



**RHODE ISLAND
JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES**

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FRONT COVER

Mrs. Aaron Lopez and Her Son Joshua, oil on canvas by Gilbert Stuart, 1772/73.
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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

130 SESSIONS STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02906-3444

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

At the start of my tenure as editor I wish to restate the primary purpose of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*: to record the historical presence of Jews in Rhode Island. To achieve that purpose, we shall offer articles that report not only facts and figures but also a sense of what life was like in earlier times, not only the notable achievements of community leaders but also the daily experiences of ordinary people. As this issue illustrates, oral histories and interviews as well as documented sources will continue to be featured.

In addition, the *Notes* will include an occasional essay with wider historical scope, filling in the record of Jewish activities in other lands. It is important to know not only the place we came to but also the places we came from. The essay here by Dr. Lobban describes the influential presence of Jews in ancient North Africa.

I encourage everyone with any interest in Jewish life to come forward with a project, no matter how non-scholarly it may be. Make your contribution now, before we too become history! My thanks to those who have already taken on projects. And my heartfelt gratitude to the previous editor, the late Judy Weiss Cohen, who handed down her intelligence, expertise, and warmth as the heritage of this journal.

PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT

Two frequent contributors to the *Notes*, Geraldine Foster (past president, RIJHA) and Eleanor Horvitz (archivist, RIJHA), together with the late editor of this journal, Judith Weiss Cohen, collaborated on the first pictorial history of the Rhode Island Jewish experience. *Jews of Rhode Island 1658-1958* (Arcadia Publishers, 1998) surveys three hundred years of history beginning with the first Jewish settlers in Newport. The authors drew upon the RIJHA archives to compile a fascinating collection of photographs that chronicles Jewish families, organizations, neighborhoods, synagogues, and businesses.

Jews of Rhode Island, we are happy to report, has been favorably reviewed. Doug Riggs, on the front page of the book section of the *Providence Sunday Journal* (July 5, 1998), wrote that a book like this can "take you to a different time and place but be familiar, contain a surprise or two and vividly re-create a past you may not have shared but are made to feel nostalgic for anyway."

Eleanor Lewis, reviewing for the *Jewish Voice of Rhode Island* (July 1998), found that "the book simultaneously entices the reader to linger over the photographs and explanatory texts and to rush ahead to find a familiar person, family, business or neighborhood." The reviewer concludes that it "makes a vibrant connection between past and present on a personal level and fosters an understanding of the variety of backgrounds and experiences of the Jews of Rhode Island. It deserves a place in Jewish homes and Jewish and secular libraries throughout the state."

Tara V. Lisciandro, in the *R.I. Jewish Herald*, writes that “the collection of photos vividly illustrates the history of the Rhode Island Jewish community.” And according to the *Senior Times* (May 1998), the book addresses the desire of Jews in many communities “to investigate their past so they may share their common history and heritage and enter the future with a greater understanding of the people and actions that created and shaped their community.”

Jews of Rhode Island may be obtained by mail for twenty dollars from the RIJHA, 130 Sessions Street, Providence 02906, or call the office at 401-331-1360.

Leonard Moss

Editor

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RECONSTRUCTING THE LIVES OF NEWPORT'S HIDDEN JEWS, 1740-1790

BY HOLLY SNYDER

When we think of the Jewish presence in colonial Rhode Island, the image which most readily springs to mind is of the prominent and well-to-do Sephardic merchant prince, who came to eighteenth-century Newport with little and proceeded to build a mercantile empire prior to the Revolution. And there is good reason why we remember the story of Aaron Lopez. The mercantile accounts and correspondence he left behind him, now dispersed among at least nine repositories in five different states, is the single most significant cache of records of a Jewish merchant operating in colonial times. While Lopez has, for this reason, become the very symbol of Jewish enterprise in Newport, we are fortunate to have other records which reflect on eighteenth century Jewish mercantile endeavors in colonial Rhode Island. Men such as Naphtali Hart, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, Moses Seixas and Moses Michael Hays have also left us their correspondence and mercantile accounts, through which we can track their activities and reconstruct their trading patterns.

These records, however, must be considered with a particular caveat, for there were many Jews in the Newport community who are not represented within them. Surviving mercantile accounts tell us little of the lives of Jews not heavily engaged in commerce. Jewish, and gentile, women, for example, make only sporadic appearances here, generally when they come to make household purchases. Others who are poorly represented include Jews who worked in the service of Jewish merchants, most likely in the position of a clerk. Poor Jews, who relied on the synagogue community and its Tzedakah (or charity fund) for their subsistence, as well as those who performed the routine functions necessary to preserve Jewish religious life, also do not appear. Mercantile accounts and correspondence thus tell us little of those at the very center of Newport's Jewish community — women, the poor and the unsuccessful, and those devoted to the religious welfare of the community. This silent lot have left few letters and no ledgers behind to document their lives. And, until recently, scholars in the field have perpetuated their silence by choosing to present the reading public with general communal histories which fail to flesh out the significant social and ethnic hierarchies which existed in colonial Jewish communities, or with biographies which focus attention on those Jews for whom the extant records provide extensive evidence.

Clearly, evidence from the intimate interiors of Jewish colonial Newport is not so easy to find. Apart from the 1677 deed for the cemetery and the legal proceedings

Holly Snyder, a candidate for the Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization at Brandeis University, is a Touro National Heritage Fellow at the John Carter Brown Library in Providence. This article was supported by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture; an earlier version was presented at the conference, "Rhode Island Reconsidered," sponsored by the John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization, November 14-15, 1997.

initiated against eight Jewish merchants in 1684, we know little of the seventeenth-century founders of the community. Jewish births, deaths and marriages were infrequently reported to colonial record-keeping authorities, and the town records for Newport — where most colonial Rhode Island Jews resided — were heavily damaged during the Revolution, thus destroying much of the evidence of Jewish wills, estate inventories and land holdings in the town. Nevertheless, the heretofore overlooked voiceless majority of the Jewish population in seventeenth and eighteenth-century British America played a vital role in the formation of the fabric of community established by Jews in colonial America. Like their prominent and well-to-do co-religionists, they worked for a living, raised their families, interacted with their gentile neighbors, and expended their energies to promote and defend the interests of the Jewish community as a whole. Yet, because of their very lack of prominence, they may have carried out these activities in very different ways than the successful merchants who presented themselves as the public face of the Jewish community to the gentile world. It is, I believe, only through the study of these Jewish lives, at the margins of colonial society, that we can fully understand the complexity of the social world which the Jews who established their homes in colonial Newport inhabited.

