



**RHODE ISLAND
JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES**

VOLUME 11 NOVEMBER 1992 NUMBER 2

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D., *Chairman*

STANLEY ABRAMS

SIDNEY GOLDSTEIN, PH.D.

GERALDINE S. FOSTER

ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

BONNIE N. GOLDOWSKY

TERRY KANTOROWITZ SHAFFER

JEROME B. SPUNT

The Library of Congress National Serials Data Program (NSDP), Washington, D.C. 20540, which operates the U.S. Serials Data System, has assigned the following International Standard Serial Number (*ISSN*) to the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, a publication of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association: **ISSN 0556-8609**.

FRONT COVER

Beach and Boardwalk at Narragansett Pier, August 1940. See "Summers Along Lower Narragansett Bay: Narragansett Pier and Nearby Areas," pages 180-217. Foreground, Bernice Ganzer Axelrod. Front row, l. to r., Claire Stone Auerbach, Deana Robinson Litwin, Norma Berger.

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

NOVEMBER, 1992
VOLUME 11, NUMBER 2



Copyright © 1992 by the

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

130 SESSIONS STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02906-3444

FROM THE EDITOR

Notes on the *Notes*

I have been asked to include in this issue of the *Notes* some of my remarks at the May 3, 1992, annual meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association on the work of an editor. I began with a couple of negative quotes about editors, which I hope do not apply to the editor of the *Notes*:

From Adlai Stevenson — “an editor is one who separates the wheat from the chaff and prints the chaff.”

“Editing is the same as quarreling with writers,” by Harold Ross, the famous *New Yorker* editor.

A more positive quote from Malcolm Freiberg in the *William and Mary Quarterly*: A writer said to him, “You make me look so much more scholarly than I am. Thank you.” Freiberg said, “To edit was to teach — on a different level. Now one’s students were peers and superiors, dealt with individually rather than collectively. Preparing their monographs for publication required all of one’s skill, knowledge, and intelligence, to say nothing of tact and diplomacy. In the process, you learned as much as you taught.” To which I say, Amen.

A copy editor at a university press writes, “I try not to stand in the way of the author’s voice, especially if it is barreling down the page like a Mack truck. If the author has a nice feel for language and a sense of direction, I’m content just to point out the few bumpy phrases to avoid.”

To be specific about what I do for the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association: The first step in editing is *acquisition*, that is, collecting articles for an issue. Some, I am happy to say, come in like delightful gifts, such as those from Geraldine Foster, Seebert Goldowsky, and Eleanor Horvitz. Our Association’s close relationship with the faculty at local colleges, especially Sydney and Alice Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider at Brown, brings articles from them or their students.

More often, though, I have to think of ideas for an article and try to find writers. For example, last year’s Benefit Street article occurred to me because of an interesting vignette I heard about the area. I asked the subject of the vignette and someone who had done research on the area to write an article, but, unfortunately, they were unable to find the necessary time. Meanwhile, I was collecting names of possible contacts for interviews. Then I offered the Benefit Street area as a subject to several Brown University interns who had volunteered their services to the *Notes* in return for some training, and one became the author of the article.

An important part of acquisition is evaluation. Papers are judged mainly on historical relevance, suitability for a journal about Rhode Island Jews, accuracy, and preferably on whether the events occurred at least fifty years prior to publication.

Since David Adelman, the founder of the *Notes*, envisioned the journal as one that should provide not only history but notes for future historians, you may find items that may not seem to meet all these requirements. I have not yet turned down an article for lack of writing skill. I am willing to work with an author and try to make him or her look good. I do, though, send many articles back for suggested revisions.

The next phase is *copy editing*, which includes making sure of the correctness and consistency of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and style, and checking the accuracy of names, titles, citations, dates, and other facts.

Once the article is copy edited, it is sent for typesetting. The returned copy is then subject to *proofreading*, the most time-consuming and tedious part of editing, and one that even publishers of scholarly books are skimping on these days. I try to read or have read each article four times. Fortunately, I have found some volunteer proofreaders who help out — Bonnie and Seebert Goldowsky, Terry Kantorowitz Shaffer, Geraldine Foster, Violet Halpert, Barbara Levine, and Rosalind Gorin, who also helps with research. Of course, your editor takes full responsibility for any errors.

To use another of the quotes on editing I have collected, “The author will always open the book to the only typo.” And I must tell you, the worst day of the year for me is the day the finished book arrives — I always find some little mistake, often in something that has been read not four but perhaps fourteen times.

The final step, which takes time all along the way, is *arranging for printing*. That includes negotiating with the printer and setting deadline dates, checking the layout, selecting and writing captions for pictures, planning covers and introductory pages, and a final review of the entire book layout.

To get back to acquisition — you, the members and friends of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association are the key to the editor’s acquiring good articles. If you would like to be a writer or if you have any suggestions for articles, I urge you to call or write me.

Special thanks for help with the editor’s job this year are due to Anne Sherman, Association Office Manager, and loyal volunteer members Stanley Abrams, Aaron Cohen, Maurice B. Cohen, Jack Cokin, Sylvia Factor, Eleanor F. Horvitz, Bernard Kusnitz, Lowell Lisker, Toby Rossner, Alvin Rubin, and Lynn and Samuel Stepak. I also thank the volunteer writers of articles in the *Notes* and the many people who provided information.

Judith Weiss Cohen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MARKING ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY: THE DIASPORA OF THE SEPHARDIC JEWS	112
<i>by Robert L. Carothers, Ph. D.</i>	
BLACK-JEWISH RELATIONS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NEWPORT	117
<i>by Joshua Rotenberg</i>	
THE CONTRIBUTION OF NEWPORT'S COLONIAL JEWS TO THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE	172
<i>by Bernard Kusnitz</i>	
SUMMERS ALONG LOWER NARRAGANSETT BAY: NARRAGANSETT PIER AND NEARBY AREAS	180
<i>by Eleanor F. Horvitz and Geraldine S. Foster</i>	
<i>THE JEWISH HERALD</i> —HAPPENINGS OF INTEREST AT LOWER BAY VACATION PLACES	215
ALONE, A JEW IS NOTHING — JEWISH COMMUNITY IN PROVIDENCE IN THE MIDDLE TO LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY	218
<i>by Michael Goldstein</i>	
EDITOR EMERITUS GOLDOWSKY HONORED BY BROWN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE	233
SONS OF ZION SYNAGOGUE — MEMORIES	235
<i>by Melvin Zurier</i>	
100TH ANNIVERSARY OF TEMPLE BETH-EL LIBRARY	240
<i>by Seebert J. Goldowsky, M. D.</i>	
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY TURNS 100	242
<i>by Stanley M. Hurwitz</i>	
MEN OF VISION EXHIBIT	245
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES	246
<i>by Seebert J. Goldowsky, M. D.</i>	
THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION	250
NECROLOGY	253
ERRATA AND ADDENDA	259
FUNDS AND BEQUESTS	260
LIFE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION	261

MARKING ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY: THE DIASPORA OF THE SEPHARDIC JEWS

BY ROBERT L. CAROTHERS

This year, 1992, has been a special year for remembrance and for reflection, a year for taking stock of what has been and for setting the course for what lies ahead. For the University of Rhode Island, this is our Centennial year, a time to look back with pride at one hundred years of service to Rhode Island and to America and a time to set forth a bold new vision for a better future. And for many Americans, 1992 has been a year to celebrate, after a fashion, the 500th anniversary of the arrival in the "New World" of Christopher Columbus, a celebration clouded with moral ambiguity, but the sort of ambiguity which, at least in my view, is good for us, the ambiguity that causes us to test old and easy beliefs in the crucible of debate and discussion.

And so in July, into the exquisitely beautiful harbor of Newport, Rhode Island, sailed the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria* (or their reasonable facsimiles), ships which in 1492 brought into the fully occupied and fully cultured New World both bright dreams and dark death, blinding new vision and blighting old disease, a swirl, a maelstrom of ideas and values, faith and doubt, good laced with evil, truth built on lies, confounding contradictions.

But how could it have been otherwise? For Columbus' voyage began in the midst of another venture of nightmarish proportions, the horrific Spanish Inquisition, a chief target of which were the Jews of the entire Iberian peninsula. In the first entry in Columbus' account of his passage to the West, he wrote, "In the same month in which Their Majesties issued the edict that all Jews should be driven from the kingdom and its territories — in that same month they gave me the order to undertake with sufficient men my expedition of discovery to the Indies." Thus began as well an exodus of profound proportion, commemorated with like ambiguity this year, the 500th anniversary of the diaspora of the Sephardic Jews, whose vessels were lying in the harbor of Seville close by Columbus' own *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria* and by which the Great Voyager actually and literally sailed as he departed into history.

This expulsion of the Jews from Spain was but a single episode in a catechism of intense persecution that began nearly a century earlier and continued in flame and fury for another two hundred years, made manifest in the torture and death of more than 350,000 Jews and the flight in terror of many more. During such a period, the struggle to maintain faith and identity waxed and waned, and many Jews bowed to nominal conversion to live out the day, to shield parents and children from the rack and the screw and the grand *autos-da-fe*, the public judicial ceremonies in which

Dr. Carothers is the President of the University of Rhode Island. This article is adapted from his speech at Touro Synagogue, Newport, August 30, 1992, to the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue National Historic Site, Inc., in celebration of the annual reading of the George Washington Letter.

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Vol. 11, No. 2, November, 1992

those who persisted in the ways of their ancestors — and many who yet yielded — died in flames at the stake. It was some of these “New Christians,” known as the Marranos, a Spanish vulgarism for pig, who populated those ships lying in the harbor at Seville and, indeed, who we now know financed the expedition and navigated for and sailed with Columbus himself. It is likely, in fact, that one Lois de Torres, who was baptized just before sailing, was the first European, certainly the first in this expedition, to set foot in the new land.

The history of the Jewish exiles and particularly the Marranos and other crypto-Jews is complex, and the trail of the Marranos takes us to northern Africa, to Turkey and Salonica, Venice and Leghorn, France, and especially the Low Countries of modern Holland, where Amsterdam came eventually to be known as the Dutch Jerusalem. Many Spanish and Portuguese Jews saw their best hope far from a Catholic Europe dominated by the Grand Inquisition, saw a future in the lands of opportunity in the New world.

In the Spanish American colonies, however, the Marranos found only more of the same, as the Inquisition quickly began its brutal work in Mexico. By 1515, a Marrano was sent home to Seville to face his inquisitors, and in 1528 two of the colonizers, including the conquistador Hernando Alonso, were burned at the stake by the Apostolic Inquisitors for the New Colonies, for “the heresy of Judaizing.” By the middle of the century, however, with the Portuguese persecution now at full fury, many Marranos were heading for Brazil, then a Portuguese colony, in part because the tribunals of Portugal were now deporting many of its “penitent” heretics across the Atlantic to Brazil. In that colony the Marranos grew in both numbers and wealth. Although the Inquisition was never formally introduced there, the colony remained subject to the mother country in this regard, and by 1579 the persecution began anew under the direction of the Bishop of Salvador. Thus when the Portuguese colony came under attack by the Dutch of the West Indies Company in the early seventeenth century, the local Marranos espoused the Dutch cause. The Dutch were successful for a period of time in capturing and ruling several key cities in Brazil, and many Jews began openly to practice their religion. But when the Portuguese and their Spanish allies recaptured Brazil in mid-century (in a war effort financed ironically by the Marranos remaining in Portugal), the Jews of Brazil were forced once again to flee, many to Amsterdam and others dispersing throughout the American colonies of the Dutch and, to a lesser extent, of the English.

It was one of these groups of exiled Brazilian Jews which landed in New Amsterdam, then under the authority of Governor Peter Stuyvesant, who was persuaded to allow them to stay in his city-state only by the considerable exertions of the Jewish stockholders of the parent Dutch West Indian Company. There, in New York City, with Sephardic Jews who joined them from Holland, they formed, of course, the congregation, Shearith Israel, “Remnants of Israel,” from which came

the founders of Touro's congregation, Yeshuat Israel, "Salvation of Israel," and who built and, in 1763, dedicated this magnificent synagogue, the first such edifice in North America.

It was in this context of tortured history, then, that Moses Seixas, Warden to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, sought to secure from the President and Commander-in-Chief of his newly created nation, assurance that the terrors of the past were indeed behind them. With what hope and yet what fear this congregation, situated in the midst of strong Tory sentiment, must have viewed the changing of the government. Even those who had supported and financed the Revolution must have remembered the promises of long lineages of political leaders who took their grandfathers' money and loyalty, only in betrayal to wield the torch at the auto da fe. Could it be at last that built into the very founding principles of a government, indeed of a nation, was a tolerance of religious diversity, and an affirmation of religious freedom? These were the words Moses Seixas sought to read from the pen of the President himself, and he framed his request carefully, hoping to hear back the very language he put forward. And it did come back to him: this would be, George Washington promised him, a government which "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." It had been a long voyage.

In the years following that message from General Washington, Yeshuat Israel, in the ebb and flow of the fortunes of Newport, grew small and quiet, almost to the vanishing point. The poet, Harvard scholar, and connoisseur of all things Spanish, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, visited this seaport and wandered through the little plot of sanctified soil. Later, in 1852, he mused on the voyage we have recalled this afternoon, in the poem, "The Jewish Cemetery in Newport." He said:

How strange it seems! These Hebrews in their graves,
Close by the street of this fair seaport town,
Silent beside the never-silent waves,
At rest in all this moving up and down!

.....

And these sepulchral stones, so old and brown,
That pave with level flags their burial-place
Seem like the tablets of the Law, thrown down
And broken by Moses at the mountain's base.

The very names recorded here are strange,
Of foreign accent, and of different climes;
Alvares and Rivera interchange
With Abraham and Jacob of old times.

.....

How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,
What persecution, merciless and blind,
Drove o'er the sea — that desert desolate —
These Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind?

They lived in narrow streets and lanes obscure,
ghetto and Judenstrass, in mirk and mire;
Taught in the school of patience to endure
The life of anguish and the death of fire.

All their lives long, with the unleavened bread
And bitter herbs of exiles and its fears,
The wasting famine of the heart they fed,
And slaked its thirst with marah of their tears.

Anathema marantha! was the cry
That rang from town to town, from street to street;
At every gate the accursed Mordecai
Was mocked and jeered, and spurned by Christian feet.

Pride and humiliation hand in hand
Walked with them through the world where'er they went;
Trampled and beaten were they as the sand,
And yet unshaken as the continent.

For in the background figures vague and vast
Of Patriarchs and of prophets rose sublime,
And all the great traditions of the Past
They saw reflected in the coming time.

And thus forever with reverted look
The mystic volume of the world they read,
Spelling it backward, like a Hebrew book,
Till life became a Legend of the Dead.

But ah! what once has been shall be no more!
The groaning earth in travail and in pain
Brings forth its races, but does not restore,
and the dead nations never rise again.

Like many a poet attempting to recreate the complex world around him,
Longfellow had it right, and he had it wrong. He saw in his mind's eye the voyage
from old world to new, a voyage through fears and tears, to the peace and rest of this
quiet and grassy place in Newport, where solemn voices call him to reflect, as we
do together today, on the diaspora now 500 years past and on human cruelty and

courage, prejudice and principle.

But for Longfellow, the past is only the past, however it may provoke us to thought. "What once has been shall be no more!" He cannot see the horrors yet more vast, the evil yet more cold and dark, waiting for the children of the stock of Abraham beyond the horizon of the wide sea east of our Rhode Island. He could not know that his young nation, America, would be called to act in the spirit of its founding President's words, to give its precious young to defeat the massed forces of bigotry and persecution.

And Longfellow was wrong, too, about the earth and its restorative powers. "The dead nations never rise again," he concludes. But the voices from the graves on this gentle hillside are powerful, can inspire the recreation of the buried nation, as they have done in Israel, where Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews together have caused the nation to rise again, and they inspire in this very place today. Indeed, we gather to celebrate and to dedicate ourselves again to those very principles of liberty and equality for all which gave young America in 1790 the idealism and passion to change the world.

As we reflect on these five hundred years of Europeans in the new world, and on the five hundred years of the diaspora of the Sephardic Jews, and indeed on the one hundred years of Rhode Island's university, let us honor the human spirit that speaks to us in this historic place, that speaks of our power to do what is ethical and what is right, that speaks to our power not just to endure but which permits the right to prevail.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For a more detailed discussion of the history of the Inquisition and the Marranos, see Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1932), which was a primary source for this paper. I am also deeply indebted to conversations on this subject with Dr. David Gitlitz of the University of Rhode Island languages department. Dr. Gitlitz's forthcoming book on this subject is the definitive study of the diaspora of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews.

BLACK-JEWISH RELATIONS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NEWPORT

BY JOSHUA ROTENBERG

PART 1

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO BLACK-JEWISH RELATIONS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Finally, bretheren, [*sic*] let us with the united heart pray to that God who did promise the children of Israel that he 'will gather them from the North country and all the country wherein they have been scattered and will carry them to their native country,' that he will be pleased to bless and prosper our undertaking, and gather us also from all the country and carry us to our native country is the sincere desire of your brother in affliction.

Letter to African Union Society of Providence,
from Free African Union Society of Newport, February 13, 1794¹

During the American colonial period, European settlers were confronted with the problematic realities of a "New World": its unfamiliar geography, the establishment of a viable economy, the ethnic heterogeneity of an immigrant society, a representative political system, and a new social order. Although each colony was distinctive in the composition of its population, the development of both class and racial caste divisions were social patterns which cut across colonial boundaries. While the thirteen American colonies depended on their economic and political ties with Europe, colonial society had transformed from its European model in order to cope with different economic needs and diverse population.

Unlike Europe, America had built a racial caste system where African-Americans* and Native Americans were permanently and absolutely subordinate to Whites — there was very little fluidity to the barriers of race. Chattel slavery was an institution which selectively trapped and subordinated both Native and African-Americans under a White hierarchy. The legal, social, and economic machinations of colonial society turned against non-Whites in order to control, enforce and preserve slavery. Occasionally, a freed Black man could ascend to higher socioeconomic status, but there were always limitations to the extent of this mobility.

As in Great Britain, the White colonists' social and legal status varied with their wealth. The rich had more influence on government, more advanced education, the favor of law and, most importantly, enhanced access to the networks which

* In this article I will use the terms African-American and Black interchangeably.

This article is adapted from an honors thesis by Joshua Rotenberg in the Program in Judaic Studies at Brown University. Rotenberg is presently a student in the Brown University School of Medicine.

supported wealth. Although upward mobility was difficult in colonial America, differences in class could be overcome.

Some have argued that a belief in a hierarchy of the races did not develop until years after the American colonial period. According to Michael Banton, the attitude of late eighteenth century Englishmen towards race was this: "Africans were black because their environment had made them so; they were neither natural slaves nor were they especially well suited to work in the tropics."² And, according to some historians, American Whites before 1830 perceived Blacks as inferior, but "open assertions of permanent inferiority were exceedingly rare."³ While such assertions of permanent inferiority appear in the literature of the period, we cannot deny that there were economic, social, and political disparities between Whites and non-Whites in the colonial period. The supposed rigidity of the caste-like barriers between the races seems to conflict with the assumption that no belief in a racial hierarchy existed. How can we explain the extreme disadvantages faced by both free and enslaved Blacks in pre-Revolutionary Newport? Could African-Americans not advance because of their poverty, their race, or both?

In addition to racial and economic schisms, the American colonies were struggling to cope with the problems of religious minorities. At the same time as various Protestant denominations competed for converts and pre-eminence, Catholics and Jews were attempting to find a tolerated niche in British North America. Many of those same social pressures which subordinated religious minorities in Europe were at work in colonial society, and while these minorities were tolerated, they were also legally disadvantaged.

Given the colonies' European cultural antecedents, we might assume that religion proved to be as formidable a barrier as those of race and class. But was there actually equality of discrimination? Did one of these racial, economic, and religious barriers in late eighteenth century, colonial America prove to be the more salient? Were all three of these social schisms similarly impermeable to those aspiring to upward mobility as well as, conversely, resistant to the downward mobile?

Of course, not every region of the American colonies faced dilemmas of class, racial, and religious heterogeneity that were equal in magnitude. African-Americans formed the overall majority of the population of South Carolina, but in New Hampshire they only comprised one percent of the overall population. Even in their highest concentrations in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, only four percent of the inhabitants were Black.⁴ Similarly, not every colony contained a large number of people professing minority religions. Each colony, though, had to cope with the realities of racial, class, and religious diversity to some degree.

The composition of the population of late eighteenth century Newport, Rhode Island, provides an optimal location for studying the interactions of minority

peoples in a society divided by race, class, and religion. From its inception, the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations opened its doors to religious minorities. By the time of the Revolution, Newport's inhabitants practiced a spectrum of religions and, at the same time, it had grown to be one of the most prosperous cities in the American colonies. This wealth came with its prominence as a mercantile center, but one of the important foci of its trading activity was in slaves. This combined atmosphere of religious tolerance, financial success, and involvement in the slave trade contributed to the growth of Newport's African-American and Jewish populations. No two of Newport's many minority groups better illustrate the distinctiveness of colonial society's social barriers than its Jews and Africans.

Jews first arrived in Newport in the seventeenth century, and, while they found a tolerant environment for their religious practices, the community had disappeared by the beginning of the eighteenth century. In the 1720s Jews arrived again, searching for economic opportunities. Within fifty years of the return of Jews to Newport, the Jewish community had achieved great success in colonial society. But, despite Rhode Island's official commitments to tolerance, Newport's Jews were still legally disadvantaged. Did prevailing European norms dictate the unequal interactions between Jews and Gentiles in early America? Did Jews form another caste in colonial Rhode Island, behaving as a separate community within the larger community with a distinct set of norms and behaviors? To what extent were Jews disadvantaged by their identification with a minority religion? What do the interactions between Jews and other disadvantaged groups in colonial society tell us about their communal role in colonial society?

Unlike other newcomers to the Americas, Africans arrived on the shores of Rhode Island as captives chained to the holds of ships, isolated from any kin and denied input into their futures. Ultimately, their futures included slavery, discrimination, and a radical discontinuity in their African cultural identities. The common experience of slavery formed Africans' mode of transition into colonial society as well as their relationship to it. By the American Revolution most of Rhode Island's African-Americans were still enslaved, but a significant number had been freed. Regardless of their status, though, all Africans were treated as an inferior caste, socially and economically disadvantaged as well as foreign to the mainstream of colonial political life.

Moreover, African-Americans were hampered by poverty. As property, slaves had little chance to earn their own living, and within the master's household the slaves received some basic care, if only to protect the master's investment. Often, however, free Blacks lived in a worse physical state than slaves. Most had few employable skills and little education, and, consequently, when freed, the bulk of the Black population could only find the lowest paying and least attractive jobs.

African-Americans were hampered by dual stigmas of blackness and poverty. But how much of a stigma was their poverty compared to their color?

To answer these questions, a comparison of Jews and Blacks in colonial Newport can shed light on the comparative salience of religious, racial, and economic schisms in colonial Newport. Previous studies have depicted the Jews as among the least tolerated religious minorities in Newport, finding consistent political discrimination throughout the colonial period. Being neither of African nor of Native American descent, though, the Jews were untouched by the many limitations which Blacks faced. Racism was ever-present in colonial Newport as the White majority strove to control the town's African-Americans—twenty percent of all Newporters.⁵ Because Newport had the highest concentration of Blacks in New England as well as one of the largest and most influential Jewish communities in America, in few other cities of the colonial era would we find the possibility of such frequent and intense Black-Jewish interaction.

These interactions may inform our understanding of these groups' relative social standings in colonial America. If Jews were regarded as an alien entity and as a subordinate caste defined by their religion, then we might expect to see attitudes of sympathy, kinship, or affinity reflected in the records of the Black community. Similarly, we might expect to find that the Jews' attitudes and behaviors towards Blacks were remarkably more sympathetic and lenient.

From the cultural and historical backgrounds of these two groups, what might form their base-line expectations of each other?

First, we might expect to see the Jews' religious heritage informing their behavior towards the African-Americans. By the eighteenth century, many Jewish traditions had set precedents in religious law describing the treatment of slaves as well as of the poor. Consequently, in the practice of their religion, we might expect the Jews to have observed those religious traditions which would relate to the enslaved and poor African-American community.

Second, while only some of the Jews had arrived in America from markedly oppressive European or colonial territories, all of them had come from communities with histories of anti-Semitic tyranny and expulsion as well as religious traditions which stressed themes of oppression. Thus, it might seem only logical for the Jews to hold sympathetic emotional bonds with the enslaved and impoverished Blacks.

As for the Blacks, they too might have perceived the disadvantages which Jews faced in colonial and European societies, thus feeling a kinship to another oppressed people. In addition, perhaps the African-American religious tradition which stressed the lessons of the Old Testament and, specifically, the trials of the Israelite slaves formed the basis of an inter-group bond. Perhaps they looked to the Newport's

descendants of the tribes of Israel for support and sympathy.

There are few written records from the eighteenth century that specifically describe the interactions between African-Americans and Jews. Consequently, a comparison of the two groups' patterns of residence, occupations, income, social lives, and legal status will inform most of this study. If Jews and Africans faced similarly salient discriminations in pre-Revolutionary society, we would expect there to be some strong parallels between these groups' socioeconomic profiles. For example, as a result of their political disadvantages we might expect Jews and Blacks to unite in an effort to win more equal treatment. Did Jews and Blacks react to a similarly oppressive White and Gentile society by pursuing similar occupations, by socializing in the same organizations, or by fighting for the same political goals?

In this article, I plan to test the comparative rigidities of class and caste divisions in pre-Revolutionary Newport by examining the African-American and Jewish communities. The comparative experiences of these minority populations in pre-Revolutionary Newport will be revealed by answering these two general questions: a) How did their religious traditions and minority identities inform their interactions with each other? and b) What distinctive features of their economic and social positions might also have affected these relationships?

Because the margins of the Black and Jewish population in Newport are not so apparent, Part 2 of this paper defines the subjects of this investigation. Part 3 explores how the religious traditions of Blacks and Jews might have either influenced their expectations or prescribed their behavior toward each other. In order to examine the socioeconomic and legal positions of African-Americans and Jews in pre-Revolutionary Newport, Part 4 details these communal profiles. In the context of these contrasting pictures, Part 5 examines the actual interactions between African-Americans and Jews. In the conclusion, the distinctiveness of Black-Jewish interactions in eighteenth century Newport is evaluated, leading us to an overall assessment of the salience of race, class, and religious differences in colonial America. In the end, I will also discuss how the patterns set down in the pre-Revolutionary era may inform our understanding of today's African and Jewish American communities.

PART 2

WHO WERE THE BLACKS AND JEWS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NEWPORT?

Prior to a comparison of the interactions between a religious minority and a non-White caste, we must clearly define who is included in this study of Blacks and Jews in pre-Revolutionary Newport, Rhode Island. At first, this question seems strange, because many might think it very clear who was African-American and who was Jewish. In fact, the picture is not so clear.

There was a considerable amount of miscegenation in colonial Rhode Island, and thus contemporary legal documents, personal papers, and newspapers refer to people of African ancestry interchangeably as *Negroes* and *Mulattos*. In many other colonies of the Americas such distinctions formed a definitive social hierarchy where *Mulattos* enjoyed many social, legal, and economic advantages over those with pure African ancestry. If, as many have asserted, all Africans in the American colonies were treated similarly, then of what use were these distinctions between lighter and darker-skinned individuals? If there were advantages conferred on non-Whites with lighter skin in eighteenth century Newport, how can we study a singular "African-American" experience?

New England was much different from territories like New Orleans where the legal and social status of individuals increased proportionately with the amount of White ancestry. While in other colonies a "Mulatto" could attain markedly higher social and even legal status than people of fully African origins, in Rhode Island the term *Mulatto* was more useful when a physical description of an individual was necessary. Consequently, in advertisements for run-away slaves we find very frequent use of the word *Mulatto*.

It may have been that having a lighter skin occasionally conferred some minimal social advantage on the individual. But with respect to their legal status, the condition of African-American Newporters was similarly inferior regardless of the racial composition of their ancestry. All legislation regarding African-Americans included both terms *Mulatto* and *Negro*, and thus the result for both groups was a similarly subordinate caste status within White society.

The problems in describing the African-American community persist when we take into account that the legal, social, and economic status of a slave and that of a free Black were markedly different. Consequently, we cannot study African-Americans assuming that all of them were subject to the same socioeconomic realities. Yet, while some Africans like John Quamino, Bristol Yamma, and Newport Gardner were able to penetrate White society to some degree, they were extremely rare exceptions. Moreover, even the social ascent of these free Blacks was controlled by the beneficence of White men.⁶ Whether free or enslaved, all Blacks were subject to certain limitations because of their race, and thus we can study the African-American community as one distinctive group.

The Jewish community requires even more careful delineation, because not all Newporters of Jewish ancestry claimed membership in this community. For instance, in Ezra Stiles's *Bill of Mortality Newport, R.I.*, he lists two deceased individuals who we might think were Jewish by their names. But according to Stiles's list, Wilson Pollock* was a Baptist and Jacob Myers was an Episcopalian.

* Though Pollock is also an English name, Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., "Where They Lived and Worked in Old Newport," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 5, No. 4, November 1970, p. 382, includes a Myer Pollock as a Jew. Ezra Stiles described one Miss Pollock as a Jewess. See p. 151, below.

In addition, Stiles's list mentions that in 1760 a Mr. Marks died at the age of 71 and that he was a "Jew X^{ian}[sic]."7

Also, many descriptions of Newport's Jews have included the Lucena family, despite their dubious connection to Judaism. While James Lucena was a cousin of the famous Aaron Lopez, as well as one of the first individuals close to this community to be naturalized in Rhode Island, he never associated with Jewish practice. Like Lopez, James Lucena derived from a family of *conversos*, individuals of Iberian descent who had been forced to convert from Judaism to Catholicism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Yet unlike Aaron Lopez's family, Lucena's never reverted back to Judaism when they came to the more tolerant North American environment. The evidence of these individuals who seem to have had Jewish ancestry but who nevertheless affiliated with Christianity indicates that there were Newporters who shared this dual experience.

But what connection did these individuals have to those Newporters who publicly identified as Jewish by, for instance, practicing Jewish ritual, joining the Jewish social club, and by contributing to the synagogue? Alternatively, how did Newport's Gentile community relate to those people who attempted to separate themselves from Judaism? Like Mr. Marks, was James Lucena defined as a "Jew X^{ian}" by Gentiles because of his ancestry? This last question is most important, as an affirmative answer would suggest that even in Newport the barriers between Jew and Gentile had an ethnic quality in that not even a full conversion to Christianity could rid one of his or her Jewish minority status.

Within a year of their arrival in America, Aaron and David Lopez had openly affirmed their connection with Judaism by changing their given names from Duarte and Gabriel and by undergoing circumcision.⁸ The Lopezes' speedy association with Judaism in a country where it was acceptable but not necessarily socially or economically advantageous to be Jewish leads us to believe that the Lopez family was strongly committed to their religion.

Consequently, we might think that individuals like Aaron Lopez or Abraham Rivera would have scorned those conversos who did not return to public practice of Judaism when they had the opportunity to do so. However, the business and personal relationship between Lopez and his cousin, James Lucena, never waned. Although Lucena neither contributed to the synagogue, nor joined the Jewish social club, Lucena was drawn into the orbit of Lopez's mercantile empire. Even when Lucena moved on to Savannah, Georgia, he continued as Lopez's agent there until the Revolution. Consequently, we should not be surprised that the Lucena family was included in Ezra Stiles's list of "Jews in Newport in 1760."⁹ We can infer that because James Lucena was a cousin of Lopez and a successful merchant he moved in many of same social circles as the Jews of Newport. It also seems that Lucena's

refusal to join the Jewish *religious* community did not hinder his social or financial relationship with his Jewish family members. From the available evidence, it further appears that regardless of Lucena's Christian religious identity, he was still perceived as part of the Jewish community.

In contrast, while Wilson Pollock, Jacob Myers, and Mr. Marks shared the family names of important Newport families, these three individuals were not important personalities in the Jewish community. Consequently, their business and social interactions with practicing Jews must not have been strong. In addition, Stiles's references to these three in his *Bill of Mortality* are inconsistent. Unlike the consistent use of the term *Negro* in recording the deaths of African-Americans, Stiles only records one of these three men as a "Jew X^{ian}." If Judaism was perceived as an identity which was independent of religious preference, then Pollock and Myers would have been labeled "Jew X^{ians}" as well. There seems to be no evidence that Jewish ancestry necessarily precluded American colonists from assimilating into the Christian majority.

With regard to Lucena, though, many occupational and familial factors brought him into close contact with practicing Jews. His religious practice may have been irrelevant when his occupation, surname, and family connections labeled him, inappropriately or not, as a Jew. Consequently, religious practice may have been a sufficient condition for Gentiles to perceive one as Jewish; however, this condition does not seem to have been a necessary one.

Finally, the African-American community was composed of free and enslaved individuals who exhibited any trace of African ancestry. Whatever the hue of skin, being a Black meant unavoidable and permanent inclusion in that community. Almost all Blacks were distinguished by their appearance and thus automatically labeled as African, regardless of their self-identity. Newporters of Jewish descent, however, were not necessarily viewed as Jews. Certainly conversion to Christianity separated many people from the Jewish community. But full separation also required severing social and economic bonds with the Jews, as without these less spiritual measures one could still be identified with the Jews. Thus, a primary and most basic contrast between Blacks and Jews lies in the fact that Blacks could not escape their ancestry, while people of Jewish descent could identify either with the Jewish community or with the Christian one.

PART 3

INFLUENCES OF BLACK AND JEWISH RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS ON PERCEPTIONS OF EACH OTHER

Blacks and Jews had many points of contact in colonial society, and certainly these contacts must have been affected by their acquired prejudices towards each other. It stands to reason that one source of these biases might have been those

learned from teachings and traditions of their own religious cultures. How did their cultural or religious backgrounds influence these baseline expectations? Did Jewish tradition cultivate an understanding or sympathy with the African-American that other Gentiles did not have? Did Blacks' religion(s) or culture portray Jews as partners in their oppression?

Before we explore how Jewish traditions affected the perspectives of colonial Jews, we must know how closely tied these Jews were to religious observance. Not only would the intensity of their observance indicate how strongly the Jews felt about the preservation of European Jewish traditions, but it would also indicate how distinctively they behaved in Christian Newport. Frequent and public observance of Jewish rituals might further indicate the distinctiveness of this religious minority, and hence their tendency to stand in contrast to the Gentile majority.

Also, if Newport's Jews scrupulously observed their traditions, then it might stand to reason that through their religious observance they encountered their tradition's view on Blacks and chattel slavery. And thus, if the Jews were not influenced by the social pressure of the Christian minority, then sympathetic attitudes towards the Blacks might have manifested in the behaviors of Jewish Newporters.

To answer these questions, we will 1) examine how Jewish observance manifested in a colonial American environment, 2) assess how deeply Gentile culture influenced Jewish religious practice, and 3) reflect on how Jewish tradition may have informed Newport's Jews on how to perceive Africans and slaves. Since the Jews' religious observance was distinctive in the greater Gentile, colonial society, then the question of how "traditional Judaism" guided these Jews to relate to Africans becomes essential. An assertion that there was no connection is unnecessary; even an inconclusive answer will require us to examine other influences on the Jews' behaviors.

An analysis of the influence of Blacks' religious culture on their baseline expectations of Jews will be much more difficult because of the dearth of records and the low levels of Black affiliation with Newport's churches. Regardless, enough data exists for us to assess whether any unique perception of Jews or Judaism was a major theme in their religious practice.

Luckily, many witnesses of the Jews' observance of ritual left written accounts of their practices. The most detailed of these descriptions can be found in the *Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, a Congregationalist minister who had great interest in the Jews and their religion. Because of this interest in Judaica, he often attended services at the synagogue and kept detailed notes regarding the Jews. While Stiles had taught himself Hebrew and had studied many of the Jewish religious texts, he was ignorant of normative Judaism. Despite this ignorance, Stiles's observations

are extremely detailed and often confirmed by other written evidence in the Jews' own private papers, letters, and published works.

However, as a result of Stiles's ignorance of the actual customs his narratives do not describe details which would enable us to assess just how scrupulous the Jews were in their religious practices. But even with these deficiencies, we still get some picture of the Jews' religious life in pre-Revolutionary Newport. Apparently the Jews of eighteenth century Newport observed the major rituals of contemporary normative Judaism. Stiles described their Sabbath services in his diary:

April 18th 1772:

A.M. I went to the Synagogue, it being **שבת**, Sabbath of the Passover. They read in the Law the passages which give an Account of the Exodus and Institution of the Passover; and also a passage about Vth of Joshua concerning circumcision and rolling away the Reproach of Egypt. Several mentioned over the Names of their dead friends, for whom Prayers were immediately made. Large offerings or Alms were made to probably fourty [*sic*] dollars as one of the Jews estimated, and I believe true; for sundry offered Chai Livre i.e. £.16 or two Dollars — and I judge Mr. Aaron Lopez offered ten or a dozen of these Chai.¹⁰

It seems to have been common for Newport's Jews to refrain from work on the Sabbath and holidays. One Gentile observer of Newport's Jews commented that Joseph Lopez, Aaron's son, left work on Fridays at three o'clock during the winter and five o'clock during the summer.¹¹ Major holidays as well as the less important ones, such as Purim, were observed.¹² In addition, major life cycle events were celebrated in the synagogue, as evidenced by the Bar Mitzvah of Moses Lopez'sson in January, 1770.¹³ Communal prayer according to Sephardic ritual was a major feature of colonial Jews' religious practices.

While there are no records of what actually transpired in the kitchens of Jewish homes, we do know that Newporters had access to an abundance of kosher foods as well as those foods used in Jewish ritual. In fact, Aaron Lopez exported kosher meats to Jamaica, and by 1770 his products were well known there. Occasionally his cargoes even included such specialty items as *chorisas* (*haroset*, a mixture, usually of apples, nuts, and wine, eaten at the Passover Seder).¹⁴

Besides these more common Jewish customs, the Jews had other rituals which distinguished them from their Christian neighbors. One of the more dramatic practices was observed by Ezra Stiles:

N.B. The Jews are Wont in Thunder Storms to set open all their Doors and Windows for the coming of Messiah [*sic*]. Last Hail Storm, 31 July, When Thunder, Rain and hail were amazingly violent, the Jews in Newport threw open Doors, Windows, and employed themselves in Singing and repeating Prayers etc., for meeting Messiah [*sic*].¹⁵

This religious behavior was out of the ordinary for eighteenth century Newport, and thus, like other observances, it served to emphasize the religious differences between groups.

Keen observers of the Jewish community like Ezra Stiles were not the only ones to comment on the different religious practices. Many Newporters took notice and seem to have perceived the Jewish residents as extraordinarily pious. In his memoirs, George Channing describes Joseph Lopez, one of Aaron's sons, as, "... conscientiously bound to observe the 'times and seasons' peculiar to Mosaic ritual."¹⁶ This theme is consistent in his description of other Jewish Newporters and articulates the perception of Jews practising foreign rituals which affiliated them with a minority religion.

While the Jews of Newport did observe many religious rituals practiced in Europe, some of their patterns of observance diverged from those in the Old World. Contrary to the proscriptions which applied to contemporary European Jews, many of Newport's Jews earned their livelihoods from the sale of nonkosher foods and products derived from nonkosher animals. In 1772, Moses Hays advertised the sale of Irish beef and Burlington pork from his store.¹⁷ Aaron Lopez and Jacob Issacks also sold nonkosher foods out of their stores. Moreover, the trade in spermaceti candles was a pillar of Newport Jewish income; Aaron Lopez and Jacob Rivera as well as Naphtali, Samuel, Abram, and Isaac Hart were all important players in the manufacturing of candles refined from whale fat.¹⁸

Besides the fact that some Jews earned their livelihoods from the sale of nonkosher products, they also differed from European Jews in their style of dress. Unlike the European pattern, the Jews of Newport were indistinguishable from White Gentiles. During the Revolution, a Hessian mercenary for the British army was impressed that the Jews were not "recognizable by their beards and dress as they are at home."¹⁹ It seems that Newport's Jews had discarded the traditional practices of wearing distinctive beards or visible *tzitzit* (fringes tied to the corners of an undergarment) in favor of current colonial fashions.

The loose adherence to some contemporary Jewish traditions is not surprising given 1) the weakness of Jewish religious authority in Newport and 2) the overall spirit of religious tolerance that characterized Newport.

Like all other colonial congregations, Newport's Nephuse Israel never employed a rabbi. It is not clear whether rabbis would not come to settle in America or whether it was because colonial Jewry could not sustain a rabbi. From time to time, a visiting rabbi would stay in Newport for a short period, but the function of these individuals was more to collect charity than to preside over the congregation as a rabbinical authority. Isaac Touro served Newport's Jews as their *Hazzan* (Cantor, Hebrew) in the pre-Revolutionary period. In the eyes of Gentiles, he was the Jews' spiritual

leader, but he lacked rabbinical training, and therefore his influence was minimal. Of course, when Jews had questions of law, they could address letters of inquiry to Europe; however, a reply could take months. Consequently, given their resources, the Jews were left to interpret the tradition as best they could.

