 at Touro Synagogue on the occasion of the visitation to St. John's Lodge No. 1 of the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons for the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Charles A. Calverly, Jr., and adapted for publication. Ed.

Masonry in Newport goes back to the very early period in colonial history — how far, no man ventures to assert. Of course, there were Masons in Newport long before St. John's Lodge No. 1 was established in 1749, and tradition tells us that there were meetings long before the opening of the seventeenth century. While tradition is not history, it is a well established fact that Masonry flourished in Newport from the earliest time, and as Newport was one of the largest and most prosperous communities in the New World, the fact is by no means surprising.

Sanborn's use of the word "tradition" is unfortunate because it clearly gives the impression that historical data cannot substantiate such claims. Furthermore, the tradition of which he spoke does not acknowledge the relationship of Masonry to the Newport Jews, nor does he clarify further the bare fact of that tradition. Did Sanborn imply that tradition which asserts that the three white stones embedded in the peculiar mortar of Newport's Old Stone Mill as evidence of its Masonic origin? How about the tradition that speaks of a gathering of Brethren in Newport in 1656? Or perhaps it was the tradition that suggests that certain peculiar marks on the stonework of the Newport State House point to the involvement of Masons in its construction? One cannot confirm nor deny any of these traditions — and that has kept them alive.

None of these traditions, however, point to an actual beginning of the Craft in Newport. It is a missing element that must be addressed. An exposition of this link turns to history, and the first clues appear in an 1868 manual for Masons of Connecticut, titled *Guide to the Chapter*. Authored by John Gould, whose family has been a member of the St. John's Lodge No. 1 of Newport since 1760, this volume revealed that "the earliest account of the introduction of Masonry into the United States is in the history of the lodge organized in Rhode Island [around] 1658, or 59 years before the establishment of the first lodge in Massachusetts." As the basis for his claim, Gould quoted from Rev. Edward Peterson's 1833 *History of Rhode Island*. While Peterson's work contains one glaring inaccuracy, his major contribution is clear.

In the spring of 1658, Mordecai Campanell, Moses Pechekoe [Pacheco], Levi, and others, in all fifteen families, arrived in Newport from Holland. They brought with them the three first degrees of Masonry, and worked them in the house of Campanell, and continued to do so, they and their successors, to the year 1742.¹

Together, these two statements are significant from both the Jewish and the

Masonic standpoint. Jewish tradition, backed by historical evidence considers this to be the actual beginning of the Jewish community of Newport.

Peterson's remarks were not based on mere tradition, but on the testimony of Nathan H. Gould. Gould's family, although not Jewish, knew more about Jewish colonial history in Newport than any other. Its members had been Masons, had lived in Newport, and while there had acquired documentary evidence to substantiate the claim.

When the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts heard of Peterson's claim it wrote to Nathan H. Gould, who was by then a Mason of high rank, for further information. Gould's reply was printed in the 1870 *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts*. In it he substantiated Peterson's findings based on Masonic tradition and on a fragile document he uncovered in 1839. This document and other papers had been found in an old chest that had belonged to one of Gould's deceased relatives. I have seen several different versions of what was said in that document. While all vary somewhat in style and detail, the text is essentially identical. The first part of the document presents dates in Hebrew and English in some versions but is obliterated in others. This is followed by textual material which was quoted by Gould in his reply.

Wee mett att y House of Mordecai Campanell and after
Synagogue wee gave Abm. Moses the degrees of Masonrie.

Admittedly, this is a fragile basis for such grandiose claims. To be sure, skepticism on the part of 19th century Masons existed: some were concerned about its unknown authorship, and others about the lack of corroborative evidence.