This article will present three short case studies which attempt to reconstruct lives of Newport's less notable Jews from existing documentary sources. Each case will highlight different types of archival or manuscript collections within which information about early Rhode Island Jews has been discovered, and each case attempts to raise different issues concerning the identification and description of Jews in early Rhode Island records, as well as to demonstrate the richness of existing records for documenting the cultural diversity of colonial Rhode Island. Through these case studies, I hope to shed illumination into the corners where it does not typically go, in order to suggest a more complete picture of Jewish communal life in eighteenth-century Newport.

SARAH RIVERA LOPEZ

Perhaps the best place to start discovering the overlooked is with the life of a woman who had every reason to be conspicuous, yet who remains largely invisible in the historical record. When Sarah Rivera Lopez died, she left little behind her. Though she led a privileged life and was not poorly educated, she never kept a diary and was apparently not an avid letter writer. The single remaining document which captures anything of her essence is the portrait of her as a young mother, painted by Gilbert Stuart, which hangs now in the Detroit Institute of Arts.¹ Stuart's painting shows a sedate and modest young woman, in a simple but elegantly appointed dress and lace cap. She is no great beauty, but nonetheless her portrait suggests a certain elfin charm, her dark eyes filled with merriment, the barest hint of a smile on her composed lips. Her right arm encompasses her small, grave son, who, unlike his

mischievous mother, regards the viewer with a very adult solemnity. Sarah's image intrigues the viewer; we want to know her, but she has left us nothing to know her by.

Or has she? It is easy enough to reconstruct the bare details of her life. Born in New York to Jacob Rodrigues Rivera and his wife Hannah, she was raised largely in Newport and was married at age 16 to Aaron Lopez, a widower with six young children. The responsibilities of motherhood thus came to her early in life, and all indications are that Sarah took to the task readily. She would bear her husband another ten children between 1763 and 1782, of which only two did not survive infancy. In addition, after the death of his brother Moses in 1767, Aaron Lopez took on the support of the widow and her eight minor children. Since Rebecca Lopez was Sarah's aunt, this was probably not an infelicitous arrangement. Nevertheless, even with the benefit of servants, of which there were plenty, such a large household might have been nearly unmanageable without someone of considerable talents to oversee the household operations. And, in the best tradition of the Jewish housewife, Sarah ran her ship with a warm and loving hand.

The Lopez household was well-known among her husband's associates and friends for the warm and hospitable atmosphere which Sarah was largely responsible for creating. Letters to her husband regularly made note to deliver the regards of the correspondent to Aaron's "Worthy Spouse." During the Revolution, she provided sanctuary at the family residence in Leicester, Massachusetts, supplying her guests with whatever they might have needed, to the best of her ability. Benjamin Seixas, noting that "my Parents & Sister flew to Your Hospitable roof for an Asylum from the British Mercenaries," begged Aaron Lopez to "Accept of my Sincere thanks for the friendly Civilities they received from You & Yours while at Liecester[.]" Sarah was particularly mentioned by Seixas for her generosity to his sister Grace, to whom she had given "some Linnen."² Aaron himself had a fair appreciation of his wife's instinctive nature on this score. Following a visit to Leicester by his friend Moses Seixas, Lopez wrote to Seixas that he "wish[ed] M^{rs} Seixas had been able to Accompany you here as am Certain M^{rs} Lopez would have used her best endeavors to make her easy & as Comfortable as our Situation would admit[.]"³ He was also quick to invite his friend, Captain Joseph Anthony of Philadelphia, to bring his family for a summertime visit, knowing "you may at least be assured of a hearty and well come [inter]ruption" while entertained in "our humble habitations."⁴ Sarah thus extended her gracious and generous reach to her friends and neighbors of all persuasions, to whom she might occasionally send the unsolicited gift of a "Pott of Pickles"⁵ or a box of cookies.⁶

Sarah had all the household skills which we know, through the pioneering work of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, were common to women of her time and social status. Though, like other privileged women, she had her clothes from a local dressmaker,⁷

she had evidently had the same training in needlework as her equally polished contemporaries.⁸ She had sufficient skill in the making of preserves to consider offering them for sale,⁹ and knew how to render medicines from red sage and other herbs.¹⁰ She nursed her family through various and sundry ailments, from chicken pox¹¹ to rheumatism,¹² and, even toward the end of her own life, managed to keep them together in the face of death and physical decline.¹³ When Moses Lopez, her husband's nephew, became ill in 1822 and could no longer care for himself, she took him into the bosom of her own household as part of the family. Throughout her life, family was her first, and foremost, concern. Even the single surviving document in her hand — a narrative genealogy of the Lopez and Rivera families, which she prepared at the request of another family member — reflects Sarah's true *raison-d'être*, both in its content and in the circumstances surrounding its creation.¹⁴

Sarah Lopez may have remained in the shadow of her father and her husband, but she was not altogether sheltered and unworldly. Though raised in Newport, she spent considerable time on the family's farm in nearby Portsmouth, resided in the country town of Leicester, Massachusetts, during the Revolution, and at the end of her life, moved her family to New York City. In 1780, she made a small "tour" of Boston and New England with her husband — a trip the devoted Aaron evidently designed to raise both her spirits and her flagging health.¹⁵ While she left the pursuit of the family business interests to her father and her stepson Joseph following Aaron's death, she was not entirely unfamiliar with the concept of enterprise. In 1774, for example, Captain William English reported on an endeavor to sell some preserves and furniture she had sent with him to Africa and the West Indies for sale.¹⁶ Although this effort was, sadly, not as successful as Sarah might have wished, the attempt itself reveals that Sarah understood the basics of mercantile trade and was willing to engage a modicum of risk. After her husband's death, she marshalled her small business skills to deal with those who performed the tasks of physical maintenance of her household. When George Nightingale, for example, served his account for services rendered in 1798, it was Sarah, and not her father or her stepson, to whom he addressed the bill.¹⁷

These scattered details of the life of Sarah Rivera Lopez are derived primarily from letters of her husband and his associates, her nephew and her stepson, which are supplemented by information found in a few surviving household accounts. With the household as her center, Sarah Lopez manages to remain largely hidden from public view, even to the most discriminating of researchers. The merry eyes and enigmatic smile hang in the air before us like ghosts, inviting our approach but eluding our comprehension. For Sarah Lopez, as for other colonial Jewish women, being seen at all involves reading between the lines of other lives.