But, more importantly, even if a rabbi had led the community, his authority still would have been much more limited than in Europe. In general, religious leaders did not hold the same political and economic power that they did in Europe. Also, the Jews were not treated like a separate political entity with their own autonomous institutions as their coreligionists were overseas. All religious groups in Rhode Island, Jewish and otherwise, were officially divorced from the colonial government — they had no political or economic autonomy except regarding the organization of their own churches. Individual ministers could influence their parishioners, but without the political power necessary to enforce participation, even the ministers of the dominant Christian churches had limited authority. In fact even in 1760, forty-nine percent of the population was unaffiliated with any religion. In ten years that number had dropped to forty-two percent, but still the size of the group labeled by Ezra Stiles as “nothingarians” is impressive.²⁰

For the Jews, this absence of a relationship between government and religion had profound impact on the relationship between the individual and the synagogue. Whereas in Europe the Jews depended on their community for their personal identity, the colonial synagogue relied on its membership for its existence. Marcus writes, “To some extent the very structure of the colonial Jewish community, its unitary character, jeopardized the tradition. The old way of life was threatened by virtue of the fact that there was but one religious institution in the Jewish community: the synagogue.”²¹ The synagogue was the solitary religious institution, and even its power over the community was negligible when the very real option of assimilating to the status of a “nothingarian” was ever-present.

As a result of the attenuated power of the religious institutions, there is good reason to believe that even had a rabbi presided over the congregation, he could not have prevented the rank and file break with tradition. In an environment which both protected freedom of religion and tended to encourage voluntary religious affiliation, we can see how the Jews could quickly vary their religious behaviors to suit the colonial environment. Strict adherence to the traditions regulating the exchange of nonkosher products would have deprived them of a significant proportion of their income, and continuing their distinctive European style of dress would have separated them from their Gentile neighbors. Thus, free from the social and political pressures inherent in European Jewish communities, the Jews of Newport were free to conform to the American milieu.

Despite their disadvantaged political status, the Jews were interested in adapting their religion into the mainstream of colonial life and their religion was maximally

accepted. A good indicator of how integrated Judaism was in Newport lies in where the Jews chose to establish their institutions — projects requiring investment of time, money, and thought. The location and design of the Touro synagogue, being the sole structure reflecting a Jewish presence in colonial Newport, illustrates the maximal acceptance of Judaism into Newport's community of religions. First, looking at a map of Newport, we should be struck by the centrality of the synagogue in the city. It was built within yards of the colonial legislature and the courthouse, and it is no farther from the populated areas of town than any church. The Jews' place of congregation was not removed from or even peripheral to Newport; it was a central fixture. The synagogue's centrality demonstrates both that the Jews felt comfortable observing their religion in a focal point of Newport as well as that the Gentiles accepted such a demonstrative expression of the Jewish presence.

The architectural style of the Touro synagogue further illustrates the Jews' willingness to conform to colonial aesthetics. When they decided to build a synagogue they chose an architect, Peter Harrison, who had served the richest Newporters and Bostonians. Harrison had designed the Malbone mansion and would later build the city's famous Brick Market. His design for the synagogue combined a traditional, Sephardic interior with a typical colonial exterior. Its interior copied from the famous synagogue in Amsterdam, the one in Rhode Island was also intended to reflect "... not just growing wealth, but renewal, reviving confidence and even claims of grandeur."²² Ezra Stiles's description of the synagogue's dedication ceremony reflected that the Gentiles of Newport were appropriately influenced by its grandness:

Dec. 2, 1763, Friday. In the afternoon was the dedication of the new Synagogue in this Town. It began by a handsome procession in which were carried the Books of the Law, to be deposited in the Ark. Several Portions of Scripture, & of their Service with a prayer for the Royal Family, were read and finely sung by the priest & people. There were present many Gentlemen & Ladies. The Order and Decorum, the Harmony & Solemnity of the Musick, together with a handsome Assembly of the People, in a Edifice the most perfect of the Temple kind perhaps in America, & splendidly illuminated, could not but raise in the Mind a faint Idea of the Majesty & Grandeur of the ancient Jewish Worship mentioned in Scripture.*²³

Besides Stiles's impression of the synagogue, his entry also indicates that the Jews had included in their religious services prayers for their secular leaders.²⁴ The dedication service was not an isolated event, as the Jews sponsored entire services for colonial American holidays, such as Thanksgiving, or during national emergencies.²⁵

* See Kusnitz, "The Contribution of Newport's Colonial Jews to the American Way of Life," on p. 172 of this issue.

Not only did the Jews accept elements of colonial culture in their religious rituals, but the Gentiles also seem to have had knowledge of Jewish rituals. In his old age, George Channing recalled what he did on the Sabbath and holidays for Moses Seixas, a prominent Jew in Newport and later cashier of the Bank of Rhode Island:

I was expected to take the keys to the bank when a Christian officer would be in attendance for this service. I always received some token usually in the shape of Passover bread and bonbons resembling ears in memory of those cropped from Haman when hung for his intended cruelty to Mordechai.²⁶

Not only do non-Jews seem to have maximally tolerated the Jews' minority religious practices, they also seem to have reacted positively towards their practice. Channing and Stiles were not the only Christians who had access to the Jewish rituals. In 1773, Governor Wanton as well as Judges Oliver and Auchmuty attended a sermon delivered by Rabbi Carigal, a famous cleric who visited Newport to raise charity money. Thus, we see that while the Jews may have been politically disadvantaged in Newport, their religion was socially and politically acceptable in the dominant culture.

Observance of religious traditions and affiliation with institutions marked the Jews as distinctive and as a part of a disadvantaged minority. However, the Jews altered their rituals as well as their religious institutions to fit the colonial environment. In addition, White Gentiles were willing to accept the Jewish religion as an integrated element of Newport's Protestant-dominated religious culture.

While the Jews of colonial Newport observed religious rituals, they altered facets of their traditions to adapt to the colony's social norms (e.g., patriotism, observance of indigenous holidays). Jews were open to change, and Gentiles were open to interacting with Jews. Given that Jewish tradition was open to change in colonial Newport, it is conceivable, then, that any Jewish traditions which defined the status of the African could also have been adapted to suit their environment. Given the mutability of colonial Judaism, we now need to examine how Jewish tradition defined the ideal relationship of the Jew to both the African and the slave.

JEWISH TRADITION AND COLONIAL CHATTEL SLAVERY

Asserting that an entity called Jewish tradition informed Jews on how to treat African-Americans and that this religious code has directly led to the marginalization of Blacks assumes 1) that some entity known as "traditional Judaism" exists, 2) that this entity had clearly defined the roles of people of color in Jewish culture, and 3) that Jews knew the tradition.

There is an immense wealth of Jewish literature spanning millennia that seeks to describe the multitude of Jewish practices and beliefs. Many perceive Judaism as

a constant tradition, described succinctly by God at Mt. Sinai and perfectly transmitted over time and space to the present day. However, those behaviors and attitudes that have characterized Judaism have continuously adapted to suit the realities of these societies. In essence, Judaism has been changing ever since there have been Jews — the religion has transformed along with its adherents. It seems to be a gross simplification to characterize the various modes of religious observance of a people who have lived in every continent over thousands of years as one corpus known as Jewish tradition. As Calvin Goldscheider and Jacob Neusner wrote,

... there is not now, and never has been, a single Judaism. There have been only Judaisms, each with its distinctive system and new beginning, all resorting to available antecedents and claiming they are precedents, but in fact none with a history prior to its birth. Each system begins on its own, in response to a circumstance that strikes people as urgent and a question they find ineluctable.²⁷

Since no such traditional Judaism exists, it could not necessarily inform any one Newporter on anything.

Yet, even if we proceeded, assuming that such a constant source of traditional precedents existed, we would be hard-pressed to define its perspective on Africans or on slavery.

Africans certainly came into contact with Jews over the last few thousand years, but direct references to Blacks are sparse in Jewish literature. In the book of Amos (9:7), there is a reference to the Ethiopians, but not to Blacks as a whole.

To Me, O Israelites, you are just like the Ethiopians. True, I brought Israel up from the land of Egypt, But also the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir.²⁸

One possible interpretation of this source might have indicated the common humanity of all peoples, that all share equal status in God's judgment and that we should relate to all, especially Ethiopians, as equals.

We should not be surprised that a perception of Black inferiority is not a significant theme in the Bible or in the Talmud, because it simply was not part of the contemporary world-view. The modern ideology of racism is a construct which only arose in the last two hundred years.²⁹

There are also Jewish sources which indicate Jewish superiority over non-Jews, in general, "Yet it was to your fathers, that the Lord was drawn in His love for them, so that He chose you, their lineal descendant from all people." (Deuteronomy, 10:15). The concept of "chosenness" has manifested itself in many forms in many

Judaisms, but there is no definitive description of what obligations or status is conveyed by being chosen. As in the above quote from Amos, textual sources indicate both the "chosenness" as well as the "commonness" of the Jewish people. Thus, Newport's Jews might have chosen either "precedent" to define their relationship with Africans or with Gentile Blacks.

But, does the ambiguous meaning of Jewish tradition also apply in the case of slavery, an economic and social institution which demanded careful regulation? In many sources of Jewish laws governing slaves, a distinction is made between "Hebrew" slaves and "heathen" slaves. In these legal codes, the former group enjoys increased legal status because of their affiliation with the Jewish people.³⁰ In the seventeenth century, the American colonists attempted to model the American form of slavery after the biblical traditions, but over time they found this model impractical.³¹ As a result, Jews and Gentiles alike participated in a system of slavery that was best suited to their needs for cheap labor.

As a European people, some Jews were involved in the institutions which accompanied the opening of the New World, including colonization, the infamous triangular trade,* and slavery. But Jews in the colonial period formed different mechanisms for reconciling their religious observance with such institutions as slavery. In Suriname, for instance, the Jewish plantation owners converted their many hundreds of slaves to Judaism. This behavior seems to have been in accordance with Maimonides's interpretation of laws governing Hebrew servants:

If one buys a slave from a heathen without making any specifications and the slave refuses to be circumcised and to accept the religious duties incumbent upon slaves, the master bears with him all of 12 months; if the slave still refuses the owner may resell him to a heathen or to a foreign land."³²

In contrast, what religion did the slaves of Jewish owners pursue in eighteenth century Newport? Only about five percent of the deceased African-Americans listed in Stiles's *Bill of Mortality* for the years 1760-1764 are listed as having affiliation with one of the Protestant denominations.³³ Indirect evidence of their eventual allegiance with Christianity comes from the names of former slaves which appear in the records of the Free African Union Society, a religiously oriented self-help organization of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. There is no evidence of any Blacks joining the Jews in worship or in the management of the synagogue, and there are no records of anyone but European Jewish males being circumcised in Newport. Thus, it appears that the Jews in Newport did not convert their slaves like the Sephardi planters in South America. Consequently, there does not seem to have been a consistent attempt to define African slaves in terms of those

* Rum from New England was shipped to Africa in exchange for slaves. The slaves were carried to the West Indies to work the sugar plantations. Sugar and molasses, along with other West Indian products, were then shipped to Newport for the manufacture of rum.

definitions set down in the Pentateuch and interpreted by later authorities.

However, when it came to other traditions, such as the Biblical injunction against working servants on the Sabbath (Exodus, XX:10; Deuteronomy, V:14), the Jews of Newport may have conformed to the tradition to some degree. Many historical sources relate how Aaron Lopez, the richest of these colonists, kept his businesses closed from Friday afternoon to Monday morning, thus respecting both Jewish and Christian Sabbaths. But did the domestic slaves have Saturdays off, leaving Mrs. Lopez to tend to her husband and their ten children? Did those slaves who worked on Lopez's ships stop for the Sabbath while they were at sea? In both cases, I would hazard to assert that neither types of slaves observed the Sabbath like their masters.

Further, Deuteronomy (XXIII:16-17) states, "You shall not turn over to his master a slave who seeks refuge with you from his master. He shall live with you in any place he may choose ... you must not ill-treat him."³⁴ Yet, on a number of occasions Newport's Jews advertised in the local newspaper for the return of runaway slaves. On June 24, 1771, Samuel Hart even advertised for the return of a runaway on behalf of a Christian New Yorker (*Newport Mercury*, No. 668, p.3). Not only did they try to recoup the loss of their own investments, they tried to help Gentiles recover theirs as well. The Jews conformed to the social norms and helped perpetuate the system of slavery, even though aiding in the return of a runaway might have contradicted this potential source of Jewish legal tradition.

Why were some Jewish traditions observed and not others? As we saw before, it seems that the realities of pre-Revolutionary society nurtured the expression of some Jewish traditions and inhibited others. In Newport, scrupulous observance of the Sabbath and public worship in an impressive synagogue had great social value, but the conversion of slaves and help to runaways were not viewed as advantageous. In any case, it appears that Jewish traditions did not ultimately determine how Jews behaved towards their slaves or Africans.

Yet, even if Jewish tradition had taken some definitive stand on slavery or on the treatment of people of color, the Jews of Newport would probably have been unaware of what the religious literature proscribed. Colonial American Jews, like the vast majority of all Jews of that period (and throughout history, for that matter) were very ignorant as to the content and meaning of Jewish texts. Ezra Stiles, a Congregationalist minister in colonial Newport, knew more Hebrew and read more Jewish texts than the Jews residing in Newport. It is no accident that his most detailed discussions on theology were with travelling rabbis and not with the local residents. In fact, after Sabbath services during Passover 1772, Stiles described an interchange that he had with one of the worshippers:

I asked one when they should have killed the Pascal Lambs if they had been in Jerusalem; he replied too [*sic*] day. But I doubt it; he was ignorant.³⁵

In the end, the assertion that Jewish tradition has marginalized people of color fails on many levels. First, neither does a singular Jewish tradition exist nor do Jewish texts provide any consistent perspective on Blacks or an applicable one on slavery. Even if such traditions had existed, it is not clear that the Jews would have been aware of the their texts' intent. Second, Newport's Jews created a Judaism which emphasized certain rituals that were in harmony with the social, legal, economic, and political norms of the colonial environment; those traditions which conflicted with these norms were not emphasized. Certainly, religiously observant individuals have subjugated non-Whites, but to understand the interrelationships between Jews and Africans in Newport, we must look beyond their religious observance to explore other, more general environmental realities such as economics, politics, and values.

PORTRAYALS OF JEWS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN RELIGION
AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON BLACK-JEWISH RELATIONS

It is difficult to isolate and identify the religious practices of African-Americans and to investigate how indigenous African religions affected the perception of Jews, especially since only vestiges of African traditions remained after the process of forced acculturation to colonial society. The continuity of culture was minimal, and thus religious influences on Africans, if any, would have come from the dominant forms of Christianity. Thus, the religious teachings that Christian Blacks absorbed would have derived from the dominant White, Gentile traditions and not necessarily from within their own culture.

Also, like most Newporters, very few Blacks were officially affiliated with an organized church; none affiliated with the synagogue. The debate over whether to baptize Africans had been resolved positively by the eighteenth century, but still very few African-Americans joined the local churches. In 1772, the heaviest concentrations of Blacks were in Ezra Stiles's congregation; he recorded that seventy Blacks and five hundred Whites worshipped at his church. However, other congregations had many fewer African-American members; Reverend Sam Hopkins only had four or five members in that same year.³⁶ At the same time, Blacks also joined the Episcopal, Baptist, and Quaker churches. (See Table 1, below.)

This dispersion of the Africans among the various White-dominated churches would have further diluted any distinctly Black perception of Jews. As a small percentage of the congregants, their ability to interpret their own perspective on Jewish Newporters was severely limited.

However, from the records of the Free African Union Society we can examine possible biases of this post-Revolutionary, Black-dominated, religious organization towards the Jews.³⁷ The written record of the proceedings of this society, formed by African freedmen, reveals a feeling of kinship with the Biblical children

Table 1
Religious Affiliation of Slaves: Deceased 1760-1764

Year	None	B	E	P	Q	J	T1	T2
1760	38			1	1		40	40
1761	26		1				27	35
1762	25		1		2		28	34
1763	32		1	1			34	37
1764	34			1			3	40
Totals	155	0	3	3	3	0	164	186

B=Baptist, E=Episcopalian, P=Congregational or Presbyterian, Q=Quaker, J=Jewish

T1=Total number of deaths according to Stiles's lists.

T2=Total number of deaths according to Stiles's summaries.

Source: Stiles, *ibid.*, *Bill of Mortality*. By Reverend Stiles's own admission, his figures for 1761 were much lower than the actual mortality rate.

of Israel. For example, in their minutes and letters they identify themselves as "strangers and outcasts in a strange land,"³⁸ an allusion to Abraham's descendants who were to be enslaved in Egypt (Genesis 15:13). Christians of the colonial period also stressed the Old Testament, and in this religious environment parallels were easily drawn between the plight of the Africans and that of the Israelites.

However, there is no evidence to suggest that these rhetorical references to the Pentateuch translated into a feeling of kinship with contemporary Jews. In the records of the Free African Union Society, neither contemporary Jewish people nor Judaism receives special mention as having any significant meaning to the Black community.

For both Blacks and Jews, Newport was a community where there was minimal influence of religion on their perceptions of each other. Any religious influences were bound to derive from the dominant Christian traditions, and the vast majority of African-Americans did not even join religious institutions. In contrast, despite the continuity of traditions and the importance of religion to the cohesiveness of the Jewish community, the Jews had great latitude in defining their own religious expressions regardless of any religious antecedents. Since we cannot determine a direct influence of religion on their interactions, we must question what other social, economic, and political conditions in pre-Revolutionary Newport may have affected their relationship and their comparative statuses.³⁹

PART 4

A CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS
OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND JEWISH AMERICANS

Neither Black nor Jewish people had as full rights as White Christians under British and colonial law. But, how different were the actual lives of the Jewish and African newcomers to America? How did their respective disadvantages affect the two communities' economic and social lives? Might Jews and African-Americans have interacted in a way that manifested an alliance against a dominant White and Gentile society? Any such economic, social, or attitudinal bonds might indicate a commonly felt oppression in an environment of similarly rigid social schisms, while the absence or weakness of such bonds might point to differently salient barriers dividing class, race, and religion. Both of these groups found varying degrees of disadvantage due to their minority statuses; however, the African-Americans' dual stigmas of blackness and poverty proved to be key in differentiating their experience from that of the Jews. The colonial period had opposite effects on the Jews and Africans of Newport, Rhode Island. Jews maximally integrated into the social, economic and even political fabric of American society, while Blacks were precipitated out of it. In this section, we see the contrasting lifestyle patterns of these two minority groups in pre-Revolutionary Newport.

Unlike the Jews, not all of the colony's African-Americans lived in Newport. In 1755, only twenty-five percent of Rhode Island's Blacks lived in the colony's capital — most African-Americans lived in rural areas mostly as slaves.⁴⁰ Africans began appearing in Rhode Island during the seventeenth century; however, it was not until Rhode Island became an important center for the slave trade that Blacks formed a large presence there. In fact, Newport became the slave-trading capital of the North American colonies, and it is estimated that by 1770 Rhode Island underwrote seventy percent of the *colonially* based trade in slaves. Of course, the slave trade which originated in Great Britain far outweighed the American trade throughout the period. Colonial slaving from North America was responsible for less than ten percent of the period's traffic in Africans. According to Coughtry, the British trade outstripped Rhode Island's ventures by about a factor of twenty over the eighteenth century.⁴¹ Slaves who could not be sold in either Caribbean or southern colonial ports were brought to the home-ports in the North. Thus, over the eighteenth century, the slave population of Rhode Island increased markedly.

By 1790, 6.3 percent of the total Rhode Island population was African-American, the highest overall proportion in all of the northern colonies.⁴² In Newport, though, Blacks made up approximately *twenty percent* of the population. William Pierson refers to the general pattern of slave settlement in New England as a clustered minority, as seventy-five percent of Rhode Island's Blacks lived in Newport and King's Counties.⁴³ Most slaves who were freed made their way to the cities, but the

majority of Rhode Island's Blacks lived in rural areas.

There were many characteristics of the African-American population that derived from the practice of slavery. As an enslaved community, the nature of Black life was intimately tied to the fortunes of the master-class. The most pressing influence on family life was that there was a much higher proportion of Black males to females in New England. In Boston, there were 168 Black males to 100 females in 1765, and in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the ratio was 197 to 100 in 1767. In Boston in the same year there were 95 White males to 100 females, and in Portsmouth there were 102 White males to 100 females.⁴⁴ With fewer Black females per Black males, a typical result was that Black males often started families with Native American women or, less often, with White females. By 1782, about twelve percent of Rhode Island's overall population of African-Americans was of mixed ancestry.⁴⁵ In Newport of 1755, however, the gender ratio was 111 Black males to 100 Black females, and thus we would expect that the gender balance was a less serious issue in pre-Revolutionary Newport than in Boston or Portsmouth.⁴⁶

From the beginning of the eighteenth century, Newport's merchants had been increasingly basing the Rhode Island economy on shipping and commerce. The economy received strong boosts, particularly in the 1730s, when Newport began trading with Africa as well as with the West Indies, and in the 1750s, when Newport-based industries proliferated. However, the initial boom to the Rhode Island economy which resulted from the Seven Years War eventually gave way to the worst depression that had so far hit the colonies during the eighteenth century. Inflation soared, the public treasuries had been exhausted, and the number of indigent poor increased dramatically.⁴⁷ Moreover, because of trade restrictions on such critical imports as molasses, Newport's economy slumped in the first years of the 1760s. The economy recovered, but it was faced with another crisis toward the end of the decade. Because of the non-importation agreements among the colonists, trade with Britain diminished, and the effects of this embargo were felt in many sectors of the colony.

It is into this volatile economy that there was the first significant increase in the number of free Blacks. According to Lynne Withey, the recorded number of transient, free Black workers in Providence was five times higher in the 1760s than in the 1750s. We can only assume that there was a similar or perhaps even a higher increase in the number of African-American workers in Newport as a result of its larger size and greater economic importance. (See Table 2, below.)

What accounts for this significant increase in the number of free Blacks in the 1760s? Table 2 shows that the racial composition of transients in Providence increased from 1731 to 1800. In the 1760s, the number of transient White workers, who had parallel economic status to Blacks, slightly decreased from the number it

Table 2
Race of Transients, Providence, R.I. 1731-1800⁴⁸

Years	White	Black
1731-1740	63	1
1741-1750	55	3
1751-1760	57	2
1761-1770	53	10
1771-1780	93	15
1781-1790	54	43
1791-1800	164	69

had been over the previous forty years. Since the poorest Blacks competed with the poorest Whites for similar jobs, it stands to reason that the overall job market actually decreased somewhat. Therefore, while Blacks from other towns who were already free would probably not have been attracted to Providence, a general increase in the number of free Blacks would account for this larger number of transient Blacks.

Another reason for the increase in free Blacks may be found in the slump in Rhode Island's agricultural output during this depression. Moreover, the economic hardship which followed the Seven Years War taught urban industrialists that hired labor was less expensive than slave labor because they could adjust their labor force to the changes in economic fortunes by hiring and firing their workers. Thus, we can conclude that there seems to have been a relationship between the economic downturn and the local increase in the free Black population. Although some slave owners may have freed their slaves because of abolitionist ideals or as a reward for years of service, it actually appears that slave labor was beginning to become economically disadvantageous for many. It seems more likely, then, that some slave owners could neither afford to keep their slaves nor could they sell them, and consequently a substantial number of masters liberated their slaves.

Slaves continued to be emancipated throughout the 1770s as the importance of industry grew and that of agriculture declined, and, with the ascension of Newport into its "Golden Age," many more migrants flooded into Rhode Island's urban areas. As commerce based in Newport and Providence increased, there were greater opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled laborers in shipping as well as in industry. Impoverished ex-slaves began to enter the free work force in Rhode Island, and they took jobs as domestic servants, as sailors, as carpenters, or as other types of artisans. Yet Whites moved to the colony's towns in unprecedented numbers as well, because increased opportunities in Rhode Island's ports equally attracted many workers

seeking job opportunities. Thus, between 1755 and 1774 Newport's population expanded by about fifty percent and Providence's doubled.⁴⁹

In contrast, the Jews immigrated from cities in Europe, and they continued this pattern of urban residence in Rhode Island. Many Jews arrived in the late eighteenth century seeking a viable economic niche in North America; the tide of Sephardim into the New World was never more than a trickle. Increasingly tolerant Holland and, to a lesser extent, Great Britain, had claimed the status of world economic capitals — economic opportunities abounded in Europe as well. Because the American colonies were distant and dangerous outposts of European culture, the drive to relocate to America did not appeal to many Sephardim.

Eighteenth century Jewish immigration was supplemented, though, by arrivals from central Europe. In fact, in some cities Ashkenazi Jews outnumbered the Sephardim by the time the Revolution broke out. Sephardim dominated the institutions of the colonial Jewish community, and the small numbers of Ashknazim adapted to the community norms that were already extant.

While individual Jews ventured into the countryside to conduct business, all of Rhode Island's Jews were based in Newport. This pattern of residence was a distinctive pattern for the Jews, because only about thirty percent of the entire colony's population was settled in urban areas.⁵⁰ In Newport, widely recognized as one of the most affluent colonial Jewish communities, there were only twenty-five Jewish families in 1774.⁵¹ Since there were about 9,200 residents of Newport at that time, at the height of Newport's "Golden Age" the Jews composed only about two to three percent of the town's total population.⁵² As we will see later, with their communal and personal urban origins, the Jews had advantages when integrating into Newport's physical setting, cultural life, political establishment, and economic base.

Previous studies have reported that the Jews lived throughout Newport in no distinctive pattern, but in actuality they were very focused in their patterns of residence.⁵³ They tended to live in their own homes or in those of their extended families. The Jews primarily lived in two areas of high mercantile activity within this small city, The Point and The Parade, with their residences closely connected to their places of business. No Jews lived in the south end of Newport; and instead they clustered in two residential foci. When we plot their residences on a map of Newport in 1777, we find that as many as half the residences of Newport's Jews were located within a thousand-foot radius of the intersection of Thames and Ann Streets, the center of town. Records show that the families of the following Jewish men lived in or near the center of Newport: Moses Levy, Hyman Levy, Moses Lopez, Sam Lopez, Aaron Lopez, N. Myers, Moses Seixas, Isaac Touro, Isaac

Elizer, Myer Benjamin, the Judah Family, Isaac Cardozo, and Abraham Rodriguez Rivera.⁵⁴

Of the families living in these areas, some lived in the very center of town, the Parade Ground section on Washington Square. Moses Seixas, Abraham Rodriguez, Myer Benjamin, Moses Lopez, and Moses Levy all lived here. Additionally, Isaac Hart owned a store on the north side of the parade, and Isaac Cardozo ran his tailoring business in the Benjamin household, located near the courthouse. Consequently, within an area no larger than 600 feet by 200 feet, there was a high concentration of Jewish residences and businesses.

About another third of the town's Jewish homes were located within a few blocks of each other in the northeast section of town near Washington Street, an area known as The Point. The Jews who lived in this area were Nathaniel Hart, Naphtali Hart, Isaac Hart, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, Myer Pollock, Jacob Pollock, James Lucena, and Francis Lucena.⁵⁵ Additionally, Jews residing in other parts of town who had business interests (stores, wharves, factories) on The Point included Aaron Lopez, Moses Hays, and Isaac Elizer.

The remaining three or four known homes of Jewish families were in one of two areas: Broad Street or the south end of Thames Street. On the northwest side of Newport, Broad Street appears to have been a residential neighborhood where elite Newporters were increasingly settling. Jacob Isaacs and Moses Hays resided there, and Naphtali Hart had one of his stores there until the 1770s. The high concentrations of Jews in mercantile areas put them in close proximity with one source of contact with Blacks, the slave markets. One market, on the corner of Long Wharf and Washington Streets, was very close to Jacob Rivera's residence as well as to the foci of his mercantile and manufacturing businesses.

While the density of Jewish residences was not exceedingly heavy, the concentrations of their homes was remarkable. Colonial Newport was a walking city, and any place of residence would have been in close proximity to other Jews. In 1775 the settled portion of Newport covered less than a square mile. There were no clearly divided residential and commercial districts, and most people lived in very close proximity to their place of work. For instance, the Malbones, a prominent non-Jewish trading family, lived in a townhouse immediately across from their wharf. Being extremely wealthy, the Malbones also had a larger estate out of the city, but their choice of residence in Newport followed the typical pattern of closely linking residence and business.

The Jews followed this pattern as well. Aaron Lopez's family lived on the upper floor of a building which also housed his storeroom and offices. In addition, the Lopez residence was right across the street from his wharf. Living there gave him

the opportunity to observe the goings-on of his ships night and day. For a long time, Isaac Elizer had his shop in his house. Isaac Touro, the hazzan of the congregation, lived only one and a half blocks from the synagogue. Only the wealthiest merchants could afford to have multiple shops, and thus most of the Jews sold their goods out of their homes. Because the vast majority of the Jews of Newport earned their livings from trade and local industry, it made sense for them to live near the wharves where such trade was commonly conducted.

The wealthiest Jews of Newport also owned estates outside of Newport. Like Malbone, Aaron Lopez, Naphtali Hart, Jr., and Jacob Isaacs owned sizeable estates outside the city.⁵⁶

There seem to be no ethnic or economic differences between those Jews who lived in the center of town and those who lived on the Point. Sephardim and Ashkenazim spread almost equally in both areas, and similarly the richest Jews were spread evenly in both foci of Jewish residence.

The occupation and wealth of the head of the household, and not cultural origins, played the central role in determining the place of residence of the Jewish family. If we compare the map of Newport from 1775⁵⁷ to one drawn in 1712,⁵⁸ we note that the northeast section of Newport was relatively new. Moreover, by 1775, this newer area already had wharves and some significantly large buildings. Given that the Jews of the period were merchants and the owners of small industries, the northeast was the logical alternative for building new businesses. Land was cheaper and more open to large-scale development there. Some indirect evidence indicates that many of the Jews who settled in The Point were generally less financially stable than those who lived in the center of town.⁵⁹

It is not clear if Blacks, in contrast to the Jews, lived more dispersed throughout Newport, but slaves typically lived in the homes of their masters. While a single farm may have had a group of slaves residing on it, urban homes in Newport or Providence tended to have room for only a small number of servants. In Providence, a town with slave residential patterns which were similar to Newport's, eighty-six percent of Blacks lived in White homes in 1774; the majority of these Blacks were probably slaves. Also, despite the fact that about fifty-eight percent of Newport households did not own any slaves, thirty-three percent owned between one and three slaves. Multiple slave households with four or more slaves were a rarity; this pattern occurred in only nine percent of Newport homes.⁶⁰ Since only about ten percent of Newport's Black population was free in 1774, most Blacks probably lived where the more affluent Newporters lived.

Because of these patterns of residence, the family life of Newport's slaves was severely limited. Even if a master could afford to buy his slave's spouse, many were

unwilling to add to their close-quartered domestic arrangements. Consequently, when slaves did have spouses and children, they were very likely to be separated.

Even when freed, many Blacks continued to serve their ex-masters as employees. Because many still lived as boarders in others' homes as a result of their poverty, a slave's gaining freedom prior to the Revolution may not necessarily have led to a shift in his or her residence. Infrequently, a free African family could live in its own home, but then they, like all free workers of all races, still lived in close proximity to their employers. In the period immediately after the Revolution, the residences of New York's ex-slaves tended to be dispersed among the homes of White elites. Black homes tended to cluster in groups of two to five around the homes of wealthy New Yorkers. African-Americans did not yet live in ghettos as they would later in American history. "The colonial city was a walking city of mixed neighborhoods and relatively little spatial separation of the classes, and the distribution of free Black households reflected those characteristics."⁶¹ As we saw above, a third pattern of residence became increasingly prevalent as well, as many freed Blacks joined the ranks of the growing number of transient workers.

Occupational differences between African-Americans and Jews illustrate the broad disparities in opportunity and in origins. Jews were primarily focused in the white-collar sectors of business. Based on Ezra Stiles's lists of church members in Newport as tabulated by Lynne Withey, it appears that eighty-three percent of the Jewish men were merchants. In addition, another eight percent of the Jewish population were engaged solely in retailing.⁶²

The latter figure is misleading, as many of the merchants also owned retail shops to sell their wares. Such merchants as Naphtali Hart and Co., Aaron Lopez, Isaac Elizer, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, and many others did not function as pure middlemen. By supplying their stores with their own merchandise, they involved themselves in both the retail and wholesale trade.

Of course, there were some Jews who made their living outside of mercantile pursuits. Isaac Touro served as hazzan to the congregation, Isaac Cardozo tailored clothes, and Francis Lucena practiced medicine. However, these Jews were clearly anomalous, and, as in the case of Isaac Touro, trading was often utilized as a supplement to their income.

The occupational profile of the Jewish community was distinctive in that so many of them were merchants. Of the other religious groups in Newport, only the Anglicans had roughly similar proportions of merchants (55%) in their overall populations; the other religious groups had a much lower proportion — Congregationalists (23%), Baptists (13%), and Quakers (20%).⁶³

the opportunity to observe the goings-on of his ships night and day. For a long time, Isaac Elizer had his shop in his house. Isaac Touro, the hazzan of the congregation, lived only one and a half blocks from the synagogue. Only the wealthiest merchants could afford to have multiple shops, and thus most of the Jews sold their goods out of their homes. Because the vast majority of the Jews of Newport earned their livings from trade and local industry, it made sense for them to live near the wharves where such trade was commonly conducted.

The wealthiest Jews of Newport also owned estates outside of Newport. Like Malbone, Aaron Lopez, Naphtali Hart, Jr., and Jacob Isaacs owned sizeable estates outside the city.⁵⁶

There seem to be no ethnic or economic differences between those Jews who lived in the center of town and those who lived on the Point. Sephardim and Ashkenazim spread almost equally in both areas, and similarly the richest Jews were spread evenly in both foci of Jewish residence.

The occupation and wealth of the head of the household, and not cultural origins, played the central role in determining the place of residence of the Jewish family. If we compare the map of Newport from 1775⁵⁷ to one drawn in 1712,⁵⁸ we note that the northeast section of Newport was relatively new. Moreover, by 1775, this newer area already had wharves and some significantly large buildings. Given that the Jews of the period were merchants and the owners of small industries, the northeast was the logical alternative for building new businesses. Land was cheaper and more open to large-scale development there. Some indirect evidence indicates that many of the Jews who settled in The Point were generally less financially stable than those who lived in the center of town.⁵⁹

It is not clear if Blacks, in contrast to the Jews, lived more dispersed throughout Newport, but slaves typically lived in the homes of their masters. While a single farm may have had a group of slaves residing on it, urban homes in Newport or Providence tended to have room for only a small number of servants. In Providence, a town with slave residential patterns which were similar to Newport's, eighty-six percent of Blacks lived in White homes in 1774; the majority of these Blacks were probably slaves. Also, despite the fact that about fifty-eight percent of Newport households did not own any slaves, thirty-three percent owned between one and three slaves. Multiple slave households with four or more slaves were a rarity; this pattern occurred in only nine percent of Newport homes.⁶⁰ Since only about ten percent of Newport's Black population was free in 1774, most Blacks probably lived where the more affluent Newporters lived.

Because of these patterns of residence, the family life of Newport's slaves was severely limited. Even if a master could afford to buy his slave's spouse, many were

unwilling to add to their close-quartered domestic arrangements. Consequently, when slaves did have spouses and children, they were very likely to be separated.

Even when freed, many Blacks continued to serve their ex-masters as employees. Because many still lived as boarders in others' homes as a result of their poverty, a slave's gaining freedom prior to the Revolution may not necessarily have led to a shift in his or her residence. Infrequently, a free African family could live in its own home, but then they, like all free workers of all races, still lived in close proximity to their employers. In the period immediately after the Revolution, the residences of New York's ex-slaves tended to be dispersed among the homes of White elites. Black homes tended to cluster in groups of two to five around the homes of wealthy New Yorkers. African-Americans did not yet live in ghettos as they would later in American history. "The colonial city was a walking city of mixed neighborhoods and relatively little spatial separation of the classes, and the distribution of free Black households reflected those characteristics."⁶¹ As we saw above, a third pattern of residence became increasingly prevalent as well, as many freed Blacks joined the ranks of the growing number of transient workers.

Occupational differences between African-Americans and Jews illustrate the broad disparities in opportunity and in origins. Jews were primarily focused in the white-collar sectors of business. Based on Ezra Stiles's lists of church members in Newport as tabulated by Lynne Withey, it appears that eighty-three percent of the Jewish men were merchants. In addition, another eight percent of the Jewish population were engaged solely in retailing.⁶²

The latter figure is misleading, as many of the merchants also owned retail shops to sell their wares. Such merchants as Naphtali Hart and Co., Aaron Lopez, Isaac Elizer, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, and many others did not function as pure middlemen. By supplying their stores with their own merchandise, they involved themselves in both the retail and wholesale trade.

Of course, there were some Jews who made their living outside of mercantile pursuits. Isaac Touro served as hazzan to the congregation, Isaac Cardozo tailored clothes, and Francis Lucena practiced medicine. However, these Jews were clearly anomalous, and, as in the case of Isaac Touro, trading was often utilized as a supplement to their income.

The occupational profile of the Jewish community was distinctive in that so many of them were merchants. Of the other religious groups in Newport, only the Anglicans had roughly similar proportions of merchants (55%) in their overall populations; the other religious groups had a much lower proportion — Congregationalists (23%), Baptists (13%), and Quakers (20%).⁶³

How prevalent were these Jews in Newport's overall population of merchants? According to the data published by Withey, Jews made up only thirteen percent of Newport's mercantile force. Similar figures can be observed for the Jews in the retailing business, where they only made up eight percent of the total.* Considering the Jews' low proportions in the entire colonial population, these figures are high, but by no means did Jews dominate broad fields of the economy.⁶⁴

Merchants of the period tended to trade in a very diverse line of goods. One can open the *Newport Mercury* to almost any issue between 1765 and 1775 and find at least one Jewish merchant advertising various items such as tea, nails, pepper, glass, steel, Carolina oranges, molasses, rum, indigo, and cotton. Especially since the financial health of the colonies was volatile and since Newport had few native exports, diversity promised more stability.

But, because there were so many merchants (Jewish and Gentile) who were engaged in the trade of various products, there was also a limit to how much one merchant's business could grow. This economic environment encouraged Newport-based merchants to engage in entrepreneurial pursuits in order to find novel niches in the colonial trade. Lynne Withey, in her study of colonial Rhode Island, describes this phenomenon on a larger scale, "Expansion of trade in Rhode Island depended on population growth and on the general development of the colonial economy, but the process of developing trade required the initiative of merchants seeking new commodities and new markets."⁶⁵ The R.I. economy, thus produced many entrepreneurs, and Newport Jews were no exceptions to this trend. As early as 1753, Moses Lopez was granted a monopoly in the production of potash, and in 1761 James Lucena was granted the sole right to produce Castille soap.⁶⁶

The most successful entrepreneurial venture, both for the Jews and for the general Rhode Island economy, was the manufacture and trade of spermaceti candles. Between 1768 and 1772, the most valued export from Rhode Island was spermaceti candles (£66,327). In order of their total value in pounds sterling, the next five highest exports were: American rum, bread/flour, fish, livestock, and whale oil. Jewish merchants traded in all of these commodities, but it was spermaceti candles which catapulted the Jews to communal prominence.⁶⁷

* For two reasons, it seems to me that Withey's figures may be misleading. First, there was no clear distinction between retailers and wholesalers. Merchants often supplied their own stores with goods which they bought and transported. Second, Withey's sampling of the total population is confounded by the fact that a) she found the religious allegiances of these Newporters by comparing her list of names with an incomplete list in Ezra Stiles's diary and b) her list of people's occupations is taken from a number of sources which cover a number of years.

Between 1760 and 1774 there seems to have been a profound change in the number of retailers in Newport, as issues of the *Newport Mercury* are full of bankruptcy notices in the closing years of the 1760s. As I discuss elsewhere in this paper, six Jewish merchants — about a third of this small community — became insolvent between 1768 and 1771. Thus, in the 1760s the number of Jewish retailers may have accounted for as much as one quarter of the total, but by the 1770s this proportion certainly dropped.