Nevertheless, I accept it as authentic, and I accept the idea that just nineteen years after the founding of Newport itself the dim beginning of both Judaism and Masonry may be found. First, the names cited by both Peterson and the document have been historically verified as authentic.² Second, the fragmented document was written in a style consistent with that used by 17th century Newport Jews. Third, the entire Gould family of Newport has been found completely reliable in everything they have written, and there was no good reason to think that Nathan Gould would forge such a document. Fourth, while 19th century Masons were unable to assign authorship to the document, an author can be deduced and both he and the chest can be linked and traced.³ Last, the document should be accepted as authentic as long as we do not read into it what it cannot support. While it was not a duly authorized form of Masonry, the evidence indicates that Newport Jews practiced whatever form of Masonry existed in the Old World or was possible in the New. No place does it state or infer that a

Masonic lodge *per se* was involved, or that anyone associated with it claimed authority despite the use of the word “lodge” by Gould. One should not read too much into the words “degree” or “three degrees” either. Perhaps “rite” or “ritual” could have served as well. The document should be taken at face value; that is, a group stayed after religious services and inducted one of its members into “Masonrie.” These people acted on their own because no legal authority from an official governing body had been activated.

In 1693 this first wave of Jewish “pioneers” was joined by additional immigrants from Curacao. The few references that exist for Jews in Newport in the 1680s suggest that these newcomers augmented those who remained from the first group. Historians have repeatedly stated that not too much is known about the community: they purchased land for a cemetery in 1677 and they were involved in a court case.⁴ In my research I have found no evidence for the existence of this community for a period of fifty to sixty years. This leads one to two probable conclusions. The first is that its members left either singularly or in groups so that the community disappeared in time. The second is that a Jewish community existed but that its members were of modest accomplishment, leaving no evidence of their existence nor can one trace any of their names to the brilliant community that followed in the 1740s and 1750s. One might also suggest that the practice of Masonry in Newport either diminished or disappeared with the collapse of the first Jewish community.

Although this recitation of the origins of Masonry in Newport may still have its doubters, no one debates the establishment of the first duly authorized lodge in Newport, the founding of St. John’s Lodge No. 1 in 1749. These Jews came from New York, Boston, Portugal, the Caribbean islands, and if you want to go back farther, from England, Holland, Poland, and Germany. These were the famous Jews of colonial Newport, and among them were the families of Aaron Lopez, Jacob Rodrigues Rivera, Moses Levy, Isaac Hart, Isaac Pollock — five of the most important families in Newport. They epitomize the commercial success of Newport in its Golden Age prior to the American Revolution, and their names ubiquitous in civic, religious, mercantilistic and Masonic endeavors. They were followed by such names as Isaacs, Sarzedas, Hayes, Seixas, Elizer, Myer, Mendes, Jacob, and many others. Together, they created a complete Jewish community with a full range of services and institutions.⁵ These were men of distinction, ability, and social consciousness, but their number was not large as some historians have suggested. Instead of nearly a thousand, my estimate places the number of families at twenty to thirty, for an approximate total of two hundred people.

If my estimate of the number of families is correct, then my calculations

suggest that from two-thirds to five-sixths of the Newport Jewish community belonged to the Masonic fraternity. These are impressive numbers. They indicate, that Masonry, more than any other leisure-time activity, was an integral part of these people's lives. Significantly, twice as many men belonged to the Masons than to their own exclusive Jewish Men's Club. Are we not justified, then, in concluding that Masonry and the colonial Jews of Newport had a profound effect on one another?

But who were these fellows, and can we be sure that they were both Masons and Jews? The answer is "Yes, I am sure." Although three separate lists of Masons of the Jewish faith exist, each has errors because the compilers relied almost exclusively on secondary sources for their information. (See Appendix A) Consequently, I have prepared a fourth list based on both primary Masonic and Jewish sources, independent of each other. For a Jewish Mason to appear on my list he had to be named in documents of impeccable credentials. Of course, some names appear on all four lists; several do not make my list; others are pending further investigation. (See Appendix B)

To single out Moses Michael Hayes and Moses Seixas as the two most important Jewish masons is unavoidable. Nowhere was the new chain of command in Masonry more apparent than in the career of Moses Hayes. Appointed in 1768 as Deputy General of Masonry for North America, Hayes' mission, under the authority granted to him by the Grand Council of Princes at Kingston, Jamaica, was to introduce the "Scottish Rite" to America. He had been given, according to the patent, "full power to constitute Lodges of Royal Arch and Perfection, also Councils and Grand Councils of Knights of the East and Princes of Jerusalem. . . ." The appointment of Hayes, a Jew, to such high honors in America, when Jews were being expelled, hated, and persecuted throughout Europe, was but another indication that the New World would be different from the Old and that Hayes was an extremely able individual. His name and Masonry in America are synonymous. Hayes organized the King David Lodge in New York and then was instrumental in moving it to Newport in 1780. He served as its first Master from 1780 to 1782, and after moving to Boston continued to travel throughout the colonies spreading the doctrine of Masonry.