THE ABRAHAMS FAMILY

In looking backward to the eighteenth century, we tend to deem an individual as having social significance by his own merit. But our regard for the individual in society often shields us from his other, and more important, communal role as the connective tissue of an extended family group whose members wholly depend upon him for their support and sustenance. Such a figure was Israel Abrahams, who struggled, unsuccessfully, to meet the burdens of eighteenth-century family life and the demands of a difficult marketplace.

The Abrahams family first appears in the Newport town records on April 6, 1747, when the minutes of the Town Council record an order "That y^e Town Sargeant Carry Israel Abrahams His Mother and all y^e Rest of y^e Family That Came from York out of Town to James Town and Deliver y^m To a Proper Officer There That They May Be Transported to York from Where They Came."¹⁸ This instance of "warning out" is, to date, the only identified case of poor Jews living in a New England town. Who were these people, and what brought them to Newport from cosmopolitan New York? We know that Israel Abrahams found in Newport the prospects of home sometime in the early 1740s. He most likely believed his economic opportunities would improve with the change of venue. With his partner, Nathan Nathans, he seems to have engaged in a variety of mercantile activities in Rhode Island. But the partnership of Nathans & Abrahams, whatever efforts they may have made, achieved no success as merchant traders. Between 1744 and 1745, Israel Abrahams was imprisoned in the Newport town jail, and the partners filed for protection under the "Act for the Relief of Poor and Insolvent Debtors" in October 1745.¹⁹ Following the bankruptcy, Israel Abrahams apparently engaged in different attempts to make a living for his family; he appears, for instance, in the records of the Court of Vice Admiralty as a translator of Dutch and Spanish in 1746 and 1747,²⁰ and in August 1750 was identified as "a Jew Perriwigg Maker" in the records of the Newport Town Council.²¹

On May 1, 1749, Israel Abrahams appeared before the Town Council to render an Account of Estate for his brother Saul, who had recently died, and to claim administration of the estate as its principal creditor.²² It is in the inventory of Saul Abrahams' estate that we find the clearest picture, in material terms, of what it might have meant to be both unsuccessful and Jewish in eighteenth century Rhode Island. Saul Abrahams apparently owned, at the time of his death, little more than personal belongings. He died possessed of approximately six changes of clothes, almost all noted by the two town examiners as being "old." His two pairs of shoes were well-worn, and he had but one hat and one wig, as well as a single handkerchief and a silk tallis for use in prayer. Although his profession is given as "Merchant," he clearly had no inventory of merchantable goods. He had no cash, and owed money to Dr. Wigneron, Jacob Hasey, Elizabeth Clarke, Philip Wanton and tailor Henry Sowle.

The only items of real value which he owned were his silver shoe and waist band buckles, a few gold rings and some gold buttons. Two chests, three razors and a set of Shochet's knives for the ritual slaughter of cattle completed his possessions.²³ The whole inventory, valued at just over £100, suggests a certain shabby gentility with a distinctively Jewish bent.

After the Abrahams family was warned out of town in 1747, they may indeed have gone back to New York. Nevertheless, their absence from Newport was only a temporary one, and they had reappeared by January of 1749. The arrival, however, was not triumphant, for Israel Abrahams returned already indebted to creditors in town;²⁴ and with no collectible debts owed to him,²⁵ he was soon to become even further enmeshed in the spiraling cycle of debt. Francis Honyman (who presumably was in a position to know) would later claim that on January 5, 1749, Israel Abrahams was guilty of "illegally Entering into with force and arms & unjustly withholding" from his underage ward, William Martin, "the Possession of one certain Lot of Land situate ... in Newport ... with a Dwelling House thereon standing."²⁶ It is impossible to tell from the extant court records in this case how relations between the two men had started — whether Honyman had voluntarily agreed to lease the property to Abrahams, or Abrahams had indeed taken possession of the property without Honyman's knowledge or permission. By May of 1750, however, their relationship was clearly an embittered one, and with good reason. Though the language of the charges may well disguise a simple eviction proceeding, it is absolutely clear that Israel Abrahams was seriously in arrears with respect to the payment of his rent.²⁷ Abrahams, in any case, pleaded "Not Guilty" to the charge of trespass. But by then the damage to his reputation had already been done, and a few months later, in August 1750, he was called before the Town Council to "Give Bond" to ensure his future good behavior.²⁸ With such shameful proceedings in motion against him and no money to pay the judgments owed, Abrahams must have felt his fate in Newport was, by this time, forever sealed. Before 1752, he had fled to Halifax, Nova Scotia, never to return.²⁹

Between Newport's town government and its courts, Israel Abrahams had argued his case even when he must have known he had no chance of winning. His ongoing legal problems in the 1740s might suggest to some a troublesome personality. But, given the all of the evidence at hand, I rather think they were the result of desperation — of a man trying valiantly to avoid the consequences of impoverishment, and maintain some shred of dignity in a community where honor defined you as a member of civilized society. To look at either the town or the court records independently of each other is to miss an important part of his story. It is only when the two sets of records are read together that the whole twisted tale emerges.

HILLEL JUDAH

For women and poor Jews, there are, as I have shown above, bodies of records which may reveal significant details, if carefully read. But for the religious Jews of colonial Newport, the task becomes even more complicated. Ezra Stiles was pleased to note in his diary that he had known six rabbis during his residence in Newport;³⁰ these gentlemen, however, were only passing through on their travels. They did not reside in Newport, and were not responsible for meeting the day-to-day requirements of Jewish ritual life. The best source to get at those who dedicated themselves to providing for the Jewish community in this way is through synagogue records. Of these, however, nearly none have survived in Newport for the eighteenth century. With scant records to guide us, perhaps it is nonetheless possible to reconstruct one representative life which can inform our still incomplete portraits of other, similar lives.