The large-scale production of candles from the oil of sperm whales began in the early 1760s, and the nature of this competitive market caused fluctuating prices of head matter, the organic ingredient necessary for candle production. In the early years of this industry, there were more candle manufacturers than the whaling ships could supply with ingredients, and thus this seller's market caused inflated prices. To control the rise in the cost of head matter, the various chandlers banded together to form the "United Company of Spermaceti Chandlers." Various agreements were negotiated between 1761 and 1764 which arranged for the control of both cost and distribution of all the head matter which came to American ports. In addition, the existing chandlers were to work hard to prevent the establishment of even more manufacturers.⁶⁸ Of the nine firms which joined the Company, three involved Jews: Naphtali Hart and Co.; Aaron Lopez and Co.; and Collins and Rivera.⁶⁹

Because of constant violations of the terms of the trust, the articles of their agreement had to be revised on numerous occasions. But, the most detailed of these agreements was reached in 1764, when the various companies agreed that all head matter coming into North America from any whaling vessel would be considered the joint property of all the Company's members. According to the agreement, the catch would be distributed on a percentage basis. As in previous years, Providence's Obadiah Brown and Boston's Richard Cranch received the highest shares — each company receiving twenty percent and fourteen percent respectively. Jewish chandlers received the following proportions: Aaron Lopez, eleven percent; Jacob Rivera and Co., eleven percent; Naphtali Hart and Co., nine percent; and Moses Lopez, two percent. Newport's Jews controlled as much as thirty-three percent of the spermaceti candle production in the early 1760s. Clearly, the spermaceti candle industry was dominated by New Englanders, and the fact that one in three of these candles came from a Jewish manufacturer reflects a distinctive pattern of Jewish occupational activity.⁷⁰

While the spermaceti industry succeeded on an immense scale, both Jewish and Gentile merchants traded in other major Rhode Island exports. As early as 1763, Aaron Lopez reported that his most important trades were in whaling, fishing, and spermaceti.⁷¹ However, he eventually conducted a sizeable trade in New England rum, this commodity being a major export of colonial Rhode Island.

The markets for New England rum were in the other American colonies, but the molasses which fed the distilleries was acquired in the West Indies. Earlier in the eighteenth century, Rhode Island supplied its molasses producers with food, lumber, and other commodities which it produced on a small scale. However, the slave trade gave Rhode Islanders the opportunity to turn the West Indies into a large market for those "human commodities" that it acquired on the African coast. In addition, rum had a large market in Africa, and thus this Rhode Island export grew in its importance as a currency of exchange. As a result, Rhode Island became an

important hub in the infamous triangular trade.

At this point it is important to stress that Jews were no exception to those forces which moved Gentile merchants. The overall importance of Africa to the trade in New England rum was considerable, and no merchant trading in molasses or rum could ignore the fact that the slave trade accounted for approximately forty-two percent of Newport's rum exports.⁷²

In contrast to this entrepreneurial freedom of the Jews, freed Blacks' occupational patterns were shaped by racist legislation and the experience of slavery. In the primarily agricultural southern counties of Rhode Island, free Blacks were forbidden to own horses, sheep, or any other domestic animals.⁷³ These laws made farming prohibitively difficult for African-Americans, and therefore they had to turn to the cities for their livelihoods. Consequently, the disadvantages of the racist legislation as well as high land prices pushed them away from rural settlement, and, concurrently, increased opportunity in the urban areas pulled them to Rhode Island's towns.

Free Blacks who had learned skills as slaves often found themselves working in those same occupations. The community was primarily focussed on low-skill labor, but because some slaves had been trained in all types of crafts there were many who practiced diverse skills. In the table below, the list of occupations of those Blacks discharged from the First Rhode Island Regiment illustrates this pattern.

Table 3
Occupations of African-Americans Listed in the
First Rhode Island Regiment

Laborer	Rope-Maker	Hatter
10	1	1

Source: Size Roll and Returns of 1st Rhode Island Regiment, Col. Christopher Greene, 1780.

One prominent free Black, Zingo Stevens, earned his living as a stone cutter. Another, Newport Gardner, a skilled musician, continued to teach music upon his liberation. However, many Blacks, like Cesar Lyndon and Prince Updike, earned their livelihoods by producing foodstuffs for local merchants.⁷⁴

Shipping was also a primary focus of Black occupational activity. Both as slaves and as freedmen, many African-Americans worked as sailors in all areas of the shipping industry. Often, African-Americans worked on simple, inter-colonial commercial voyages; however, Blacks were often forced to take jobs in the most risk-filled voyages: whaling, privateering, and the slave trade. The risks involved in these jobs often led to fatalities, such as that of John Quamino, who died on a

privateer in 1791.⁷⁵ Also, these jobs led to a great deal of social conflicts at home. The Free African Union Society declared in 1791 that its members were not to associate with Blacks who participated in the slave trade.⁷⁶

Even at sea racism persisted in the social interactions between sailors. One Black who became a privateer in order to pay his debts, Unkafaw Gronifolaw, reported that there had been much persecution among sailors.⁷⁷

The tendency of Blacks to be forced into the worst jobs at sea continued into the nineteenth century. While African-Americans were only 8.5 percent of the population of Providence in 1820, Black sailors occupied twenty percent of the available berths in the early nineteenth century shipping industry.⁷⁸ The abundance of Blacks in shipping and in the worst jobs aboard ships illustrates how free African-Americans had to contend with a split labor market. As a result of racism as well as the abundance of slave labor, free Blacks were forced into the worst jobs available. As a result, these ex-slaves had a more difficult time earning a livelihood than did Whites of similar skills.

During the last half of the eighteenth century there was also a general increase in the number of poor White transient workers throughout New England. These transients caused special concern in the towns because they often had no means to support themselves besides charity. Each town was committed to support its own natives, and the funds for poor relief drained the treasuries at a time when the local governments were faced with a financial crisis. Therefore, town councils (primarily composed of the wealthier, taxpaying citizens) across New England attempted to limit the entry of transients into their towns. Limiting the numbers of these workers was achieved by any one of a number of means: a) requiring a bond guaranteeing that they would not become charity cases; b) presenting a letter from their native town assuring that they would be cared for at home if unsuccessful; or c) warning the poor out of the town's jurisdiction. A "warning-out" occurred when a local government decided that there was a high risk of a poor individual becoming dependent on public welfare for his subsistence. Often, newcomers were examined by a committee and, if rejected, forced out of the town. Failure to leave was punishable by whippings or jail.

In practice, this system was prone to abuse, as warnings-out were commonly used to remove undesirables who also happened to be poor: unwed mothers, drunkards, and single pregnant women. Ostensibly, the warnings-out were supposed to protect the local economy; however, the evidence indicates that the elite residents of the towns used this mechanism to protect their wealth. Clearly, when Blacks tended to be so poor, this system trapped Blacks disproportionately to their representation in the overall population.⁷⁹ As Pierson points out, "Poor Blacks who migrated to the cities after emancipation were often warned to leave by the selectmen. ... In 1791

almost three percent of the people warned out of Boston were born in Africa — at a time when only one per cent of the Massachusetts population was Negro.”⁸⁰ This number seems especially disturbing when we consider that only about a third of New England’s Blacks at the time were born in Africa.⁸¹ Consequently, the proportion of African-Americans warned out of Boston was ten times as high as their proportion of the population. The increased number of transients in Rhode Island may point to a similar trend occurring there.

It is difficult to conclude that this regional increase in the warnings-out of transients indicates that racism was the only factor underlying the warning-out of so many Blacks. African-Americans were further hampered by the added burdens of poverty and few employable skills. Since the African-born slaves tended to be less acculturated and consequently less skilled than native-born Blacks at trades which were marketable in colonial towns, no newly freed slave was rich. And the most impoverished among this group probably tended to be those who were African-born. It follows, then, that so many African-born individuals were warned-out.

It would be naive to assert that the politics of race simply coincided with the subjugation of the poor. Racism was a strong force motivating town councils to punish non-Whites disproportionately. In one case, the Providence Town Council awarded a White person fourteen shillings to sustain himself while a Black man received only eight shillings.⁸² Freed African-Americans were hampered by the dual and intertwined stigmas of poverty and Blackness; their economic status marked them as much as their skin color did. African-Americans were the poorest of the poor. Some had accumulated enough money to buy themselves out of slavery, but with that economic hurdle jumped, they usually had neither money nor marketable skills to earn substantial incomes. In any case, no Blacks are recorded as having paid taxes during the colonial period.⁸³

Of course, both groups’ patterns of residence and occupation closely tied to their incomes. Lynne Withey’s examination of the tax records for colonial Newport provides us with excellent insight into the Jews’ economic strength and into how they compared to other religious groups in Newport. In pre-Revolutionary Newport, fifty-six percent of the entire population paid taxes. In 1774, thirty-three percent of Newport’s tax-paying population fell into the highest tax brackets. At the same time, about sixty percent of the Jews were in the same highest brackets. Thus, by the mid-1770s, the Jewish community as a whole occupied a comparatively high rung on the economic ladder.

Of the other religious groups, only the Anglicans had a similar profile to that of the Jews — fifty-two percent of their community is known to have been in the highest two brackets. Compared to the rest of the members of their respective

denominations, the proportion of rich Quakers, Baptists, and Congregationalists was markedly lower. A similar pattern holds true for the lower tax groups where there were smaller proportions of poor Jews and Anglicans in their communities than in the other religious denominations. It appears that the Jews' income patterns were comparable to those of the Anglicans, analogous to the case of these two religious groups' occupational patterns.

However, while the Anglicans composed forty-five percent of Newporters in the highest tax groups, the Jews only formed seven percent of this total number. Again, we see a typical distinction between the Anglicans and the Baptists, Quakers and Congregationalists, as they formed thirteen percent, twenty percent, and fifteen percent respectively. On the other end of the economic spectrum, these same groups made up about ninety-three percent of those in the lowest tax brackets — Congregationalists alone composed just over half of this number. Consequently, we see that there was a significant split between religious groups in Newport on the basis of wealth. Anglicans and Jews tended to be wealthier groups while other Protestant denominations were less so. But, as was the case of their occupational patterns, at the same time as the Jews were an affluent community, they did not dominate the wealthiest classes of Newporters.

Why was it the case that the Anglicans and Jews were wealthier than others? There was a high degree of correlation between occupation and wealth, as merchants typically found more financial success than did artisans. There were more merchants among the Jews and Anglicans than among the other Protestant denominations.

By examining the religious identities of the richest merchants, a further connection between the Jews and the Anglicans emerges. As early as 1760, of the richest merchants, fifty-six percent were Church of England, and fourteen percent were Jews, a figure disproportionate to their small share of the overall population. Since the number of Jewish families jumped by two thirds over the next fifteen years, this proportion probably increased. The Jewish community was a distinctively affluent and occupationally concentrated segment of the population. Merchants earned the highest average incomes in colonial Newport, and, because most of the Jews were merchants, they tended to be more affluent than most Newporters. Certainly, the fortunes of individual Jews rose and fell, but Newport Jewry rarely had to help impoverished members of their community.

As described above, the social differences are also especially evident when we examine the religious behavior of Jews and Blacks. We documented earlier that African-Americans minimally participated in the White-dominated churches. Unlike other Newport churches, Ezra Stiles's Congregationalist church had the highest numbers of Blacks, and he often officiated at Black weddings.⁸⁴ Still, the vast

majority of Blacks did not affiliate with any church, and those that did were peripheral in those institutions. They were usually prevented from voting on church affairs and seated in the most distant and uncomfortable pews.⁸⁵ Yet, unlike their social, political, and cultural institutions, distinctively African-American religious institutions did not develop until after the war. In the colonial period, Blacks as a group rarely identified with an organized Christian denomination in Newport. The result of Black dispersion among the various denominations was that they were a diffuse, subordinate minority, and thus they could not wield any real power in these religious institutions.

The Jews, in contrast, controlled their own synagogue, and almost the entire community participated in it. This synagogue was a particularly grand testimony to the Jews' affluence, integration, and prominence in pre-Revolutionary Newport.

Another clear difference between Jews and non-Whites in Newport was in education. To slave owners, there were advantages to providing their slaves with basic education. But few masters could afford to educate their "property," and as this advertisement shows, this education was not always available:

The public are hereby notified that the school for the instruction of Negro children, gratis, is again opened to all societies, by Mrs. Brett, in High Street near Trinity Church.⁸⁶

Also, this education does not seem to have been widely available, as advertisements for runaways often made reference to a slave's good English skills as part of the description of the runaway's unique characteristics:

On the 20th of August run away from John Bannister his Negro man Caeser, 35 years old, a well fed fellow stoops forward remarkably when he walks, speaks good English for one of his color....⁸⁷

The plethora of written records and personal correspondence testifies to the educational attainments of the Jews. In fact, the Jewish males' high concentrations in Newport's elite organizations like the Redwood Library and The Masonic Order also hints at their advanced education. As early as 1749, fifteen Jewish men belonged to Newport's St. John's Lodge, and many prominent Jewish men belonged to these organizations: Moses Lopez, Isaac Elizer, David Lopez, Moses Seixas, Moses Michael Hays, and Isaac Touro. In fact, very few of Newport's Jews did not have membership in the Masonic Order.⁸⁸

The Redwood Library was typical for its day, in that this Newport institution required payment of a membership subscription. Therefore, only the richest in the community could join, and it consequently became a focus of elite interaction. Its first members included Abraham Hart, Moses Lopez, and Jacob Rivera, but in time Aaron Lopez, James Rivera, Isaac Hart, and Naphtali Hart also donated money to

the library. As in the case of the Masonic Order, many of the most prominent Jews participated in the same cultural institutions as Gentiles.⁸⁹

Not all Jews participated in these organizations, however. Jewish Newporters began their own social club in 1761, and it is clear by examining the charter that this organization was intended to be purely social. Indeed, there was a penalty of "the value of four bottles good wine" for discussing any synagogue business.⁹⁰ Membership qualifications were vague in the initial regulations — they only specified that any new members could only join with the existing members' assent. Also, the only limitation as to who could come to the club was that each member could only bring one guest at a time. Consequently, there is no evidence on whether Gentiles ever attended the Jewish social club.

Many of the men who started this club were not members of the Masonic Order. Of the nine men who initiated this club, Moses Lopez and Jacob Isaacs were the only two who were both Masons and charter members of the Jewish club of Newport. It is not clear why was there so little overlap in membership, but many of the founders of the social club were wealthy and long-time residents of Newport who had founded the synagogue. Also, there appears to have been a high proportion of younger, American-born Jews in the Masonic Lodge. Perhaps a generation gap manifested itself in the younger Jewish colonists tending to socialize more readily with their Gentile neighbors. Regardless, we can see that even in the 1750s there were few barriers to Jewish men having maximal social contacts with Gentile Newporters.

Did Jewish women have the same opportunities for contact with Gentiles? Were women more tied to traditional norms of social behavior which separated Jew from Christian? Did women's domestic roles prevent their having time for substantive contacts with Christians? One way in which colonial women socialized was in spinning meetings where women would gather to spin yarn. During the boycotts of British goods in the late 1760s these meetings took on political implications as they supported the self-sufficiency of the colony. Many of these gatherings were spinning bees, where the products would benefit the household of the host, who was often a minister. However, some were also spinning contests or demonstrations. These events attracted many women; two of the spinning meetings which were held in Ezra Stiles' shome were attended by fifty-one and ninety-two women respectively.⁹¹ These meetings must have been well-organized social and/or religious events, as not only could spinning be done alone but it also must have been difficult to fit ninety-two women and their spinning wheels into one home. In 1769, Stiles reported that female Baptists, Quakers and Congregationalists had spun ninety-four skeins at his home, and thus it seems that these events were open to women of different religious affiliations. In fact, in the *Newport Mercury*, we find a letter from Ms. Hart discussing her participation in a spinning match in 1766.⁹² Jewish women

also participated in these spinning matches and freely socialized with Gentile women. Consequently the barriers between religious groups were not just breached by the male merchants, but by the women as well.

Also, Jewish women received education from local tutors, when such an investment served little economic value.⁹³ Evidence from Stiles's diary indicates that some Jews were also educated in classes with Gentiles and taught by Gentile religious leaders. In 1770, he wrote:

There is a young Jewess in Town, born here, one Miss Pollock, aet. phaps 15, that with other young Misses attended a Writing School for two years past where the Master often gave religious advice and exhort to the children.⁹⁴

Again, in the area of education, we can see that the Jews associated with the dominant social institutions, despite the religious differences. Barriers between the Jewish minority and the Christian hierarchy were fluid enough to let the Jews integrate into their classrooms. As a result, Jews and Blacks were separated at an early age by education and language differences, the latter of which would have especially complicated the interactions between communities.

It is important to note that just as residence, religion, and income were linked to occupational patterns, social patterns were similarly tied to the Jews' roles as merchants. The mercantile fraternity further supported itself by doing non-business favors for each other. At the request of Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, a prominent Jewish merchant, a poor Jew was transported to Suriname for free on a ship owned by Nicholas Brown and Co. — this appears to have been a less harsh method of warning-out a potential Jewish indigent. Two months earlier, in March 1770, Rivera and Aaron Lopez had donated 10,000 board feet of wood to the Browns for the construction of University Hall at Rhode Island College, later to become Brown University.⁹⁵

The relationships between Jew and Gentile often extended far beyond business fellowships and the exchange of favors. Male and female Jews tended to participate in the White majority's elite institutions and cultural events. Contrasting Blacks' and Jews' behavior in social and cultural settings further underscores the schisms between their groups.

Black slaves, on the other hand, developed a culture that was analogous and parallel to that of the Whites (e.g. "Lection Day"), and with Newport's high percentage of slaves at the time of the Revolution, this culture was central to slave life. The most prevalent and widespread tradition among New England's African-

* At its inception, Brown University not only guaranteed freedom of religion for any Jewish students who matriculated, but its trustees promised to exempt Jewish students from religious exercises and to provide a special tutor for them. It seems that these progressive regulations were a tribute to the Jews who helped build the University, and that they reflected some amount of interest in recruiting the children of American Jews to the school.

Americans was the annual "Lecture Day," where Blacks came together to elect their own governor, magistrates, and judges. The election and inauguration festivals were the most elegant and elaborate moments of the slaves' year, with the masters dressing their slaves in some of the best clothes they could. Masters placed importance on their slaves' achievements in these festivals, as they reflected well on the status of the master.

The governing officials elected on "Lecture Day" had increased status as well as real power among the slave community. For example, the magistrates who were elected could rule in civil disputes between Blacks or even between a White person and an African-American. The powers and prestige attributed to these community leaders further indicates the fact that they had formed an analogous and separate culture to that of the Whites.

Even when Blacks participated in communal celebration they could only participate peripherally, and when such celebrations were deemed inappropriate for the African-Americans, they were totally banned.⁹⁶ This tendency was never more clear than in instances where the Blacks practiced communal rituals that had no resemblance to the practices of Whites. Colonial legislation from Massachusetts provides some picture of this attitude among the master-class. In Boston, long processions which wound through the streets and that were unique to Black funerals were outlawed in 1721, and in Rhode Island similar legislation against unsupervised gatherings of slaves existed from the beginning of the 1700s.

But did freed Blacks receive different freedoms once their legal status had changed? Rhode Island's legislation regarding the consumption of alcohol illustrates how free Blacks, in fact, had different social options than slaves. In 1750 a law was enacted which "... forbade the sale, barter or exchange of liquor of any kind with any Indian, mulatto or Negro servant or slave."⁹⁷ However, free Blacks did not have the same limits imposed on their possession of alcohol. Also, the law indicates that they had the option to socialize in the taverns drinking New England rum like the other poor colonists, while it was more difficult for slaves and native Americans. Moreover, because rum was a typical form of payment for wage-laborers and because Blacks were a small minority in their trades, it stands to reason that they would have socialized with their fellow White workers, especially since they also lived in proximity to each other.⁹⁸ The legislation outlined above indicates that freed Blacks might have had a mixed social and legal status, having more freedom than the slaves yet not the full liberty of the Europeans.

While Rhode Island's Jews were never subjected to the breadth of legislation which restricted Black activity, they too were legally disadvantaged. In the Naturalization Act of 1740, the British parliament declared that Jews could be naturalized after having lived in the colony for seven years. But as we saw above,

even as late as 1761, Jews could not gain naturalization in Rhode Island. Even when the Jews had finally become subjects of the British monarchy, they still could not vote or serve in the colonial legislatures. In 1761 the Lower House of the legislature declared:

But Inasmuch as the Said Aaron Lopez hath declared himself by religion a Jew this assembly doth not admit him or any other of that Religion to the full freedom of this colony. So that the said Aaron Lopez nor any other of said Religion is not Liable to be chosen into any Office in this Colony Nor allowed to give a Vote as a Freeman in Choosing others.⁹⁹

This proscription against Jews, voting or holding governmental office remained valid until 1843, and the first Jew was still not elected to public office in Rhode Island until 1884.¹⁰⁰ Despite all the wealth and acceptance of Jews in the Newport community, they still faced rigid legal barriers which prevented them from attaining full equality with Christians.

Despite these disabilities the Jews still wielded a considerable amount of political power. Influence over elected officials came along with wealth, and the wealthiest Jew, Aaron Lopez, consequently had many benefactors throughout the colony. Not only did Governor Ward seek his favor, but the customs officials also regularly ignored Lopez's violations of the law. When Lopez was caught, Stiles reports that they would sell his confiscated ship and goods right back to him, thus minimizing the losses.

Despite their legal handicaps, the Jews of Newport did not shun away from participating in politics. On many occasions they signed petitions to the colonial legislature seeking changes in the tax assessments and the establishment of smallpox hospitals.¹⁰¹ In one case, forty-six Jewish and Gentile merchants sought the interference of the Rhode Island Assembly in the affairs of the Customs Officers. Apparently these agents of the crown had been enforcing the regulations on trading, at the expense of the local merchants. The merchants perceived these officers' fees as excessive, and consequently, in 1764, they protested the increasingly difficult mercantile situation. They wrote:

The subscribers, in behalf of themselves and the trading part of the colony, beg leave humbly to represent to your honors:

That without trade it will be impossible for the inhabitants of this colony to procure themselves any tolerable subsistence;

That ... his Majesty's custom house officers ... have burthened our trade with the most unreasonable and extravagant positions;

That by these means the trade of the colony is in danger of being entirely ruined ...

And, therefore, we pray Your Honors to pass an act for regulating the fees of the custom house ...¹⁰²

This petition was signed by five Jewish merchants: Isaac Elizer, Issachar Pollock, Naphtali Hart, Jr., Moses Levy, and Aaron Lopez. It seems that these merchants felt confident that they could persuade the colonial government to intervene in the affairs of functionaries who were technically not under the colony's jurisdiction. Not only did these merchants feel comfortable pressuring the government, but they seem to have been well aware of their importance to the economic stability of the colony. They were aware that the Rhode Island economy had few local products of any value, and that the success of their primary exports (spermaceti candles, fish, and rum) depended on the import of raw materials by sea. While this petition did not immediately achieve its goals, the merchants' economic leverage could pressure the legislature to rule on their behalf in most cases.

What factors, besides the merchants' economic leverage, might have increased governmental responsiveness to the demands of the merchants? Often, the political leaders were selected from the colony's affluent individuals and/or merchants. In Newport immediately before the Revolution, ninety-six percent of the colonial political officials as well as just over two-thirds of the city officials were in the top four tax brackets (7-10).¹⁰³ Also, merchants dominated colonial and city politics, forming eighty percent and forty-four percent of those two institutions.¹⁰⁴ Since many of the Jews were wealthy merchants who moved in the elites' social and occupational circles, it seems likely that the Jews had very strong access to and influence on political life.

Aaron Lopez best typifies the political access that resulted from social standing. In 1773, the Rhode Island General Assembly asked Lopez to serve on a delegation to the British Secretary of State. The mission of George Gibbs, William Vernon, and Lopez was to try to prevent the British government from cutting off Rhode Islanders' access to fishing zones near the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Fishing being a primary local occupation, this committee had great importance, and the Assembly's choice of a Jew to represent them testifies to the access of Jews to the political arena.¹⁰⁵

Perceived disparities between Jews and Gentiles in their political status was a main source of the Jews' dissatisfaction with the colonial system, despite the fact that Jews suffered minimal disadvantages as a minority. One of the key changes that came with the success of the Revolution was an end to most remaining legal disabilities. In addressing the civic and religious leaders of Newport, George Washington said:

... All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights.¹⁰⁶

Consequently, while the Jews were deprived of the right to vote during the colonial period, they certainly were not disenfranchised. In most cases, the Jews could not directly exercise their own political power, but those legal restrictions minimally hindered their capability to affect governmental action on their own behalf. Through their business associations as well as their own direct influence the Jews were able to participate increasingly in the machinations of their government. And, in the end, their political status only improved with the Revolution and the birth of the new republic. Unlike the Blacks, they had no need for their own civil courts or communal leaders, as they participated freely in those of the Whites.

In almost every case, the Jews blended into the institutions and everyday life of majority White culture. Yet, concurrently, Blacks seemed to be a separate and subordinate entity within the colony. Interactions, then, that would reflect sympathy or a bond against a common oppressor in the context of these social, occupational, cultural, and legal disparities seem scarce.

PART 5

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN AFRICAN AND JEWISH AMERICANS IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY NEWPORT

Our examination and juxtaposition of the Black and Jewish communities has revealed that the Jewish minority had more access to socioeconomic opportunity and social mobility than did the non-White racial castes. However, these descriptions have only taken us part way in understanding the differences between racial castes and religious minorities in the colonial American context. We cannot be sure how fully the Jews integrated into a seemingly hostile society dominated by White Gentiles without exploring how those on the other side of the color line perceived them. If Blacks perceived themselves as distinctly separate from Jews, then we can draw some further conclusions about the salience of racial differences. Conversely, an analysis of the Jewish reaction to contacts with Blacks would indicate the perspective of a disadvantaged minority on the White side of the color line. Any commonalities might point to a similar experience and to an overlap in the discriminations against religious and racial groups.

It is no accident that Rhode Island came to have the highest proportions of Blacks in colonial New England — Newport was the slave trading capitol of the North. In fact, Rhode Island slavers made a total of 934 voyages between 1725 and 1807, and it is estimated that during this time Newport slave ships imported 106,544 slaves. The Revolution interrupted this trade, yet until 1775 Newport imported 59,067 slaves and after the war another 47,477.¹⁰⁷ Of the American colonies, Rhode Island was clearly the leading home of American slave ships, and Newport reigned supreme among the state's ports.

Newport was much less significant on the international slave-market, though, as

there were many nations trading slaves in the eighteenth century. Rhode Island's slave ships occupied an important niche in the "Guinea trade" because they almost monopolized the trade in rum on the African coast. As a result, Rhode Island traders were known as the *rum-men*, a term that distinguished them from the British slavers who traded textiles and finished goods for slaves. While it is true that Newport's slave trade was lively, it could not compare with that of the British who imported 2.5 million Africans between 1701 and 1810 — twenty-four times Rhode Island's volume.¹⁰⁸

Between 1753 and 1774, Jewish merchants outfitted twenty-four slave voyages. By 1774, the signs of Newport's impending economic disaster were clear, and the most prominent of merchants began relocating. Ultimately, the British bombardment and occupation of Newport ended much of the Jewish mercantile activity, including the slave trade. After the Revolution, when Newport resumed its slave trade, only one more voyage was sent out by a Jew, in 1786.

Although other merchants like Moses Levy, Isaac Elizer, and Naphtali Hart each sent out one voyage, the trade was monopolized by Jacob Rodriguez Rivera and Aaron Lopez. The two often worked together, and the records show that they cooperated on eleven of these voyages. Rivera sent out three by himself, and Lopez funded eight on his own. If Lopez was involved in over three-quarters of these recorded slave voyages, then the slave trade of Jews is mostly attributable to this one merchant.

Like other Newport slave ships, the vessels which Newport's Jews sent were small and usually carried 100–125 slaves — in stark contrast, British slavers could carry around 400 people at a time. The maximum recorded number of slaves that a Jewish slaver ever brought back from Africa was 230.¹⁰⁹ The pattern of these voyages conformed to the typical pattern of the triangular trade.

The slave ships owned by Newport's Jews imported no more than two thousand slaves to the New World between 1753 and 1773.¹¹⁰ When compared with the entire slaving industry in Newport, then, Jewish shipping accounted for under two percent of the total number of slaves brought to Newport. If we calculate their share of the trade before the Revolution, the proportion is no more than 3.3 percent. However, the major period of Jewish involvement in the colonial slave trade lasted from 1753 until the end of 1774, during which 347 slave ships left Newport. Using this figure, we can estimate that Jews owned at least seven out of every one hundred slave ships that left Newport for Africa during the two decades before the Revolution.

The slave trade, though, was only one aspect of these merchants' very diverse interests. Aaron Lopez's fourteen slave-voyages left between 1760 and 1774, and during that same time he underwrote a total of two hundred trading voyages.¹¹¹

Therefore, the slave trade appears to have only dominated about seven percent of the total number of voyages which he underwrote.

His trade with the West Indies formed an important link in his general trade. To his agents there, mainly Benjamin Wright and Abraham Pereira Mendes, he sent lumber, barrel materials, fish, spermaceti; from there he received in Newport molasses to make New England rum, which he then sent to the coast of Africa in exchange for slaves; these slaves his captains carried back to Jamaica and other West Indian Islands to work the sugar plantations, the products of which he then sent to England, Amsterdam, and Spain.¹¹²

But this small share of his shipping ventures does not reflect how important the slave trade was to Lopez's financial stability and to his other industries. Certainly, the slave was a potentially lucrative mode of exchange for rum, especially when cash was in short supply. Moreover, when a ten percent profit was considered very good, the slave trade could bring back a twenty-three percent profit.¹¹³ When cash was in short supply, these voyages took on extra appeal, but often the potential benefits were overshadowed by the very real financial and physical dangers.

In general, increases in slaving voyages coincided with the economic problems which engulfed Newport as the Revolution neared: taxes, boycotts, and overall decreases in trading. With Newport's economy in trouble, its merchants were more anxious to acquire liquid capital through the slave trade. The general tendency was to increase slaving voyages in the early 1770s. Aaron Lopez, like the Gentile merchants, increasingly turned to slaving voyages in the early 1770s. Lopez outfitted many voyages alone, but more often than not he cooperated with his father-in-law, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, in outfitting these voyages. Between 1765 and 1769 they outfitted six slaving voyages, but from 1770 until 1774 they sent out twelve ships to bring back slaves.

According to some, Lopez's profits were balanced by his losses in the slave trade, and, consequently, we can understand why Newport's Jews did not immerse themselves even more deeply in the slave trade;¹¹⁴ it was too financially risky. By focussing on other commodities, Lopez and the other Jewish and Gentile Newport merchants revealed their preferences for mercantile pursuits that did not involve such high risks.

The slave trade was not just economically important in its own right. Many ancillary industries — such as rum and ship-building — depended on the continuation of this trade. With many of Newport's Jews involved in distilling rum, and with Aaron Lopez contracting for the construction of slaving ships, much more income came from the slave trade than was acquired through the actual commerce in slaves.¹¹⁵

The correspondence between Jewish merchants and the captains of their ships shows no evidence related to their captives in any way that would reveal some sense of commonality or sympathy. A letter from Jacob Rivera to Captain Nathaniel Briggs states that another of Rivera's slaving ships had found good markets for slaves in South Carolina. Rivera's main concern about the voyage was that the "... vessel [would] come home without as much will pay her portage bill."¹¹⁶ Consequently, we can see that the ultimate goal of these slaving trips was high profits, and that other considerations were irrelevant insofar as they did not involve a reduction in financial returns.

From advertisements published in the *Newport Mercury*, it appears that Jews advertised for the sale of their slaves the same way as Gentiles. The common practice in Newport was for owners to advertise for the sale of slaves without publishing the owners' names. Interested parties were asked to contact the publisher. Only in the case of runaways do we find the names of the owners in the advertisements. Clearly, there were practical reasons for formulating different types of notices for different goals; however, in this regard Jews behaved in the same way that Gentile masters did. (See Table 4, below.)

Many of the Jews living in pre-Revolutionary Newport owned slaves: Aaron Lopez, Jacob Rivera, Moses Seixas, Moses Levy, Mr. Levarez, Mr. Hart, Mr. Jacobs, and Mr. Monis.¹¹⁷ But, in most cases, these were the most prominent and affluent Jews in the community, and thus, as with Gentiles, the number of slaves one owned corresponded with one's wealth. For instance, in 1774, Aaron Lopez owned five slaves and Jacob Rivera owned twelve. According to Lynne Withey's calculations, this pattern of ownership would have put these two merchants in the very highest economic echelons, as the mean number of slaves owned by Newporters in the highest tax brackets was 3.5.¹¹⁸

By 1774, Rivera focussed more on manufacturing rum and candles than on shipping, and consequently he had more of a need than Lopez to have regularly employable workers. He tended to employ his twelve slaves in his spermaceti works and in his home as servants.¹¹⁹

One way to examine the prevalence of slave ownership in the Jewish community is to analyze the lists of deceased slaves in Ezra Stiles's *Bill of Mortality*. It is a relatively easy task to identify the slaves of Jewish owners by their distinctive names. First, the Jews' slaves took their masters' surnames; second, they were given first names that conformed to the popular style of the times. Consequently, we often find records of African-Americans named London Lopez, Fortune Lopez, Quaco Rivera, or Pompey Levy. Also, each slave's owner was recorded in this list, and hence it is possible to determine the owner's religious affiliation. (See Table 5, below.)

Table 4
A Comparison of Jewish and Gentile Advertisements Relating to
Slaves in The *Newport Mercury*

Sales			
	No Name *	Non-Jews	Jews
1759	5	0	0
1764	4	0	0
1769	8	2	0
1774	9	2	0
Wanted			
	No Name	Non-Jews	Jews
1759	0	0	0
1764	0	0	0
1769	1	0	0
1774	1	0	0
Runaways			
	No Name	Non-Jews	Jews
1759	0	3	0
1764	0	3	0
1769	0	5	1
1774	0	9	0

Source: Advertisements Relating to Slaves in the *Newport Mercury*: 1759, 1764, 1769, and 1774.

*"No Name" indicates that the advertisement told any interested parties to respond to the printer of the *Newport Mercury*. Of course, without examining the records of the printer, we have no way of ascertaining who these people were.

Of the 109 slaves who were recorded as having died between 1760 and 1764, only three out of 109 belonged to Jewish masters. At 2.8 percent, this number of deaths is roughly proportional to the concentration of Jews in Newport.¹²⁰ With the prominence of the Jews in trade and considering the overall wealth of the community, we might expect the proportion to be higher if the Jews owned a proportional share of slaves. Also, despite the wealth and need for slaves among the Jews of colonial Newport, not one Jew appears on Lorenzo Greene's listing of the forty-eight leading slave-holders in Rhode Island.¹²¹ Remarkably, it seems that Jewish Newporters might either have owned fewer slaves than their Gentile economic and occupational peers or that the slaves of Jewish masters died less often. Still, the evidence does not show whether the Jews' treatment of their slaves was either worse or better than that of Gentile Newporters.

Table 5

Religious Affiliation of Deceased Slaves' Masters: 1760-1764

Year	Gentile	Jewish	Total
1760	21	1	22
1761*	18	0	18
1762	21	1	22
1763	19	0	19
1764	27	1	28
Total	106	3	109

Source: *Bill of Mortality for Newport Rhode Island, for the Years 1760-1764*. Reverend Ezra Stiles, copied from the original manuscript W. Henry Ford.

*By Reverend Stiles's own admission, his figures for 1761 were much lower than the actual mortality rate.

As was the common pattern of slave use in Newport, Jews also employed the slaves of other owners as needed. Consequently, on the manifest of sailors aboard Lopez's ships, we not only find the names of his own slaves working there but we also find the names of "rented" slaves who filled out the complement of personnel. For instance, Lopez's schooner *Sally* employed five rented Indian and five Negro servants as sailors in its voyage from Warren to North Carolina and on to the Falkland Islands in 1775.¹²²

The destinations of the ship mentioned above indicate that it was leaving on a whaling voyage, the least attractive trip for sailors because of its long duration and inherent personal risks. As a result, only the most desperate of sailors signed on to these trips, and thus the whalers were often disproportionately staffed by African and Native Americans. At first, these were servants who were leased from their masters, but even into the nineteenth century, whaling ships continued to be staffed by many non-Whites.¹²³ As part of a typical pattern of employing non-Whites on the most risky voyages, it appears that almost all of the sailors aboard Lopez's ship, the *Sally*, were either African or Native American servants. Lopez's methods of staffing his ships were not extraordinary — there was nothing unique in how he, as a Jew, employed slave labor in his enterprises.

With regard to the slaves' family life or material condition, it is difficult to tell how they lived. It appears that Aaron Lopez employed the same shoemakers for his slaves as he did for his family, but it is unclear whether the quality of the shoes was comparable,¹²⁴ and it is impossible to judge how well Lopez dressed his slaves. Finally, there appears to be no evidence that the Jews' treatment of their slaves was

in any way different from how African-Americans were generally treated by masters.

In the slaves' ultimate liberation from their ownership by Jewish masters, perhaps common patterns manifested in how early the slaves were liberated; how these ex-slaves were supported after years of service; or in how Jews later supported Black charitable institutions. Slavery and the slave trade were abolished in Rhode Island by 1790, but these institutions took time to die out. In the case of the slave trade, Rhode Islanders continued to import slaves illegally well into the nineteenth century. While slavery was legally abolished by forbidding the purchase of new slaves, the legislation allowed gradual manumission of African-Americans.

The Jews of Newport had stopped their slave trading activity by the mid 1780s, primarily because the key traders had died or relocated during the war. Also, because the Jewish population of Newport dwindled in the late eighteenth century, some slaves left with their masters. But many ex-slaves of Jewish masters were gradually emancipated. In many cases, these slaves were emancipated with the death of their owner. Jacob Rivera manumitted his slave Pompey in 1787, two years before his death.¹²⁵ In addition, if we look at when ex-slaves with typically Jewish surnames first appeared in the proceedings of the Free African Union Society, an organization composed of freed Blacks, we can derive some clue as to when they were manumitted. Following Jacob Rivera's death in 1789, we suddenly find references to a Quaco Rivera in 1793. Also, with Moses Seixas's death in 1809, we suddenly find Lydia, Peter, and Ann Seixas signed up for the Society's School in 1809.¹²⁶ As was the pattern, Jews' slaves seem to have acquired their freedom with the death of their master or immediately prior to it. Thus, the Jews' methods of liberating their slaves did not differ from those of the Gentile majority.

Slaves occupied the bottom of the social order — stripped of their autonomy, they existed as subjugated humans with the legal status of property. Free Blacks enjoyed some benefits in that their family lives could be more stable, they earned their own livelihoods, they had more personal autonomy, and they had enhanced legal status.

There are a number of records of business interactions between free African-Americans and Jews in Newport. Many of these interactions were between Black producers of food and Jewish merchants. One free Black, Prince Updike, manufactured chocolate for Aaron Lopez to export.¹²⁷ Also, the account books of Cesar Lyndon, one of the most prominent members of the pre-Revolutionary free Black community, show that he sold large amounts of carrots and celery to Aaron Lopez and to a Mr. Pollock.¹²⁸ Lyndon's account books include short narratives of important events in the lives of his family, his friends, and himself. While this account book describes the lives of successful free Blacks and their connections to the Congregational church, it does not indicate any more or less intense relationship

with the Jews than with any business people.

Further evidence that Blacks did not see Jews as a unique minority with common interests lies in the Proceedings of the Free African Union Society. In 1793, this self-help organization voted to pay for Quaco Rivera's unresolved debt from their own treasury. In the minutes of this meeting they noted that,

Upon the Request made by Mr. Primus Thurston that he had an account of charges for Nursing the late Mr. Quaco Rivera in his last sickness, that Mr. Abraham Rivera, the son & Heir of Mr. Jacob Rodriguez Rivera had refused paying the whole of said accompts [sic] so made up ... they order'd the Treasury to pay 5/3 ...¹²⁹

In all of the minutes of this organization, this is the only reference made to a dispute with a former slave owner or his family, and thus it must have had some extraordinary importance. A common practice of the day was to emancipate slaves in their old age, because having lost their earning potential they then became liabilities to the slave owner. Such a manumission was particularly cruel, as it left the slave free but with little ability to care for him or herself. It is not clear, however, that with the death of Jacob Rivera and the manumission of Quaco Rivera occurring at the same time as the banning of slavery, whether the responsibility of the former master's heirs for a former slave was neglected or undetermined. Regardless, the refusal of Abraham Rivera to pay the small nursing costs for an ex-slave was outstanding enough to earn Jacob Rivera's heir a special mention in the minutes of that meeting.

While there was an outspoken opposition to slavery among the free Blacks, the Free African Union Society was not necessarily hostile to all of those who had previously owned slaves. It perceived many Whites and many former slave masters, like William Thornton and Ezra Stiles, as sympathetic to their communal goals.¹³⁰ But never is a Jew listed as a benefactor of the African-American community or as sympathetic with their goals. Thus, while Blacks perceived some Whites as friendly, it appears that free Blacks did not see Jews as having any unique relationship with them.

Finally it appears that the relations between Jews and Blacks in colonial Newport can be described by a number of paradigms: slave and master; employer and employee; rich and poor; merchant and supplier; integrated and ostracized; White and Black. Jews blended into the colonial milieu while Africans stood apart from it. Each interacted with the other and perceived the other as we might have expected other Gentile Whites to have done with the African-Americans.

PART 6

HOW DISTINCTIVE WAS NEWPORT IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA?