There is little to dispute that after the death of Aaron Lopez, the "Merchant Prince of Newport," and Jacob Rodrigues Rivera and others, Moses Seixas completely dominated the Jewish community of Newport. He was one of its leading citizens, a prominent merchant, and the last president of Congregation Yeshuat Israel before the community faded away. He even acted as the *mohel*, or ritual circumcizer. A master of the English language, he authored two famous letters to George Washington: one from the Masons and the other from the Hebrew congregation. It should be of special

interest and a source of great pride to all Masons that Seixas' penned words "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance" were used by Washington in his address to the new government. Additionally, Seixas was one of the founding members of the Bank of Rhode Island in Newport, serving as its cashier until his death.

His prominence in Masonry was no less pronounced. He served as Senior Warden under Moses M. Hayes in the King David Lodge, and after Hayes' departure he became its Master, supervising the reconstitution of the St. John Lodge No. 1 with the King David Lodge in 1790, retaining his title of Master until 1808. He also served as Grand High Priest of the Royal Arch from 1795 to 1803 after his appointment as Deputy Inspector General of Masonry for Rhode Island. Instrumental in its formation, Seixas assumed the post of Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island from 1802 to 1807. In addition to his service to Rhode Island Masonry, Seixas is also credited with helping L'Union Francais Lodge No. 17 of New York overcome its difficulties. After its formation in 1798 that lodge was placed on probation for six months. Seixas joined it and assisted in petitioning the Grand Lodge of New York for authority to continue its Masonic labors. Leon H. Depas, historian of the lodge, even stated that "the presence of a brother of such stature as Seixas without a doubt helped to enhance the credibility of this group of bretheren." And so they survived.

What more can one say of the Jewish Mason from Newport, Rhode Island? Such was his prestige; such was his illustrious career. Such also has been the relationship of early Masonry in Rhode Island and the Jewish community of Newport. No matter what standard of comparison one adopts — commercial, religious, patriotic, social conscience — the colonial Jews of Newport and the Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons were synonymous from 1658 to at least the early part of the 19th century.

NOTES

¹Peterson is inaccurate in that these Jews came from Barbados and, instead of surviving until 1742, the community left no trace of its existence for a significant period of time.

²These names appeared in a purchase of land agreement for a Jewish cemetery in 1677, and again in a court case. Both reaffirmed the names of the Gould document and of Peterson's statement.

³The connection that links the fragmented document, the chest, and Nathan Gould involves the relationship of the following families: Pacheco, Carr, Wanton, Hull, and Gould. First, it has to be established that Moses Pacheco was the author of the disputed document. Along with Mordecai Campanell he was one of the two leaders of the pioneer Jewish community. Second, how did the old chest, which contained the critically important document, get from the house of Pacheco to the house of Gould? Reasonable conjecture, based on irrefutable facts, suggests that its history was as follows.

Upon Pacheco's death, the court appointed Caleb Carr as the administrator of the estate. Upon Carr's death, he willed to his son Edward, among other things, "the chest that stands in the hall which I had of Moses Pacheco the Jew." Now there is no question but that the families of Caleb Carr and John Wanton were close. Both men were outstanding Quakers of Newport, and both had served as governors of Rhode Island. The former was active in real estate and in business, the latter was one of Newport's most prominent merchants. Members of both families were Masons. When Carr's will of 1693-1694 was recorded in 1715, John Wanton was one of the witnesses. There is a suggestion also, that branches of the two families were united by marriage. Whether it was because Wanton had better storage facilities or because the two families were close, papers originally belonging to the Carr family ended up in the Wanton family.