Hillel Judah, born in New York to an Ashkenazic family, is one such life. He became a member (Yachid) of Congregation Shearith Israel sometime prior to March 1759, and had served as Hatan Bereshit (Second Assistant) to the Parnassim in 1758.³¹ In June 1759, he married Abigail Seixas, then aged 17. Abigail bore Hillel at least nine children between 1760 and 1779, one every two years.³² With such a large family to support and little inclination for trade, Hillel Judah was never able to accumulate any assets to speak of. In 1780, Benjamin Seixas was obliged to write to Aaron Lopez seeking the latter's assistance to aid Judah "in his Endeavours to procure a livelihood for his poor family" as he embarked for Newport. His brother-in-law, Seixas wrote from Philadelphia, would of course "require a small Credit" to get started in the new location. But, wrote Seixas, "he is strictly Honest, & I dare answer will always strive to fulfill every engagement he enters into."³³

His description of Judah's family as "poor" surely was not entirely sentimental. Indeed, the Rhode Island census of 1782 records that the Judah household consisted of five sons and two daughters under the age of 15 and one teenage daughter over 15, in addition to Hillel and Abigail, but no servants of any description to assist in managing the household. Nor was this a temporary state of affairs for the Judah family. The Federal census of 1790 reveals that the Judah household then consisted of two young sons and four daughters, but still no servants in addition to Hillel and Abigail; meanwhile Abigail's brother, Moses Seixas — who made a more respectable living as a merchant — had six slaves and one free servant to attend the needs of his family of eleven.³⁴ While the Judah household was not a wealthy one, however, it was also not entirely impoverished. Hillel Judah never had to file for protection as an insolvent debtor, and in all his years in Newport he was sued only once — over a book debt of £100.³⁵ Their house, on Thames Street at the corner of Fare, was in a grand and prominent location. Three of the Judah daughters reportedly grew to be great beauties, and were remembered by Newport residents

long after the family had moved away.³⁶

Though he may have had some small activity in trade, Hillel Judah found his principal employment as *Shochet* (ritual slaughterer, also recorded in 18th century records as “Jew Butcher”) for the Jewish community of Newport, for which he was paid a small salary. His name appears on an extant record of the congregation in this capacity in 1788.³⁷ Of Hillel, Moses Seixas noted that he had a “commendable conscience” in observing religious law with regard to the inspection of kosher meat. But Judah’s strict interpretation of Halakah sometimes had deleterious consequences for his brother-in-law’s business activities. On one occasion, Seixas noted that Judah’s conscientious behaviour had “prevented our having any chance as yet to make a beginning in procuring” kosher fat, thus preventing Seixas from providing a useful service to the Lopez household and himself the opportunity to ingratiate himself with his friend and business mentor.³⁸

Hillel Judah’s dedication to religious principle was absolute. He apparently circumcised his own sons, since none appear on the circumcision records of the known Mohels for New York and Newport (Abraham I. Abrahams and Moses Seixas, respectively). His high regard for Halakic standards in Jewish ritual practice sometimes brought him into conflict with the powers that be in the synagogue. In May 1768, for example, while living in New York, he was called before the Parnassim, along with Manuel Josephson and Uriah Hendricks, to answer for his behavior “in attempting to make Scandalous Offerings during Service,” though “in Contempt and defiance of the Good & Wholesome Resolve passed ... for the Tranquility of the Synagogue.”³⁹ In July of the following year, he and five other men were disciplined by the ruling body of Congregation Shearith Israel for having repeatedly, “for a Considerable time ... Acted in Opposition, and tending to Subvert the Laws & Rules made for the Good order, and Support of our congregation,” and warned to “make proper reasonable, and Satisfactory Concessions to the Parnasim & assistants” on pain of expulsion from the congregation.⁴⁰

The nature of the “scandalous offerings” Judah and the others were alleged to have made in 1768 and 1769 is not described, but since all of those so disciplined were Ashkenazic Jews it is most likely that the conflict involved objections on their part to aspects of the congregation’s form of service. Another clue to this incident is revealed in a letter of one of the “co-conspirators,” Manuel Josephson. Writing to Moses Seixas in February 1790, Josephson made reference to an earlier letter he had written to Hillel’s wife, Abigail Judah, in which he “did point out some improprieties & recommended an alteration” in the practices of the Newport congregation. Moreover, Josephson declared, “I can’t avoid to say a word in justification of Mr Uriah Hendricks not attending publick worship when last at your place.” Hendricks, he thought, had been right to have declined attendance “on the score of a religious principle,” given the manner in which services were conducted

in the Newport synagogue — by direction of the admittedly “capricious & whimsical disposition” of some of the regular members.⁴¹ The 1768 refusal to submit to the prevailing regulations of the congregation by Hendricks, Josephson and Judah thus reflected the protest of a small group of independent thinkers dedicated to a strict interpretation of religious law.

The evidence of other Shochets' lives suggests that Hillel Judah's approach to ritual life and to the spiritual welfare of the Newport Jewish community, if more rigorous than some, was not atypical. His immediate predecessor as Shochet had been Joseph Jacobs. In 1746, while living in New York, Jacobs had been a member of Shearith Israel, but was not well-to-do; in 1750, he subscribed to the seats in the second least expensive category.⁴² When Jacobs arrived in Newport in the early 1770s, Myer Benjamin was serving as Shochet for the Newport congregation. Benjamin's untimely death in 1776, at age 43,⁴³ left a vacuum in communal practice which Jacobs was quickly tapped to fill — and, according to one recollection, “no man was more faithful to the ceremonial law.” Jacobs, however, was an accomplished silversmith, who occupied the easternmost portion of a house owned by a Quaker lady, to whom he “paid part of the rent in Silver Spoons” marked with his family monogram.⁴⁴ As ritual slaughtering was not his primary occupation, we may surmise that he was probably happy to surrender this obligation to someone as dedicated to religious observance as Hillel Judah.⁴⁵ Myer Benjamin, on the other hand, appears to have been as dedicated to Jewish religious life as Hillel Judah. Although he had brought his family to Newport in August 1761,⁴⁶ like Judah he never appears in any mercantile accounts and was sued only once.⁴⁷ His household details, revealed in the census of 1774, indicate that he followed the same family pattern as would the Judah household in later years — which is to say, that the Benjamin household consisted of Benjamin, his wife and eight young children, but no household slaves or servants.⁴⁸ He resided next to Davis' tavern “in a house near the court-house,” where he rented a room to tailor Isaac Nunes Cardozo — a fact which undoubtedly reflected the need to generate extra income for the support of such a large family.⁴⁹