Between 1756 and 1763, the Jews in Newport organized to establish their own synagogue building. They donated their own resources, appealed for outside aid, and, in all likelihood, met repeatedly to make the many decisions involved. During the actual construction of this impressive building, many of the workers and artisans were slaves.¹³¹ Just as African-Americans suffered building a White-dominated, Gentile America, they also labored for the Jews. In fact, any distinctions between the pre-Revolutionary Jewish community and White society were more functions of religious traditions than the result of economic, social, or political cleavages. Jews were an ethnic subset of the dominant White society. Economic success was an open avenue for the Jews, and, in turn, this success allowed the Jews to overcome barriers to their full participation in colonial society. The divisions between religious groups were far less important than those which defined the racially based caste system.

How distinctive were these patterns to pre-Revolutionary Newport? Rhode Island had the highest proportions of Jews and African-Americans in New England; however, slavery, slave codes, and racist legislation were ubiquitous in the region. Because Rhode Island typified many social, economic, and political trends that were at work throughout the North, we would be able to generalize Newport's patterns of divergences between the experiences of racial castes and disadvantaged classes to other American colonies.

Colonial South Carolina illustrates how similar differences between Blacks and Jews were evident in other colonies. At the same time as Newport's Jewish community was ascending in socioeconomic status, a similar process was taking place in Charleston, South Carolina. A small community of Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews was established while Charleston was growing to be among the three largest port cities in the American colonies. As a group, the Jews there were occupationally focussed in trade and retailing, and, while the Jews suffered some political disadvantages, they thrived both economically and culturally. The Jews, especially the wealthy ones, enjoyed many rights which many Gentiles did not even enjoy: naturalization, public worship, property ownership, and the right to bear witness in court (after swearing on the Pentateuch).¹³² The open practice of Jewish religion was maximally tolerated, and, as one witness wrote of Charlestown in 1770,

Altho' differing religious principels [sic], and in the knowledge of salvation ... [the city is] far from ... inclining to that disorder which is so common among men of contrary religious sentiments in many parts of the world, where that pernicious spirit of controversy has laid foundation to hatred, persecution and cruel inquisition ...¹³³

At the same time that this Carolinian was lauding Charlestown's spirit of religious tolerance, African-Americans were experiencing racial caste barriers in Carolinian society. By 1770, Blacks formed a numerical majority in Charlestown, with a population of 5,000 Whites and 6,000 African-Americans.¹³⁴ Blacks were a majority throughout the Carolinas, and with the dependence on slave labor combined with the unique demographic pattern White fears of a mass rebellion were high. Consequently, South Carolina had one of the most extensive and rigorous slave codes in all of the American colonies. Among its many disenfranchising provisions, the codes prevented African and Native Americans' access to the courts; declared that any White individual had the right to examine any Black person; extended the scope of crimes which merited capital punishment; and authorized local marshalls to force slaves to implement judicial punishments (i.e., whippings, brandings, removal of ears, and killing).¹³⁵ These legal disabilities translated into other disadvantages, and consequently non-Whites in South Carolina tended to occupy the lowest echelons of socioeconomic status as they did in Rhode Island.

However, in the South the socioeconomic differences between the races was even more distinctive given the larger and more concentrated populations of Blacks. In addition, the South also had a greater dependence on cheap slave labor to fuel its agrarian economy. Thus, besides the social pressure to prevent rebellion and repress Blacks, there would also have been strong economic pressures to retain slaves in bondage. In the South, the legal, economic, and social schisms between the races were even more emphasized than in the North. In the South's environment of strong White vs. Black tension, the differences between White religious minorities was at least as inconsequential as it was in Newport, and it would be only logical for Jews and Blacks to interact as they did in Newport, Rhode Island.

African-Americans, both enslaved and free, were not part of the mainstream of colonial American society — they existed on its periphery, serving it. As property, they were highly valued, but, as people, they were neither accepted by the Whites nor did they feel that the American colonies were their home. How could Blacks have felt at home? In almost every part of their lives, non-Whites were ostracized, subjugated, and relegated to the very worst conditions. By the late eighteenth century, Blacks had developed a separate communal consciousness as well as a culture that existed outside of that of Whites, but, by necessity, in contact with it. In pre-Revolutionary America, the experiences of non-Whites and those of religious minorities were wholly different.

What implications do these findings have for the study of race, class, and ethnicity in the United States? By the end of the eighteenth century, many social patterns which would affect later groups of immigrants were already established. The quick ascent of Jewish immigrants into the highest economic and social echelons of colonial society indicates the fluidity of the barriers between White groups. These

Jews faced some disadvantages, but in the long-run these barriers proved to be of little consequence in preventing their entry into the mainstream of eighteenth century American society. This absence of rigidity between White immigrant groups was to remain an important feature of American life—a characteristic which later waves of Jewish immigration would find upon their entry into American society. Whether it was in the 1730s, the 1830s, or the 1880s, Jews would find few social or economic obstacles impeding their full participation in American society. Like other White immigrant groups, Jews would find opportunities which African-Americans would find inaccessible or unattainable at all three of these points of immigration.

Second, in eighteenth century Newport, we have seen that European models for Jewish communal life were unworkable and that new forms of cohesion developed between Jews. In an environment where religious identity was voluntary, those individuals who were born as Jews were no longer necessarily bound to the Jewish community. Jewish identity was not simply formed by religious practices; occupations, wealth, residence, cultural institutions, and social clubs became new loci of Jewish interaction. While some new sources of cohesion developed for eighteenth century Jews, they would not develop as numerous and as densely as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Still, evidence from pre-Revolutionary Newport shows how identity with the Jewish community was not necessarily contingent on religious observance.

It is this freedom to define one's own allegiance to a community that differentiates the American Jewish experience from the European model. While the old world was fraught with rigid barriers separating Jews from the dominant culture, politics, economy, and social institutions, these schisms were almost wholly absent in the American colonies. Just like any White Gentiles, Jews could observe their religion openly and with impunity, and they could attain high levels of economic, social, and political influence. North America began as a uniquely tolerant home for Jews, and it continued to be such a haven and source of opportunity through to the present.

In this way, the American experience for White ethnic and religious minorities has diverged sharply from the experiences of non-Whites. For African and Native Americans, the establishment of thriving European colonies in the new world ended in the creation of societies where they were outsiders. Jews may have been a minority, but when we compare them to those peoples who existed as disenfranchised, oppressed, and impoverished members of non-White caste groups, the position of the Jews closely resembles that of other White European immigrants.



Notes

- 1 Robinson, William, ed., *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society and the African Benevolent Society*, Providence, 1976, p. 45.
- 2 Banton, Michael, "The Classification of the Races in Europe and North America: 1700-1850," *International Social Science Journal*, February 1987, p. 50.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 4 Pierson, William D., *Black Yankees*, Amherst, 1988, p. 15.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 6 John Quamino and Bristol Yamma were two Black Newporters who were selected by Congregational minister Ezra Stiles to train as missionaries. Stiles's plan was eventually to send them back to Africa but the Revolutionary War interrupted their studies at Princeton. Neither one ever arrived in Africa.
- 7 Stiles, Ezra, *Bill of Mortality for Newport, Rhode Island for the Year 1760 to 1764*. Copied from the original by William Henry Ford. Rhode Island Historical Society.
- 8 Chyet, Stanley F., *Lopez Of Newport, Colonial American Merchant Prince*, Detroit, 1970, p. 22.
- 9 Kohut, George Alexander, *Ezra Stiles and the Jews*, New York, 1902, p. 108.
- 10 *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, Jewish Publication Society, New York: 1985, p. 227.
- 11 Channing, George G., *Early Recollections of Newport, Rhode Island*, Newport, 1868.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 14 Chyet, *ibid.*, p. 134.
- 15 Kohut, *ibid.*, p. 56.
- 16 Channing, *ibid.*, p. 199.
- 17 *Newport Mercury*, July 27, No. 725, p. 3.
- 18 Chyet, *ibid.*, p. 46.
- 19 Burgoyne, Bruce, ed., *A Hessian Diary of the American Revolution by Johan Conrad Dohla*, 1990.
- 20 Crane, Elaine, "Uneasy Coexistence: Religious Tensions in Eighteenth Century Newport." *Newport History*, 53 Part 3 (179), Summer 1980, p. 102.
- 21 Marcus, Jacob R., *The Colonial American Jew, 1492-1776*, (Vol 1-3). Detroit, 1970, p. 1029
- 22 Israel, Jonathan, *European Jewry In The Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*, New York, 1985, p. 220.
- 23 Kohut, *ibid.*, p. 58.
- 24 It is noteworthy that Aaron Lopez and Issac Elizer, the first of the Jewish community to demand naturalization as professing Jews, were only granted their petition of citizenship a year earlier. Many if not most of the Jewish congregation were not yet subjects of the British monarchy. Nevertheless, they changed their synagogue service to include a tribute to a government which was not yet their own.

- ²⁵ *Newport Mercury* and Gutstein, Morris, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*, New York, 1936, p. 178.
- ²⁶ Channing, *ibid.*, p. 202.
- ²⁷ Goldscheider, Calvin and Neusner, Jacob, eds., *Social Foundations of Judaism*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1990, p. 7.
- ²⁸ *Tanakh*, *ibid.*, p. 1030.
- ²⁹ Banton, *ibid.*, p. 111.
- ³⁰ For a detailed description of Maimonides's interpretation of the laws regarding slaves see Klein, Isaac, trns. *The Code of Maimonides, Book 12, The Book of Acquisition*, London, 1951.
- ³¹ Greene, Lorenzo, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776*, Port Washington, New York, 1942, p. 168.
- ³² Maimonides, *ibid.*, Treatise V, Chapter 8:12.
- ³³ Stiles, *ibid.*
- ³⁴ *Tanakh*, *ibid.*, p. 310.
- ³⁵ Kohut, *ibid.*, p. 73.
- ³⁶ Greene, *ibid.*, p. 269.
- ³⁷ The membership of this organization consisted of former slaves and free Blacks, and although this organization was formed immediately after the colonial period there is no reason to assume that their opinions of Jews radically changed during the war.
- ³⁸ Robinson, William H., ed., *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society and The African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island 1780-1824*, Providence, 1976, p. 25.
- ³⁹ Crane, *ibid.*, p. 101.
- ⁴⁰ Piersen, *ibid.*, p. 15.
- ⁴¹ Coughtry, Jay, *The Notorious Triangle*, Philadelphia, 1981, p. 25.
- ⁴² Berlin, Ira, *Slaves Without Masters*, Philadelphia, 1974, p. 23.
- ⁴³ Piersen, *ibid.*, p. 15.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 20.
- ⁴⁵ Greene, *ibid.*, p. 230.
- ⁴⁶ Piersen, *ibid.*, p. 19.
- ⁴⁷ Withey, *ibid.*, p. 33.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135. Original Sources: Providence Town Council Records, Providence City Hall.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Kohut, *ibid.*, p. 109.
- ⁵² Withey, *ibid.*, p. 115.

- ⁵³ Gutstein, *ibid.*, p. 136.
- ⁵⁴ The places of residence of the Jews of Newport were derived from a number of sources: 1) "Where Credit Is Due," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 6, No. 2, November 1972, pp. 226-235; 2) Rhodes, Irwin S., ed., *References to Jews In the Newport Mercury*, 3) Goldowsky, *ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ I have included Lucena in my list of Jews living in The Point, despite the fact that he continued to associate with Christianity throughout his life. Lucena was a cousin of Aaron Lopez, and the two families did business together for many years. Although Lucena never practiced Judaism, he was counted by Stiles as being part of the Jewish community in 1760. Consequently, it appears that he had many links with the Jewish community, despite the fact that he remained a Christian by religion.
- ⁵⁶ *Newport Mercury*, April 27, 1772. Hart, for instance, owned a 600-acre farm in Scituate and a 100-acre farm in Tiverton. Both Lopez and Hart had farmhouses on the property, while Issacs owned a lot in Scituate.
- ⁵⁷ Blaskowitz, Charles, *Plan of the Town of Newport, 1777*, Rhode Island Historical Society.
- ⁵⁸ Gutstein, *ibid.*, p. 18.
- ⁵⁹ Rotenberg, Joshua, "Caste, Class and Religion. Black-Jewish Interactions in Pre-Revolutionary Newport," Unpublished thesis for the Honors A.B. degree, Brown University, 1991, p. 59.
- ⁶⁰ Withey, Lynne, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island*, Albany, 1984, p. 131.
- ⁶¹ White, Shane, "'We dwell in Safety and Pursue Our Honest Callings': Free Blacks in New York City 1783-1810," *The Journal of American History*, 75(2) September 1988, pp. 445-471. In this paper, White documents the creation of racial enclaves in New York. In examining the settlement in pre-Revolutionary New York, I avoid the pitfall of blurring together these two periods. Shane White's observations are taken from three years — 1790, 1800, and 1810 — to show these changes in residence among the African-American community over time.
- ⁶² Withey, *ibid.*, p. 128.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- ⁶⁶ Gutstein, *ibid.*, p. 157.
- ⁶⁷ Withey, *ibid.*, p. 122.
- ⁶⁸ Chyet, *ibid.*, p. 45.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- ⁷² Coughtry, *ibid.*, p. 16.
- ⁷³ Greene, *ibid.*, p. 299.
- ⁷⁴ Cesar Lyndon's Account Books, Rhode Island Historical Society.
- ⁷⁵ Robinson, *ibid.*, p. 22.

- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 86.
- ⁷⁷ Gronifolaw, James Albert Unkawfaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Participation of James Albert Unkawfaw Gronifolaw, An African Prince*, Newport, 1774, Rhode Island Historical Society.
- ⁷⁸ Bolster, Jeffrey W., "To Feel Like a Man: Black Seamen in the Northern States," *Journal of American History*, 76(3) Dec. 1989, p. 1174.
- ⁷⁹ At the time, the division of the Rhode Island colony's wealth was extremely skewed. In fact, the wealthiest ten percent of Newport residents paid fifty-six percent of the taxes in 1760 (Withey, *ibid.*, p. 51). If the number of poor who were supported by the town increased, then so did the obligation on the rich. For this reason, poor pregnant women were a liability because their babies would have to be cared for by the town in which they were born. Consequently, the records reveal that many women were run out of town.
- ⁸⁰ Piersen, *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ⁸² Daniels, Bruce, "Poor Relief, Local Finance and Town Government in Eighteenth Century Rhode Island," *Rhode Island History*, 40(3) August 1981.
- ⁸³ Withey p. 123.
- ⁸⁴ Lyndon, *ibid.*, Volume 10, p. 84c.
- ⁸⁵ Greene, *ibid.*, pp. 283-285.
- ⁸⁶ *Newport Mercury*, March 21, 1774.
- ⁸⁷ *Newport Mercury*, September 10, 1764.
- ⁸⁸ Gutstein, *ibid.*, p. 168. Later, in 1780 the Jews of Newport started a new Lodge called *King David's Lodge*. The creation of their own Masonic chapter may signal some dissatisfaction with the more Christian chapter, but the creation of their own lodge reveals a willingness to emulate Gentile cultural institutions.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- ⁹⁰ Schnappes, Morris, ed., *Documentary History of the Jews in the United States*, New York: Citadel Press, 1952, p. 35.
- ⁹¹ Hoffman and Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the American Revolution*, Charlottesville, 1989, p. 216
- ⁹² *Newport Mercury*, June 9, 1766, No. 405, p. 3.
- ⁹³ Lopez Collection, 1773, American Jewish Historical Society.
- ⁹⁴ Kohut, *ibid.*, p. 44.
- ⁹⁵ Marcus, *ibid.*, pp. 98, 222.
- ⁹⁶ Greene, *ibid.*, p. 311.
- ⁹⁷ Larkins, John R., *Alcohol and the Negro: Explosive Issues*, Zebulum, N.C., 1965, p. 207.

- ⁹⁸ For a detailed comparison of poor and elite tendencies toward drinking in colonial times, refer to Pinson, Ann, "The New England Rum Era: Drinking Styles and Social Change In Newport, R.I., 1720-1770," *Working Papers on Alcohol And Human Behavior Number 8*, Department of Anthropology, Brown University, Providence, 1980.
- ⁹⁹ Adelman, "Strangers: Civil Rights of Jews in the Colony of Rhode Island," *Rhode Island History*, Vol. 13, No. 3, July, 1954, p. 72.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- ¹⁰¹ Marcus, ed., *Documents*, p. 212.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 214.
- ¹⁰³ Withey, *ibid.*, p. 131.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- ¹⁰⁵ Chyet, *ibid.*, p. 126.
- ¹⁰⁶ Mendes-Flohr, Paul R. and Reinhartz, Jehuda, *The Jew In The Modern World, a Documentary History*, New York, 1980, p. 363.
- ¹⁰⁷ Coughtry, Raymond, *The Notorious Triangle*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981, p. 28.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-285, and Platt, Virginia Bever, "And Don't Forget the Guinea Voyage: The Slave Trade of Aaron Lopez of Newport," *William and Mary Quarterly*, October, 1975, pp. 601-618."
- ¹¹¹ Platt, *ibid.*, p. 617.
- ¹¹² Jacobson, Jacob Mark, "Jewish Merchants of Newport in Pre-Revolutionary Days," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 5, No. 4, November 1920, p. 934.
- ¹¹³ Coughtry, *ibid.*, p. 19.
- ¹¹⁴ Deutch, Sarah, "The Elusive Guineamen: Newport Slavers, 1735-1774," *New England Quarterly*, June 1982.
- ¹¹⁵ Marcus, ed., *Documents*, p. 416.
- ¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 447.
- ¹¹⁷ Burial Grounds, Old City (1903), Rhode Island Black Heritage Society. Some of these names are derived from the tombstones of ex-slaves who were buried in Burial Grounds of the Old City.
- ¹¹⁸ Withey, *ibid.*, p. 131.
- ¹¹⁹ Platt, *ibid.*, p. 607.
- ¹²⁰ Stiles, *ibid.* Because of the transition to a different society, many slaves died as a result of diseases for which Africans had little immunity. Being less susceptible to fatal disease, "seasoned" slaves exacted higher prices on the market.
- ¹²¹ Greene, *ibid.*, p. 258.
- ¹²² Lopez Collection, *ibid.*, 1775.

- ¹²³ Farr, James, "A Slow Boat to Nowhere: The Multi-racial Crews of the American Whaling Industry," *Journal of Negro History*, Spring 1983, 68, pp. 158-170.
- ¹²⁴ Lopez Collection, *ibid.*, 1773.
- ¹²⁵ Rivera file. Facsimile on file, Black Heritage Society, Providence, Rhode Island.
- ¹²⁶ Robinson, *ibid.*, p. 162. These three actually attended the African Benevolent Society's school. The Benevolent society was the successor organization to the Union Society, which dissolved at the end of the century.
- ¹²⁷ Chyet, *ibid.*, p. 131.
- ¹²⁸ Lyndon, *ibid.*, Vol 10, p. 83c.
- ¹²⁹ Robinson, *ibid.*, p. 107.
- ¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ¹³¹ Greene, *ibid.*, p. 114.
- ¹³² Goodman, Abraham Vossen, *American Overture, Jewish Rights in Colonial Times*, Philadelphia, 1947, p. 8.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹³⁵ Higginbotham, A. Leon, *In the Matter of Color*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 194-197.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NEWPORT'S COLONIAL JEWS TO THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

BY BERNARD KUSINITZ

The occasion of various anniversaries recalls distant milestones in the struggle for human liberty. For example, in 1986 the 350th anniversary of the founding of Rhode Island was observed. In 1987 the 200th anniversary of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia was celebrated. The product of its deliberations was nothing less than the Constitution of the United States, one of the greatest milestones in the history of mankind, so much so that today, more than ever, the United States is a beacon of light to repressed peoples all over the world.

In a more geographically limited area, the following year, 1988, witnessed the 225th anniversary of the dedication of Touro Synagogue, an international symbol of religious freedom, and the 350th anniversary of the founding of the city of Newport. In 1990 came the 200th anniversary of the George Washington Letter to the Hebrew congregation of Newport, which proclaimed "to bigotry no sanction; to persecution no assistance," followed in the year 1991 by the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights amendments to the Constitution of the United States. All these anniversaries reveal a common thread, the crucial thread of the founding of religious freedom in America within the system of dualism that is uniquely American and is the American way of life.

Another basic set of circumstances must be considered, the "confluence of the exiles," that particular basic combination of events that ultimately resulted in the establishment of Rhode Island and the flowering of religious liberty in the New World. The first momentous circumstance was the exodus of the Christian dissidents, with their philosophy of dualism, from the Massachusetts Bay Colony into Rhode Island in the 17th century, led by such men and women as Roger Williams, John Clarke, John Coddington, Anne Hutchinson, and others. The second stream of the confluence was the exodus of Jewish refugees from Europe, South America, and the Caribbean Islands into Newport in the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Our new insight into these events is the realization of the connection between the two immigrations. The entrance of the second group into Newport was made possible by the entrance of the first group into Rhode Island. The second group proved that the philosophy of dualism of the first group was a valid one.

This paper is adapted from an article in the March 1992 issue of *Los Muestras* "La Boz De Los Sephardim," (Our Things, the Voice of the Sephardim," Ladino). *Los Muestras* is a magazine published in Brussels, Belgium, with articles in Ladino, French, and English. Bernard Kusinitz is First Vice President of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and the historian of Touro Synagogue.

In other words, the Sephardic Jews of colonial Newport did indeed make a major contribution to the actual development of the American way of life of which we are all so proud. This they did by the lifestyle they created, together with their developing commercial prowess, both within the context of their newly found Americanism.

Before discussing this theme, I want to establish a workable definition of the American way of life and also to give at least a sketchy background of what both Rhode Island and the Jews were all about. First, I believe that the American way of life is fundamentally the equality of all its citizens before the law combined with the freedom of all to be alike in some ways — that is, our secular occupational life — and to be different in others without legal restriction — that is, our religious life. Some call this dualism; others call it pluralism. But regardless of what one calls it, it is still the co-existence of one's secular life with one's religious life. We are all equal in our pursuit of life, liberty, a career, and the pursuit of happiness. At the same time, we enjoy the right to be different, one from another, in our worship of a Supreme Being, whatever He is called. As mundane as this seems to us today, please remember that this was a revolutionary concept during American's colonial period.

Let us make no mistake about it, within the framework of our theme we must remember and re-emphasize that it was in Rhode Island, not Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, Pennsylvania, or any other colony in America, that this dualism evolved. The people who founded the other colonies were interested in religious freedom, but their idea of religious freedom was freedom for their own group but not for others. They were seeking their own exclusive earthly paradise. Hence, for example, the banishment from Massachusetts of such free-thinkers as Roger Williams to Rhode Island, the "sewer of New England" as some called this noble little island. Still others referred to colonial Rhode Islanders as "the Lord's debris" and facetiously said that if anyone lost his religion he could find it somewhere in Rhode Island.

The establishment of religious freedom in our country, I must maintain, was based on the James Madison philosophy of strength through diversity rather than the adoption of a single state religion. Many of our Founding Fathers felt that the new United States should be a harmonious society of like-minded Protestants into whose fold all other religions would sooner or later assimilate.

Even as late as the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, there was talk of establishing a state religion. Moreover, while the first Amendment to the Constitution was being written, said amendment expressly prohibiting the Federal government from making any law regarding the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free expression thereof, more than half the states had state religions, including the New England states other than Rhode Island.

The American way of life, as I understand it, and as we saw it develop from the Rhode Island experience, had its first major challenge by an ethnic minority in colonial Newport, the Jewish, Sephardic-oriented, minority. That minority anticipated that the system which actually developed into the American way of life was a social system that could and did work, the negative experience of hundreds of European years notwithstanding.

I believe, moreover, that, to those immigrants whose previous sixteen hundred years of suffering, murder, and expulsion at the hands of a parochial Europe and whose fearful peregrinations had taken them from Spain and Portugal and eventually to Holland and then to Brazil and Barbados and to other Caribbean Islands, Rhode Island was more than a physical site. To them it was an idea whose time had come; it was a oft-broken promise begging to be fulfilled! That idea, of course, was freedom of religion within the framework of civil liberty and equality. They faced the challenge and this opportunity by simultaneously becoming good American citizens, participating in all phases of civic life, while living as complete a Jewish life as anyone can define. I also submit that not only did they take advantage of this new system, they also contributed greatly to it.

Let us go back to the very beginning and take a fresh look at one of the first significant actions taken by the fledgling Jewish community of Newport, the purchase of cemetery grounds in 1677, just nineteen years after their arrival in Newport. There were times and places in history when Jews were not allowed to establish cemeteries. The fact that here in Newport, right from the very beginning *they found that they could have one, and the fact that they wanted one* augured very well for both the developing American way of life in general and the young Jewish community in particular. It certainly would indicate that they were in Newport to stay, for better or worse. And it seems to me that the inexorable trend towards religious liberty and mutual respect received an impetus right from the beginning when *the right to die as one chose was linked to the right to live as one chose*. Incidentally, that little cemetery, which is as full of mysteries as it is small, is still in existence at the corner of Kay Street and Bellevue Avenue in Newport.

Now, the second factor in the building of a Jewish community in Newport was the construction in the eighteenth century of what became known as the Touro Synagogue in the late nineteenth century. I believe that there is no argument when we say that a synagogue, or temple, has to be the focal point of any Jewish community. Hence the relevancy of the construction of such a facility cannot be questioned.

Touro Synagogue was recognized as a National Historic Site in 1946 and is an internationally recognized symbol of religious liberty. We could spend hours on all aspects of its history, its architecture, its contents, and its place in the hearts and

minds of Jews everywhere, but I would like to focus on just one aspect of this unique shrine that seems to defy time. Think for a moment, how do you remember the synagogue the last time you saw it or some pictures of it? Do you remember seeing a building that had a simple austere look? Or, do you recall seeing a relatively elegant building? Most of the fairly recent articles or books that I have read on the subject seem to describe the synagogue as a beautiful, but simple, austere structure. Its design was the result of architect Peter Harrison's genius at creative adaption, wherein he combined various sources in his library with a rare sense of harmony and proportion, resulting in what is considered to be one of the most perfect examples of colonial architecture with its simple and austere architectural lines. In contrast to the magnificent and opulent historic cathedrals and to many contemporary churches and temples, Touro Synagogue is indeed simple in its architectural glory. From the outside the building seems plain.

This concept of austerity was not always so. What seems to be simple to some eyes appeared elegant to others in a different frame of reference. Thus, Touro Synagogue in its colonial setting projected an image of elegance that one can read a lot into. For example, I believe that the synagogue's elegance reflected the moral courage of its founders and denied the assertions of those who believed that the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island, lived in a state of fear. Cowards do not a Touro Synagogue make!

A contemporary source projects this different view of Touro Synagogue. Traveling through America in 1768 and 1769 was one Reverend Andrew Burnaby, an English clergyman, who had this to say about colonial clerical architecture in Newport:

The places of public worship, except for the Jews synagogue are all of wood and not one of them is worth looking at. They consist chiefly of a church; two Presbyterian meeting houses, one quaker ditto, three anabaptist ditto, one Moravian ditto and the synagogue above mentioned. This building was designed, as indeed was several of the others, by a Mr. Harrison, an ingenious English gentleman who lives here. It will be extremely elegant within when completed; but outside is totally spoilt by a school, which the Jews insisted on having annexed to it for the education of their children.*

In its colonial setting it was the elegance of the synagogue that was striking. Today, it seems simple, and the moral courage of its founders, as reflected as in the total ambiance of the structure, is taken for granted or ignored altogether.

How was it that this small group of pious merchants of approximately two dozen men, with relatively limited resources, surrounded by and outnumbered greatly by non-Jews, could have created such an everlasting monument to religious freedom?

**Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 7, No. 1, November 1975, p. 33.

One possible answer, I submit, is that this two-story brick building, which was only one of four or five so constructed in the entire town, was really an extension of their faith in God and America and, hence, became an amazing physical manifestation and symbol of their Judaism and Jewishness, their character, their aspirations, their sense of safety, and their contribution to the American way of life. Even its conspicuous location, right above the center of town, halfway up a hill and constructed on the acute angle to the street for religious reasons, bears silent witness to the confidence in America and their neighbors in particular. Even the fact that they hired Peter Harrison, one of Colonial America's premier architects, to design their synagogue was hardly a timorous thing to do and correctly infers that they were indeed integrated into all aspects of Colonial Newport's society as well as its commercial life.*

The primary purpose of a congregation is to hold religious services. From the time that they arrived in Newport in 1658, the new Jewish arrivals conducted services in private homes. So, when they built and dedicated their new synagogue in 1763, it was definitely not for show nor for social reasons. They built the synagogue with the idea of practicing and perpetuating their religion in the tradition of their forefathers. Services, therefore, were held in the synagogue on a regular basis — daily, weekly, holidays, the whole religious calendar. This, then, was not only another phase of their Jewish lifestyle, but it was actually a key aspect of their Jewish psyche. Keep in mind that the Newport Jewish community is the second oldest in America and that Touro Synagogue is the oldest on the mainland in America. The *minhag* (ritual, Hebrew) that was adopted and is still in use today was the Sephardic one, although the congregation also included Ashkenazim.

Within the Jewish community it would be almost inconceivable to speak of founding a synagogue without also establishing a Hebrew school. The Colonial Jews were no exception. See Reverend Burnaby's observation quoted above. In fact, a letter the Newporters sent to Congregation Shearith Israel in New York soliciting funds to aid in the building of the synagogue stated that one of the objectives in building the synagogue was that "it is our Duty to Instruct children in the path of Virtuous Religion."**

Kashruth, or "keeping kosher" — the method of slaughtering animals, the prohibition of certain foods, the method of serving acceptable foods, and the proper supervision of public facilities — was very important to the Colonial Jews, as indeed it is to many Jews today. There is sufficient documentation to show that not only did the Newport Jews "keep kosher," with a *shochet*, or qualified certified ritual slaughterer in residence, but they also exported certified kosher meats to other Jewish communities, especially to the Caribbean Islands.

*See Rotenberg, "Black-Jewish Relations in Eighteenth Century Newport," above, p. 117.

**Letter in Touro Synagogue archives and *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. 27, pp. 177-178.

Another matter of deep religious concern was the practice of ritual circumcision. Fortunately, there was always a *mohel*, one qualified to perform such circumcisions, available — if not in residence then brought in from New York. When at one time there was none in Newport one of the local leaders learned the technique by correspondence with the New York practitioner. Certainly, the mohel was an important, vital element in keeping a Jewish community Jewish.

Ample documentary evidence shows that many other laws and customs basic to Judaism were observed. Here are two examples, both with a distinct Newport flavor. First, an integral part of the observance of Passover is the substitution of *matzohs*, the unleavened bread, for regular, or leavened bread. The board used in the making of such matzohs, purchased in 1786, can still be seen in one of the small rooms adjacent to the sanctuary of Touro Synagogue. And the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, Succot, calls for the construction of a little hut-like structure called a *sukkah*, or booth. The Colonial Jews did indeed build every year such a structure, decorated with, in their words, ribbons of many colors. Being Spanish-Portuguese in background, they called the *sukkah* a “cabana”!

According to religious authorities, the weekly observance of the Sabbath is even more important than the observance of the most serious holidays, the New Year and the Day of Atonement. The Jewish merchants of Newport were conscientious in their observance of the Sabbath. We find references to men quitting their labor on Friday before the Sabbath began at sundown. Moreover, it is a matter of record that there were no mercantile departures by such outstanding merchants as Aaron Lopez on either the Jewish or Christian Sabbath.

One of the basic tenets of Judaism is the giving of charity, *tzedakah* in Hebrew. The Colonial Jews took care of their own indigent, needy travelers, and non-Jewish charity cases. Even at that time, they supported Jews in the Holy Land, long before modern fund-raising techniques and organizations.

Another measure of their Jewishness was the many visitations to Touro from rabbis from all over, including Palestine, Europe, and the Caribbean Island. Certainly, if the community was not known as an outstanding Jewish community, many of these visitations would have been made elsewhere.

Two important visitors were Isaac Hayim Carigal, author of the first Hebrew sermon printed in America, and Gershom Mendes Seixas, the so-called Patriot Rabbi, who fled the British in New York, was the first American-born hazzan (cantor, Hebrew) and was among the clergymen invited to participate in the inauguration of George Washington as President of the United States.

One final bit of evidence that I think substantiates my theory is that although they participated in and were even prominent in all phases of Jewish life in particular and

non-Jewish life in general, such as Freemasonry, nine Newport Jews organized a Jewish Men's Club in 1761, the first such club in America.

Perhaps an indirect corroboration of all we have said so far can be found in the many printed statements, such as books, speeches, sermons, and eulogies, made by their non-Jewish peers and those that followed in later years. The impressive aspect of these statements is their common denominator. No matter who the author was they all spoke of the Colonial Jews in Newport only in terms of superlatives and always in the context of their Judaism and their high standards of secularism. It seems to me that this would not be the case if they were not totally absorbed into the mainstream of American life, if Jews were not respected as members of an ancient reputable faith, and if they were not accepted as fellow Americans in every sense of the word. Credit for their achievements must be shared with their Christian neighbors without whose good will and common beliefs the coming American way of life could not have been realized.

The Colonial Jewish community of Newport was indeed Jewish and American in every sense of the work and in every level of its observance. If, instead of the Jewish life they actually did live, they had adopted a negative assimilationist attitude and way of life; if, instead of understanding the true meaning and implications of the new American way of life; if, instead of understanding, either consciously or unconsciously, that the true strength of American democracy lies as much in diversity as in similarities, the Newport Colonial Jews and their descendants might have disappeared into the oblivion of assimilation long ago. Had this happened we never would have known whether Roger Williams had the right idea or not. It might have taken another ethnic minority at another time to test the validity of the American dream.

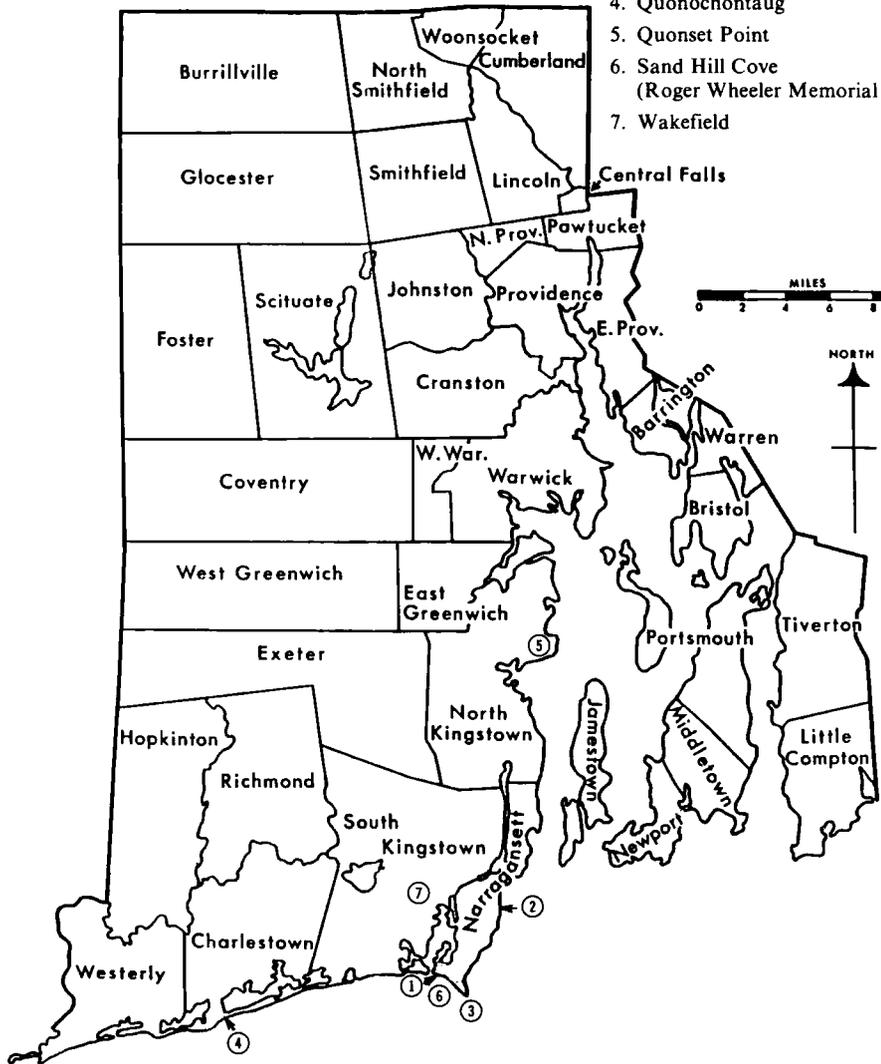
Instead, the Jews of Colonial Newport saw the situation as it really was; they saw it both as a challenge and an opportunity. They lived up to the challenge and proved that the promise of America was real. I believe that they anticipated the greatness of America and shared in its development. They pointed the direction it must take in creating and maintaining the democratic society that is so vital for all Americans, regardless of race, color or creed. What America has accomplished must never be forgotten. What the Sephardic Colonial Jews of Newport accomplished must also never be forgotten. Certainly, the Jewish experience in America represents a triumph of innovative diversity over the stifling conformity of the non-free world. It also represents the triumph of the indomitable human spirit in its quest for the eventual free expression of all its physical and spiritual needs.

Yes, the Newport Colonial Jews added their own strand of Judaism and its ideals, of integrity, of honesty, of business acumen, and of customs into the American social fabric. They did indeed understand the meaning of the Roger Williams

doctrine of dualism and the American way of life it anticipated. They were the first ethnic minority to do so and the first to prove, with the aid and comfort of their Christian neighbors, that it could work. Finally, I think that not only could we say, but that we must say, that the gift of choice so inherent to the American dream and so assiduously pursued by the Newport Colonial Jews, is a precious legacy that must be nourished and cultivated anew by future generations each in their own way and in its own time. That is the lesson and contribution of the Newport Colonial Jews to the American Way of Life!



1. Galilee
2. Narragansett Pier
3. Point Judith
4. Quonochontaug
5. Quonset Point
6. Sand Hill Cove (Roger Wheeler Memorial Beach)
7. Wakefield



**Selected Lower Narragansett Bay
Vacation Areas**

SUMMERS ALONG LOWER NARRAGANSETT BAY: NARRAGANSETT PIER AND NEARBY AREAS

BY GERALDINE S. FOSTER & ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

Natural disasters figure prominently in the history of Narragansett Pier, one of the important vacation areas of Lower Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island.* The original wharf or pier was destroyed in the Great Gale of 1815; subsequent piers could not withstand the buffeting of the surf with its immense breakers.

Raging fires destroyed many Narragansett Pier properties. The *Narragansett Times* of September 14, 1900, reports one disastrous fire:

The Pier presented a desolate sight Wednesday night (September 12), the big Rockingham hotel, the Casino, the four-story Hazard block, the two-story Knights of Pythias building, the two-story building occupied by George H. Cook, and one-half of the long row of stores in the Burns block on the way to the beach, all in ruins and devastated by the fire fiend.

The hotels were elegant structures, architecturally homogeneous. All of them had long, horizontal main blocks of wood-framed construction that varied in height from two and one-half to four stories tall. The encircling verandas were a distinguishing feature. Unfortunately not one of these hotels is standing today. Because of their wooden frames, all of these grand hotels became victims of destruction by fire.

The great hurricane and tidal wave of September 21, 1938, swept away the Dunes Club, Sherry's Bathing Pavilion, Palmer's Bathhouse, the shops on the main boardwalk, and the Hotel de la Plage. The sea wall was reduced to small stones. These stones, as well as pieces of the drive itself, which had broken up in many pieces, were swept onto the lawns of the hotels which lined the waterfront.

According to Richmond Barrett, who had known the Pier at its height, "Today nothing remains of it but a few ramshackle old buildings typical of all clap-trap seaside resorts that have slumped into stoop-shouldered neglect." However, he did cite exceptions: the "superb new Dunes Club and the Stone Towers."¹

In spite of Barrett's dismal evaluation of Narragansett Pier after the 1938 hurricane, considerable rebuilding took place. The contour of the Pier was again transformed by the devastation of Hurricane Carol, which lashed the area on August 31, 1954. The Canonchet Club on Narragansett's waterfront broke into two pieces. The former Coast Guard Station, which had become a cafe, was battered. Businesses

*See "Summers Along Upper Narragansett Bay," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 11, November 1991, pp. 14-39. Future issues will contain articles on Newport and Block Island.

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

along Beach Street were again levelled.

The Missry store, the Pier Linen Shop, suffered considerable damage from Hurricane Carol. The building itself was left standing — it was very sturdy — but four feet of water flooded the interior. All the merchandise was lost. Unfortunately the store's hurricane insurance covered only wind and rain damage. But the Missrys did rebuild, and, Leon Missry commented, with the entire renovation of the area, Narragansett Pier had become "sanitized" and had lost its flavor.²

BEFORE 1930

The name *Narragansett Pier*, according to the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, was taken from a pier built after 1780 by John Robinson, near the present site of the Towers, to help local farmers with their imports and exports.³ According to an article in the *Providence Journal Bulletin* of September 8, 1990, with the construction of ocean-front hotels in the 1800s, Narragansett Pier almost rivalled Newport in its lavish living quarters, pomp, and prosperity.