The next connection was Hannah Hull. She was a great, great granddaughter of John Wanton. When she died, Nathan Gould's father, also a relation to the Wanton family, was appointed administrator of her estate. This then, is the explanation behind Nathan Gould's story that in an old chest belonging to a deceased relative he found certain papers, including the famous document in question.

⁴Further research on the cemetery is being conducted to ascertain if anything more can be learned about the Jewish community during these years.

⁵To be considered a full-fledged Jewish community the following services and institutions had to be provided: a cemetery, a synagogue, a religious school, a kosher butcher, a ritual bath, and a *mohel*. In addition, the observance of the Sabbath, attendance at weekly and holiday services, the giving of charity, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and the offering of hospitality to visitors and strangers, all are phases of Judaic tradition and all were practiced in Newport.

APPENDIX A

LISTS OF JEWISH MASONS OF NEWPORT

St John's Lodge¹

Christian Myers
 Moses Isaacs, 1760
 Isaac Isaacs, 1760
 David Lopez, 1762
 Jacob Isaacs, 1763
 Moses Lopez, 1763
 Isaac Elizer, 1765

St. John's Lodge²

Moses Isaacs
 Isaac Isaacs
 David Lopez
 Moses Lopez
 Isaac Elizer
 Eleazer Elizer
 Moses M. Hayes
 David Lopez, Jr.
 Solomon A. Myers
 Abraham P. Mendes
 Moses Seixas
 Jacob Jacobs
 Barak Hayes

King David Lodge³

Moses M. Hayes
 Solomon A. Myers
 Isaac Isaacks
 (broker, 1760)
 Joseph Jacobs
 Eliezer Elizer
 Moses Isaacks
 (silversmith, 1760)
 Isaac Elizer
 Christian Myers
 (doubtful)
 S. Simpson
 Samuel Levy
 (member, 1760)
 Abm. Pollock, 1760
 D. Lopez, 1762
 Jacob Francks, 1763
 (broker in flax)
 Moses Lopez, 1763
 Nathaniel Phillips
 (member, St. John's
 Lodge, 1793-1795)
 Daniel Phillips
 (Father made a
 member, 1747. In
 St. Johns Lodge,
 1793-1795)

King David Lodge¹

Eleazer Elizer
 Moses M. Hayes
 Isaac Isaacs
 David Lopez, Jr.
 Sol. A. Myers
 Abraham P. Mendez
 Moses Seixas
 Jacob Jacobs
 Barrak Hayes, 1791
 Sheftall Sheftall, 1792
 Abraham Massias, 1800

King David Lodge²

Moses M. Hayes
 Solomon A. Myers
 Joseph Jacobs
 Eleazer Elizer
 Moses Isaacks
 Isaac Isaacks
 Isaac Elizer
 S. Simpson
 Samuel Levy
 Abm. Pollock
 David Lopez
 Joseph Francks
 Moses Lopez
 Nathaniel Phillips
 Daniel Phillips

¹Samuel Oppenheim, "The Jews and Masonry in the United States Before 1810," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 19 (1910), 19.

²Morris A. Gutstein, *The Story of Jews of Newport* (New York, 1936), 168-169.

³"The Lyon Collection," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 27 (1920), 416.

APPENDIX B

BERNARD KUSINITZ'S LIST OF JEWISH MASONS¹

Moses Isaacs
Isaac Jacobs
Myer Pollock
David Lopez
Jacob Isaacs
Moses Lopez
Isaac Elizer
Eleazer Elizer
Moses M. Hayes
Isaac Isaacs
David Lopez, Jr.
Solomon A. Meyers
Abraham Perreira Mendes
Moses Seixas
Joseph Jacobs
Baruch Hayes
Sheftall Sheftall
Abraham Rodrigues Rivera

¹To be included in this list, a name had to appear in both Jewish and Masonic sources. Some names that appeared in Appendix A and rejected here might have been members of Masonic lodges in other communities before moving to Newport. Nevertheless, since their names did not appear in both Masonic and Jewish records for Newport, the assumption was that they were not active members while in Newport.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BY SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

Recent acquisitions in the library of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association containing items of Rhode Island interest and a listing of these items:

1. *Rhode Island: A Bibliography of its History*. Edited by Roger Parks, Senior Research Associate, Boston University. This work is volume 5 of the Bibliographies of New England series prepared by the Committee for a New England Bibliography, John Borden Armstrong, Boston University, chairman and series editor. University Press of New England, Hanover, New Hampshire; London, England, 1983. 223 pages, indexed, hardcover.