This is the extent of what I have so far uncovered about Hillel Judah and the other eighteenth-century Shochets for Jewish Newport. Slight and inconsiderable as these three stories may seem, they tell us much about the structure of Jewish communal existence in colonial Newport and its dependence on those who quietly devoted their lives to its service. Moreover, the fact that I have been able to glean even this much information about them is a singular reflection on the research of one man — Jacques Judah Lyons, Hazan for Congregation Shearith Israel of New York between 1839 and 1877 — who made it part of his life's work to collect documents and information pertaining to the early settlement of Jews in North America.⁵⁰ Jacques Judah Lyons made several trips to Newport to collect information first

hand, and met with elderly Newport residents, such as N. H. Gould, who had known and been friendly with members of the Jewish community. In addition to his superb collection of original documents, Lyons kept careful notes on the information he obtained from oral sources. The Lyons notebooks contain the record of these first-hand recollections, which otherwise would probably have been lost to posterity. Though Lyons died without having the opportunity to write the definitive history he had planned, his research collections remained behind to document nearly every important aspect of Jewish religious life in colonial times, from synagogue minutes to circumcisions. If we know anything much at all of Jewish religious life in this period, it is largely due to his efforts to preserve these private records which had been heretofore kept in the attics of the recordkeepers' descendants.

Merchants such as Aaron Lopez certainly played an important role in colonial Jewish Newport. In the end, however, they were merely the most public facet of the broader, complex and interdependent network which constituted Jewish communal life in the eighteenth-century town. To the extent that we neglect to look behind the mercantile facade, we will necessarily miss seeing the body of the iceberg under the surface of the water. And so, I would like to close this brief presentation with passages from two letters written by Providence resident David Lopez Jr. during the hard winter of 1780, which provide us with an unusual insight into the day-to-day lives of ordinary Jewish Rhode Islanders of the eighteenth century. Writing to his uncle Aaron in Leicester, Massachusetts, in late January of that year Lopez could hardly help making note of "the large quantities of Snow, which has so effectually blocked up the road as to impede the Travelling on every side." Since he was thus unable to make his way to Leicester for a visit, he reported that he now had "deliberated on attempting a retreat to Provid[en]ce on snow shoes, in Company with a Young Gent n who setts off from hear early in the morning." Nine days later, he was able to "have now the sattisfaction to advise you my safe return here after a very fatiguing journey, on foot. [T]he roads not being passable for a Horse, was forced to take snow Shoes, & they being machines I did not perfectly understand the use of, made our Journey two days long[. W]e however reached here without any other inconveinency than my feet Terribly Blisterd."⁵¹

Now, I submit to you that here, in this brief but very personal account, we can find a central metaphor for the kind of work undertaken by the historian writing about marginal Jews in early Rhode Island. Just like the snowed-in route from Uxbridge to Providence in January 1780, the way is not easily traversed. So, like the intrepid Mr. Lopez, we must strap on intellectual snow shoes to tread impassable routes through the wilderness of damaged, dispersed, and inconsistent records, slogging persistently until, blistered to the point of exhaustion, we have finally reached our goal.



NOTES

- ¹ This portrait has been reproduced in Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew. 1492-1776*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970, Vol. II, facing p. 493. Chyet states that the portrait has been dated to 1773, when Sarah would have been 25 or 26 years old. See Stanley F. Chyet, *Lopez of Newport: Colonial American Merchant Prince*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970, p. 206, note 1.
- ² Benjamin Seixas & Co. to Aaron Lopez, 21 Jan 1780 [addendum in the hand of Benjamin Seixas], G. W. Haight Collection of Aaron Lopez Papers, Box 169, folder 2, Collections of the Newport Historical Society.
- ³ Aaron Lopez to Moses Seixas, November 4, 1781, Aaron Lopez letterbook, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
- ⁴ Aaron Lopez to Joseph Anthony, April 3, 1782, Aaron Lopez letterbook, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
- ⁵ Aaron Lopez to Moses Seixas, November 4, 1781, Aaron Lopez letterbook, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
- ⁶ Moses Lopez to Stephen Gould, December 27, 1825, Lopez Collection, Rare Documents file, Collections of the American Jewish Archives.
- ⁷ See, e.g., Account of Sarah Bissell, 1764, Papers of Aaron Lopez, Box 12, folder 7, Collections of the American Jewish Historical Society.
- ⁸ On January 13, 1775, Sarah appeared at her husband's warehouse to take 3 1/2 yards black flowered Satin and 3/8 of a yard black persian, which was charged to the account of her father, Jacob Rodriguez Rivera. Store blotter Dec 1774-Mar 1775, Papers of Aaron Lopez, folder 2, Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society.
- ⁹ See William English to Aaron Lopez, January 10, 1774, G. W. Haight Collection of Aaron Lopez papers, Box 168, folder 7, Collections of the Newport Historical Society. In this letter, English wrote to Lopez from St. Nicholas Mole in Haiti: "I am Sorry itt Did Not Ly in my power to turn M^r Lopez's adventure out more advantageous as the preserves was for a Gentleman that Thought the first Cost in america to much to pay for them on the Coast[.]"
- ¹⁰ Moses Lopez to Stephen Gould, December 12, 1822, January 26, 1823, July 24, 1823, April 24, 1824, January 28, 1825, September 24, 1827, October 10, 1828; Lopez Collection, Rare Documents file, Collections of the American Jewish Archives.
- ¹¹ David Lopez junior to Aaron Lopez, November 16, 1780, Box [?] G. W. Haight Collection of Aaron Lopez Papers, Box 169, folder 3, Collection of the Newport Historical Society.
- ¹² Joseph Lopez to Stephen Gould, July 15, 1822, Lopez Collection, Rare Documents file, Collections of the American Jewish Archives.
- ¹³ Moses Lopez to Stephen Gould, December 12, 1822 (on death of stepson Joseph Lopez), January 26, 1823 (on death of Sarah's brother, Abraham Rivera), Lopez Collection, Rare Documents file, Collections of the American Jewish Archives.
- ¹⁴ "The Genealogy of the Lopez Family, Presented by Sarah Lopez to her Friend, Mrs. Priscilla Lopez, of Charleston, by her Request," in Chyet, *ibid.*, pp. 197-199; reprinted from *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 2 (1894), pp. 103-106.
- ¹⁵ David Lopez junior to Aaron Lopez, June 12, June 18, and June 28, 1780, G. W. Haight Collection of Aaron Lopez Papers, Box 168, folder 7, Collections of the Newport Historical Society.