Albert T. Klyberg, Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, described the early history of the popular resort:

Although Narragansett Pier's first hotel, the Narragansett House, was built in 1856 for summer guests, it was not until the completion of the Narragansett Casino in 1886 that the great social whirl of Narragansett was ready for its age of renown. By then, in fact, 'the scene' had shifted from hotel life to cottage life with the Casino as the community game room.

To be sure, summer Narragansett retained a smattering of wealthy Rhode Islanders, but the real pacesetters were residents from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Louisville, Chicago and St. Louis. Between 1866 and 1871 ten hotels were erected at the Pier. When the Narragansett Pier Railroad was opened in 1876 to connect the resort with the main line between New York and Boston, easy access was assured.

... Narragansett Pier, in the last quarter of the 19th century, was one of America's posh resorts.⁴

An 1894 book said of Narragansett Pier:

Thirty-five miles from Providence. By rail, New York, Providence and Boston Railroad to Kingston, Narragansett Pier Railroad to Pier, \$1.50 round trip. Or by small steamer from Newport, 75 cents round trip. ...

In itself, Narragansett Pier is far from being such a showplace as Newport. Its attractions need time and familiarity to reveal. ...⁵

The fashionable "high society" aspect of the Pier lasted until the turn of the century, when the disastrous fires brought an end to the exclusive hotel living of the

rich. Rhode Islanders from all over the state replaced the rich. They came to enjoy the beautiful sand of the beach and the surf of the bay. They came for the day, for the weekend, for the week and for the whole summer season. Bathhouses were built to accommodate this segment of population. Rooming houses with kitchen privileges were made available, as well as modest hotels with dining facilities. And in the early teens of the 20th century the first Jewish residents discovered the pleasure of vacationing at Narragansett Pier.

The Goldowsky family spent its first summer in Narragansett in 1914. Dr. Seebert Goldowsky remembered walking on the boardwalk near the Casino Theatre and seeing people holding newspapers with headlines announcing that war had broken out in Europe.

His family had spent the previous two summers in a nearby area of South County on the Quonochontaug Breachway at Eldridge House. The hotel was two or three stories in height, according to Dr. Goldowsky, probably grey-shingled, with a large porch and the traditional rocking chairs. When the tide was high, the breachway filled in, making it possible to sit on the porch and dangle one's feet in the water. Guests first used an outhouse attached to the main building. By the next summer the outhouse had undergone modernization and flush toilets were installed in the outhouse building.

To prepare for their stay at the Eldridge House and later at the Pier, Mrs. Goldowsky packed clothing in a large trunk which was then dispatched a day or two ahead of time via Adams Express. Sometimes the trunk arrived at the hotel on time; often they had to await its arrival. However, their hand luggage covered such emergencies.

The family — Mr. and Mrs. Goldowsky, Eleanor, Beatrice, and Seebert — occupied three rooms in the Eldridge House; Mr. Goldowsky spent only weekends with them. He probably took the train to Wood River Junction and then traveled the ten miles to the hotel in a horse-drawn vehicle. For part of the season the family was joined by Aunt Annie and Cousin Eugene. Aunt Annie, once half of a sister act on the vaudeville circuit, still performed as a solo. She played the cornet, which she practiced regularly even while on vacation. So as not to disturb others, she retreated to an old abandoned house, a "haunted house" in a marshy area at the end of the breachway. Although some distance from the hotel, the sounds could still be heard, adding to the mystique of the "haunted house."

Getting to the swimming area from the Eldridge House required crossing the breachway by skiff, although at low tide one could walk across, Dr. Goldowsky recalled. On the sand dunes at Quonochontaug there was a Coast Guard Station. Periodically the Coast Guardsmen practiced the technique of removing people from a vessel in distress using a breeches buoy. As described by Dr. Goldowsky, the



At Quonochontaug, 1912 or 1913, l. to r., Beatrice Goldowsky, Eleanor Goldowsky Adelman, Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D.



Eldridge House, Quonochontaug, ca. 1930s. The upper story porches in the photograph were added many years after the Goldowsky family stayed there. The hotel, built in 1888, was destroyed in the Hurricane of 1938.

exercise involved firing a small cannon that shot a rope out to the stricken boat. In an actual rescue, it would have been aimed at the mast. During the practice its target was a T-shaped structure, planted on the beach, to which a victim clung. The rope secured, the buoy (a hoop with pants legs) was sent by pulley to the "vessel," the "victim's" legs were put into the pants, and the pulley plus the buoy brought him to safety. Dr. Goldowsky remembered the same exercises performed by the Coast Guard at Narragansett Pier. At neither place did he recall seeing the procedure used in an actual rescue.

At Narragansett Pier, the Goldowsky family stayed at the Revere House, owned by a Mr. Nye. It was, Dr. Goldowsky stated, "one of the better hotels. The children of the prosperous clientele all had nursemaids to attend to them, but we did not. There was a separate dining room for children. My mother told Mr. Nye that her children had no nursemaid, and she did not want them in a dining room separate from herself. The proprietor agreed to let us sit with her as long as we behaved, which we did. There was only one untoward incident, when I drank some water from what must have been a very thin glass. I bit the top off of it. No permanent harm was done, except to the glass."

The family invariably followed a routine that took them to the beach in the morning, to one of the small proprietary bathhouses off the boardwalk where they had lockers. After lunch they went "to the rocks," the beautiful rock cliffs off Boston Neck Road and spent a few pleasant hours sitting in the sun, watching the fishermen, and reading. In the evenings they went to the Casino Theatre.⁶

The easiest way to go to the Pier in those days before the prevalence of private transportation was the streetcar. Sidney Goldstein vividly recalled the trolley ride that brought him and his mother to Narragansett for their annual two-week vacation, starting in 1916. Strips of tickets were obtained at Reiner's Drug Store on Westminster Street. At each stop along the way, the conductor removed one section: Elmwood and Park Avenues, Apponaug, East Greenwich, Wickford, Saunderstown, Narragansett. At the top of the hill at the East Greenwich stop, the trolley would pause for a while so that the passengers could detrain and use nearby facilities. It was a long ride.

All the children wanted to sit up front in the open cab to catch the breezes. The ride was particularly thrilling to the youngsters when the trolley went over a trestle spanning the water. At the Pier, the streetcar made a turn on another trestle that crossed a pond near Sherry's Bathhouse, another exciting moment for the youngest travelers.⁷

Children and adults, too, gazed in awe at another form of transportation seen at Narragansett. The two Samuels brothers, Leon and Joseph, who owned summer homes there, were frequently seen driving, often at breakneck speed, their Rolls

Royce roadsters. Each one dressed in proper driving costume — cap, long duster, and goggles.

Dorothy Markoff Nelson's father drove a Pierce Arrow, she recalled. He drove from the city to Narragansett on Wednesdays and weekends during the summers when the family stayed at the Massasoit House. Mrs. Nelson spoke particularly of the 1920s and early '30s, before she went to camp. Most of her day was spent at the beach, at Sherry's Bathhouse, but there were also walks along the boardwalk on sunny days. On rainy days the children would congregate in the card room for cards or games or puzzles. And then they could always run up and down the veranda (a la Eloise at the Plaza). Their nursemaid would take them out for ice cream and a matinee on rainy Saturdays. Vivid also are her memories of the polo matches held near the Point Judith County Club. Since there were neither grandstands nor seating of any sort, spectators parked their cars along the edge of the field and sat on the hoods.⁸

Shirley Ganzer Palestine's grandparents Abraham and Fannie Goldberg purchased a property at 5 Caswell Street, probably as early as 1915. They may have



August 7, 1942. In center with cake for Jennie and Samuel Ganzer's 25th wedding anniversary, Jennie Ganzer. Standing, l. to r., Shirley Ganzer Palestine, Samuel Ganzer, Bernice Ganzer Axelrod, Sybil Ganzer Yaffe. Person in background unknown.

been the first Jews to own a home in Narragansett, Mrs. Palestine stated. The large three-story house was surrounded by a large yard. The upper two floors had a total of seven bedrooms, several of which they rented to others. In 1924 or thereabout, they sold the property to her parents, Sam and Jennie Ganzer, who made extensive renovations. The house first had an icebox and kerosene stove, which yielded to a coal stove. With time modern kitchen appliances replaced these. However, the house was never furnished with central heating equipment; it remained a summer vacation home.⁹

Joseph Ladow's grandparents came to Narragansett Pier before World War I, but not as summer residents. Joseph Spiegel preceded his family to this country from Austria. How he found his way to Narragansett is not known. Dora Spiegel Ladow told her son of the difficult days the family endured during their early years in this country. Mrs. Ladow was already a teenager when she, her mother, and two sisters joined her father. With only a minimal command of English, she enrolled at South Kingstown High School. The principal took an interest in her because she was very bright, her son stated. After school hours, he tutored her at his home. She learned not only English and academic subjects but also how to set a table, how to act in company, as well as other social graces. She graduated from high school in 1918 and happily attended her senior prom held that year at the Casino.

Dora Ladow was a very strong swimmer. She could swim from Tucker's Dock a mile out into the channel where the boats anchored. It was from Tucker's Dock that Joseph Spiegel frequently went fishing.

According to Joseph Ladow, only one other Jewish family lived at the Pier year-round in the decades before and after World War I. Joseph Spiegel and the husband of this family were tailors, and they had a reciprocal arrangement that benefited both. When Mr. Spiegel had an order for a made-to-measure suit, he brought it to the other tailor, who was better at making and finishing lapels, and had him secretly do that part. He fulfilled a similar role for the other in his area of expertise.

Following high school and before her marriage, Mrs. Ladow assisted her father by picking up cleaning from the mansions and estates along Ocean Road. Mr. Ladow described his mother's uniform as captured in an old photograph. Dressed in a white shirt, bow tie, peaked hat, and jodhpurs, she stood near the old Ford she drove while working. One day (the year was 1922) she walked into her father's shop with an armload of rumpled clothes. There on her father's cutting table sat a young dude wearing only Skivvies, waiting while Mr. Spiegel pressed his pants. It turned out to be George Gershwin. He was one of many celebrities who did business with Mr. Spiegel.¹⁰

One of the most famous celebrities whom early residents recall (and it is not known whether he ever used the services of Mr. Spiegel) was the well-known

violinist, Jascha Heifitz. Gertrude Hochberg, who herself played the violin for many years, remembered the thrill of coming face to face with Heifitz as she was walking along the main street of Narragansett Pier. She had great admiration for his ability and would have liked to have addressed him, but was too shy to do so.¹¹

A 1923 photograph in an album of Joseph Ladow's shows a handsome Jascha Heifitz posed with his horse at Narragansett Pier. According to Ladow, Heifitz's mother and his mother and aunts knew each other.¹² The summer residence of the Heifitz family was located off Boston Neck Road, according to Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky, about a mile down the meandering road which started at the Green Inn.¹³

BUSINESSES AT THE PIER

Recorded in the 1878 Providence City Directory is the information that Lester Blumenthal owned a clothing store at 291 North Main Street and that Charles Jacobs was in the clothing business at 15 South Main Street. By the year 1885 these men were no longer listed in the Providence City Directory. But in 1888 they are listed as tailors in the business directory of Narragansett Pier: L. Blumenthal on Beach Row and C. Jacobs on Beach Road. This information is corroborated in a commemorative book entitled, *Souvenirs of Narragansett Pier 1884—1922*. These two tailors and an S. Jacobs, a storekeeper of antique furniture and bric-a-brac located in the Casino block, may well be the earliest Jewish businessmen of Narragansett Pier. Louis Kaplan on Beach Road N. and Jacob Eisgrou, Road N., are listed as tailors in the 1925 Narragansett Pier directory.

For the pre-World War I and the 1920s period there is little information about Jewish-owned businesses or those employed in service industries. Several individuals were listed in the Narragansett Pier directories for the year 1925 as summer residents: Eli Port on Walnut Street N., Sam Priest on Ocean Road N., Joseph Samuels on Boston Neck Road N., and his brother Leon on Ocean Road N., and Raphael Silverstein on Walnut Street N.

In 1925 a few Jews were listed as in business at the Pier. The Sea Side Restaurant on Beach Road was owned by Louis Kaplan and Pauline Weiner. Irene Finklestein owned a delicatessen on Beach Row N. Abraham Goldberg was listed as a junk dealer on Caswell Street N., and William Podrat had a pharmacy on Beach, corner of Exchange Street.

By 1930 Benjamin Mittler had opened a kosher restaurant on Kingstown Road, and Isaac Moses operated a variety store on Narragansett Avenue. Sophia Spiegel, widow of Joseph, continued his tailor business on Kingstown Road, and, also on Kingstown Road, the Sussman family operated a ladies' apparel shop and lived in the back. According to Claire Samdperil White, they brought their merchandise

from the Florida store they operated in the winter season. William Sussman was listed as a tailor. Mrs. White also recalled that next to the pharmacy was a clothing store, also owned by a Mr. Podrat. In her memory is a picture of the same window display of clothing every summer.¹⁴

The list of summer residents continued to grow: Abraham and Pauline Golden were property owners at 5th Avenue N., and Maurice Bliss and Isaac Robinson lived on Kingstown Street N.

In addition to Mittler's, there were two other kosher restaurants at varying times during this period at Narragansett Pier. Kaplan, the tailor, had a restaurant where Irving Zimmerman worked as a waiter. Zimmerman related that he and three other waiters lived in an attic room at Kaplan's. Most customers were steady patrons.¹⁵

The Zinn family, owners of the popular Zinn's Restaurant in Providence, opened a restaurant in Narragansett Pier, renting quarters owned by the Kaplan family. Evidently it turned out to be only a one-summer venture for, as Irving Zimmerman commented: "It rained ten out of the possible twelve summer weekends."

The Jewish Herald of June 21, 1935, described a Jewish meat market opened by Irving Siegal (name later changed to *Chandler*):

Of great interest to housewives who will spend a portion of the entire summer at Narragansett Pier is the announcement by Siegal's Meat Market of 746 Hope Street, of the opening of a branch store at 10 Kingstown Road, Narragansett Pier.

The new store is completely up-to-date with the finest of fixtures and frigidare system [*sic*]. Orders may be placed by phoning either the Providence or the Narragansett Pier markets and prompt deliveries will be made anywhere. Sharing the market with Mr. Siegal is a branch of the M. Winer & Company chain, operating a grocery, fruit and vegetable department.

A candy store and ice cream parlor was owned by Harry and Anna Chaet for a few seasons in the '30s. The business was conveniently situated next to the Casino movie theatre.¹⁶

THE MOVIE THEATRE — THE CASINO

There was a place to go in Narragansett Pier on a rainy afternoon or in the evening after supper. It was the Casino Theatre.

Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky recalled attending the Casino Theatre in the late 1910s and '20s. At the time it might have been owned and managed by Johnny Miller, from whom Abraham Stanzler rented and then bought the building in 1932.¹⁷ Stanzler owned several theaters throughout Rhode Island in areas such as Centredale,

Wakefield, East Greenwich, and Pascoag.

One film was shown at each performance, scheduled for 7:00 and 9:00 p.m. On rainy days a matinee was held. As one of Mr. Stanzler's seven children, Molly Stanzler Fisch, related in an interview, "It was the evening performances which brought out the crowds. Ordinary people attended the seven p.m. showing, but the 9:00 p.m. performance attracted the elite. Many women came in long gowns, their escorts in tuxedos. They might have dined at the Dunes Club. The movie represented part of their evening entertainment."

She told a story about the famous Colonel Joseph Samuels, owner of the Outlet Department Store, who owned a mansion called The Meadow Brook in Narragansett Pier. His chauffeur would drive him and his wife down the alley, which was the approach to the Theatre, for the evening's late performance. Movies changed three times a week, and the Samuelses made sure to attend each performance. Molly Stanzler was on duty at the box office and took his crisply folded one dollar bills, but if change were needed from a five-dollar bill, she was instructed not to include a two-dollar bill. The Colonel was superstitious about carrying two-dollar bills.

There was a camaraderie about the small town movie theatre's patrons, who included the regulars who came each summer to the large hotels such as the Massasoit and the Beachwood. The employees, who were in the Stanzler employ for many years, were treated as part of the family. Especially cited was Earl Doyle, who began his career as an usher at 14, and advanced to become manager of the Wakefield theatre. The Stanzlers all worked in the family movie houses. Milton ushered in the Narragansett one, and Helen worked at the Wakefield theatre, which is still showing movies.

Camp JORI (acronym for Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island) was not far from Narragansett Pier. Abraham Stanzler would invite the campers on rainy days to see movies at his theatre as his guest. His name on a plaque on the flagpole base at Camp JORI testifies to the campers' appreciation for his generosity.

The Stanzler family rented a home each summer in Narragansett. They lived on Cissout Street and also on Narragansett Avenue. Molly Stanzler Fisch remembers Mrs. Palow, who owned a very large home opposite their home on Narragansett Avenue, which she rented out to five or six families who shared a community kitchen and large dining room. When she was still a little girl she was allowed to sit up in the balcony of the Casino and enjoy the big name bands while she watched the "grown-ups" dance.

Abraham Stanzler died in 1937 at the age of 55. His son, Meyer, who was president and general manager of Rhodes Exposition, Inc., took over the ownership and operation of the Casino Theatre as well as the Community Theatre in Wakefield.

The Casino Theatre remained in the family until his death on August 6, 1965, at the age of 56.¹⁸

Lila Robinson Winograd shared her reminiscences about the Casino Theatre: "They changed the movies every other day, so you could attend three times a week. It was always crowded, and hot as the devil. Some kids used to sneak in the side doors. The lines to get in were tremendous. There was nothing else to do except to go to a movie at night. You knew everybody, but wherever you went in Narragansett Pier, you knew everybody."¹⁹

Carl Feldman was an usher at the movie theatre in the early 1950s. He had a very good friend, Arthur Richter, nephew of Meyer Stanzler. Carl was given the title of Assistant Head Usher. Arthur was Head Usher and received a salary of fourteen dollars a week. Carl received twelve dollars, but there was a fringe benefit to their salaries — all the candy they could eat — for free.

The first four rows would become flooded every time there was rain, as water seeped through the door near the screen. "But that was all right," Carl commented, "for there were 20 to 30 rows of seats in back of those four rows." Carl also knew that if it rained, he had to go to the theatre to usher at a matinee. His pay remained the same. Lewis Scoliard, Carl remembered, was the curtain puller.²⁰

The Casino Theatre is very much a part of the lives of those who summered at Narragansett Pier, and they all have wonderful stories to relate about the patrons, the employees, and the Stanzler family themselves.

THE PIER LINEN SHOPS

Associated with Narragansett Pier businesses were the linen shops. The nomenclature was erroneous because these shops sold many more items than linens, but to the tourists and the residents of Narragansett Pier, they were always the linen shops. The Jagolinzer sisters, Marion Goldsmith and Lois Fain, remembered the shops on Main Street and commented: "They were unbelievable — everything was elegant and lovely. We would buy gifts there. It was not honky-tonk at that time."²¹

Muriel Port Stevens has another memory of the linen shops: "I remember that there were three or four linen shops which all had the same stuff. There was a constant sale — 'Beginning of the Summer Sale,' 'End of the Summer Sale,' 'Going out of Business Sale,' etc."²²

The son of the owner of one of the linen shops, Leon Missry, spoke about his father's business. In June 1939 the Missry family opened the Pier Linen shop on Beach Street across from the ocean. The season lasted until the end of October. Missry remembered that Ocean Road was just sand, and there was no longer a seawall. The inventory included a varied line of goods such as gift items, china,

beach-wear, toys, and, of course, a wide selection of linen items.

The family lived in a nearby rented apartment. The business was a family affair. The six children all helped out in the store. Although Leon was only six years old when the Narragansett Pier store was opened, he assisted with such duties as unwrapping the boxes in which the stock was shipped. His father managed the store he owned in Providence, commuting from Providence every night. His mother was in charge of the Pier establishment. Since it was necessary for her to leave the store to tend to her household chores and cooking in their apartment, Leon and his siblings were left to wait on the customers. Leon commented: "It was a hard life for us all. The store was kept open from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. seven days a week."

Missry described Narragansett Pier at the time he lived and worked there:

People — people — people. It was lively — there was a miniature golf course, a movie theatre, people constantly strolling in the evening, shopping, or just walking. There was always life along the main drag. I particularly remember during the war years when servicemen would be there in large numbers. The Pier used to have color. It was at the Casino that a pageant, in conjunction with a dance, was held to choose "Miss Rhode Island." My sister, Annette, was chosen Miss Rhode Island one year.

And I remember the celebrities who shopped at our store — the band leaders who played at the Casino, Harry James, Louis Prima, and Tommy Dorsey. Senator Pastore was also a customer.

Since the store was not closed for the season until the end of October, Missry was enrolled in the public school of the area for the months of September and October. As the High Holidays also occurred during these months, the family observed the holy days at a home in Narragansett Pier to which a Torah had been brought.

During one period the Missry family had two stores in the business section of Narragansett Pier. A cousin ran a similar store, and other competitors opened linen stores in the neighborhood.²³ Another person who was interviewed for this article, Joseph Ladow, spoke about the fact that his mother, Sophia, worked in the Missry store for a short time.²⁴

ANNA IRENE FINKLESTEIN

A familiar figure at Narragansett Pier was Anna Irene Finklestein, who is listed in the Narragansett Directory of 1925, but was undoubtedly involved in business at the Pier many years before that date. According to Aaron Burrows, a relative, she was short and heavy with very small feet and black hair.²⁵ Another relative, Howard Lewis, corroborated that description, but added that he thought she resembled Elsa Maxwell and that she was fond of wearing shoes that looked like men's. She wore

a large raccoon coat.²⁶

Irene Finklestein was the only child of Jacob and Rachel Finklestein. Her father had originally owned real estate in Narragansett Pier, and she had extensive real estate holdings. Bertram Brown, who worked at Sherry's bathhouses, described a portion of the property she owned: "She owned all the property along Beach Street. It was not a good area, but rather honky-tonk with bars and poolrooms. It was known as Finklestein's Alley."²⁷ Shirley Ganzer Palestine was one of several people who recalled how Irene would drive around in her big open Stutz-Bearcat touring car. According to Mrs. Palestine, Miss Finklestein often stopped at the Ganzer family home on Caswell Street during her business rounds.²⁸

Anna Irene Finklestein is on record as a special student at Pembroke College in 1905-06 and was involved in music and dramatic circles in Providence.

Miss Finklestein died in February 1940. It was noted in her obituary that she was a member of a pioneer Jewish family in Rhode Island and that she had been prominent in both Jewish and non-Jewish societies in Rhode Island. She was a member of the Board of Trustees of The Miriam Hospital and was involved with the Jewish Home for the Aged, the Jewish Children's Home and the Jewish Community Center. Also included in her obituary was the information that she had been active



Anna Irene Finklestein, November 17, 1912, driving a 1912 Model T Ford. Passengers are not identified.

in business circles for many years at Narragansett Pier and had served for some time as secretary of the Business Men's Association of Narragansett.²⁹

Her last will and testament was filed in the Town of Narragansett. She left specific bequests to such recipients as the South County Hospital in Wakefield, The Miriam Hospital in Providence, and the Congregations Sons of Zion, where she and her parents were active members for many years. Among Jewish organizations to benefit from her will were the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island, the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, Jewish Family Welfare Society, Jewish Community Center, Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association, and the Providence Hebrew Shelter Society.

LIVING QUARTERS

Summer living quarters at Narragansett came in all sizes, shapes, and dimensions. Until the 1930s very few Jewish families owned their own homes there; they rented houses or stayed at hotels. According to Ida Glantz, many Jewish families who came to the Pier during the '20s rented rooms in some of the large homes along Narragansett Avenue, where they lived for a week or two each summer. Mrs. Glantz first took rooms at Keating's on Kingstown Road. The owners had converted the three floors of the original estate into some twenty rooms for rent. Mrs. Glantz continued to rent quarters all her summers at the Pier.³⁰ Sidney Goldstein's mother, her two sisters, and young Sidney occupied two rooms with kitchen privileges in another house. He recalled that his mother brought a great deal of food but a minimum of clothing on their streetcar ride to the Pier. Since most of their days were spent at the beach, there was little need for many outfits.³¹

The decade of the 1930s saw more Jewish families spending their summers at Narragansett and more purchasing property. Muriel Port Stevens's grandparents, Raphael and Mamie Silverstein, rented houses for many year until, as Anna Silverstein Port told her daughter, "They got sick of cleaning up from others and so decided to build." Mrs. Port, a very talented woman, received a free hand from her father in the design of the house. The result, according to several interviewees, was a splendid eight-bedroom house commodious enough to accommodate three generations of the family.³²

Mr. and Mrs. Max Silverstein purchased Yellow Patch, on Central Street, known for its opulent appointments, and Dr. and Mrs. Maurice Adelman made their home nearby at La Sata, a veritable museum for the Victorian antiques they carefully collected. These two houses are on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. Violet B. Halpert remembers spending many happy summers at Yellow Patch, which was furnished like an ocean liner. "There was a central staircase in the great hall, the railings of which were silken ropes. Stephen Halpert, the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Max Silverstein, has started a press that he calls Yellow Patch Press."³³

For the most part, families made do in quarters less comfortable or modern or elaborate than their homes in the city. It was worth "roughing it" to enjoy the pleasures and quality of life at the Pier. The Joseph Jagolinzer family rented a tiny house on Narragansett Avenue for several years during the 1930s. The house consisted of a kitchen, living room, and two tiny bedrooms, each barely large enough for a bed and dresser. Marion Goldsmith could not figure out where everyone slept or how they managed, for, in addition to their family of four, they had a live-in maid and a great deal of company. Her aunt and uncle, Faye and Ben Woolf, owned a lovely cottage at Rodman and Fifth Streets, named "We Luv It." The white and blue house was filled with wicker furniture and fascinating objects, according to Lois Fain, and surrounded by a beautiful lawn and garden.³⁴

Lila Robinson Winograd's first recollection of their summer quarters at the Pier was a room with kitchen privileges, probably in 1929. Since her mother did not enjoy sharing a kitchen with others, the following year the family rented a three-room apartment on Mathewson Street, to which they returned for 17 years. The apartment had two bedrooms and a kitchen where everyone congregated, which made eavesdropping on the adults' conversation quite easy. Additional bedrooms in the same house were leased for her *bubbe* (grandmother, Yiddish) and uncle, but, she added, "they really lived with us." However, in 1947, the whole Robinson family moved to their own home on Othmar Street, where Mrs. Winograd still spends her summers.³⁵



In front of Sherry's Bathhouse at Narragansett Pier, 1921, Anna Viner and Sigmond Robinson, before their marriage.

Many rooming houses like Chandler's allowed kitchen privileges, by which families might share the stove and shelf space in a refrigerator for perishables. There could be as many as ten women preparing meals at the same time. One had to have patience and also enjoy togetherness in such situations. However, not all lodgings allowed use of the kitchen. Nor did all rooming houses rent to families with children. Carl Feldman recalled visits to his grandmother who lived in a house on Central Street with such a restriction. Indeed, even visits by children were discouraged.³⁶

As the Pier became more popular and less exclusive as a summer resort, existing structures were converted to so-called apartment houses, many with strange room arrangements and jerry-built partitions. One building had interior walls that ended five inches from the ceiling. No one enjoyed much privacy from one's neighbors or the neighbors' friends and acquaintances.

AT THE HOTELS

In speaking of the Massasoit House, Marion Goldsmith said, "I always think of the Massasoit in terms of smells, It always had a little musty — a genteelly musty — smell. And the fragrance of the dining room!" When her parents were guests at the Massasoit House during the 1940s, she and her sister Lois Jagolinzer Fain had a room on the top floor adjoining their parents, with a bath in between. All the furnishings, including the iron bedsteads, were painted white, giving the room a "clean, charming look." Indeed, white seemed to predominate throughout the hotel — from the furnishing of the rooms to the linen napery of the dining room to the clothing favored by the manager, Mr. C. Carter Bryant. He always wore a white suit, white bow tie, white shoes, and white socks. Mrs. Goldsmith remembered him as elegant, soft-spoken, and courtly.³⁷

Dress was very important in the routine of guests at the Massasoit House, particularly at mealtimes, according to Dorothy Nelson, a practice that did not change even in later times. Guests were expected to wear proper attire in the dining room. For little girls in the 1920s this meant cotton frocks at lunch and dinner, party clothes with satin bows and white gloves at dinner. Men wore blue blazers and white slacks or other combinations of elegant clothing, while the women dressed with style and taste.³⁸

The Massasoit House, like all the Victorian hotels along Beach Road, had a veranda facing the ocean where guests could sit and rock and socialize or just watch the ever-changing vista. Jacqueline (Blotcher) Teverow Factor found the veranda a formidable place "when we were young women and went to the Massasoit. There was a barrage of eyes that followed you when you went by the people on the porch, sizing you up and looking at you. Who were you going to visit and why? Were you dressed properly? Were you dating someone? Were you behaving yourself?"³⁹

Marian Goldsmith and Lois Fain described the hotel as "very prim and proper." The little children there were very well behaved. "Lillian Fogel (Mrs. Jacob Fogel) was the queen of the Massasoit, something like the Auntie Mame of the time. She livened things up in a nice way," they stated. "She brought fun to that hotel."⁴⁰ Mrs. Fogel's daughter, Marilyn Fogel Schlossberg, said that her mother had stayed at the Massasoit in the early 1930s, went elsewhere, and returned. She was a doer, "full of pizzazz," who would get a ride to Wakefield to buy prizes with her own funds for various activities and entertainments she organized.⁴¹

The Mittler brothers owned a kosher restaurant and rooming house on Kingstown Road. Sleeping rooms were on the second floor. As a child, Lynn Shaffer Tesler saw the flight of stairs between the two floors as "a very long flight." She and her parents occupied two rooms, her parents in one, she in the other. The bathroom was located down the hall. Families named Dressler, Gittleman, and Samdperil also vacationed at Mittler's during the 1930s. "We were all like family," Mrs. Tesler commented. There was a large porch and a room where the children gathered on rainy days to cut out paper dolls and play games.

The large restaurant occupied the entire first floor of the building and served three meals a day on white linen tablecloths. According to those who were interviewed, the food was very good. Not only the roomers ate at the restaurant. On beach days Mrs. Tesler's mother asked the waiters to prepare picnic lunches for her family.

On the last night of the summer, before everyone went home, the management arranged for entertainment in the restaurant. Charles Samdperil, who was evidently more of an extrovert than Mrs. Tesler was, volunteered to sing the then popular song, "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl ..." as his contribution to the evening. Mrs. Tesler remembered that she worried that she would have to follow his act with her presentation.⁴² On another occasion in the dining room, Arline Rothschild, a resident with her parents, recalled being very embarrassed when, on her birthday, "Happy Birthday to You" was sung to her in the dining room. "I wanted to crawl under the table," she said.⁴³

Claire Samdperil White (sister of Charles) spoke of her family's stay at Mittler's: "People would come down for weeks at a time, eat three meals a day of the good food. Our family had one big room. We did have fun, but I could not picture doing it today."⁴⁴

Jack Miller, who worked at Mittler's for a short time as a substitute waiter, serving customers who walked in for late breakfasts, gave his recollections of the Mittler establishment:

My strong impression is that Ben Mittler provided personal service to insure that his hotel guests were comfortable and his restaurant patrons

satisfied with plentiful Jewish cuisine. Sundays were always very busy days with the restaurant crowded from noon until well into the evening.

Hotel guests generally stayed for a week or two on the American Plan and were assigned to their own reserved table and were served by the same waiter during their stay. (The waiters worked very hard for their tips.) Ben circulated at each meal, and most patrons left feeling they had been treated with special attention.⁴⁵

Irving Zimmerman and Earle Cohen also worked as waiters at Mittler's. Elaine Chandler Hoffman related that her father supplied the kosher meat served at the restaurant from his butcher shop in Providence.⁴⁶ Muriel Port Stevens contrasted the selection and quantity of food served at Mittler's with that served to today's diet-conscious individuals: "Mittler's was the restaurant where they would serve a six-course meal on a 93-degree day."⁴⁷

After the hurricane of 1938 the Mittler's building was divided into very modest apartments and rooms.

When Claire White passed the Hotel de la Plage, she always tried to peek into its interior, and each time she was amazed by its luxury. Located on the beach, the hotel catered to people involved with the stock market. "There was a little stock exchange there," an area where stock quotes were posted. The guests exuded wealth and privilege in their bearing as well as by the beautiful clothes they wore. Children accompanied by governesses rode in pony carts to buy ice cream or go to the movies. In its appointments as well as its clientele, the de la Plage was one of the most impressive hotels in Narragansett.

Mrs. White stated that the hotel did not have a Jewish clientele.⁴⁸ However, Mrs. Glantz said that was true for many years, but when Morris Blitz bought the place (no date available but probably about 1930), the situation changed and a number of Providence Jewish families spent summers there.⁴⁹

THE BATHING PAVILIONS

"Sherry's Bathhouse by the sea — keep smiling," was the motto of Sherry's Bathhouse. Bertram Brown, who worked there for several years, beginning in 1933, said that the employees always referred to the place as Sherry's Bat House. The sign painter misspelled "bathhouse" dropping an *h*. The error was never corrected, to the delight of the workers.

Mr. Brown was the "inside man." Maurice Kay was the "outside man." Brown worked primarily in the bathhouse itself, while Kay had charge of the parking lot. The working day began at 7:00 a.m., when they swept the area and put out towels for the patrons.⁵⁰ Muriel Port Stevens, whose family rented lockers at Sherry's, related that one could not enter the premises in a bathing suit. From the changing

rooms located on the upper level, one went down to the beach. At the close of the day, she recalled, the attendant "would actually take your wet and sandy suit, wash it, dry it, and put it back in your room."⁵¹ Claire White said that on Sundays "it was customary to get all dressed in beautiful clothes, hats, and gloves to go to the beach."⁵²

For the most part Sherry's rented lockers by the season, but its annex accommodated day or short-term visitors. Sidney Goldstein's mother rented a locker at two dollars a week for their annual two-week stay at the Pier, he believed. For a fee one could sit in the large pavilion, which had a restaurant and a rotunda. The Goldstein family enjoyed the weekly concerts in the rotunda. He was also fascinated by the ladies garbed in lovely dresses, large straw hats, and white gloves. All in all, he said, it was a beautiful picture.⁵³

Lynn Tesler's family rented a locker at Palmer's Bathing Pavilion next door to Sherry's. It was smaller, but Mrs. Shaffer thought it was cleaner. As a child, Mrs. Tesler would gaze longingly at the children playing in front of Sherry's; that was where all the children seemed to be. Her mother would not allow her to go over to them lest she stray into the water away from the maternal line of sight.⁵⁴

If a family did not have a locker at any of the pavilions, they could, until the opening of the Town Beach, wear a bathing suit under their street clothes and remove the outer garments at the shore. Bathing attire was not allowed on the street. The practice of "refusing to patronize the bathhouse," particularly on the part of day trippers, who preferred to "change in their cars and climb over or under fences to get to the beach, ... was the source of much controversy."⁵⁵ Some summer residents resolved the issue by removing themselves from this scene. They incorporated as the Dunes Club and built their first clubhouse in 1928-29.

BEACH SCENES

During the 1920s the Narragansett Pier beach at six o'clock in the morning was a picture of beauty. Its miles of curving shoreline consisted of gleaming pure white sand contrasting with the sparkling cerulean sea. Activity on the beach in those early morning hours differed sharply from that which occurred later in the morning and throughout the day. It was during these early hours that the polo horses from the Point Judith Country Club were exercised. Sidney Goldstein remembered the picturesque sight of these horses as they were led down to the beach via a ramp which was located between the Casino and the movie house. Their leaders and riders were natives of India, their heads covered in traditional turbans. "It was thrilling," Goldstein said, "to watch these men exercise the graceful horses through the water's edge in preparation for the day's polo matches." Evidently the exercise in the water was intended to strengthen the horses' legs.⁵⁶

A child such as Dorothy Nelson could take advantage of the early morning to exercise her pony. She would not encounter any obstacles on the beach, now free of the bathing and sunning vacationers.⁵⁷

Later in the morning families would start setting up for the day's activities at the beach. They carried myriad items — picnic lunches, umbrellas, beach balls, reading material, playing cards — all required to insure a relaxing and entertaining day for adults and children.

Marion Goldsmith and Lois Fain described their summer days as having a wonderful rhythm. After breakfast they went to the beach for the day. During the week, it was really a society of women and children. The mothers came with their children, bringing with them picnic baskets and snacks, folding chairs and blankets. No one worried about sunburn. Everyone, especially children, became brown as berries, and everyone felt healthier for it.⁵⁸

After the changes wrought by the hurricane of 1938, access to the beach was restricted, and one had to go to the Town Beach, Dunes Club, or Canonchet. Myrtle Feldman usually spent her day at the Town Beach with her good friend Sylvia Kirshenbaum. They had their special place just beyond the water's edge where they could keep an eye on their children and dip their feet in the water at the same time. Each watched the other's youngsters as well as her own. In truth, everyone watched out for the welfare of all the children. Still, some like Arnold Feldman managed to



"The Gang" at Narragansett Pier, 1927 or 1928. L. to r., Myrtle Lucksniansky Feldman, Marion Rotenberg White, Anne Lucksniansky Coulter, Jennie Lucksniansky Falcofsky, Unidentified person, Sarah Litwin, Matilda Litwin. Child in foreground not identified.

wander off. Lost children knew that their best hope for reunion with parents was the lifeguard, who would blow his whistle and hold up the errant child. Mrs. Feldman said, "Every time I heard the lifeguard's whistle, I automatically walked over to his stand; I knew it was Arnold. He loved to go around chiseling cookies."

For regulars, it was not difficult to find someone on the beach. People tended to sit in the same spot each day with the same group of friends in the same configuration of chairs and blankets.

The boardwalk in front of the bathing pavilion was a favorite gathering place for adolescents, who also enjoyed games of bridge or poker in the shade underneath.

One woman remembered by Carl Feldman with affection and respect for her kindness always appeared in a dark blue dress, never a bathing suit, toting bags, huge bags, from which she brought forth wonderful food like *Vursh* (Salami, Yiddish), forbidden by his mother because it might spoil in the heat, and pickles and fruit. From under the shade of her umbrella she fed everyone — her own children and anyone else who came. The brown bags seemed to hold a never-ending supply of good things to eat.⁵⁹

A day at the beach almost always included a walk to Narrow River, which meant passing the Dunes Club. Invading the forbidden precincts of the club which excluded Jews from membership became an irresistible challenge for many of the Jewish young people. They made it their summer's objective to see how many times they could sneak into the grounds and particularly into the pool before discovery and ejection. The pool was an almost unique phenomenon in the 1940s. Being able to brag about swimming there before being thrown out guaranteed hero status. Jacqueline Teverow Factor stated that as an undergraduate at Rhode Island State College, she and her friends went to the beach to start their tans as early as February or March. They found shelter from the wind and protection from any chill in the empty pool of the Dunes Club. No one bothered them; security at the club was nonexistent because "it was an innocent age."⁶⁰

COMPANY'S COMING!

Sundays, holidays, vacations — all meant company if you summered at the Pier. The trip from Providence or Pawtucket was long, with frequent bottlenecks in Apponaug or East Greenwich. It was thus a given that family and friends would share a meal or two. As Marion Goldsmith and her sister Lois Fain expressed it, "we were enveloped by family and friends." Despite the tiny size of their home and the simplicity of the kitchen appliances, there was still room for everyone.⁶¹

Lila Robinson Winograd stated: "We had company constantly. It was like a continuous open house. Sunday you never knew who was coming to dinner, even

when we lived in a small three-room apartment. When we moved to Othmar Street we used to set up tables and chairs on the lawn for the overflow. We could have 25 to 30 people drop in for dinner. That's why we bought my father a grill — to prepare a quick dinner."⁶²

Myrtle and Irving Feldman spent the summer at the Pier for the first time in 1940, when their family was very young. Mrs. Feldman recalled: "We first lived in a tiny house with a big yard on Caswell Street that we rented for \$250 for the whole season. I had a stove and refrigerator I brought from the city. On a Sunday I would feed 12 to 15 people. Aunt Lena, who also rented an apartment, fed the other half of the family. No one ever thought of eating out, so whoever showed up from Providence went to either house to eat. We were always ready for a crowd. My husband brought a large kosher meat order from the city on Thursdays."⁶³

Claire Samdperil White said that it was not unusual for her to return from the beach on a Sunday, head for the kitchen, and have her mother tell her to set the table for fifteen. "Why so many?" she would ask. Her mother would reply, "They (relatives and friends) are on the beach already, they'll come for dinner. What's the big deal?" Claire answered, "We have to wash the dishes." The Samdperils also enjoyed inviting many people to stay overnight. One night Mrs. White worried that she would not have a bed to sleep in because of the crowd visiting. Her mother reassured her, "Don't worry. I guarantee you'll have a place to sleep."⁶⁴

Muriel Stevens' grandfather, Raphael Silverstein, had a rule about overnight company. Mr. and Mrs. Silverstein's beautiful eight-bedroom house sheltered their four children, spouses, and grandchildren. On weekends, particularly, when all the husbands were at home, it was always full house. Mrs. Stevens stated that on Fridays her grandfather arrived with literally a car full of food. By Monday it was gone. The sheer number of people in the house at all times gave rise to "The rule": overnight company was permitted during the week, but guests could stay for one night only. It was, Mrs. Stevens said, "the only sensible arrangement under the circumstances."⁶⁵

ORGANIZATIONS AND FUND-RAISING

Few of those interviewed were aware of any fund-raising activities on behalf of the Jewish community. Local churches ran raffles, Dorothy Nelson recalled. One event in which she participated offered a pony with a saddle and small basket as first prize. In her zeal to win the grand prize, she encouraged everyone to sell tickets for her, in addition to the tickets she sold herself. Everyone put her name on the stubs, and she did win the pony. After the summer season it was stabled behind her home on Waterman Street in Providence.⁶⁶

When asked about possible fund-raising, one person commented negatively on "pushy people selling tickets on the beach." For some, summers in Narragansett were a time to relax and unwind, leaving the city and its involvements behind.