Items too numerous to mention, many extracted from the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*.

2. *The Jewish Experience in America: a Historical Bibliography*. Compiled from the data base of the American Bibliographical Center by editors at ABC-Clio Inc. ABC-Clio Inc., Santa Barbara, California; Oxford, England, 1983. 190 pages, hardcover.

Items too numerous to mention, many extracted from the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*.

3. *American Jewish Archives*. Published by The American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati. Volume 35 (April 1983), under "Selected Acquisitions" includes entry of "Braude, William G.; Providence, R.I. Autobiography and Miscellaneous Sermons and Lectures, 1932-1976; Typescript and Printed (Received from William G. Braude)."

Volume 35 (November 1983), mentions Rabbi William G. Braude in paper by David Polish, "The Changing and Constant in the Reform Rabbinate," on page 286. Also mentioned is Rabbi Samuel Belkin in paper by Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886-1983," on pages 142-143, 149, 156, 159.

4. *American Jewish History*. Published by the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Volume 73 (December 1983), notes *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 8 (November 1982), on page 211.

Volume 73 (June 1984), notes *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 9 (November 1983), on page 453.

5. *Archival acquisitions*. The archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

on September 24, 1984 received the following materials from the Pawtucket-Central Falls Chapter of Hadassah:

Donation program books (1937-1970); Minutes (1924-1977); Account Books (1949-1974; several photographs and snapshots; and miscellaneous items, including letters, program notices and invitations.

THE THIRTIETH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was held on Sunday, April 21, 1984 at the Rhode Island Jewish Community Center, 130 Sessions Street, Providence. Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky, president, called the meeting to order at 2:40 p.m., and requested that the reading of the minutes of the last Annual Meeting and the Midwinter Meeting be waived. The request was granted.

Bertha Kasper, Treasurer, reported a total income for the calendar year ending December 31, 1983 of \$16,220. Expenses amounted to \$10,911.16, leaving a balance of \$5,309.64 in Fleet National Bank. Mrs. Kasper also reported that \$9,065.78 had been invested in the Fidelity Cash Reserve Fund, that life Membership and Endowment Funds had a balance of \$1,817.23, and that \$2,500 was on deposit at the Pawtucket Institution for Savings. The total net worth of the Association was reported at \$18,692.25. The Treasurer's report was approved as read.

Louis I. Sweet, Budget Chairman, reported an increase in the number of members, and reviewed the 1984 budget as adopted at the Midwinter Meeting. Melvin Zurier, Membership Chairman, elaborated on this report and announced that eighteen new members had been recruited.

Eleanor Horvitz, Librarian and Archivist, explained some of the services and activities she engaged in for the Association during the year. She reported that the *Encyclopedia Judaica* will include information about the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, and that the Pawtucket Preservation Society will publish a 1985 calendar which will include a picture of the old Ahavoth Shalom Synagogue of Pawtucket. Dr. Goldowsky acknowledged Mrs. Horvitz's many contributions and added that, in addition to her regular duties, she also handles publicity and contributes articles to the *notes*.

Dr. Goldowsky next announced the selection of a new Editor of the

Notes, Dr. George H. Kellner. He noted that the new Editor received his doctorate in history from the University of Missouri, that recently he had published *Rhode Island: The Independent State*, that he was a cocreator of the multi-image show "Providence: A Century of Greatness, 1832-1932," and that he has contributed numerous articles to local and national historical journals. Dr. Kellner holds the position of Professor of History at Rhode Island College.

Dr. Kellner addressed the audience, indicating his commitment to the Association and to making the *Notes* a respected historical journal. He spoke with enthusiasm about the Association's \$500 grant for a scholar-in-residence, about the possibility of student membership, and about the archives. Additionally, he continued to suggest that members have a voice in the *Notes* through suggestions for improvement and submission of material for publication. In closing Dr. Kellner called upon all members to support him and the Association so that he may fully carry out his responsibilities.