- ¹⁶ William English to Aaron Lopez, January 10, 1774, G. W. Haight Collection of Aaron Lopez Papers, Box 168, folder 7, Collections of the Newport Historical Society.
- ¹⁷ Account of George Nightingale to Sarah Lopez, 27 Aug 1798, Box 52, Folder 3, Collections of the Newport Historical Society. The account covered the following labor, performed between November 1797 and August 1798: milking the cow for seven weeks, digging a well and a drain, chopping 11 cords of firewood, and cleaning a cellar.
- ¹⁸ Newport Town Council Minutes, vol. X, folio 149; Collections of the Newport Historical Society.
- ¹⁹ *Isaac Beauchamp v. Israel Abrahams*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, November 1744, CCP Book B, folio 590, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center (noting that Abrahams "is in the Custody of the Sheriff (by Virtue of a Writt by the said Isaac Sued out agst him the said Israel"; the writ included Nathans, "who could not be found by the said Sheriff or his Dep^t in the County of Newport"); Public Notary Records, vol. 5, Collections of the Rhode Island State Archives, published in Jacob Rader Marcus (ed.), *American Jewry — Documents, Eighteenth Century: Primarily Hitherto Unpublished Manuscripts*, Cincinnati: The Hebrew Union College Press, 1959, no. 119, pp. 325-326. Among the creditors who sued Abrahams and his partner before 1746 were not only Isaac Beauchamp of Boston, to whom the pair owed £250 on a Note of Hand, but also Samuel Webb of Newport (book debt of £80), Jacob Franks of New York (£1500 by Bond), and Moses Levy of Newport (book debt of £500). See, e.g., Newport Court of Common Pleas, CCP Book B, folios 534, 590, 592, 595, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center.
- ²⁰ Lee Max Friedman, "Notes: Jews in the Vice-Admiralty Court of Rhode Island," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 37 (1947), pp. 392.
- ²¹ Newport Town Council Minutes, vol. IX, folio 373, Collections of the Newport Historical Society.
- ²² *Ibid.*, folios 380, 382.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, vol. X, folio 204.
- ²⁴ In November 1747, Israel Abrahams was sued by Newport merchant John Bannister over a book debt of £700, on which he had defaulted after paying £200; that same session, the Widow Rebecca Allen sued him for a book debt of £200 owed to her late husband, Joseph Allen. *John Bannister v. Israel Abrahams, Rebecca Allen v. Israel Abrahams*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, November 1747, CCP Book C, folios 127, 151, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center. In May 1748, merchant Patrick Grant sued Abrahams over default of a Bond for £600, and Newport distiller John Brown sued Abrahams in an action of Covenant for performance of promise, claiming £800 in damages, and Abrahams countersued for performance under the Articles of Agreement he and Brown had signed, with a claim for £1000 in damages; the parties agreed to arbitrate their differences. *Patrick Grant v. Israel Abrahams, John Brown v. Israel Abrahams*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, May 1748, CCP Book C, folios 202, 222, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center. In November 1748, blacksmith Joseph Cleveland of Norwich, Connecticut, sued Abrahams over his default on a note of hand for £80. *Joseph Cleveland v. Israel Abrahams*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, November 1748, CCP Book C, folio 256, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center. In each of these cases, the Court eventually found in favor of the Plaintiffs. Abrahams appealed the Bannister and Grant decisions, but apparently failed to prosecute his appeals — a tacit indication that he perhaps knew he had no viable case to make.
- ²⁵ Between November 1747 and May 1749, Abrahams filed suits for debts allegedly owed to him by Newport mariners John Rouse (book debt of £450), Bartholomew Smith (Note of Hand for £140), Joshua Lyon (book debt of £500), and mariner David Gardner of Nantucket (book debt of £50). *Israel Abrahams v. John Rouse, Israel Abrahams v. Bartholomew Smith, Israel Abrahams v. Joshua Lyon, Israel Abrahams v. David Gardner*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, CCP Book C, folios 164, 170, 251, 344, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center. See, also, the

countersuit by Israel Abrahams against distiller John Brown, cited in Note 24, above. In at least three of these cases (Brown, Lyon, Gardner), the suits were clearly filed as a desperate ploy by Abrahams to find the wherewithal to pay his debts, as the Court repeatedly found nothing owed by the respective defendants. Indeed, in the Lyon case, the appointed referees determined that Abrahams, in fact, owed Lyon some £400, and awarded court costs to the defendant. *Joshua Lyon v. Israel Abrahams, Israel Abrahams v. Joshua Lyon*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, November 1748, CCP Book C, folio 272, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center. In the Gardner case, after Abrahams appealed the jury verdict, in favor of the defendant, to the Superior Court of Judicature, a panel of appointed arbitrators confirmed "that having examined the Appellants Accounts against the Appellee they find to the Appellant nothing due," and awarded costs to Gardner. Newport Superior Court of Judicature, March 1750, SCJ Book D, folio 164; *appealed from* Newport Court of Common Pleas, May 1749, CCP Book C, folio 344, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center.

²⁶ *William Martin v. Israel Abrahams*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, May 1750, CCP Book C, folio 519, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center.