However, Jennie Ganzer always held an event in behalf of the Women's Association of the Jewish Home for the Aged, an organization to which she was very devoted. Another of her favorite philanthropies was Camp JORI, to which she took her daughters on frequent visits.⁶⁷ Faye Woolf held a card party each year to benefit Hadassah. The scene of the ladies in their finery enjoying dessert and cards on her lawn on a lovely summer day inspired Mrs. Woolf, an accomplished artist, to capture it on canvas. In her painting the subjects were depicted as belonging to the Edwardian era.⁶⁸ An item in the *Jewish Herald* (August 2, 1935) stated that Irene Finklestein's annual big bridge Monday at Narragansett was a great success — this event was for the Jewish Home for the Aged.

Pioneer Women [now Na'amat] held fund-raising activities of various sorts during the years 1940 to 1948, according to Mollie Fried Sklut, who was very much involved with the organization. There were dances at the Casino and card parties at the Beachwood and Mansion House. Ida (Mrs. Israel) Resnick hosted four or five small bridges each summer at her home on Boon Street. Planning meetings also took place there.

"Celia (Mrs. Nathan) Izeman was always on the road driving Goldie (Mrs. Hyman) Stone to sell tickets," Mrs. Sklut said. "Ida Resnick and I were another pair of ticket sellers. We specialized in covering the beach, especially on Sundays when the beach was crowded. We would walk from the start of the Town Beach all the way to the Dunes Club. My poor Sharon would pull at my bathing suit and ask when we were going swimming or to tell me she was tired." The women did not restrict their ticket sales to the beach or to the Jewish summer residents. They called on businesses all the way to Wakefield and on restaurants as far as Galilee. Very few refused them, Mrs. Sklut added.⁶⁹

In 1948 the Providence Hebrew Day School began to hold its carnivals and raffles. The carnivals were held every night for a week (except Shabbat) each year as long as the Casino still stood, according to Aaron Segal, whose mother and father were very active in the affairs of the school. The carnivals included games of chance and sales of clothing and food. Volunteers, members of the Day School, staffed the booths. Most volunteers had summer homes at the Pier, but Mr. Segal remembered accompanying his mother on the drive from the city to spend evenings preparing and working at the carnival. It was a major event to which people came to have a good time.⁷⁰

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Before there was a *shul* (synagogue, Yiddish; Beth David in Narragansett was founded in 1961), Jewish summer residents could attend a *minyan* (quorum needed for religious service, Hebrew) in private homes. No records of those early summer services exist as they had no formal organization. Only in recollection do they still live.

The earliest minyan thus remembered was held in the home of one of the tailors doing business in Narragansett during the 1920s. Shirley Palestine recalled that her grandfather Abraham Goldberg attended a minyan in the home of Jacob Eisgrou, who lived above his shop on Road N.⁷¹ However, Ida Glantz suggested that it was more likely that it was held at Louis Kaplan's home, as he had the reputation of being more observant.⁷²

Sylvia Katz Factor's family rented a cottage in the mid 1930s. Since her father held the position of *gabbai* (trustee or warden of a communal institution, usually a synagogue, Hebrew) at Temple Emanu-El and was very observant, he would not think of spending a whole summer without attending a daily minyan. Every day at dusk, a quorum came together at their home.⁷³

Claire White and Ida Glantz spoke of the service held each Shabbat at the large home of Isadore Samdperil on Boone Street, after 1945. And if someone had *yahrzeit* (anniversary of death, Yiddish), he knew he could find the necessary minyan at their house. Sometimes it meant combing the beach for the tenth man, but no one had to do without the consolation of a service. One year, during a major polio scare, people were reluctant to return to Providence and put their children in jeopardy; everyone remained at the Pier as long as possible, past the High Holidays. That year Isadore Samdperil, who had purchased a Torah, held Rosh Hashanah services in his home.⁷⁴

In 1948 Charles Koffler purchased a large home at 37 Central Street. Except for one year, 1938, the family had been renting apartments at the Pier since 1932. Since two married daughters who lived out of state spent vacations in Narragansett, it seemed foolish for the family to occupy three different apartments for the summer. The house could accommodate everyone comfortably and also provided space for religious services. Mr. Koffler was concerned that his son-in-law, Rabbi Philip Kaplan, would be uncomfortable without such space. At that time, according to Esther Koffler Kaplan, her husband had his own Torah, a gift from his grandfather.

The sun room and living room became the synagogue on Fridays and Saturdays from 1949 to 1958. The rooms overflowed with worshippers. Many brought children and grandchildren who ran around the large lawn or played on the swings in the yard. Mr. Koffler took great pride in the synagogue. He got the idea that a

*kiddush** should properly follow the Shabbat morning services, and he began bringing supplies from the city on Fridays: herring, gefilte fish, kichel, and wine. However, the regular congregants felt that he should not assume the entire burden. They began donating the food, leaving the Kofflers only with the task of setting the table and clearing up afterwards.⁷⁵

VIGNETTES

"We were getting dressed constantly," according to Lila Winograd, speaking of the daily ritual she remembered from the summers of her childhood and youth. "Dress in the morning to go to the beach, change in the bathhouse to go on the beach, dress to leave the beach, then dress up in the evenings. Shabbat we dressed up. Sundays everyone put on dressy clothes. I remember that every evening my mother put on white gloves and her hat to go out with us for ice cream."⁷⁶

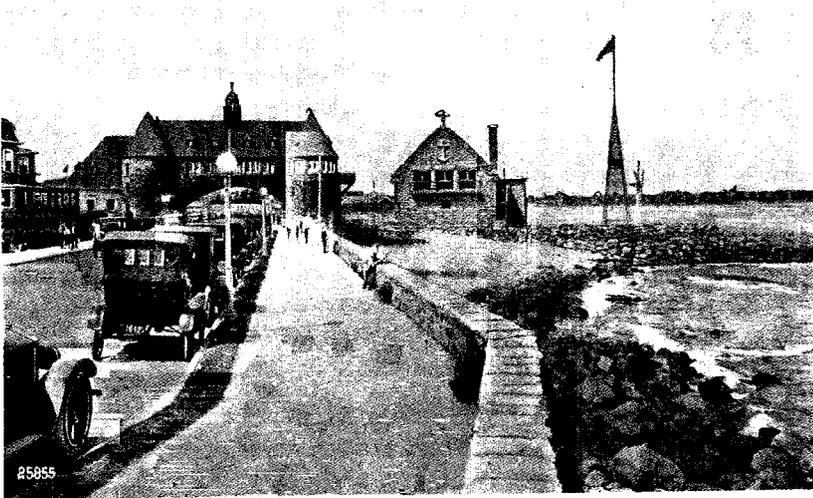
"After dinner, dressed in your good clothes, you went for a walk, perhaps to the linen shops, perhaps to the sea wall. That was when you saw everyone," said Lynn Tesler.⁷⁷

Esther Kaplan had a fond memory of the Fourth of July. It was a time of fireworks and concerts and the start of the summer vacation at the Pier: "We always got dressed up. I remember my father wearing white shoes ... He was copying what all the others wore. We would walk on the boardwalk (before 1938) and buy ice cream. On the green near the beach in the gazebo an orchestra would play. And of course, fireworks. The stores along the way sold them — sparklers, caps. It was a gay, happy time."⁷⁸

Marion Goldsmith and Lois Fain also enjoyed fireworks on the Fourth. Her father purchased theirs at the variety store owned by Isaac Moses. The sparklers and Roman candles were always set off on the beach where it was safer.⁷⁹

The Casino was a very important place for many years. Dorothy Nelson spoke of her parents wearing formal clothes to attend a Saturday evening at the Casino. Gertrude Meth Hochberg never stayed at the Pier, but as a young career woman in Providence, she came with a date. "My best times," she said, "were dressing in evening clothes and going on a Saturday night to the Casino to dance to the music of the big bands. Sometimes when our feet had become hot from dancing, we left the hall and went to the beach where we took off our shoes and stockings to walk in the cool sand and wade in the cool water."⁸⁰ Claire White said that she saw all the big bands there while in her teens. The young people had a favorite way of gaining admission: "One of the boys paid to enter and have his hand stamped, which allowed him go out and come back in later. Then he come out, wet his hand, and transferred the marking to some one else. That was how I got in." Mrs. White described the hall

**Kiddush* (Hebrew) refers to the blessing over the wine as well as light refreshments after a service.



Old Casino Arch, Life Saving Station, and Ocean Road, Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island, postcard, ca. 1929.



Sitting on the Narragansett Pier sea wall, ca. 1935, l. to r., Charles and Fannie Hoffman, Rose and Abram Halpert.

as "... a big area, with a lot of lattice work, but very plain. It was all wood, with a big bandstand in front. This floor area was all that remained of the original building."⁸¹ Lois Fain and her cousin Earl Woolf were too young to attend the dances at the Casino, so they sat outside and listened to the wonderful music. Earl, a musician, was enthralled with the sounds of bands like Tommy Dorsey's.⁸²

True devotees of Narragansett had difficulty remembering what one did on a rainy day. Non-beach days did not loom large in their recollections. One went to the movies or took the dinkey (a motor-driven bus with the tires removed so that the rims of the wheels ran along the railroad tracks) to Wakefield or stayed home and waited for the rain to pass.

Before refrigerators, there were iceboxes that had to be filled with ice and the melted accumulation emptied from the *shissel* (basin, Yiddish) underneath. Marion Goldsmith remembered trips to the icehouse, perhaps every other day. The big block of ice was placed on the running board of their car, then lugged to the icebox.⁸³

The Robinsons had an iceman who delivered every morning. Her brother Mendy earned his money during the summer delivering ice via his bicycle. Hot days made the job more difficult. No matter how quickly he pedaled, the ice melted, leaving a wet trail all the way down Kingstown Road.⁸⁴

SAND HILL COVE

When the owner of a dental supply house mentioned to Dr. Ilie Berger that he planned to sell his summer home at Galilee [on Sand Hill Cove, later Roger Wheeler Memorial Beach]. Dr. and Mrs. Berger decided to buy it. Their years there, said Evelyn Berger Hendel, "were the most wonderful times." The Berger family spent summers there from 1918 until their move to Barrington. There was no public beach. The area, patrolled by the Coast Guard, was quiet and unspoiled. The house stood on stilts on the beach; it had to be moved three times because of beach erosion.

Mrs. Berger cooked and baked wonderful things on a kerosene stove. The plumbing was primitive, but no one minded the inconveniences of living there. "It was wonderful," Mrs. Hendel said. "My sister Lillian (Lillian Berger Rubenstein) and I didn't wear shoes all summer." Mrs. Berger, a devotee of physical fitness, arose every morning at 6:00 a.m. to take a long swim. For a short time the family owned a boat which the two girls enjoyed sailing. But Dr. Berger soon sold it. The tricky tides made maneuvering or controlling the craft difficult, and on more than one occasion the Coast Guard had to come to the girls' rescue.

The Ben Kane family lived nearby. Though they and the Bergers were the only Jewish households at Galilee, Sidney and Irwin Kane and the two Berger sisters did not lack for activities. In addition to their hours at the beach they played tennis on a court they built themselves. During the summers, Mrs. Hendel recalled, Sidney

Kane worked for a nearby farmer, assisting in bringing in the cows and milking them. He also helped with the horses. As a result they had the opportunity to ride one of the horses — all four of them on the back on one steed.

The move to Barrington in 1922 ended their idyll in Galilee. The house survived the 1938 hurricane, when it became a makeshift morgue for victims.⁸⁵

CODA

The destructive hurricanes of 1938 and 1954 destroyed much of the landscapes of Narragansett and Galilee, but, as with all other beach communities, progress and the process of rebuilding brought even greater changes to the social landscape. The Roger Wheeler Memorial Beach claimed major portions of the area where once stilt houses stood. Condominiums replaced the strip of honky-tonk shops and bars on Beach Road at the Pier, and year-round residents swelled the population. It is now an easy commute; gone is the stress of the two-hour drive. Nor are people as willing to “make do” or accept accommodations that involve “roughing it.”

However, the beaches still attract, and if you are a regular at Narragansett, it is not difficult to find another summer resident near the shore. People still tend to congregate in an accustomed place, with the familiar configuration of chairs and blankets, and young people have their special places to meet. And a walk to Narrow River is still part of the pattern.

Many things have changed, but not — to quote Elaine Hoffman — “the serenity of Narragansett Pier.”⁸⁶



APPENDIX

FOND MEMORIES OF THE MASSASOIT HOTEL BY ROSALIE ADELMAN BELOFF

The first thing that I remember about the Massasoit Hotel was its size; it appeared huge to me.

In order to enter the large wooden structure one had to climb what appeared to me to be at least one hundred wide grey wooden stairs that surrounded the building on two sides. One then crossed the veranda with its row of green wood rocking chairs, which beckoned invitingly.

Upon entering the lobby, we were greeted pleasantly by the Manager, Mr. C. Carter Bryant, wearing a spotless white suit and pince-nez spectacles, and his corpulent assistant, Miss Davies, who was always at his side. It's difficult to describe the thrill and anticipation that I felt the first moment my feet touched the

green plush carpet in the cool, dark interior of the hotel. The best month of the year was about to begin for me!

The hotel was full of delights for a small child: an old-fashioned elevator ("powered" by ropes) that took "hours" to ascend to the second floor; wide wooden banisters just made for sliding down; long green-carpeted corridors in which to run and play "hide and seek"; keyholes to peek into; and even chamber pots to use in the middle of the night as only the rooms at the ends of the hall had private bathrooms. The common rooms were large with many nooks and crannies to explore.

We children (I remember, especially, Myles "Buddy" Bachman) used to amuse ourselves by hanging around the kitchen windows on the side of the hotel porch and joking with "the help." The most daring thing we did was to sneak around under the veranda looking into the windows of the rooms where employees stayed and rested between chores. In those days it never occurred to us to question the difference in the "upstairs-downstairs" accommodations. Nor did we fear any harm from those who worked there.

Life in the hotel revolved around the dining room. I remember one "scandalous" evening when Sally Rand, the Fan Dancer, was dining at the Massasoit in the company of a clergyman. She was appearing at the Casino that night, and all the hotel guests were stationed around the closed doors of the dining room waiting for the pair to appear. That event was obviously the highlight of the season.

Life at Narragansett Pier included, of course, the beach, walks along the ocean (most daringly, on the sea wall), the fantastic surf, salt water taffy, the shops, flowers, and all the delights of a summer resort in August. However, the Massasoit Hotel alone will always remain in my memory as the most magical of places!! Even today I feel excited when I step into a lovely hotel anywhere, and the month of August (still, our vacation time) remains very special to me.

Recently, I learned from a friend that the Massasoit Hotel is no more, and I know that I could never bear to visit Narragansett Pier again without seeing it beckoning to me.

THE PIER, 1930-1950
BY DOROTHY WAXMAN MILLER

In the early 1930s my parents, Aaron and Rifka Waxman, and my siblings, Eve, Martin, Sidney, and I often spent weekend days on the beach at the Pier.

The first memory I have of our renting a room or two was in August, 1936. I was 16 years old, had just graduated from Central High School. The rooms were on Beach Street on the second floor, over first floor stores. There was a community

kitchen with a kerosene stove, ice-box, and a few tables. My Aunt Chava Lightman and her children had rooms next to ours. We had tap water in the room and used the community bathroom. I believe we spent two weeks a summer until the building was swept away during the 1938 hurricane. My father and Uncle Solomon came on weekends, bringing food.

We children were on the beach early in the morning. My mother would clean house and cook and then join us, bringing sandwiches and milk. We ate supper in the community kitchen.

Evenings we teenagers sat on the boardwalk ... listening to the waves, talking, and singing the hit songs of that time. Evenings also meant strolling along Ocean Road — from the Twin Towers to Tucker's Dock, on that beautiful pink concrete sidewalk and the rock wall where people sat looking out over the large rocks to the ocean. On these walks people greeted friends and relatives. Across the road we would see people rocking on the porches of the very old, large hotels. My sister Eve's fiance, Larry Hoffman, his parents, Major Charles and Fanny Hoffman, and brother, Arthur, would spend summers at the Massasoit Hotel. Mr. Hoffman was Superintendent of The Miriam Hospital when it was on Parade Street. He would join his family on weekends.

The Waxmans and the Lightmans sat on the beach together, with blankets spread out, a chair or two, and one colorful umbrella. That's where we would gather at lunch time. The younger children were not allowed to wander far, but they could play at the water's edge and make castles in the sand. If they felt concern about finding the adults, they knew that all they had to do was look for the very colorful umbrella. Those blankets were always spread above the high tide mark.

During the '40s and '50s and beyond, we and our cousins, having married and having had children, would make an effort to gather at the Pier, no matter where we had moved to. And there, along with our parents and aunts and uncles, we would carry our blankets to the beach. The blanket area would triple as three generations would come to enjoy each other and talk about old times at the Pier and all the family news since we had last met.

THE PIER 1930-1950
BY JACK S. MILLER

My family's first summer at the Pier was in 1930, when I was 10 years old. We rented a small cottage on Narragansett Avenue. In the following years we lived in several locations — usually with two or three rooms for the five of us: me, my parents, and brothers Josh and Henry. We always had running water, electricity, and a kerosene stove for cooking. I remember my trips to the icehouse, as we had no refrigerator.

For a Hebrew teacher's family in the Depression years, our summers at Narragansett were anything but luxurious. But my mother, Ann, was an excellent cook who could turn out delicious meals on the old kerosene stove, and all the best things in life at Narragansett were free — sand, sun, water, and friends.

Much of our food was brought in by my father, Charles, when he made his weekend commute from Woonsocket. Our food shopping at the Pier was done at the Ideal Market. In later years a number of Jewish shops opened for the summer months — there was Siegal's Meat, Perler's Bakery, and Winer's Grocery.

In pre-1938 hurricane days, Narragansett was a sleepy little place with a rather Victorian ambiance. In 1930 the massive old Hotel de la Plage dominated Beach Street. Each summer when we returned, we would find that another of the old hotels had burned down. The shingled wooden boardwalk housed a number of interesting small shops — selling snacks, souvenirs, etc. — and Post's Camera Shop, one of the few Jewish-owned businesses in those early days. I also remember the many shops on Beach Street, across the street from the boardwalk, and the linen shops featuring "on sale" signs all summer.

More affluent people made Sherry's Bathing Pavilion their favorite, but we just walked right to the beach. Our summer days as children were monotonous in a delightful way. We would go to the beach on our own each morning. Mother would arrive with lunch and then we would all spend the afternoon on the beach. The highlight of each day was the obligatory walk to Narrow River ... and we enjoyed walking past the Dunes Club, knowing that although they did not allow Jews to be members, they could not keep us off their part of the beach.

Physical activities, such as body surfing, football, beach tennis, and baseball filled much of our days on the beach, but in the evening we still had energy for the walk along Ocean Road, from the Twin Towers to Tucker's Dock. Word games, such as "Hangman," were also played on the beach, in the sand.

Off the beach was Ben Mittler's, a famous Jewish restaurant, and on weekends, the Narragansett Casino brought the great swing bands of the era. Among them were the Dorsey Brothers, Bob Crosby, Ina Hutton and her all-girl orchestra, Sammy Kaye, and Glen Miller. We could not afford to buy tickets, but we could and did sit out on the lawn beside the Casino and listen. One of my thrills as a young teenager was the experience of serving breakfast to Duke Ellington when I was a waiter at Mittler's.

Sometimes we were allowed the indulgence of a visit to Bill's Ice Cream shop on Kingstown Road. Bill's featured a hand-crafted creation of ice cream on a stick, dipped in his special chocolate syrup. These spectacular creations cost about fifteen cents, I think.

Towards the end of its long existence, the old Beachwood Hotel came under the management of my mother, who rented out rooms with facilities for cooking in the community kitchen. Later, my parents bought a guest house. Mother's guests enjoyed her hospitality and especially her parties. She became known as the lady whose "knishes were delicious."

Memories of the Pier are also about family and friends. An uncle, Israel Miller, and an aunt, Rebecca Rabinowitz, owned cottages on Boon Street. They are still lived in. There was never a day when I would fail to see two or three relatives.

Dorothy Waxman and I were introduced to each other at Tucker's Dock in August of 1936, by a mutual friend, Gertrude Chaet, whose family operated a candy store next to the Casino Theater. We were married in August 1941.

In our adult years, Dorothy and I have found that there are many other beaches more scenic and more dramatically beautiful than Narragansett. But for children in those Depression years, the Pier had that ideal combination of livability and the opportunity to enjoy nature, physical activity, and compatible people. It was all we could have asked for and more.

The Pier has remained a very special place to us and to our sons, Peter and Lewis, a place to which we would return to relive happy family memories. In 1991 our sons arranged a 50th Wedding anniversary party for us at the Pier, attended by many relatives, many of whom had their own happy memories of Narragansett.

NOTES

- 1 Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission: "Historical Architectural Resources of Narragansett, Rhode Island," p. 21.
- 2 Interview with Leon Missry, June 14, 1992.
- 3 Commission, *ibid.*, p. 12.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 5 Tallman, Mariana M., *Pleasant Places in Rhode Island and How to Reach Them*, Providence: The Providence Journal Co., 1894
- 6 Interview with Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky, July 16, 1992.
- 7 Interview with Sidney Goldstein, August 4, 1992.
- 8 Interview with Dorothy Markoff Nelson, June 12, 1992.
- 9 Interview with Shirley Ganzer Palestine, June 8, 1992
- 10 Interview with Joseph Ladow, May 29, 1992.
- 11 Interview with Gertrude Meth Hochberg, July 3, 1992.
- 12 Ladow, *ibid.*
- 13 Goldowsky, *ibid.*
- 14 Interview with Claire Samdperil White, May 6, 1992.
- 15 Interview with Irving Zimmerman, June 24, 1992..
- 16 Letter from Gertrude (Chaet) Edelston Sharpe, July 19, 1992.
- 17 Goldowsky, *ibid.*
- 18 Interviews with Molly Stanzler Fisch, July 26, 1990, August 30, 1992
- 19 Interview with Lila Robinson Winograd, June 6, 1992.
- 20 Interview with Carl and Myrtle Feldman, June 3, 1992.
- 21 Interview with Marion Jagolinzer Goldsmith and Lois Jagolinzer Fain, July 2, 1992.

- 22 Interview with Muriel Port Stevens, June 11, 1992 ..
23 Missry, *ibid.*
24 Ladow, *ibid.*
25 Interview with Aaron Burrows, June 19, 1992.
26 Interview with Howard Lewis, June 7, 1992.
27 Interview with Bertram Brown, June 1, 1992.
28 Palestine, *ibid.*
29 *Rhode Island Jewish Herald*, February 16, 1940, pp. 20, 21.
30 Interview with Ida Glantz, October 9, 1992.
31 Goldstein, *ibid.*
32 Stevens, *ibid.*
33 Interview with Violet B. Halpert, November 10, 1992.
34 Goldsmith, Fain, *ibid.*
35 Winograd, *ibid.*
36 Feldman, *ibid.*
37 Goldsmith, Fain, *ibid.*
38 Nelson, *ibid.*
39 Interview with Jacqueline (Blotcher) Teverow Factor, June 1, 1992.
40 Goldsmith, Fain, *ibid.*
41 Interview with Marilyn Fogel Schlossberg, June 21, 1992.
42 Interview with Lynn Shaffer Tesler, June 1, 1992.
43 Interview with Arline Rothschild, July 2, 1992.
44 White, *ibid.*
45 Memoir written by Jack S. Miller, July 19, 1992.
46 Interview with Elaine Chandler Hoffman, June 4, 1992.
47 Stevens, *ibid.*
48 White, *ibid.*
49 Glantz, *ibid.*
50 Brown, *ibid.*
51 Stevens, *ibid.*
52 White, *ibid.*
53 Goldstein, *ibid.*
54 Tesler, *ibid.*
55 Commission, *ibid.* p.21.
56 Goldstein, *ibid.*
57 Nelson, *ibid.*
58 Goldsmith, Fain, *ibid.*
59 Feldman, *ibid.*
60 Teverow Factor, *ibid.*
61 Goldsmith, Fain, *ibid.*
62 Winograd, *ibid.*
63 Feldman, *ibid.*
64 White, *ibid.*
65 Stevens, *ibid.*
66 Nelson, *ibid.*
67 Palestine, *ibid.*
68 Goldsmith, Fain, *ibid.*
69 Interview with Mollie Fried Sklut, June 11, 1992.
70 Interview with Aaron Segal, September 30, 1992.
71 Palestine, *ibid.*
72 Glantz, *ibid.*
73 Interview with Sylvia Katz Factor, June 4, 1992.
74 White, Glantz, *ibid.*
75 Interview with Esther Koffler Kaplan, June 16, 1992.
76 Winograd, *ibid.*
77 Tesler, *ibid.*

- 78 Kaplan, *ibid.*
79 Goldsmith, Fain, *ibid.*
80 Hochberg, *ibid.*
81 White, *ibid.*
82 Goldsmith, Fain, *ibid.*
83 *Ibid.*
84 Winograd, *ibid.*
85 Interviews with Evelyn Berger Hendel, June 12, 1991 and October 1, 1992.
86 Hoffman, *ibid.*

THE JEWISH HERALD, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Happenings of Interest in the Women's World
Pauline Chorney, Women's News Editor
Personal and Social

JULY 10, 1931

Mr. and Mrs. Haskell Frank of Glen road entertained as week-end guests, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Shein, at their summer home at Quonset Point.

* * *

Mr. Benjamin Blacher of Irving avenue will occupy the Buddy cottage on Rockland street, Narragansett Pier, for the summer.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Darman of Woonsocket have opened Ilverthorp on Robinson street, Narragansett Pier, where they are staying for the season.

* * *

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kenner of Gallatin street entertained a party of friends over the holiday at the Massasoit in Narragansett Pier, where they are staying for the season.

* * *

Mrs. Israel Weisel and family of Reservoir avenue are spending the summer at Narragansett Pier.

JULY 31, 1931

Ko-Ketts to Hold Motor Party Sunday

At a meeting of the Ko-Ketts, held Wednesday, at the home of Miss Ida Fain, on Goddard street, plans were completed for a motor party to Olivo's Beach, to be held on Sunday, Aug 2. The members and their friends will start from the home of the Misses Charlotte and Gertrude Sonion, at 14 Mayflower street.

Refreshments were served by the hostess.

Around the Town
With Leonard Harris

AUGUST 2, 1935

Irene Finkelstein's annual big bridge Monday at Narragansett was a great success — this event was for the Jewish Home for the Aged ... those young lawyers had a merry time in New Bedford on Sunday night last so wake up Providence lassies ... a happy group of young matrons seen at the Pier on Sunday were, Mrs. George Bickwit of N.Y., the former Ethel Deutch; Mrs. Frank Jacobson, the former Edna Bercovitz; Mrs. Herman Baker, the former Sally Torgan; and Mrs. Ira Blum, the former Janet Deutch ... Dave Adelman also enjoyed the Pier waters and found time to discuss with me the present political situation which subject Dave surely knows.

Also saw jovial Jack Gertz and family and Irwin Silverman all the way from Great Neck, L.I. ... Others seen in fine fettle were the Joe Smiths and the Abe Blackmans who are spending the season at the Massasoit ... Beatrice Wold, the niece of the J. D. Grossmans with cousin Arthur and wife ... and all the way from Brooklyn ... Selma Cort, member of Maplehurst's social staff has just returned from N.Y., where she signed a contract to appear with Rudy Vallee — this young lady hails from Boston ... Dave Geffner, Nat Dwares, and Dan Miller had a sand dune all to themselves at the Pier on Sunday and how envious we were ...

JULY 17, 1936

As the mercury climbed, your correspondent climbed — into his car, and so to the Pier ... Everybody was there, including the Norman Silvermans and their darling infant ... Papa Archie not far away, entertaining a few young ladies, with stories of course ... Syd and Min Rabinowitz strolling along ... Rose Robinson, subtle in yellow touched with blue ... the Nat Perlows bathing in the sun, joined by Al and Dolly Brown of woonsocket ... the Lennie Richters, Archie Fain and Mo Kessler ... And with the younger crowd, ... Ethel Sydell talking a mile a minute with a couple of her friends ... The Botvin sisters ... Harriet Cohen looked tropical in a striped beach costume topped with red ...

JULY 24, 1936

Regulars at the Pier on Sunday were Dr. Forbes carrying his own beach chair ... Barney Bernard looking for a likely sight for a camera snap ... Max Winograd, displaying his brown physique in white trunks ... Mildred Rosenberg in a new black bathing suit ... Mollie Schwartz, down for the day from Hartford ... the Henry Goldblatts ... John Silverman ... the Leo Weiners, and the Bill Cohens ... Joe Smith is back from a two weeks' soldiering in the Medical Reserve ... We saw all of you at the Nu Alpha Sorority dance but we were too late to make the edition.

AUGUST 14, 1936

A gala evening at the Narragansett Pier Casino last Tuesday evening, where a reception was tendered to the Myron Kellers prior to the Jewish Community Center summer frolic ... Mrs. Keller, looking very cute in brown and white, was presented with a serving tray ... Among their many friends with well wishes, we caught the George Baskins, the Charlie Borods, the Harold Rutmans in from Westerly ... the Saul Fabers, the Sid Levinsons, the Mac Kestenmans, Senator Roberts ... the John Silvermans with brother Charlie all making merry ... and Gertrude Tarnapol, who seemed to be having the best time of all ...

The Observer

JULY 26, 1935

During the first part of the week I visited Narragansett Pier, the place where socialites reign supreme. There I spotted brawny Harold Levine, who was the object of admiration by many, many females. Close by was seated Ethel Sydell in a backless suit which displayed a tan darker than she has sported so far this season. Miss Ruth Brown whose dimpled charms are a delight to visitors was amongst a gay group of young people. The magnificent coiffure of Thelma Wagner attracted the attention and admiration of many.

At a later visit to this same beach rendezvous we were delighted to see some new faces as well as pleasant old acquaintances. One of the sweeter of the visitors was Evelyn Bernsteigle who seemed to cause much of a furor in the heart of many young blades. Sprawled out in comfort was an old schoolmate, Bim Strasberg, who has been making a name for himself in athletics at Westminster Univ. His pal, Bernie Nemrow was also there.

A frequenter of the beach is Ruth Cohen who also seems to be in a very great demand as a socialite. But not to be daunted is Rose Lisker who methinks is another charming damsel. It has been rumored that Archie Carter, Milton Ladd and many more of the gang have been making night trips to these here parts and not for the sake of riding thirty-five miles. What's up, fellows? All in all, the Pier continues to be a top-notch social colony and beach-ball playground, as proven by Shirley, Eddie Korb, Jerry Weinstein and Archie Kapstein who succeeded in bouncing a ball on a few people's backs with inaccurately-aimed throws.

ALONE, A JEW IS NOTHING —
JEWISH COMMUNITY IN PROVIDENCE IN THE
MIDDLE TO LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY MICHAEL GOLDSTEIN

In pre-modern Europe, governments imposed sociopolitical restrictions upon Jews which limited their residences and jobs, thereby creating more intense social interaction among Jews and reinforcing Jewish religious culture. When 250,000 German-speaking Jews who suffered under these restrictions immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth century, the American government largely ignored them, allowing them to determine their own character. Suddenly Jews had the freedom to decide how Jewish they wanted to be.¹

But was this a freedom to observe or a freedom to neglect?² In a free and open society, German Jews were geographically mobile, entered the middle classes, and changed their religion through the establishment of Reform Judaism, all drastic changes when compared to the past.³ Certainly, these Jews shared bonds of common language and a common experience of transplantation from Europe. However, if the behavior of other contemporary ethnic groups such as the Irish is any indication, such bonds may be strong initially but not enough to insure that the Jewish community would stay together. Some historians have argued that these dramatic changes caused Jews to assimilate, to become no more likely to interact with each other than non-Jews. Nathan Glazer, for example, attempts to universalize the experience of a tiny Jewish community in a small Midwestern town which was well on its way to being swallowed up by Unitarianism until saved by the subsequent immigration of the more religiously traditional Eastern European Jews.⁴

Yet a small town is not representative of the whole United States, and German Jewish communities were indeed not in any danger of becoming extinct. Using the Jewish community in Providence, Rhode Island, in the 1870s as a case study, one finds that these historic changes occurred within a context of emerging new bases of Jewish communal life.⁵

On the surface, it appears that Providence would in fact provide a strong example for the opposite argument. In 1877, there were about 150 Jewish families in Providence and neighboring Pawtucket and a Jewish population of almost 500.⁶ Yet the sole synagogue, Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, had only eighteen members! A major membership drive later that year brought the number up to 73, but this was still less than one half of the adult male population of the greater Providence area.⁷ Surely, one might argue, this is a sign of a dying community. Yet

This article is adapted from a paper submitted to a course in Urban History at Brown University by Michael Goldstein, Brown '92. Goldstein, a teacher at the Wheeler School, is a co-founder and director of Providence Summerbridge, an intensive academic program for at-risk, high-potential middle school students from Providence public schools.

to be a Jew meant more than praying in a different place than non-Jews. As Goldscheider and Zuckerman argue, ethnicity reflects many bases of social interaction; the more bases of frequent interaction, the stronger the ethnic cohesion.⁸ Institutional, occupational, and residential networks reinforced relationships among Jews in post-Civil War Providence, tying together practicing and non-practicing Jews within a cohesive Jewish community.

INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKS

Traditionally, the synagogue was the primary institution in Jewish life, a place for prayer, education, charity, meetings, and gossip.⁹ However, as German Jews adapted to life in the United States, the synagogue became increasingly specialized and less important.

In July 1877 the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David decided to implement a moderate Reform program. While they retained traditional elements of Judaism, such as the dietary laws and the practice of wearing the yarmulke during worship, the congregation introduced organ music and a mixed choir, prescribed the English language instead of Hebrew or even German or Yiddish, and allowed women to sit on the main floor instead of segregating them on a balcony, as was the time-honored custom. They also joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, sealing their commitment to Reform.¹⁰ The motivations of these Providence reformers reflected those of the founder of this Union, Isaac Meyer Wise. Although he still sought to maintain continuity of faith and practice within Jewish religious tradition, he eliminated any customs that he perceived would stand in the way of enjoying all of the benefits of full American citizenship, noting, "Whatever makes us ridiculous before the world may safely be and should be abolished."¹¹ Thus, the Providence congregation sought to Americanize the synagogue, casting out the ethnic component of Judaism in the hopes of making the religion more decorous and accepted by the American middle-class. As Glazer concludes, "Just as the middle-class had its dignified services, its hymns, its preachers, so too would the Jews."¹²

Amidst this reform, the Providence congregation suffered through various schisms in only a short ten-year span. In 1871, the Sons of David split from the preexisting congregation, then called the Sons of Israel, forming its own charter. Although the two eventually reunited, in January 1880 the congregation split again; seventeen members left to form the Sons of Abraham.¹³ Remarkably, this institutional tumult was common nationwide. In 1853, for example, there were seventeen synagogues in New York City alone. Max Kohler tried to explain this phenomenon, stating, "Independence of thought, liberty, and self-assertiveness of the immigrants impelled each little body or clique to form a separate and distinct congregation for itself, in which their own shades of beliefs and dogma might find expression."¹⁴

As a result of this fragmentation, the synagogue itself could no longer fulfill all the needs of the Providence Jewish community. During the years of rapid growth in the United States, government programs to alleviate socioeconomic deprivation were virtually nonexistent. Yet the synagogue was too small and unstable to provide reliable assistance through its mutual aid committee.¹⁵ Moreover, many Jews became increasingly secularized. As mentioned earlier, the highest proportion of Greater Providence Jews who were members of the congregation during this period was fifty percent in 1878. Two years later, membership fell back to thirty-six males, or less than one quarter of the adult male population.¹⁶ Complained David Philipson, who was having similar attendance problems in Baltimore, "All the preaching and reformed divine sermon...will have very little effect on the young men, chained as they are to their stores and various offices."¹⁷ Although Providence male Jews rejected religious affiliation, however, most were not ready to abandon completely their Jewish identity.

Many turned to organizations outside the synagogue which could provide them a measure of economic security and which celebrated their ethnic heritage. One such organization was the Haggai Lodge of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith. The first secular Jewish organization in the United States, B'nai B'rith was created in 1843 by New York City German Jews and within twenty years had branches in every major city. Several Providence congregation members chartered a local chapter in 1870.¹⁸

What was unique about B'nai B'rith was its synthesis of components of Jewishness and Americanism. It was more than simply a Jewish Masonic Lodge (although that also did exist in Providence) or a German cultural club (which also existed).¹⁹ The secret rites, special regalia, passwords, and mottoes adapted by the B'nai B'rith reflected its American structure. The official language of the organization was English. Yet its founders bound this structure to Jewish history and folklore and created a new ritual parallel to the religious culture. For example, they gave the Lodge officers Hebrew titles: the president was the Grand Nasi (President, Hebrew).²⁰ The organization responded to the needs of Jews who wanted to Americanize but who had encountered discrimination, who were excluded from entry into Gentile orders of the Odd Fellows and the Masons. Also, the B'nai B'rith offered Jews a way to affirm their Jewishness. Members could be Jewish secularists, free of the obligation to observe ritual—beyond that of the order—or belong to a congregation.²¹

Also, the B'nai B'rith helped restore harmony in a community where ground-shaking religious rifts were once-a-decade phenomena. The lodge forbade members to discuss congregational matters and accepted members irrespective of their congregational affiliation.²² It gave members a sense of belonging and community that the synagogue could not give. Hyman Grinstein noted:

to be a Jew meant more than praying in a different place than non-Jews. As Goldscheider and Zuckerman argue, ethnicity reflects many bases of social interaction; the more bases of frequent interaction, the stronger the ethnic cohesion.⁸ Institutional, occupational, and residential networks reinforced relationships among Jews in post-Civil War Providence, tying together practicing and non-practicing Jews within a cohesive Jewish community.

INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKS

Traditionally, the synagogue was the primary institution in Jewish life, a place for prayer, education, charity, meetings, and gossip.⁹ However, as German Jews adapted to life in the United States, the synagogue became increasingly specialized and less important.

In July 1877 the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David decided to implement a moderate Reform program. While they retained traditional elements of Judaism, such as the dietary laws and the practice of wearing the yarmulke during worship, the congregation introduced organ music and a mixed choir, prescribed the English language instead of Hebrew or even German or Yiddish, and allowed women to sit on the main floor instead of segregating them on a balcony, as was the time-honored custom. They also joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, sealing their commitment to Reform.¹⁰ The motivations of these Providence reformers reflected those of the founder of this Union, Isaac Meyer Wise. Although he still sought to maintain continuity of faith and practice within Jewish religious tradition, he eliminated any customs that he perceived would stand in the way of enjoying all of the benefits of full American citizenship, noting, "Whatever makes us ridiculous before the world may safely be and should be abolished."¹¹ Thus, the Providence congregation sought to Americanize the synagogue, casting out the ethnic component of Judaism in the hopes of making the religion more decorous and accepted by the American middle-class. As Glazer concludes, "Just as the middle-class had its dignified services, its hymns, its preachers, so too would the Jews."¹²

Amidst this reform, the Providence congregation suffered through various schisms in only a short ten-year span. In 1871, the Sons of David split from the preexisting congregation, then called the Sons of Israel, forming its own charter. Although the two eventually reunited, in January 1880 the congregation split again; seventeen members left to form the Sons of Abraham.¹³ Remarkably, this institutional tumult was common nationwide. In 1853, for example, there were seventeen synagogues in New York City alone. Max Kohler tried to explain this phenomenon, stating, "Independence of thought, liberty, and self-assertiveness of the immigrants impelled each little body or clique to form a separate and distinct congregation for itself, in which their own shades of beliefs and dogma might find expression."¹⁴

As a result of this fragmentation, the synagogue itself could no longer fulfill all the needs of the Providence Jewish community. During the years of rapid growth in the United States, government programs to alleviate socioeconomic deprivation were virtually nonexistent. Yet the synagogue was too small and unstable to provide reliable assistance through its mutual aid committee.¹⁵ Moreover, many Jews became increasingly secularized. As mentioned earlier, the highest proportion of Greater Providence Jews who were members of the congregation during this period was fifty percent in 1878. Two years later, membership fell back to thirty-six males, or less than one quarter of the adult male population.¹⁶ Complained David Philipson, who was having similar attendance problems in Baltimore, "All the preaching and reformed divine sermon...will have very little effect on the young men, chained as they are to their stores and various offices."¹⁷ Although Providence male Jews rejected religious affiliation, however, most were not ready to abandon completely their Jewish identity.