Jerome Spunt, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, reported that in addition to the Secretary, the Association has created the new position of Recording Secretary. Sidney Long has agreed to become the Recording Secretary. The slate of Officers of the Association was read as follows: Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., President; Geraldine S. Foster, Vice President; Stella Glassman, Secretary; Bertha I. Kasper, Treasurer. The new members of the Executive Committee were announced as Zelda Gourse, Barbara Long, and Bernard Kusinitz. The names of Honorary Members of the Executive Committee and the names and terms of continuing members were read. A motion was made, seconded, and carried to elect the slate as presented by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. Dr. Goldowsky introduced the new officers. He also requested a minute of silence in memory of the late Howard Presel, former Executive Committee member, who had died during his incumbency in the past year.

Dr. Goldowsky next introduced the featured speaker, Lawrence H. Fuchs, Ph.D., Walter and Meyer Jaffe Professor of American Civilization and Politics and Chairman of the American Studies Department, Brandeis University. Dr. Fuchs complimented the Association and its work, and added that he felt privileged to address its membership on the topic of "The Jews of New England: Anything Special?" (A condensed version of this presentation may be found in this volume of the *Notes*.)

A question period followed. After adjournment of the meeting at 4:30 p.m., a collation followed.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella Glassman
Secretary

NECROLOGY

ADELSON, JOSEPH, born in Russia, a son of the late Elix and Devora (Kusinitz) Adelson. A former Newport resident, he lived in Providence for 58 years. He was a member of the law firm of Adelson and Chernick since 1929. He graduated from Harvard University in 1923, and from Yale Law School, where he was a member of the Order of Coif, in 1929.

He served nine years on the Providence Redevelopment Agency, resigning in 1972 with the post of vice chairman. He also belonged to the Urban League of Rhode Island and to the Rhode Island Bar Association. He was a member of Temple Emanu-El and an officer at the time of its founding.

Died on September 14, 1984 at the age of 82.

BARENBAUM, MORRIS, founder of Morris Clothes. He was a member of Congregation Sons of Jacob, Workmen's Circle, Touro Fraternal Association, the Elks, and the South Providence and Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association.

Died on October 4, 1983.

EPSTEIN, HERBERT W., born in New York City, a son of Samuel and Ethel (Rosenblum) Epstein. He had graduated from Brown University in 1949 and was manager of Max Oberhard, Inc. since 1953. He was a World War II Army veteran.

He served as president of the Newport County Council of the Navy League, member of the Navy League of the United States, of the Naval War College Foundation. He was a trustee and member of the planning and development committee of Newport Hospital, past vice president of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Newport Players Guild and the Newport Discussion Group.

He was founding member of Temple Shalom, vice president of the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue, and financial secretary of Touro Synagogue.

Died on September 8, 1984 at the age of 59.

FEITAL, PEARL, daughter of Harry and Sadie (Silverstein) Seder. As the wife of Samuel Feital, she had lived in Pawtucket for the past 40 years.

Died on September 30, 1984.

KAGAN, SAMUEL C., born in Russia, a son of the late Harry and Ethel (Brody) Kagan. He lived in Providence most of his life, and he was the founder of Kagan & Shawcross Insurance Agency from which he retired in 1979. A Democrat, he was an Alderman in the City of Providence, and from 1937 to 1976 he served in the House of Representatives in the General Assembly of Rhode Island.

Mr. Kagan supervised the state's redrawing of political districts to comply with the 1970 census, headed a governor's commission studying the problems of handgun control, and rose to deputy house majority leader.

Died on July 6, 1984 at the age of 75.

PRESEL, HOWARD, born in Providence, a son of the late Joseph and Esther (Spiegel) Presel. He graduated from Brown University in 1928. He was a Councilman in the City of Providence for 17 years.

Appointed State Records Supervisor, he supervised the restructuring of Rhode Island's records system in 1952. Under his direction, documents of historical and legal value were processed and preserved. After his retirement in June of 1974, he assumed the same task for the City of Providence.