²⁷ *William Martins v. Israel Abrahams*, case file, Newport Court of Common Pleas, May term 1750, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center; *Francis Honyman v. Israel Abrahams*, May 1750, Newport Court of Common Pleas, CCP Book C, folio 520, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center. In addition to the former suit, for trespass and ejectment brought in the name of his ward and for which he sought £5000 in damages, Honyman brought the latter suit in order to recover £440 for rent. Though the court ruled against him in both cases, Abrahams appealed only the suit for trespass — a fact which suggests that he acknowledged the debt for the overdue rent. See, e.g., *William Martins v. Israel Abrahams* and *Francis Honyman v. Israel Abrahams*, CCP Book C, folios 519-520; *Martins v. Abrahams*, Newport Superior Court of Judicature, Book D, folio 216, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center.

²⁸ Newport Town Council Minutes, vol. IX, folio 373.

²⁹ Marcus, *American Jewry — Documents*, no. 121A, pp. 331-332. In Halifax, Abrahams attempted to set himself up as a manufacturer of potash. However, having no more capital in Halifax than he had in Newport, he this time threw himself on the mercy of the Lords of Trade and Plantations by casting himself as a benefactor to the Nova Scotia colony.

³⁰ By 1783, Stiles recollected that he had known six different rabbis during his years in Newport, between 1759 and 1775. Franklin B. Dexter (ed.), *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D., President of Yale College*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901, Vol. III, pp. 77-78.

³¹ The Lyons Collection, Volume I, *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 21 (1913), p. 79. Originals of the items published here and in the Lyons Collection, Volume II (*PAJHS* vol. 27), are located in the collections of the American Jewish Historical Society.

³² The Lyons Collection, Volume II, *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 27 (1920), pp. 161, 170.

³³ Benjamin Seixas to Aaron Lopez, 02 May 1780, G. W. Haight Collection of Aaron Lopez Papers, Box 169, folder 2, Collections of the Newport Historical Society.

³⁴ John Mack Holbrook, *Rhode Island 1782 Census*, Oxford, Mass.: Holbrook Research Institute, 1979, RIA 782:11.

³⁵ In 1788, Hillel Judah was sued by Newport hatter Jacob Barney over a book debt of £100. Although Judah is listed in the proceedings of this suit as a "trader," there is no evidence (including newspaper advertisements of goods or other suits for debt) which either suggests or would support any extensive activity in trade on his part. See *Jacob Barney v. Hillel Judah*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, November 1788, CCP Book J, folio 501, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial

Records Center.

³⁶ Lyons Collection, Volume II, p. 213. This information was collected by Jacques Judah Lyons on his 1872 visit to Newport, and appears to have come from his principal contact, N. H. Gould. Gould thought the names of the three daughters were Naomi, Grace, and Huldah. Seixas family records, however, show only daughters named Sarah, Rachel, and Rebekah. See Lyons Collection, Volume II, pp. 76, 170. Lyons himself believed that Gould had simply got the names wrong.

³⁷ Lyons Collection, Volume II, p. 185.

³⁸ Moses Seixas to Aaron Lopez, July 9, 1781, printed in *Commerce of Rhode Island, 1726-1800*, Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 7th Series, vols. IX-X, Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, 1914-1915, Volume II, pp. 139-140.

³⁹ Excisions from the Minutes of Congregation Shearith Israel, Rosh Hodes Yiar 5528 [May 1768]. The Lyons Collections, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society. This document does not appear in the published compilation of the Lyons Collection.

⁴⁰ Lyons Collection, Volume I, pp. 103-104. The other members so disciplined were Solomon Hays, Manuel Josephson, Moses Judah (brother of Hillel), Barrak Hays, and Andrew Hays.

⁴¹ Manuel Josephson to Moses Seixas, February 4, 1790, Lyons Collection, Volume II, pp. 185-190.

⁴² Lyons Collection, Volume I, p. 63. The general distribution of seats breaks down as follows:

Rate	Number
£4	10
£2.9.0	10
£1.16.6	8
£1.6.0	9
£0.15.0	24
Synagogue Seat Assignments, 1750.	
Source: Minutes of Cong. Shearith Israel	

Jacobs was still living in New York in 1771, as he appears in Shearith Israel's minutes for that year. See Lyons Collection, Volume I, p. 111.

⁴³ Lyons Collection, Volume II, p. 198.

⁴⁴ Lyons Collection, Volume II, p. 211. As JBJ stood for Joseph and Bilhah Jacobs, these were probably spoons that he had made for his own family.

⁴⁵ List of Members of the Gemilut Hasadim, 1786-1790; Lyons Collection, Volume II, p. 253.

⁴⁶ Newport Administrative Bonds, vol. 3, folio 229, Collections of the Newport Historical Society. On August 3, 1761, Moses Levy and Jacob Isaacks posted bond of £10,000 each for the good behavior of Nathan Hart and Myer Benjamin and their families.

⁴⁷ Myer Benjamin appears only once in the judicial records, when he was sued by Judah Hays of New York for failure to perform a promise in 1762. *Judah Hays v. Myer Benjamin*, Newport Court of Common Pleas, November 1762, CCP Book F, folio 665, Collections of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center.

⁴⁸ John Russell Bartlett (arr.), *Census of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, 1774*, Providence: Unpublished Ms., 1858, Collections of the Rhode Island State Archives.

- ⁴⁹ Irwin S. Rhodes, *References to Jews in the Newport Mercury, 1758-1786*, Monographs of the American Jewish Archives no. III, Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1961, no. 166, p. 14; George Champlin Mason, *Newport: Historical and Social Reminiscences of Ye Olden Times With more than 550 Illustrations ...*, 6 Volumes with original illustrations, Newport: 1892, Volume I, p. 61, Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society.
- ⁵⁰ See "Jacques Judah Lyons" [Biographical Sketch], Lyons Collection, Volume I, pp. xxiii-xxviii.
- ⁵¹ David Lopez to Aaron Lopez, January 22 and January 31, 1780, G. W. Haight Collection, Newport Historical Society, Box 169, Folder 3, Collections of the Newport Historical Society.



Lt. Goldowsky, Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, November, 1942.

JEWISH VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II ORAL HISTORIES, PART V

BY PEARL F. BRAUDE

The following oral histories were transcribed and edited from two of over forty interviews conducted by the late Pearl F. Braude of Providence, Rhode Island, in 1989 and 1990.