Many turned to organizations outside the synagogue which could provide them a measure of economic security and which celebrated their ethnic heritage. One such organization was the Haggai Lodge of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith. The first secular Jewish organization in the United States, B'nai B'rith was created in 1843 by New York City German Jews and within twenty years had branches in every major city. Several Providence congregation members chartered a local chapter in 1870.¹⁸

What was unique about B'nai B'rith was its synthesis of components of Jewishness and Americanism. It was more than simply a Jewish Masonic Lodge (although that also did exist in Providence) or a German cultural club (which also existed).¹⁹ The secret rites, special regalia, passwords, and mottoes adapted by the B'nai B'rith reflected its American structure. The official language of the organization was English. Yet its founders bound this structure to Jewish history and folklore and created a new ritual parallel to the religious culture. For example, they gave the Lodge officers Hebrew titles: the president was the Grand Nasi (President, Hebrew).²⁰ The organization responded to the needs of Jews who wanted to Americanize but who had encountered discrimination, who were excluded from entry into Gentile orders of the Odd Fellows and the Masons. Also, the B'nai B'rith offered Jews a way to affirm their Jewishness. Members could be Jewish secularists, free of the obligation to observe ritual—beyond that of the order—or belong to a congregation.²¹

Also, the B'nai B'rith helped restore harmony in a community where ground-shaking religious rifts were once-a-decade phenomena. The lodge forbade members to discuss congregational matters and accepted members irrespective of their congregational affiliation.²² It gave members a sense of belonging and community that the synagogue could not give. Hyman Grinstein noted:

The very meetings with their secret regalia and passwords and ceremonies made the German Jew eager for admittance. The immigrant might peddle his way through life or engage in retail trade; once a week, however, he forgot that he was a stranger in a land he did not understand and that did not understand him. He met weekly to the place of his lodge meeting where he was ranked according to his degree; once there, once he donned the regalia, he was of the inner circle.²³

The Lodge built up the German Jew's self-respect and sheltered him from the anonymity of the impersonal urban setting. Therefore, if the Reform Temple wanted to create Judaism without ethnicity, then the B'nai B'rith created a new form of Jewishness without Judaism.

Moreover, the Order promoted members' material welfare, providing a system of material aid in case of sickness or misfortune. Because in this period death or even illness in a family often meant economic disaster, and because the public charitable institutions—the almshouses and asylums—were wretched and usually Christian-sponsored, the B'nai B'rith provided members a much needed sense of fiscal security. For example, the Lodge maintained benefit funds for orphans and widows. Members paid dues and modest fees to provide a form of insurance through which a member's widow received \$30 toward the cost of her husband's funeral and thereafter \$1 a week for herself.²⁴

The fraternal order, with its amalgam of Jewish and American components, its broad appeal across congregational lines, and its concentration on mutual aid and fellowship, fulfilled urgent needs in urban life. In 1882, a visiting Jew noted that there were 70 members in the B'nai B'rith and another almost 80 members in a similar fraternal order, the Independent Order of Free Sons of Israel.²⁵ Because the synagogue in 1882 could claim only some three dozen members, the B'nai B'rith, as an institutional option unrelated to the synagogue, created an alternative mode for Jews to affiliate with the Jewish community. The order created a personal network which strengthened Jewish ties and formed a new basis for communal cooperation.²⁶

OCCUPATIONAL NETWORKS

As Glazer notes, the rise in the social and economic position of the German Jew was extremely rapid, far surpassing that which can be shown for any other immigrant group.²⁷ A statistical survey of 10,000 German Jews who arrived in the United States between 1850 and 1880 shows that by 1890, ten percent had three or more servants, twenty percent had two, and forty percent had one. As the Providence congregation's Reform platform has shown, on the subject of manners Jews looked beyond their teachings and adopted the criteria for proper behavior set by those whose acceptance they craved: the middle class. According to historian Jurgen

Kocha, when individuals share a similar economic position, they often develop a shared identity and loyalty.²⁸ At first glance, then, Jews seemed to have assimilated into middle-class life at the expense of their ethnic and religious ties. However, despite these patterns of change, most Jewish economic activities in Providence involved only other Jews and took place within the confines of Jewish business activities, preventing any significant class affiliation with non-Jews.²⁹ Similar to the pattern nationwide, Providence Jews were found in several branches of the economy and in many occupations, from provisions to trunk making to crockery (see Table 1). However, they were not evenly distributed among the various fields, nor did their distribution correspond to that of the general population. Whereas most Americans were farmers, laborers, or craftsmen, an overwhelming majority of Providence Jews concentrated in trade and consumer-oriented fields.³⁰ As Cohen described, the limited role of the Jew in the economy of the pre-modern Christian state sharpened his talents for trade and other middle-class occupations. Jews did not become farmers because they were traditionally barred from owning land; they were not in certain crafts because guilds traditionally imposed restrictions upon them. When they arrived in the United States, Jews tended to shun entry into sectors where they had previously encountered such anti-Semitism. Also, because most of the immigrants were young and unmarried, they could engage in risky ventures such as peddling more readily than immigrants with families to support. As well, once in the United States, men excluded because of their Jewishness from Gentile firms found opportunities within their own ethnic group.³¹

Before analyzing the occupational concentration of Providence Jews, it would be helpful to survey trends in other cities. Fifty percent of employed Jews in the United States were in four professions: as peddlers, tailors, and clothing and dry goods merchants. These were occupations many of them brought from Europe: of the male immigrants from western German-speaking Poland for example, one quarter were tailors. Almost no Jews held manual, semi-skilled, service jobs, compared to forty percent of non-Jews. In Boston, New York, Detroit, Columbus, and San Francisco between 1850 and 1870, eighty percent of Jews were peddlers, merchants, and artisans. As rapid growth of cities and capitalist industries in America expanded economic opportunity for tradesmen and merchants, Jews were able to control whole sectors of the economy. In 1870, Jews controlled almost the entire New York City clothing industry, owning eighty percent of the retail clothing stores and ninety percent of the wholesale clothing industry. In 1872, German Jews owned every retail clothing store in Columbus, Ohio. In cities where Jews were predominantly artisans, their shared economic position with non-Jewish artisans was not a strong link because Jews did not have the same occupations. In Boston, for example, where half the Jewish and non-Jewish population were artisans, Jews were predominantly tailors, opticians, watchmakers, and cigar-makers. Non-Jews were bakers, shoemakers, and smiths.³²

Because of their small population (approximately 500 in a city of over 100,000), Providence Jews did not control whole industries, but they did show very similar patterns of occupational concentration (see Table 1, below). Of the 94 male Jews living in Providence in 1878 with known occupations, forty-nine percent were in four professions: peddlers, tailors, clothing, dry goods merchants. Over one-third (eleven out of thirty) of the clothing stores in Providence were owned by Jews. None of the Jews were laborers.

LIST OF OCCUPATIONS: PROVIDENCE MALE JEWS, 1878			
TYPE	NUMBER EMPLOYED	TYPE	NUMBER EMPLOYED
Clothing	20	Boots & Shoes	2
Peddler	16	Cigars	2
Tailor	8	Costumer	1
Dry Goods	3	Grocer	1
Clerk/Salesman	15*	Advertising Agent	1
Millinery	4	Trunkmaker	1
Hats & Caps	4	Butcher	1
Jeweler	3	Plaiting	1
Fancy Goods	3	Crockery	1
Provisions	2	Clothes Cleaner	1
Gloves & Laces	2	Unknown	10

*At least eight of these clerks/salesmen worked for a tailor, a clothing merchant, or a dry goods merchant.³³

TABLE 1

Not only did the occupational structure of the Jewish community differ from that of the city as a whole, but the Jews also constituted what Steven Hertzberg calls "an economy within the economy."³⁴ Although Jewish proprietors in Providence were principally engaged in providing goods and services for Gentile consumption, few Jews had Gentile partners. Most partnerships were family affairs involving either fathers and sons, brothers, or brothers-in-law. Among the partnerships were S. and B. Lederer, Krohne Brothers, S. Milkman and Co, Hirshberg and R.M. Warshauer, Weissman Bros., B & J Wolf, and L. Tint & Son. Ties of kinship among business associates increased the chances of Jewish businesses to remain independently within Jewish hands.³⁵

Moreover, nearly all of the Jewish white-collar and manual workers were in the employ of other Jews, usually relatives (Table 2).

According to Hertzberg, this apparent tendency toward separateness was due to the need for partners and employees whom one could trust, the relatively greater experience of Jews in trade, and also cultural and language barriers.³⁶

EMPLOYEE	EMPLOYER
Michael Hellman (occupation unspecified)	Robert Hellman
Harry Lamb (clerk)	Robert Hellman
Morris Jackson (clerk)	Henry Green
Morris Happ (salesman)	Hyman Happ
Samuel Krohne (clerk)	Herman and Henry Krohne
Louis Hirsch (unspecified)	Moses Stern
Jacob Harris (clerk)	Edward Harris
Abraham Jonas (clerk)	Leopold Dimond
Morris Friedman (clerk)	Michael Friedman

(Four other clerks did not specify where they worked.)

TABLE 2

Such concentration was intensified by another factor: geographical concentration. Of the 51 Jews who listed the addresses of the businesses in which they worked, 46 of them worked on or next to three streets: North Main, South Main, and Westminster. Such proximity facilitated informal contact between proprietors and clerks, thereby increasing the number of economic and social ties among them. Occupational concentration helped to reinforce the structural and cultural bonds in the Providence Jewish community.

Over half of the male population were not members of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David. Yet they were closely integrated into the Jewish economic community. Twenty-seven of the 54 Jews who were peddlers, tailors, clothing, or dry goods merchants were not members of the congregation. Several non-members worked with Jews who were members; almost all worked in close proximity to their synagogue-joining brethren. As Jews integrated into America, they did not move in the direction of total assimilation but formed new extensive bonds of economic and social ties with one another.

RESIDENTIAL NETWORKS

Geographic distribution of the German Jews who immigrated between 1830 and 1880 differed radically from that of their Sephardic predecessors. The latter group clustered mostly along the Atlantic seaboard, but the German Jews spread out through the length and breadth of the nation. In 1877, there were 53 synagogues in the Northwest, 13 in Louisiana, 12 in California, even one in Keokuk, Iowa, and one in Waco, Texas.³⁷ Despite this remarkable distribution, most Jews were residentially concentrated in several states and in the largest urban places. In 1877, two-thirds of American Jews lived in five states (New York, California, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois); an estimated sixty-five percent lived in the ten largest cities compared to only ten percent of all Americans. As Goldscheider concludes, American Jews were an overwhelmingly urban group within a predominantly rural society.³⁸

In Providence, there was considerable residential clustering as well. Of the 100 Jews with known addresses, sixty-four percent lived on five streets:

North Main	23 residents
Charles	16
Friendship	9
South Main	8
Richmond	6

Surely, these are long streets, cross-cutting the entire length and width of the city at that time. However, 65% of these Jews congregated into three specific centers:

AREA OF CITY	# OF JEWS
Four-block radius around intersection of North Main, Charles:	41
Four-block radius around intersection of Friendship, Richmond:	15
Four-block radius around intersection of S. Main, Wickenden:	9

Some differences did exist between the residential patterns of synagogue members and non-members. Because more of the synagogue members were older and better established, they were slightly more spread out on streets among native-born white Gentiles of similar economic status.³⁹ However, over half still lived in areas which had concentrated Jewish populations:

AREA OF CITY	SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS	NON-SYNAGOGUE MEMBERS
N. Main/Charles	12	29
Friendship/Richmond	8	7
S. Main/Wickenden	4	5
TOTAL	24/44 (55%)	41/56 (73%)

What is more, members and non-members even lived together in the same building (e. g., 157 Friendship, 8 Cady, 53 Richmond); at least eighteen percent of the Jews were boarders, usually living with other Jews.

Providence Jews did not concentrate in one homogeneous district, as they had when they lived in the cities of Europe. However, it is striking that although they had more freedom to live where they liked and to break completely from the ghetto tradition, most Jews—synagogue members and non-members alike—still preferred to live near each other even though they were not compelled to do so. Yet again, Providence Jews displayed complex and extensive bonds that served to make their community more cohesive.

As Charles Tilly argues, it is a myth that urban life is impersonal and disorganized. Jews, like other city dwellers, tended to organize their lives in overlapping subcommunities including organizations, professional networks, and neighborhoods. R.M. Maciver defines a community as “any circle of people who live together, who belong together, so that they share, not this or that particular interest,

but a whole set of interests wide enough and complete enough to include their lives.⁴⁰ This definition of community fits for Jews living in pre-modern Europe, who were forced to pray together, socialize together, work together, and live together. However, if the Jews who lived in Providence after the Civil War are any indication, this definition also applies for German Jews who lived in the United States in the nineteenth century. Despite their remarkable economic integration and social mobility, these Jews were much more likely to interact with each other than with non-Jews. Their lives changed drastically when compared to their lives in Europe, but they did not fully assimilate into American society. Although they reformed their religion and although many did not go to religious services at all, Jews remained part of a cohesive community.

In the process, they changed what it meant to be a Jew in American society. As seen in Providence, what determined one's Jewishness was less one's religious beliefs than one's personal organizational, occupational, or residential relationships. In this more modern age, perhaps Elie Wiesel has the most accurate definition of these Jews when he writes:

Alone a Jew is nothing. But if he is with other Jews, he's a force. Because then automatically he inherits all the strengths and all the tears, all the despairs and all the joys of his ancestors. A Jew alone cannot be Jewish. A Jew can be Jewish only if he's part of the community.⁴¹



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Temple Beth-El, The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, and Calvin Goldscheider, Ph. D., and to my father, Dr. Ira Goldstein.

REFERENCES

Adelman, David C., "Chartered Organizations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 2, No. 1, November 1956, pp. 21-23.

_____, "Population of the Jewish Community of Providence 1877," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 1, November 1954, pp. 72-74.

Cohen, Naomi W., *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States 1830-1914*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984.

Dimont, Max I., *The Jews in America: The Roots, History, and Destiny of American Jews*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978.

Fein, Isaac M., *The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971.

Feingold, Henry L., *Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present*,

New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1974.

Glanz, Rudolf, *Studies in Judaica Americana*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1970.

Glazer, Nathan, *American Judaism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.

Goldowsky, Seebert J., M.D., *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership*, Providence: Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, 1989.

Goldscheider, Calvin, Ph.D., "Studying Jewish History: How Does It Help Us Understand Contemporary Jews and Their Communities?," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 1, November 1987, pp. 5-15.

____ and Zuckerman, Alan, *Transformation of the Jews*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Handlin, Oscar, *Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954.

Hertzberg, Steven, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta 1845-1915*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978.

Jick, Leon A., *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870*, Hanover (NH): University Press of New England, 1976.

Moore, Deborah Dash, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981.

Nadel, Stanley, "Jewish Race and German Soul in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Jewish History*, Vol. 77, No. 1, 1987, pp. 6-26.

Providence City Directory: 1878.

Segal, Beryl, "Jewish Population of Providence, Rhode Island: Estimates and Studies Over the Years," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 4, No. 1, November 1963, p. 50.

____, *Know Your Community: The Story of the Jewish Institutions of Greater Providence*, Providence: Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island, 1976.

Thernstrom, Stephan, et. al., ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Tilly, Charles, *An Urban World*, Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1974.

NOTES

- 1 Goldscheider, Calvin and Zuckerman Alan, *Transformation of the Jews*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984, p. 14.
- 2 Cohen, Naomi, *Encounter with Emancipation*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984, p. 159.
- 3 Goldscheider and Zuckerman, *ibid*, p. 158.
- 4 Glazer, Nathan, *American Judaism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 101.
- 5 Goldscheider and Zuckerman, *ibid*, p. 10.

- 6 Based upon the recognizable Jewish-sounding names found in the City Directories of Providence and Pawtucket for the year 1878 and the list of subscribers to the Reform platform of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David. David Adelman, "Population of the Jewish Community of Providence 1877," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 1, November 1954, p. 72.
- 7 Goldowsky, Seebert J., M.D., *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership*, Providence: Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, 1989, p. 36.
- 8 Goldscheider and Zuckerman, *ibid*, pp. 9, 10, 161.
- 9 Cohen, *ibid*, p. 44.
- 10 Goldowsky, *ibid*, pp. 45-47.
- 11 Cohen, *ibid*, p. 160.
- 12 Glazer, *ibid*, p. 64.
- 13 Goldowsky, *ibid*, p. 61.
- 14 Cohen, *ibid*, p. 42.
- 15 Jick, Leon, *Americanization of the Synagogue*, Hanover (NH): University Press of New England, 1976, p. 110.
- 16 Goldowsky, *ibid*, p. 61.
- 17 Fein, Isaac, *The Making of an American Jewish Community*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971, p. 132.
- 18 Segal, Beryl, *Know Your Community*, Providence: Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island, 1976, p. 5; Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership*, Albany: State University of NY, 1981, pp. 7, 13.
- 19 The Jewish Masonic Lodge was called The Redwood Lodge of the Masons. In other cities, such as New York City, Baltimore, and Atlanta, Jews were active in German clubs and often were officers and founders. Although three such clubs did exist in Providence — the Germania Lodge, Cherusher Lodge, and Concordia Lodge — there is no record whether Jews were members.
- 20 Moore, *ibid*, p. 7.
- 21 *Ibid*, p. 10, 12.
- 22 Cohen, *ibid*, p. 42.
- 23 Jick, *ibid*, p. 110.
- 24 *Ibid*.
- 25 Segal, Beryl, "Jewish Population of Providence, Rhode Island," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 4, No. 1, November 1963, p. 50. Unfortunately, the actual membership lists of either membership organization no longer exist. According to Martin Waldman, president of the B'nai B'rith Central New England Council, these records do not exist for any of the B'nai B'riths in New England.
- 26 Jick, *ibid*, p. 111.
- 27 Cohen, *ibid*, p. 30.

- 28 Class notes: October 30, 1991, from Professor Howard Chudacoff's "United States Urban History: 1620-1870," Brown University.
- 29 Goldscheider and Zuckerman, *ibid.*, p. 161.
- 30 Cohen, *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 32 Goldscheider and Zuckerman, *ibid.*, p. 161; Cohen, pp. 29, 41.
- 33 Adelman, David C., "Population of the Jewish Community of Providence 1877," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 1, No. 1, November 1954, pp. 72-74.
- 34 Hertzberg, Steven, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978, p. 42. He discovered similar occupational trends in Atlanta's Jewish population, which was of comparable size (about 525 Jews).
- 35 Cohen, *ibid.*, p. 19.
- 36 Hertzberg, *ibid.*, p. 42.
- 37 Cohen, *ibid.*, p. 39.
- 38 Goldscheider, Calvin, "Studying Jewish History," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 1, November 1987, p. 10.
- 39 Based on lists of B'nai B'rith founders and lists of members of the Congregation of Israel and the Congregation of David. David Adelman, "Chartered Organizations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 2, No. 1, November 1956, p. 21.
- 40 Tilly, Charles, *An Urban World*, Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1974, p. 3.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 42 Segal, *ibid.*, p. iii.

APPENDIX

LIST OF JEWS IN PROVIDENCE AND PAWTUCKET IN 1878 WHO WERE NOT
MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL AND DAVID

Abbreviations: h—house; b, bds—boards; do—ditto

**—indicates that the individual was a charter member of B'nai B'rith, a member of the 1871 Sons of Israel congregation, or a member of the 1871 Sons of David congregation

PROVIDENCE DIRECTORY 1878

Abrams, Isaac, peddler, h 329 No. Main
 Altman, Abram, peddler, h 92 Charles
 Berman, Jacob, peddler, h 91 Charles
 Cohen, Bernard, physician, 370 No. Main h do**
 Cohn, Adolph, butcher, 2 Mill b do
 Cohn, Adolph J., provisions, 344 No. Main h do
 Cohn, Gabriel, peddler, h 47 Mill
 Cohn, Henry, clerk, bds 53 Richmond
 Cohn, Louis, h 428 No. Main
 Davidson, John H., salesman or merchant tailor
 Dimond, Mrs. A., fancy goods, 46 Wickenden h do
 Dimond, Jacob, house 46 Wickenden**
 Falkenberg, Julius, millinery, 235 Westminster h 80 Franklin
 Fellman, Harry, optician, bds 372 No. Main
 Fink, Adolph, clothing, 303 No. Main h do**
 Fink, David C., clerk, 253 Westminster h 305 No. Main
 Fink, Henry, clerk, bds 305 No. Main
 Finklestein, Barney, peddler, h 87 Charles
 Finklestein, Joseph, peddler, h 62 Charles
 Friedman, Michael, tailor, 21 So. Main 213 do
 Friedman, Morris, clerk, 21 So. Main 213 do
 Glaser, Herman, clothing, 96 No. Main h 427 do
 Halberstad, Leonard I., clothing, 328 No. Main h 285
 Harris, Benjamin, peddler, h 329 No. Main
 Harris, Lipman, peddler, h 86 Charles
 Hellman, Robert, gents furnishings, 32 No. Main h 53 Richmond
 Hirschberg, S. (R. M. Warshauer & Co.) 66 No. Main h at Boston
 Horwitz, Julius, advertising agent, bds 157 Friendship St.
 Horwitz, Mrs. J., millinery goods, 243 Westminster St., h Friendship St.
 Jersky, Levy, peddler, house 87 Charles
 Jonas, Abraham J., clerk, 170 Charles house 247 do
 Knohne, Ann, widow, house 273 No. Main
 Krohne, Henry (Krohne Brothers) tailor, 114 So. Main bds 273 So. Main
 Lederer, Benedict B. (S. and B. Lederer) 111 Summer h 109 Pearl
 Lederer, Sigmund L. (S. and B. Lederer) mfg. jewelers, 109 h 30 West Clifford
 Levy, El, h 92 Charles
 Levy, Harris, peddler, h 91 Charles
 Lewis, Bernard, peddler, h 87 Charles
 Lewis, Simon, hats, caps, etc.. 32 No. Main house at Boston
 Marcus, Raphael, peddler, h 134 Charles
 Milkman, Aaron, bds 137 Broadway
 Milkman, Bernard, cigar manuf., 36 Clemence, h 128 Elm
 Milkman, Moses (S. Milkman & Co.), millinery, 161 Westminster, h 137 Broadway
 Robinson, Simon, peddler, bds 372 No. Main

Rosendale, Moses, millinery, 173 Westminster h 102 Richmond
 Schloss, William, salesman, 173 Westminster, h 102 Richmond
 Schoolman, G., peddler, house 62 Charles
 Slocum, Abram, costumer, 213 No. Main h do
 Spear, Henry C., clothing, 83 No. Main h 157 Friendship**
 Spear, Henry G., trunk maker, 33 No. Main h 322 Plain
 Spitz, Abram, A., clerk, 26 No. Main, boards 7 Cottage
 Tint, Abram, salesman, 119 Westminster bds 8 Cady
 Tint, Louis, Mrs. and Son (Albert) fancy goods, 193 Westminster, h 8 Cady
 Warchowsky, Israel, peddler, house 37 Smith
 Warshauer, R. M. & Co. (S. Hirshberg), boots and shoes, 66 No. Main h 11 Summer
 Weissman Simeon (Weissman Bros.) dry goods, 86 Charles h do
 Weissman, Thomas (Weissman Bros.) dry goods, 86 Charles h do
 Wolf, Benno (B. & J. Wolf) 201-203 Westminster, h 238 High**
 Wolf, Julius (B & J. Wolf) 201-203 Westminster, ladies furnishing goods, b 238 High

PAWTUCKET DIRECTORY 1878

Cohen, Sol, clerk 164-66 Main House 47 South Union
 Levy, Benjamin S., clerk, 131 Main house Benedict House
 Levy, H., proprietor Star Clothing House 131 Main, house Benedict House
 Lewisohn, Adolph (American Curled Hair Co.) High cor. Blackstone, house at N.Y.
 Lewisohn, Leonard (American Curled Hair Co.) High cor. Blackstone, house at N.Y.
 Schwarz, David W., clerk, bds 66 Garden
 Spitz, Augustus P., clerk, 137 Main, bds 47 South Union
 Spitz, Peter, hats, caps, etc., 137 Main, boards 47 South Union**
 Strauss, Isaac, hats, caps, etc., 63 Mill house 6 Quincy Ave.
 Strauss, Louie, clerk, 164 Main board 6 Quincy Ave.
 Strauss, Samuel, clerk, 199 Main, boards 30 West Ave.

LIST OF JEWS IN PROVIDENCE AND PAWTUCKET IN 1878 WHO WERE
 MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL AND DAVID

Abbreviations: h—house; b, bds—boards; do—ditto

**—indicates that the individual was a charter member of B'nai B'rith, a member of the 1871 Sons of Israel congregation, or a member of the 1871 Sons of David congregation

PROVIDENCE DIRECTORY 1878

Blumenthal, Lester, clothing, 201 No. Main boards 85 do
 Buitekan, Isaac, clothing, 45 Wickenden**
 Cohen, Jacob, clothing, h 91 Charles
 Cohn, Henry, plaiting, 69 Arcade h 5 State
 Cohn, Joseph, jeweler, h 94 Langley
 Cohn, Marcus, provisions, 2 Mill h do
 Crown, Samuel, 1066 High h Johnston
 Dimond, Leopold, dry goods, 170 Charles h 178 do
 Elias, Simeon, gents furnishing, 1066 h Johnston
 Frank, Adolph, R., clerk, h 47 Doyle
 Frank, David, fancy goods, 1 Arcade h 157 Friendship**
 Frank, Lewis, hats and caps, 174 No. Main b 157 Friendship**
 Friedman, Mendel, h 213 So. Main
 Gomperts, Abraham, cigars, 428 No. Main h do

Green, Henry, tailor, 281 No. Main h 283 do**
 Greenwood, Adolph, gents furnishing, 258 No Main h 5 State
 Hahn, Isaac, kid gloves and laces, 175 Westminster h 67 Cranston**
 Happ, Hyman, clothing, 85 Westminster St., h 150 Broadway
 Happ, Morris, salesman, 85 Westminster St., h 150 Broadway
 Harris, Edward, boots and shoes, 87 No. Main h 402 do
 Harris, Jacob, clerk, 87 No. Main h 402 do
 Hellman, Michael, 32 No. Main h 53 Richmond
 Hirsch, Louis, 150 Westminster, h 140 Clifford**
 Holmes, Barnard, clothing, 44 So. Main**
 Hymes, Isaac, clothing, 119 Westminster h 49 Fountain
 Jackson, Jacob, tailor, 95 So. Main h do
 Jackson, Morris L., clerk, 281 No. Main h do
 Jacobs, Charles, clothing, 15 So. Main h 43 Stewart**
 Jacobs, Morris, peddler, house 82 Charles**
 Krohne, Herman (Krohne Brothers) tailor, 114 So. Main bds 273 So. Main
 Krohne, Samuel (Krohne Brothers) clerk, 114 So. Main bds 273 So. Main
 Krohne, Solomon, hats, caps, etc., 28 So. Main b 305 No. Main
 Lamb, Harry, clerk, 32 No. Main, 53 Richmond
 Levy, Solomon, costumer and clothes cleaner, 114 No. Main, bds 157 Friendship**
 Noot, Myer (crockery) 168 No. Main h do
 Reinstein, Lazarus, clothing, 83 No. Main bds 157 Friendship
 Richman, Jacob, laces, etc., h 9 Meeting**
 Rodenberg, Gustave, grocer, 204 No. Main h 317 Friendship**
 Rothstein, Charles, tailor, h 179 No. Main
 Shuman, Julius, clothing, house 11 Summer (see Pawtucket)**
 Simons, Jacob & Co., clothing, 34 So. Main h 46 Appleton**
 Solomon, Henry, clerk, bds 157 Friendship**
 Spitz, John H., hats and caps, 7 Westminster house 7 Cottage
 Stern, Moses M., gents furnishing goods, 150 Westminster h 25 Arch
 Tint, Albert (L. Tint & Son) 193 Westminster bds 8 Cady
 Wald, Nathan, tailor, house 203 Williams

PAWTUCKET DIRECTORY 1878

Cohen, Adolph, boots and shoes, 164-66 Main house 47 South Union
 Feder, Max, merchant and tailor, 5 Broadway h do
 Hartman, Leopold, clothing and furnishing goods, 184 Main, boards Benedict House**
 Kahn, Lewis H., clerk, 138 Main boards at Providence
 Pakas, Abraham, merchant, tailor, 70 Main h at Providence
 Schwarz, Joseph, hats and caps (Woonsocket) h 66 Garden**
 Shuman, Julius, proprietor Boston one price clothing house, 89 Main cor. Mill, house at Providence
 Strauss, Alexander & Co., clothing dealers, 199 Main, house 30 West Ave.**

EDITOR EMERITUS GOLDOWSKY HONORED BY BROWN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Seebert J. Goldowsky, M. D., Editor Emeritus of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, received a signal honor from the Brown University School of Medicine, the fourteenth annual Medical Recognition Award. At a special dinner held on December 10, 1991, at the Brown University Faculty Club,* Levi C. Adams, Associate Vice President for Biology and Medicine at Brown University, presented the award to Dr. Goldowsky and said:

"Never have I been more honored than to be asked to acknowledge on behalf of Brown University Dr. Seebert Goldowsky's significant contribution to the development of medical education in Rhode Island.

"When we began looking at the feasibility of an M.D. program at Brown there were many anxieties. I am pleased to say in retrospect that, if these anxieties were obstacles, they were handily overcome, and a significant force in gaining these victories was Seebert Goldowsky. In his role as Editor of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, Medical Director of R.I. Blue Cross and Blue Shield, and senior statesman of the R. I. Medical Society, Dr. Goldowsky has been an effective spokesman for medical education.

"In those hectic and anxious early days, we quickly learned that there were a few accomplished physicians in Rhode Island whose stature rose above the masses, so that they commanded a special respect that was at once wide and deep among their colleagues. When such highly regarded physicians as Seebert Goldowsky actively supported the efforts to establish a medical school, it made our task so much easier.

"We were not sure whether this respect for him came from the fact that Dr. Goldowsky was an insider — a native of Rhode Island who graduated Summa Cum Laude from Classical High School. We pondered whether this respect derived from his outstanding post-secondary education as a Summa Cum Laude, Sigma Xi, and Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Brown University, an alumnus of the Harvard Medical School, and a graduate of prestigious surgery and neurosurgery training programs in Boston and New York. We considered that the admiration and esteem of his colleagues might well stem from his aura of being at peace with the world and with those about him, or his obvious wisdom in choosing a spouse like Bonnie Nisson who shared his dreams and laughed tolerantly at his jokes. Perhaps all of these factors contributed to Dr. Goldowsky's effectiveness in influencing his peers and others in Rhode Island. But perhaps more than any of these was the acknowledgement that Seebert Goldowsky is a very capable and caring physician who was willing to commit himself to a lifetime of service and learning.

*Also honored was the other 1991 recipient, Edwin A. Jaffe of Providence.

“Dr. Goldowsky used that respect as an early advocate for the Medical School. His editorials in the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* were probing, analytical, insightful and persuasive. Physicians and politicians alike listened to his voice. Within the Medical Society he played an important role in the formation of the Rhode Island Medical Society–Brown Liaison Committee, a forum for the airing of concerns and the exchange of information vital to our common goals. Seebert Goldowsky was a quiet tutor within the inner circle of R.I. Blue Cross and Blue Shield, and the Medical School and Rhode Island were the benefactors.

“Dr. Goldowsky has the capacity to bring people together because he is respected and because he has committed himself to a lifetime of learning and, from the truths of his learning, a lifetime of teaching. The School of Medicine at Brown University is strong today, even as its maturity continues. No small measure of that success is due to the contributions of Seebert Goldowsky, who understands and lives that old saying of Plato: ‘Truth Persuades by teaching, but does not Teach by Persuading.’”



SONS OF ZION SYNAGOGUE — MEMORIES

BY MELVIN L. ZURIER

These remarks about the Congregation Sons of Zion of Providence, Rhode Island, are about my personal experiences, anecdotal only, not intended to be a historical treatment. The definitive history of Sons of Zion appears in several fine articles by the late Beryl Segal in the 1965, 1967, and 1977 issues of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes. Segal studied the Pinkosim (minute books, Hebrew) of the Congregation, now regrettably lost. He interviewed such teachers as Chaim Lasker, Meyer Gereboff, and Meyer Smith. He read and understood Yiddish and wrote lovingly, with evident knowledge and background of this institution.

In the 1930s my family lived on Mulberry Street in the North End of Providence behind the State House. My parents moved there around 1933 so that their children could live within the Henry Barnard School district and not have to pay tuition. This was during the Great Depression. My parents could not afford \$125 per year per child tuition, but they wanted my older sisters and me to have the best education available, and I certainly will be forever grateful to them for that.

We lived for several years in a three-decker house located at 25-27 Mulberry Street in the North End of Providence. Later we moved next door to 35 Mulberry Street until we moved away in 1942. These buildings have long since been demolished to make way for Route 95.

The North End at that time was a teeming Jewish neighborhood. Mulberry Street was near the intersection of Orms Street and Douglas Avenue. Eleanor Horvitz has written of the Jewish community in this area in a wonderful article, "Jews of the North End," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 8, No. 1, November 1979, pp. 10-50.

I personally can remember five neighborhood synagogues—the Sons of Jacob or B'nai Yaacov on Douglas Avenue, whose building is still standing; the Chalkstone Avenue Shul (*shul* – synagogue, Yiddish), the Anshe Kovno Shul (People of Kovno, Lithuania) at the corner of Orms and Shawmut Street, the Ohave Shalom (Lovers of Peace) Shul on Howell Street, and, of course, the largest of them all, the

Melvin L. Zurier, a partner in the law firm of Licht and Semonoff, Providence, Rhode Island, received his A. B. degree from Harvard College in 1950 and his LL.B. from Harvard Law School in 1953. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. This paper is adapted from a talk given at the Association's mid-winter meeting, December 8, 1991, in commemoration of the installation of the Sons of Zion Synagogue cornerstone at the entrance to the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island building and the offices of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. The cornerstone had been preserved at Sydney Supply Company for many years after the demolition of the Synagogue building and was made available to the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association through the good offices of the Sydney family. An exhibit of textiles, artifacts, and photographs of the Sons of Zion Synagogue was prepared by Abraham Gershman for the mid-winter meeting.

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, Vol. 11, No. 2, November, 1992

Sons of Zion Congregation (B'Nai Zion or Orms Street Shul) — all within a fifteen-minute walk of our home.

Both my grandfather (at one time) and my father were members of Sons of Zion. My grandparents Nathan and Lena Zurier (whose picture appears on the cover of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 9., No. 4, November 1986) moved to Providence in 1901 and lived at 5 Church Street near the corner of Canal Street. The Congregation Sons of Zion was located first on Canal Street, before its move in 1892 to Orms Street, so it was natural that my grandfather would join. My father was a close friend of the famous politician Jacob Eaton, who also was a member of Sons of Zion, as were many of the better known people in the North End at that time. At some point my father became a member of the Congregation's Board of Trustees. While my father was not at all a literate man, we always had the *Forverts* (*The Forward*, Yiddish language newspaper) in our home, and Yiddish was spoken almost as much as English. My parents were married in 1921 by Israel Rubinstein, Rabbi of Sons of Zion, who lived on Orms Street about 100 yards north of the Shul.

The Shul became a familiar place to me as a child, particularly on the High Holidays. I can remember the sunny warm main sanctuary. My father and I usually sat just in front of the *bimah* (central platform in a synagogue from which the Torah was read, Hebrew), three rows behind the *aron kodesh* (holy Ark, Hebrew). My mother and sisters, of course, would sit in the upstairs gallery with the other women. I still remember the faint odor of snuff, "*a shmek tabak*," (literally, a sniff of snuff, Yiddish) which a number of the older men would sniff on Yom Kippur, when food was not permitted. And I remember the constant hum of prayer, both collective and people reciting at their own pace.

In 1935, at the age of six, I was introduced to the Orms Street Talmud Torah (Hebrew School). My *Zayde* (grandfather, Yiddish) had already taught me the *Aleph Bet* (Hebrew alphabet). He was at that time a widower and lived around the corner from Mulberry Street on Davis Street at the home of the widow of Reverend Orliansky, who had been a *shohet* (ritual slaughterer, Hebrew) and teacher.

Even after all these years, I remember how formidable my introduction to the Talmud Torah was. From older children in the neighborhood I had already learned of the fearsome reputation of Meyer Gereboff, the *Melamed* (teacher, Hebrew). He was reputed to be a stern disciplinarian who made frequent use of a stick, cracking knuckles of disobedient students. I remember going with my father on a Sunday morning to meet Mr. Gereboff. He was very slight, had a goatee, and spoke quickly in Yiddish. Years later, when I saw the movie *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, I noted what a close resemblance John Huston, who played the Devil, bore to Mr. Gereboff. To a six-year old in the first grade at the Henry Barnard School, he was particularly intimidating. I do remember, though, that my father, who was a good-sized man,

said to him in my presence something like, "Gereboff, Melvin's a good boy. He should not give you any problems, but if he does, don't lay a finger on him. You just tell me."

We went to Talmud Torah in those days five days a week — Sunday morning and four days a week after school from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. We had to walk through a tough neighborhood, passing through the territory of the so-called State Street Gang. I recall on more than one occasion going home by a very circuitous route to avoid State Street.

In Talmud Torah, we learned a little language and some grammar. We translated the Hummash (the five books of Moses, Hebrew) from Hebrew into Yiddish. I can still remember the opening lines of Genesis: *Breyshe* (Hebrew), in *Unfong* (Yiddish), *Borah* (Hebrew), *Hot Er Geshafen* (Yiddish) — (In the beginning, He created ...) Obviously, this learning did not contribute to enormous comprehension since most of it was by rote, but some of it has stuck to this day.

During my several years in Mr. Gereboff's class he did hit a number of students and chased others, not without provocation. But I must say that he never laid a hand or a stick on me. I don't know whether this was due to my father's admonition or to my outstanding deportment.

There were about twenty children in our class, mostly from the North End, some from as far as Oakland Avenue, Eaton Street, and Pembroke Avenue. I remember two of my other teachers. The first was the gentle Meyer Smith, whom we called *Hazzan* (Cantor, Hebrew) Smith but who later came to be known as the Reverend Mr. Smith. He was not only a cantor but also a *mohel* (a person who performs ritual circumcision, Hebrew). Years later, I came to represent him as a lawyer when he was injured in an automobile accident. The opposing lawyer asked then Judge Frank Licht to disqualify himself on the ground that the Judge may have been circumcised by the plaintiff.

With Reverend Smith we learned of *Shoftim* (the Prophets, Hebrew), other books of Scriptures, and advanced studies such as the commentaries by Rashi on the Bible and Talmud. I do remember the experience with Hazzan Smith as being somewhat less threatening than my initiation with Mr. Gereboff.

My favorite melamed — and surprisingly he is nowhere mentioned in any of Beryl Segal's articles — was Morris Fishbein. He lived on Radcliffe Avenue and was my teacher while I was in the sixth and seventh grades. With him I read parts of the Talmud. I remember passages about what would happen if a cow got loose and did damage to a neighbor's property or if someone found a neighbor's cow on his property. It is barely possible that these discussions and the interesting way that Mr. Fishbein treated them evoked in me some interest in legal principles and how

to resolve a dispute that may have somehow had an effect on my later going to law school.

I left the Talmud Torah when I was age 12 to prepare for my Bar Mitzvah with a private tutor named Haskell Frank. In April of 1942, from the pulpit of Sons of Zion Synagogue, I recited the portion of the week from Exodus, the Haftarah, and speeches he provided me in both Yiddish and English. Later in the day I repeated these speeches at Weinstein's Restaurant on Weybosset Street in Providence when the family got together to celebrate.

I remember another experience at the Orms Street Shul that was particularly meaningful to me. During the '30s a gentleman named Allie Zura (no relation) was deeply involved in the real estate business in Providence. He built the Alice Building and a number of other buildings around Providence. I believe the *Yahrzeit* (anniversary of death, Yiddish) for one of his parents happened to coincide with Purim, and I remember that he offered cash prizes to the students in the Talmud Torah who could best recite, from the pulpit of the Shul, the *Megillah* (the story of Esther). When I was about nine years old, I won ten dollars, and I still remember how this was regarded in my family as a huge accomplishment, creating both pride in my parents and envy in my sisters. Ten dollars seemed like a fortune.