Mr. Presel belonged to the Players, one of the state's longest active community theatre groups, was a member of the Providence Art Club, and served on the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died on February 28, 1984 at the age of 77.

PRESEL, MARIE N., born in Somerville, Mass., daughter of the late Barnet and Kate Roitman. A Providence resident throughout most of her life, she served as president of the Providence Center for Counseling and Psychiatric Services.

Mrs. Presel was a member of Temple Beth-El and its Sisterhood.

Died on January 11, 1984 at the age of 73.

SOFORENKO, MIRIAM, born in Providence, daughter of the late Charles and Lena (Rosenblatt) Silverman. She was an officer and board member of Insurance Underwriters Inc. and its three affiliated companies.

Active in many civic, religious, and philanthropic organizations, Mrs. Soforenko had served on the board of directors of Temple Beth-El and Temple Emanu-El. She had also been an officer of the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Blindness, and served as chairman of its screening programs. During World War II she won an award for sales of U.S. Savings Bonds.

Died on November 19, 1983 at the age of 66.

STRAUSS, ELSIE, a daughter of the late Max and Sarah (Brooks) Tatz. She was a lifelong resident of Providence. She taught physical education in the Providence School Department for 36 years until her retirement in 1952.

She was a member of the Providence Hebrew Day School, Meeting Street School, the Rhode Island Retired Teachers Association, and the National Retired Teachers Association.

A member of the former Temple Beth Israel, she was active in the Jewish Home for the Aged, the Miriam Hospital Women's Association, and the Pioneer Women.

Died on November 9, 1984 at the age of 89.

SUZMAN, ARLINE, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Joseph H. and Julia (Horvitz) Marcus. She graduated from the former Rhode Island College of Education in 1942, and received a master's degree from that institution in 1962.

A Bristol resident for twelve years, Mrs. Suzman was a member of the Interfaith Choir, and a member of the board of trustees and a past vice president of the United Brothers Synagogue.

She was founder and coordinator of the Hope High School Alumni Association. She was also affiliated with Brown University and Rhode Island College as a teacher-critic in English for undergraduate student interns.

Died on April 5, 1984 at the age of 63.

YOUNG, MORTON, born in Poland, a son of the late Shapshel and Rachel (Levin) Young. He was founder and owner of both the Raymond Mattress Company and Gold Star Mattress, Inc.

A member of Temple Emanu-El and a life member of the Temple's Men's Club. He also belonged to the Providence Rotary Club and to the Touro Fraternal Association.

Died on September 5, 1984.

ZACKS, BENJAMIN, born in Russia, a son of the late Wolf and Fannie Zacks. He lived in Taunton, Mass., before settling in Providence in 1933. He was associated with Benny's from the firm's original store on Fountain Street in Providence.

He served on many boards and committees in the Providence area, including membership in Temple Beth-El and its Brotherhood, the Miriam Hospital Association, and the Touro Fraternal Association.

Died on April 28, 1984.

ERRATUM

RIJHN Volume 9, number 1, November 1983, inside the back cover under "Life Members of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association" the name Mrs. Harold A. Gourse should read:

Mrs. Harry A. Gourse.

FUNDS AND BEQUESTS OF THE RHODE ISLAND
JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

FUNDS

SEEBERT J. AND GERTRUDE N. GOLDOWSKY *Scholarship Fund*
BENTON H. AND BEVERLY ROSEN *Book Fund*
ERWIN E. AND PAULINE E. STRASMICH..... *General Fund*

BEQUESTS

JEANNETTE S. NATHANS

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JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

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JANET AND MELVIN ZURIER

For information on becoming a Life Member or establishing a Fund,
write to the Association at 130 Sessions Street, Providence, Rhode Island
02906.

BACK COVER

Joseph (left) and Jacob Goodman, Pawtucket, R.I., @1910. Joseph, a
professor of mathematics and physics at Rutgers University, became an
attorney and practices with the firm of Levy, Goodman. Jacob practices law
with Semonoff, Gorin in Providence, R.I.

(Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, donation of Jacob Goodman Family)