During my days at the Orms Street Synagogue the rabbi was David Werner, a great scholar. I recall listening to the fiery speeches Rabbi Werner delivered in Yiddish from the pulpit on the High Holidays. His voice would break. He would sometimes cry. I remember references to "*unzere bridder*" (our brothers) in Poland and in Germany, and, even as a youngster, I was moved by his words.

Rabbi Werner and his wife had four children, Avremel, Sylvia, Rochel, and Sorale. They lived on the first floor of the house where we lived at 25-27 Mulberry Street. I occasionally played with Abie (Avremel) who was a little older than I. We both loved baseball, and he had a fascination with the St. Louis Browns. If we were playing in the backyard and the Rabbi wanted to call him in for supper, he went to the rear stoop and shouted, "*Avremele, kum arien*" (come in, Yiddish), but if we were playing on Mulberry Street, the Rabbi went to the front porch and called, "Abie, Abie — come een." I think this was his sole gesture to America.

Though my formal Jewish education ended after Bar Mitzvah, I still retained a connection with the Orms Street Shul. I lost both of my parents within an eight-month span when I was fifteen years old. During that period I went to the Shul seven days a week, morning and evening, to say Kaddish for them. We then lived on Radcliffe Avenue where my parents had bought a house after leaving Mulberry Street. I went by bicycle, by trolley car, or by foot. This I simply accepted. It was something that had to be done, and I did not feel that there were any options. I can remember sessions in the vestry on a late Saturday afternoon when people joined

together to study with the Rabbi. There were always bowls of *nahit* (chick peas, Yiddish) on the tables for nibbling.

Even as an adolescent, with all that was going on in my life during the war and my personal sense of loss, I can recall the solace and understanding of the older men who comprised the daily *Minyan* (prayer quorum, Hebrew). They frequently asked me to lead the *davening* (recitation of prayer in Hebrew). In a way they showed the same kind of interest and pride as surrogate parents that I might have expected of my own parents. I will never forget them — and the Biblical injunction to respect one's elders.

When I left Providence for college, I still returned to Orms Street on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I remember well the cantor then, Hazzan Dinkin, who had a beautiful tenor voice. I remember Avremel Epstein, the *shammes* (sexton, Hebrew). He read from the Torah scroll after conducting an auction from the bimah in his sing-song Yiddish, selling off *aliyahs* (the honor of being called to read from the Torah, Hebrew) for certain portions. "*Tzvey tollar far Shlishi*" (two dollars for (Yiddish) Section Three (Hebrew), he would call out. Avremel also sold a home-made wine which he made for the Passover holidays. I understand that during Prohibition his wine was quite popular on other days as well. I remember his associate, Benjamin Russian, who was the keeper of the keys and the Shul factotum generally, a brusque but kindly man.

Not everything at the Shul was worship. I remember as a child running around the vestry playing games. We would put a shoelace through a horse chestnut and tie a knot at the other end. Then we would hit each other's horse chestnuts. The winner was the one who was able to crack the chestnuts (and sometimes the knuckles) of the other person. But I also remember the true excitement when the Shofar was blown at the end of the High Holy Day service and the chill that this sent up everyone's spine. And, then, I recall taking my father's hand and going home.

I was discharged from the Air Force in 1957 and returned to Providence after being away for a number of years. At that time I became truly enlightened, joined Temple Beth-El in Providence, and doffed my yarmulke. My experiences in college, law school, and later in the service, led me to pay less attention to the form than to the substance of being a Jew. But on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, inevitably, my footsteps took me to Sons of Zion, the Orms Street Shul. Was this nostalgia, lost childhood? Perhaps. But there was also some spiritual and ethnic comfort in returning to the roots. It was the kind of feeling that takes one to a synagogue in London or Paris or Rome or Mexico City if one is a Jewish traveler. It was like going home.



100TH ANNIVERSARY OF TEMPLE BETH-EL LIBRARY

BY SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M. D.

Adapted from a history distributed at the Service of Re-dedication of the Temple Beth-El library at Friday evening services, May 3, 1991, and reprinted in the Temple Beth-El Bulletin, May 29, 1991.

The library of Temple Beth-El, Congregation Sons of Israel and David, Providence, Rhode Island, was established in 1892 by Rabbi David Blaustein, a scholar and a man of vision. His modest aim was to provide a congregational library to meet the needs of the teachers and children of the Temple's religious school. Matilda J. (Mattie) Pincus, the daughter of a Civil War veteran, still a high school student, and two other students conducted the school. At the suggestion of Rabbi Blaustein, the three students gathered books to start a library at the Temple's old Friendship Street edifice. Eventually Pincus became principal of the religious school, but retained her special interest in the library until her death in 1954.

Rabbi William G. Braude, a noted scholar, succeeded to the rabbinate in 1932. He saw the importance of a first-rate library both for the congregation's benefit and as a community resource. He managed to make available the fruits of Jewish scholarship and spiritual heritage to a wider audience. With Pincus's help, he weeded out a large accumulation of irrelevant books, such as novels and mystery stories, which had been donated by well-meaning members of the congregation, thus making room for the library to become the repository of books of Jewish and Judaic concern.

With the support of the Temple's Trustees, a regular acquisition program was instituted. Rabbi Braude succeeded in acquiring a thirty-volume set of the Soncino Talmud. He also arranged a three-way swap among the Temple library, the John Hay Library at Brown University, and the Yeshiva University Library. Beth-El had an abundance of "popular" Judaica (which Brown lacked), while Brown had surplus books in the social sciences which were needed by Yeshiva, and Yeshiva, in turn, had extra books in Hebrew. Rabbi Braude, in his typical no-nonsense approach, packed the popular Beth-El books in his car, traded them for the social science books at Brown, and drove to New York, where he traded the social science books for works in Hebrew. Thus the "new" library was on its way.

After the death of Matilda Pincus, the library was served by volunteer librarians. Then, in 1958, Maryland Estes, a trained librarian, was hired. She and Rabbi Braude traveled to Cleveland to examine and derive ideas from one of the better Jewish congregational libraries. She helped to organize the library after the Temple's move from Broad Street to Orchard Avenue in Providence and installed the Dewey Decimal system of cataloguing.

Estes, an Episcopalian, studied Hebrew and became quite facile in it to facilitate

her library work. Her professional approach, cooperative attitude, and charm enhanced the usefulness of the library. After her retirement in 1981, she was succeeded by Allan S. Metz, followed by Reini Silverman, wife of Rabbi Lawrence M. Silverman, who was then associate rabbi of the Temple.

The library, which now contains more than 20,000 volumes, owns many primary Jewish reference sources, including both the *Encyclopedia Judaica* and the older *Jewish Encyclopedia*. It also contains a collection of *Haggadahs* (Passover prayer books), several versions of the Talmud; commentaries in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, and German; and books on Jewish art, music, philosophy, history, and literature. It has every issue of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* since it began publishing in the 19th century. It is one of the few libraries to have a complete set of the Jewish scholarly journal, *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, published in Germany from 1851 to 1938 — rare because most copies were burned by order of Hitler. There is also a full set of *The Organ*, the Temple newsletter, published by Rabbi Blaustein during his tenure (1892-1898).

The library was named the William G. Braude Library in 1967, in honor of Rabbi Braude's 35th anniversary as Rabbi of Temple Beth-El. In 1987 the library was the recipient of a grant from the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island to purchase and install a computer system to catalogue and inventory the collection. The library was enlarged and refurbished before the re-dedication ceremony on May 3, 1991.



AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY TURNS 100

BY STANLEY M. HURWITZ

It is not purely coincidental that the American Jewish Historical Society's 100th anniversary coincides with the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the New World by Columbus.

In 1886, Dr. Abram S. Isaacs, editor of the *Jewish Messenger*, proposed that it would be fitting to prepare a history of the role played by Jews in the discovery, settlement, and history of America, in time for the forthcoming world's fair, the World's Columbian Exposition to be held in Chicago, 400 years after Columbus set sail from Spain. The idea was endorsed and carried forward by a host of respected thinkers of the time — Jewish and non-Jewish — including Dr. Bernhard Felsenthal and Dr. Justin Winsor of Harvard.

The 1880s were ripe for an organized effort to promote the contributions of America's Jews and to respond to the problems confronting American Jewry. Some American historians and social scientists had begun to suggest that the Anglo-Saxon was by nature superior to other European groups. The United States was going through a period of intense nationalism, as well as a general dislike and distrust of new immigrants who, it was widely suggested, would never be absorbed successfully in America. Some of this was just old-fashioned anti-Semitism.

One of the Society's founders, N. Taylor Phillips, said, "It was this situation that challenged American Jews" to broadcast more widely their people's contributions to and participation in early American history.¹ One means of meeting this challenge was the founding of the American Jewish Historical Society.

To study American Jewish history, it was necessary to begin by collecting books, manuscripts, periodicals, memorabilia, and objects of art. The Society's first president, Oscar S. Straus, prominent author, diplomat, and communal leader who later became the nation's first Jewish cabinet secretary, said at the group's first meeting on June 6, 1892, "Every nation, race, and creed which contributed toward the building of this great continent and country should, from motives of patriotism, gather up its records and chronicles, so that our historians may be able to examine and describe the forces of our national and political existence."²

The Columbian Exposition gave American Jewry, for the first time, a national showcase for its accomplishments, as well as for their religious heritage. It also provided a vehicle through which American Jews could demonstrate their patriotism and appreciation of the freedoms they found in America. Many of the leaders of Jewish thought who delivered papers and assisted in the planning of the fair's exhibit on Jews and Judaism in the Parliament of Religions, and who participated

Stanley Hurwitz is a marketing and public relations consultant to the American Jewish Historical Society.

in the Jewish Denominational Congress helped to shape what is today the American Jewish Historical Society. The Society is now the oldest national ethnic historical organization in the United States.

For more than fifty years, the Society was housed at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. From there, it moved to rented space at 150 Fifth Avenue. In 1968, the Society moved to its own modern building on the campus of Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. The building was made possible by a gift of the late Lee M. Friedman, a prominent Boston attorney.

The Society maintains a library, archive, and museum containing over 90,000 volumes, 12 million manuscripts, and thousands of newspapers, magazines, and other artifacts that document the growth and accomplishments of American Jewry. The Society tells its story through its quarterly journal, *American Jewish History*, and through exhibitions, lectures, symposia, and other public programs. It also publishes a newsletter, *Heritage*, and *Jewish Historical Societies' Network*, a newsletter designed for local Jewish historical and genealogical societies.

To mark its centennial, the Society published in 1992 a landmark five-volume history, *The Jewish People in America* (Johns Hopkins University Press). The history has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and has received wide acclaim for its narrative and analysis of the American Jewish experience from 1654 to the present. Among the tributes to the series:

Establishes the standard against which all other accounts must be measured. Compellingly told as both narrative and analysis, *The Jewish People in America* distills the most advanced scholarship in a way that should attract — and fascinate — expert and layperson alike.

—Stephen J. Whitfield, Max Richter Professor of American Civilization, Brandeis University

These five volumes unveil the scope of Jewish life in America, the extent of which may startle even Jewish American. Jews are woven into America's historical fabric from colonial days on and are not simply the eternal newcomers. These books tell the Jewish people what they should know — but probably do not — about themselves.

—Edward I. Koch, former mayor of New York

Splendidly organized, lucidly written, this is a collection that deserves to be on the reference shelf of every lover of American history.

—Howard M. Sachar, The George Washington University

Among the Society's collections are the notebooks of Emma Lazarus, personal papers of Molly Picon, one of the largest collections of Colonial-era portraits of Jews, the first Hebrew grammar published in America, a large collection of Yiddish

theatre posters, records of many important Jewish organizations, and the papers of Cyrus Adler, Felix Frankfurter, Judah P. Benjamin, Albert Einstein, Al Jolson, Haym Salomon, the Morgenthau family, Ben Shahn, Henrietta Szold, Chaim Weizmann, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and hundreds of others.

For information about hours and research materials, call the Society at (617) 891-8110. The Society welcomes contributions of pertinent documents, books, and artifacts. The address is 2 Thornton Road, Waltham, MA 02154.



NOTES

¹ *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 1893, Vol. 1, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 41, p. 386.

The Jewish People in America

Volume I: A time for Planting

The First Migration, 1654-1820

by Eli Faber

Volume II: A Time for Gathering

The Second Migration, 1820-1880

by Hasia R. Diner

Volume III: A Time for Building

The Third Migration, 1880-1920

by Gerald Sorin

Volume IV: A Time for Searching

Entering the Mainstream, 1920-1945

by Henry L. Feingold (General Editor)

Volume V: A Time for Healing

American Jewry since World War II

by Edward S. Shapiro

Five-volume boxed set: \$145.

Available by mail from the Johns Hopkins University Press, 701 W. 40th Street, Suite 275, Baltimore, MD 21211. Or order by phone with a credit card by calling toll-free 1-800-537-5487.

MEN OF VISION EXHIBIT

A notable exhibition, "Men of Vision," on the relationship between Father Edward Flanagan and Henry Monsky was sponsored by the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association in September and October 1992 at the Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island in Providence.

The exhibit, jointly created by Boys Town and the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society, pays tribute to the special friendship and achievements of Father Flanagan and Henry Monsky, whose common interest in troubled young people fostered a profound bond of friendship that lasted more than 30 years. Legend has it that Monsky was the anonymous source of the \$90 that Father Flanagan received to rent his first home for boys in downtown Omaha, Nebraska, in 1917. Monsky served as a board member and attorney for Father Flanagan's Boys Home and was Flanagan's personal attorney. He helped to spearhead fund-raising campaigns several times as the Home expanded. His fame went far beyond Nebraska. He was the president of the International B'nai B'rith from 1938 until 1947, and during World War II he initiated the all-embracing American Jewish Conference that endorsed the principle of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine and enlisted support for the victims of Nazism.

The exhibit, which was co-sponsored by the Jewish Community Center, opened with a reception on September 9. Stanley Abrams, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association President, hosted the program. Brief talks were given by Jeffrey Brier, Vice President, Jewish Community Center; Irving Wiseman, whose interest and initiative helped bring the exhibit to Rhode Island; Thomas Parris, President, Women's and Infants' Hospital and an ardent supporter of Boys Town; Father Edward Flannery, who brought greetings from the Diocese of Providence; James Bastien, Site Director, Boys Town, RI/USA; and Mayor Vincent Cianci of Providence.

A plaque from Boys Town USA, which now serves more than 15,000 troubled boys and girls each year, was presented to Beatrice Bazarsky of Middletown, Rhode Island, in recognition of her long-time support of Boys Town and her donation, in memory of her late husband, Samuel Bazarsky, of land in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, for a five-family home residential program. Boys Town now serves children and families in Rhode Island on a non-sectarian basis through its intensive Family Crisis Intervention and Treatment Foster Care Programs.

Committee members for the exhibit were Toby Rossner, Chairman; Stanley Abrams, Jeffrey Brier, Moe Cohen, Geraldine Foster, Rosalind Gorin, Charlotte Penn, Edith Salhanick, Cathy Sherry, Lynn Stepak, Vivian Weisman, and Irving Wiseman.



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 the items:

1. *Life and Times of Judah Touro*, by David Adelman, Touro Fraternal Association, Providence, R. I., 1936, 14 pages, paperback. Some pages water-stained.

Biographical essay delivered before the Touro Fraternal Association as a Rhode Island Tercentenary address. Contains several illustrations and facsimiles of several letters, including the George Washington letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport.

2. *Rhode Island History*, vol. 49, nos. 3 & 4, published by Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R.I., Aug/Nov 1991. 128 pages.

Pages 122 and 123, A small sketch of Jewish South Providence and an illustration showing a scene on Willard Avenue in 1951.

"Neighborhood already on the verge of extinction..." The whole issue is devoted to a study by Paul M. Buhle on "Vanishing Rhode Island."

3. *American Jewish History*, vol. 80, no. 2, winter 1990-1991, pub. by the American Jewish Historical Society.

Page 259, Under "Judaica Americana" appears the following entry: Plotz, Richard D. *Genealogies of Dr. Richard D. Plotz and Judith Anker Plotz: corrected to 24 October 1990*. [Providence: 1990] 1 vol. Available at 104 11th St., Providence, R.I. 02906. The family tree is traced in detail to the 17th century and ultimately to Rashi.

4. *Davison's Textile Directory for Executives and Salesmen*, Davison Publishing Co., Ridgewood, N.J., Three small volumes for the years 1941, 1942, and 1943.

The entries are classified by state and town. Among the several hundred entries in the three volumes, several Jewish proprietors can be identified.

5. *The Grandees: The Story of America's Sephardic Elite*, by Stephen Birmingham, Dell Publishing Co., Inc. New York, N.Y. by arrangement with Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., New York, N.Y. First Dell printing 1972, paperback, 309 pages.

The book is well indexed, revealing such Rhode Island-connected names as the Touro family, Aaron Lopez, the Seixas family, and the Rivera family.

6. *Jewish Museums of North America: A Guide to Collections, Artifacts, and Memorabilia*, by Nancy Frazier, pub. by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York and other cities, 1992, 242 pages, paperback.

Pages 113-119. Rhode Island section lists Touro Synagogue in Newport and Temple Emanu-El, the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, and Temple Beth-El. The descriptions are vivid and interesting. A good index.

7. *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History*, by Arthur Hertzberg, Simon and Shuster, New York and other cities, 1989, 428 pages.

A good index, with numerous entries on Newport, Rhode Island, the Touro family, Aaron Lopez, and related Rhode Island Jewish matters.

8. *Middle-Class Providence, 1820-1940*, by John S. Gilkeson, Jr. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 1986, 381 pages.

Good index. Numerous entries relating to Jews.

9. *Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America*, by Oscar Handlin, McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., New York, Toronto, London, 1954, 282 pages

Good index with the usual entries relating to Newport, Judah Touro, Aaron Lopez, and trade in Newport.

10. *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*, by Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon, The Free Press, a Division of Macmillan, Inc., New York, 1992, 370 pages.

While there are no identifiable Rhode Island references in this interesting text, it is relevant to many Rhode Islanders, as it gives a vivid account of the passing of the Roxbury-Dorchester-Mattapan complex as Jewish neighborhoods and the role that racial politics played in the story. The area is only 45 miles from Providence. It is analogous in some ways to the passing of the Willard Avenue and the North End colonies due to "redevelopment."

11. *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience*, by Peter Levine, Oxford University Press, New York: Oxford, 1992 328 pages.

Page 157. Reference to Maurice Billingskoff, a native of Russia, who came to Providence by way of Montreal. He was a popular boxer who fought under the name of Young Montreal.

12. *The Search for Equity: Women at Brown University, 1891-1991*, by Polly Welts Kaufman, Brown University Press, distributed by the University Press of New England, Hanover (N.H.) and London, 1991, 352 pages, paperback.

One of the contributors was Linda Eisenman (page 346). A good index, revealing a number of Jewish names. In addition, page 225, "Women Who Have Served on the Corporation of Brown University," includes some Jewish women.

13. *Chachmei Yisroel of New England: Pictorial History of the New England Orthodox Rabbinate*, by Mayer S. Abramowitz, pub. by Nathan Stolnitz Archives of Worcester, MA, 114 pages.

Pages 65-72. Rhode Island Rabbis "of Blessed Memory."

Pages 107-109. Current rabbis.

14. *Who's Who in Rhode Island Jazz c.1925-1988*, by Lloyd G. Kaplan and Robert E. Petheruti, Consortium Publishing, West Greenwich, R.I., 107 pages, paperback.

The names of the artists are listed alphabetically. A number of Jews can be identified.

15. *America, History and Life, Annual Index with List of Periodicals*, vol. 28, no. 5, 1991, Pub by ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, CA., Oxford, England, 565 pages, paperback.

Page 358. Under Rhode Island (Providence) are listed several Jewish items.

Page 556. The *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* is listed.

16. *Research Guide to the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archives*, by Karen N. Lamoree, pub. by Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women and the University Library, Brown University, Providence, R.I., 1989, 449 pages, paperback.

Items are numbered and listed serially. Index identifies a number of Jewish items.

17. *A History of the Marranos*, by Cecil Roth, the Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1932, 419 pages.

Pages 293-294, 356-357. The Jews of Newport, first arriving in 1658.

18. *The Story of the Jews of Newport: Two and a Half Centuries of Judaism 1658-1908*, by Morris A. Gutstein, Block Publishing Co., New York, 1936. 393 pages, autographed copy.

It is odd that so many years have elapsed before the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association acquired a copy of this well-known and often quoted work.

While it is an interesting and readable casual source of material about the history of Jews of Newport, it had not been highly respected by historians. The author, a former rabbi of Congregation Jeshuat Israel (Touro Synagogue), might have avoided many errors as he was close to the source.

The late David C. Adelman, founder of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, first Editor of these *Notes*, and a respected and talented amateur

historian, characterized the book as "full of errors." In a paper titled "Roger Williams and the Jews," he devotes almost two pages of footnotes to pointing out errors in the text. Adelman states: "The court record (in one instance) was in Newport and so was Gutstein, but it is obvious that he did not examine it...." He further stated; "[the pursuit of facts] is a painstaking, laborious process, for historical research does not lend itself to the assembly line..." (RIJHN 1:149-157, 1954 and RIJHN 1: 231, 1955)

In a paper titled "Myer Benjamin and his descendants" respected historian and genealogist Rabbi Malcolm Stern describes the book as "regrettably inadequate." (RIJHN 5: 133-144, 1968).

Francine Gail Helfner in a paper titled "Where Credit is Due" points out that Gutstein (pp. 136-137) gives an incorrect address in Newport for Aaron Lopez's home and business. This error was confirmed by Antoinette Downing, distinguished Providence preservationist. (RIJHN 6:226-235, 1972)

Finally, on page 277, Gutstein identifies one Leonard Lewisohn as "a descendant of some of the founders of the [Touro] Synagogue." Bernard Kusinitz on "The 1902 Sit-in at Touro Synagogue" describes this genealogy as fanciful and "mistaken." (RIJHN 7:42-72, 1975).

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING
MAY 3, 1992

The Thirty-eighth Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was called to order at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 3, 1992, at the Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island by the chairperson for the day, Selma Stanzler. She welcomed everyone and introduced President Stanley Abrams.

Mr. Abrams reported that thus far two of his primary objectives on becoming President had been accomplished. The goal of computerizing the Association's basic functions has been achieved under the direction of Aaron Cohen and with the assistance of Lester Ageloff and George Levine. He stated that the Association's new office manager, Anne Sherman, has adapted quickly to the new system.

Abrams' second goal during his term of office, to increase and broaden the base of membership, has achieved satisfactory results. Membership has increased from 585 to 621, an almost eight percent increase, with several new younger members. He thanked the chairman of the Membership Committee, Herbert Brown, for assuming responsibility for the membership campaign with commitment and verve.

His third goal, to organize outreach programs, has seen only modest results, but Bernard Kusinitz has volunteered to attempt to enlist new members from the Newport area.

Abrams commended Seebert Goldowsky, M. D., Editor Emeritus of the Association's *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, for becoming a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Jewish Historical Society. He paid tribute to the work of Eleanor Horvitz, Librarian-Archivist; Charlotte Penn, Association Newsletter Editor, and the Assistant Editor, Bonnie N. Goldowsky; and Judith Weiss Cohen, Editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. He thanked the people who volunteer their time to assist in the various functions of the Association, including Maurice Cohen, Lynn and Samuel Stepak, Rosalind Gorin, Harold Schwartz, Lowell Lisker, Alvin Rubin, and Jack Cokin.

A motion was passed to waive the reading of the minutes of the last annual meeting. The Treasurer's report was read by Alfred Jaffe, D. D. S., Treasurer, and approved. Copies of all reports are on file with this report.

Eleanor Horvitz, Librarian-Archivist, reported that in 1975-76, when she first became Librarian-Archivist, she had logged two pages of information requests to the Association, compared to 10 pages for the past year. The Association's exhibit on Sephardic Jewry, which was prepared by Robert Kotlen and first shown at the mid-winter meeting on December 2, 1990, was shown at Aldrich House of the Rhode Island Historical Society and at Temple Emanu-El during the past year. The

Association also lent photographs from its Archives for an exhibit at Brown University, "A Matter of Simple Justice," sponsored by the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women. She thanked Rosalind Gorin for her work on the detailed listing of the 83 items from the Archives now on exhibit in the Association office.

Judith Weiss Cohen, Editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, reported on the responsibilities and tasks of the editor of the journal. (See "Notes on the Notes, above.")

Jerome Spunt presented the following amendment to the constitution of the Association, which was passed by the Executive Committee to empower the President to add two members-at-large to the Executive Committee:

Article VI, entitled Executive Committee, Section 1, shall be deleted, and the following substituted:

ARTICLE VI
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1. There shall be an Executive Committee which shall consist of the officers of the Association, fourteen (14) members-at-large, and all past presidents of the Association and honorary members of the Committee who elect to so serve. Two members-at-large shall be appointed by the President, each for a term of one year. Twelve members-at-large shall be elected at the annual meeting for terms of two years, and the expiration of their respective terms shall be fixed so that ordinarily six members-at-large will be elected at each annual meeting to fill the places of members whose terms have expired.

The Executive Committee shall hold meetings at the call of the President, or in his or her absence, by the First Vice President, upon reasonable notice.

The amendment was seconded and passed.

Reporting for the Nominating Committee, Ruth Fixler presented the slate of officers for the year 1992-1993, as follows: President, Stanley Abrams; First Vice President, Bernard Kusinitz; Second Vice President, Aaron Cohen; Secretary, Ruth C. Fixler; Associate Secretary, Milton Lewis; Treasurer, Dr. Alfred Jaffe. The other members of the Executive Committee are listed in the slate attached to this report. There being no counter-nominations, a motion was made and passed to have the Secretary cast one ballot in favor of the slate.

Stanley Abrams, President, announced the appointment of Jeffrey Brier as a presidential appointment to the Executive Committee.

Toby Rossner, Chairperson of the Annual Meeting, introduced Marion Wilner, artist, art historian, and educator from Fall River, to deliver the Twenty-second Annual David Charak Adelman lecture, on "The Jewish Artist in the Western World." Mrs. Wilner's presentation included a selection of slides highlighted the works of well-known artists. She described the works of Jewish artists in the United States from the early days of this century to the present, demonstrating how their heritage and background influenced the content of their works of art.

After a question and answer period, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. The social hour, arranged by Edith Salhanick, followed the meeting and gave everyone an opportunity to view the excellent exhibit of books by recently published native Rhode Island Jewish authors and books by Jewish artists. The exhibit was prepared by Eleanor Horvitz and Lillian Schwartz with the invaluable assistance of Toby Rossner and the Bureau of Jewish Education.

Respectfully submitted,
Ruth Fixler, Secretary

NECROLOGY - DECEMBER 1, 1991 — NOVEMBER 30, 1992

BROMBERG, FLORA Y., born in Baltimore, Maryland, a daughter of the late Moses and Anna Wolf.

Mrs. Bromberg was one of the early graduates of the Bryant and Stratton Business School, now Bryant College. She was co-founder with her late husband, Benjamin, of Benny's Home and Auto Stores.

A member of Temple Emanu-El and its Sisterhood, Mrs. Bromberg was also a member of the Jewish Home for the Aged.

Died in Providence on December 12, 1991, at the age of 90.

ENGLE, JOSEPH, born in Lithuania, a son of the late Abraham and Minna Engle.

Mr. Engle lived in Providence for 70 years. He began working in the tire industry in 1918. He was a former member of the board of directors of the National Association of Independent Tire Dealers. He was a member of Temple Sinai, a chairman of the board of the Touro Fraternal Association, a chancellor commander of the Knights of Pythias, and a member of Harmony Lodge, AF&AM. He was former chairman of the board of the South Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association. He was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on September 8, 1992, at the age of 94.

FAIN, BEATRICE, born in Quincy, Mass., a daughter of the late Sol and Goldie (Feinberg) Wald.

Mrs. Fain attended a teachers college in New York and served as secretary to the chairman of the Liquor Commission of New York State.

She was a member of Temple Emanu-El and its Sisterhood. She was a board member, former president, and a founder of the Women's Association of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island. Other organizations in which she was active were Hadassah, the Women's Association of the Jewish Home for Aged, The Miriam Hospital, and the National Council of Jewish Women. Mrs. Fain was a founder of the Rhode Island branch of the Brandeis University Women's Association.

Died in Providence on June 21, 1992, at the age of 81.

GOLDBERG, SHIRLEY, born in Boston, a daughter of the late Henry and Bertha Aronson.

Mrs. Goldberg was an officer, board member, and fund-raiser for many years for the Jewish Home for the Aged, Hadassah, the Alperin-Schechter Day School, and the National Council of Jewish Women. She was a member of Temple Emanu-El. She endowed scholarships at the Alperin-Schechter Day School, the Providence Hebrew Day School, and the Temple Emanu-El Religious School.

In 1989 Mrs. Goldberg was honored by the Alperin-Schechter Day School as one of four outstanding Jewish women in Rhode Island.

Died in Providence on September 30, 1992, at the age of 90.

IVENTASH, BERTHA, born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, a daughter of the late Abraham and Molly (DeJure) Horowitz.

Mrs. Iventash was a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and was an executive secretary of The Miriam Hospital for 40 years. She was a member of Temple Beth-El and its Sisterhood. She was a life member of The Miriam Hospital Women's Association, a member of Hadassah, and a volunteer worker with United Way and the Jewish Community Center.

Died in Providence on August 25, 1992, at the age of 72.

KAPLAN, DR. IRVING, born in Providence, a son of the late Samuel and Sadie (Bigunetz) Kaplan.

He was a graduate of Providence College and Temple University School of Dentistry. A past president of the Rhode Island Dental Association and the Providence District Dental Society, he was a member of the dental staffs of Rhode Island Hospital, Roger Williams Hospital, and St. Joseph Hospital for many years.

Dr. Kaplan was a past chairman of the medical division of the March of Dimes of Rhode Island and a past president of the Men's Club of Temple Beth Shalom. He was also a founding member of the Cranston B'nai B'rith Association.

A member of Temple Torat Yisrael of Cranston, Dr. Kaplan served on its board of directors and its men's club.

Died in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 21, 1992, at the age of 72.

KORN, LEWIS, born in Providence, a son of the late David and Clara (Reich) Korn.

He was co-owner and operator of David Korn & Sons Fuel Oil Company and a founder of the Safe-Way Motor Company. He was one of the founders of the Providence Hebrew Day School and served as the school's first treasurer. He was later named honorary treasurer of the school.

Mr. Korn was a member of Temple Emanu-El in Providence and Temple Raphael in Miami Beach, Florida. He was also a member of Chased Schel Amess and the Vaad Hakashruth of Rhode Island.

Died in Providence on May 27, 1992, at the age of 88.

MARKS, DR. HERMAN, born in Providence, a son of the late John and Annie (Braun) Marks.

Dr. Marks was a 1930 graduate of Brown University and a 1934 graduate of Tufts Medical School. He was a Navy veteran of World War II, in which he served as a flight surgeon with the rank of commander. He was affiliated with Bradley Hospital and served on the staff of Women & Infants Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital, and The Miriam Hospital. He was a member of the Rhode Island Medical Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The Providence Medical Association presented him its first Community Service Award for a lifetime of dedication as medical director of the Center for Individualized Training and Education and for his work with the Salvation Army Day Care Center, the Women's Center at Fox Point, the Roger Williams Hospital Day Care Center, and other services to the community. He was coordinator of medical consultants for Headstart.

Died in Providence on June 3, 1992, at the age of 83.

NASS, IRMA H., born in Providence, a daughter of the late Leon A. and Betty (Reiss) Goldberg.

Mrs. Nass attended Bryant College and was a member of the Brown Community Learning In Retirement at Brown University. She was a member of Temple Emanu-El and Temple Beth-El and its Sisterhood. She held memberships in the Providence Hebrew Day School, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association, and the Chopin Club.

Died in Providence on September 27, 1992, at the age of 67.

RESS, ANNE G., born in Montreal, Canada, daughter of the late Isaac and Eva (Ress) Gordon.

Mrs. Ress turned her interest and expertise in antiques into a career as an interior designer. She acquired many of the antiques for her collection during her travels abroad.

She was a member of Temple Emanu-El and its Sisterhood. Active in many organizations, she held membership in The Miriam Hospital Women's Association, the Rhode Island Coalition of Library Advocates, the Museum Associates of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, the Women's Division of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, Hadassah, and the National Council of Jewish Women. She was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on September 16, 1992, at the age of 85.

SCHWARTZ, JOSEPH, born in Paterson, New Jersey, a son of the late Harry A. and Frances Schwartz.

Mr. Schwartz was assistant treasurer of Cadillac Textiles, Cumberland, Rhode Island, from 1948 until 1969. From 1969 until 1991 he was assistant treasurer of the Textile Motor Express, Paterson, New Jersey, and directed its Pawtucket, Rhode Island, terminal.

He was a member of Temple Beth-El, Providence, which he served as vice president, and Temple Beth El, Boca Raton. He was a member of Jencks Masonic Lodge 24, AF&AM, Pawtucket, and the Motor Corps unit of the Palestine Shrine Temple, Cranston. He served on the boards of directors of the Waters Bend Homeowners Association Boca West of Boca Raton, the South County Jewish Federation of Boca Raton, and the Jewish Home for the Aged in Rhode Island.

Died in Boca Raton, Florida, on April 25, 1992, at the age of 64.

SEMONOFF, RALPH P., born in Providence, the son of the late Judah C. and Luci (Perlow) Semonoff.

He received his bachelor's degree from Brown University in 1939, and his L.L.B., *magna cum laude*, in 1947. He was a member of the R.I. Governor's Commission on Judicial Selection from 1977 to 1992.

Mr. Semonoff practiced law with his father in the firm Semonoff & Semonoff

from 1947 to 1960 and with the firm of Levy, Goodman, Semonoff from 1961 to 1985, when he became a partner in the law firm of Licht and Semonoff.

He was president of the Urban League of Rhode Island from 1957 to 1959 and a member of the Citizens League of Pawtucket from 1961 to 1963. He was president of the Jewish Family and Children's Service of Rhode Island from 1974 to 1977. He held many positions at The Miriam Hospital, including that of vice chairman and chairman of the board of trustees and chairman of The Miriam Foundation. He was also a board member of Rhode Island Legal Services. He was a member of the American Bar Association and served as president of the Rhode Island Bar Association and president of the Pawtucket Bar Association. Mr. Semonoff was an Army veteran of World War II.

Died in Providence on April 2, 1992, at the age of 73.

TEMKIN, BASIL, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Theodore G. and Lamprini (Bratiotis) Pliakas.

She received her bachelor of science degree from the University of Rhode Island in 1948 and worked as a guidance counselor in the Warwick School System for 31 years before retiring.

Mrs. Temkin was a member of the board of trustees of Temple Emanu-El and a past president of the Temple Sisterhood. She was a member of The Miriam Hospital's Women's Association and a board member of the Alperin Schechter School. A member of the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Home for the Aged, she was serving as its president at the time of her death. She was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on May 23, 1992, at the age of 64.

TENENBAUM, MEYER, born in Brooklyn, New York, he was a son of the late Samuel Jacob and Sophie (Buchwald) Tenenbaum.

Mr. Tenenbaum had been president of the Superior Glass Company since 1924. He was a member of Temple Beth-El and a faithful member of the Minyan there. He was a member of the board of directors of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and a benefactor of Yeshiva University in New York.

Mr. Tenenbaum was active in resettling German Jews fleeing from Nazi Germany to the Providence area.

He held membership in the Rhode Island Association of General Contrac-

tors. He was a member of B'nai B'rith and an honorary board member of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He received a 50-year pin from Roosevelt Lodge 35, AF&AM. He was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on September 28, 1992, at the age of 88.

WINNERMAN, B. RUBY, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Hyman and Rose Winnerman.

She was a graduate of the former Rhode Island College of Education and attended the Rhode Island School of Design. She was a member of the faculty of Rhode Island College, where she was a member of its Off-Campus Faculty as a Cooperating Instructor and Teacher. She was the first draftswoman at Brown & Sharpe Mfg. Co., where she apprenticed.

Miss Winnerman was also a painter and was especially interested in preserving the history of early Jewish migration to Providence's North End. A member of Temple Emanu-El, she was one of the earliest members and a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on April 3, 1992, at the age of 90.

ZUCKER, DR. JOSEPH M., born in Pawtucket, the son of the late Samuel H. and Mary (Goldberg) Zucker.

Dr. Zucker was a 1932 graduate of Brown University and received his M.D. from Johns Hopkins University Medical School in 1936. He served in World War II as a major in the Army Medical Corps. He practiced medicine in Rhode Island for 37 years.

He was a fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and the Rhode Island Medical and Psychiatric Associations. Dr. Zucker was a member of Temple Emanu-El and its Men's Club. He was a member of Redwood Masonic Lodge.

Died in Laguna Hills, California, on April 22, 1992, at the age of 80.

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 4

"The Benefit Street and Lippitt Hill Jewish Community, 1900-1940"

Page 52, lines 7 & 8, should read "Harry and Clara Fink lived on Bowen Street, then Lippitt Street, then Carrington Avenue. ..."

"Necrology"

Page 96, line 9, should read Charlotte Rosenberg "Died in Providence on July 15, 1991"

Page 98, line 15, should read Jacob Sundel "was a founder and owner of the Key Container Corp., Pawtucket. ..."

FUNDS AND BEQUESTS OF THE RHODE ISLAND
JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

FUNDS

SEEBERT J. AND GERTRUDE N. GOLDOWSKY

Research Scholarship Fund

BENTON H. AND BEVERLY ROSEN

Book Fund

ERWIN E. AND PAULINE E. STRASMICH

General Fund

BEQUESTS

JEANNETTE S. NATHANS

LIFE MEMBERS OF THE RHODE ISLAND
JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MRS. SAUL ABRAMS
STANLEY AND SANDRA ABRAMS
MR. AND MRS. CARL ADLER
IRVING H. AND ELEANOR ADLER
MR. AND MRS. MAX ALPERIN
MR. AND MRS. MELVIN ALPERIN
MRS. BENJAMIN BRIER
AARON AND JUDITH COHEN
DR. AND MRS. EARLE F. COHEN
MR. AND MRS. NEWTON B. COHN
MR. AND MRS. DONALD H. DWARES
MR. AND MRS. CARL H. FELDMAN
WARREN AND GERALDINE FOSTER
MR. ARNOLD T. GALKIN
DR. AND MRS. SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY
JEREMIAH AND ROSALIND GORIN
MRS. HARRY A. GOURSE
MR. AND MRS. STANLEY GROSSMAN
DR. AND MRS. JAMES HERSTOFF
DR. AND MRS. ABRAHAM HORVITZ
MR. AND MRS. JAY ISENBERG
DR. ALFRED AND BETTY JAFFE
MRS. SAMUEL KASPER
HOWARD AND RACHEL KAUFMAN
MRS. JORDAN KIRSHENBAUM
ROBERT A. AND BETTY KOTLEN
MRS. SANFORD KROLL
BESS AND CHARLES LINDENBAUM
MRS. BESSIE SHOLES LIPSON
DR. AND MRS. STEPHEN J. LOSBEN
DARIELLE AND GABRIELLE ZARAKOV MASON
MR. SAMUEL J. MEDOFF
MR. AND MRS. MILTON NACHBAR
MRS. DOROTHY M. NELSON
MR. AND MRS. SIDNEY NULMAN
MR. THOMAS PEARLMAN
MRS. ABRAHAM PERCELAY
DR. AND MRS. MARVIN PITTERMAN

MRS. NATHAN RESNIK
MR. AND MRS. S. DAVID ROBERTS
MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM L. ROBIN
MR. AND MRS. BENTON H. ROSEN
MR. AND MRS. HERBERT L. ROSEN
MR. AND MRS. HAROLD SADLER
MR. DONALD SALMANSON
MR. HAROLD SCHEIN
MR. IRA L. SCHREIBER
MRS. BERNARD SEGAL
PHYLLIS AND IRVING SIGAL
MRS. MARTIN SILVERSTEIN
MRS. JOSEPH S. SINCLAIR
MR. HAROLD B. SOLOVEITZIK
SONIA SPRUNG, M.D.
MILTON AND SELMA STANZLER
MR. AND MRS. SAMUEL STEPAK
MR. AND MRS. ERWIN E. STRASMICH
MR. AND MRS. LEWIS TANNER
MR. JACOB TEMKIN
MR. AND MRS. ARNOLD B. WASSERMAN
MR. AND MRS. HOWARD S. WEISS
MR. AND MRS. JAMES R. WINOKER
MR. AND MRS. JAMES W. WINSTON
MR. AND MRS. IRVING WISEMAN
MR. AND MRS. MELVIN L. ZURIER
MR. AND MRS. SYDNEY 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

Page from "Tour-O-Gram," 1933, publication of Touro Fraternal Association. The Association, organized on March 10, 1918, celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1992. It is the largest independent Jewish fraternal order in New England. David C. Adelman, founder of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and first editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, was editor of the "Tour-O-Gram" when this issue was published.

TOUR-O-GRAM

Vol. 4

Providence, R. I., September 8, 1933

No. 2

Vol. 11, No. 2

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES



NEW HEADQUARTERS - - 88 MATHEWSON ST.

November, 1992