DR. SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY

I am currently 82-1/2 years old, born June 6, 1907, in Providence, Rhode Island — as a matter of fact, in Olneyville across from St. Mary's Church, which still exists. I was not married when the draft was instituted; I was living with my sister Bea Goldowsky at 380 Lloyd Avenue. My mother had recently passed away and we sold the family house which was on Baker Street near the Broad Street entrance to Roger Williams Park. In 1940, when I believe the draft started, I would have been 33 years old and unmarried. At this time I was courting my wife, Bonnie Nissen. But this, of course, did not affect my draft status, so I became 1A in the draft.

I had opened my office after three years training in straight surgery and six months in medically related problems at the Charles V. Chapin Hospital. My other training was at the Beth Israel in Boston, where, incidentally, I met Rabbi William Braude who had come down to see a patient there. My residency was in Mount Sinai Hospital. I opened my office in February 1936, so at the time of Pearl Harbor, in December of '41, I was 34 years old, in practice for six years.

After Pearl Harbor, when they began to go after draft-eligible people in a more energetic way, I was notified that I would be eligible sometime in the future as a 1A draftee. However, I was also a physician at this time and this would have changed my status. So when I was invited to become a member of the 48th Evacuation Hospital early in 1942, I volunteered and was to be inducted in that outfit as a captain, on the basis of age plus training. Well, I had pretty good training. Sometime early in 1942, when this outfit was being organized, I remember riding down to Fort Adams, which was an Army base in Newport, for my physical. At that time, I wore arch supports, steel plates in my shoes for flat feet, which I wore since my intern days when my feet had broken down. These plates really rehabilitated me. When the examining officer asked me if there was anything he should know, I mentioned that I was wearing steel plates in my shoes, because it didn't seem to me that it was going to matter for a medical officer, you know, in the work he had to do. But based on that, I was turned down. This was ridiculous because it didn't matter to anybody whether you were flat-footed or not. So I immediately became 1A in the draft again. Here I had volunteered for service, and they turned me down.

Since I was turned down for the Army, I thought I would apply for the Navy. I would have been eligible for Lieutenant (Senior Grade) in the Navy, the equivalent

of captain. They were not interested in my feet particularly, but they found out I was color blind. The Navy is very fussy about color blindness and I was turned down by the Navy. So these are two ridiculous things. And here I was trying desperately to get in. I was not afraid of the draft, but to be drafted 1A when I was perfectly willing to serve as an officer was patently ridiculous.

Dr. Lucius Kingman was senior surgeon in the community at the time. He was more or less involved in looking after the program of induction of medical officers. So I went to see Dr. Kingman and I said, "I have tried my best to get in and here I am." He suggested a way out. He had learned that at Quonset Point they had a couple of civilian physicians working down there who were examining civilians construction workers who were going over to the overseas bases. They were examining them on their way over and on their way back, just as the military might have done. And so I was given the opportunity to work at Quonset Point as a civilian, which delayed my draft status.

During this period, I was courting Bonnie more vigorously. We had been courting off and on for thirteen years. This is a well-known story; some years earlier she had almost married a guy up in Montreal, Canada, then that broke up, and at this point I think that our courtship was very serious. But she was reluctant. In fact, I had a ring even, and she wouldn't take it because she felt that it was not right for us to get involved when I might be in the service. You'll have to ask her what her motivation was, but anyway after I got the job at Quonset I went back to her and said I'm no longer eligible for the draft for the foreseeable future, so she consented to marry me, and we were married on June 25, 1942, in Boston. Our wedding was at the Copley Plaza Hotel. It was a lovely affair. At that time my sister Bea and I were living at the Lafayette Apartments, and I didn't have very much, and Bonnie was agreeable to move in with Bea so the three of us were living together there. She came to Providence, and we had two bedrooms, and we were able to arrange it very nicely, as a matter of fact, and I think she was happy there.

So that was June 25, 1942. Then I was notified that the Seabees, who had been in preparation for many months, were ready to be activated. That meant that I was not going to work for them anymore, and again would be eligible for the draft. I went back to Dr. Lucius Kingman, and said, "You know, I've tried very hard, and I've done what everybody has told me to do, and here I am again. What do I do now?" So he said that there was a Medical Officer, Procurement Office, for this area, and that person was Dr. Guy Wells, who was a prominent internist in town. He said, "Get down to see Guy Wells." So I went down to see Guy Wells, and Guy Wells said, "Sure, we will get you a commission, and in view of not the color blindness, but in view of your flat feet, we will get you limited service which probably will mean you won't go overseas." So I said okay. He said, "But we can't give you a captaincy, we can only give you a first lieutenant," and I said, "But I've been eligible." He said,

"Well, that's the way the regulations work," so I was eventually inducted as a first lieutenant.

Pearl Braude: How about the fact that you were a Jew? Did you realize what was going on with Hitler at the time?

SJG: Well, yes and no. I don't think that my being a Jew added any particular motivation to it. I detested what the Japs had done, and although the Holocaust was not fully known in 1942, I felt patriotic and a little proud to be able to serve my country. But I thought I had been treated rather badly up to this point.

Well, I had my medical examination in Providence, and the physician who examined me was Hyman Miller. During the summer I received a communication from the War Department, the Army, with directions as to what I needed to do in the way of purchasing a uniform and that sort of thing; on September 24th I was to proceed to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where I would join the 97th Evacuation Hospital. The ticket agent said, "There's a train that goes from Washington to New Orleans called the Southerner. It is one of the early streamlined trains, and it takes thirty hours. That's what most of them go on, but you have to sit up because there are no sleepers on there." So I thought that, you know, here I am an officer and I wanted to do things right so I said, "Well, I think I'll take the sleeper." That also left in late evening from Washington. So he sold me a ticket, and on the 24th of September Bonnie took me to the railroad station, and we had our farewell. I fill up a little bit when I talk about this, but frankly, I cannot remember too much about that departure, even though we were newlyweds of three months.

When I went to Washington that evening I was farther from home than I had ever been in my life. My train must have gotten into Washington around 10 P.M. and I wasn't leaving until midnight, and it was a beautiful moonlit September evening so I took a walk around Washington, as far as I could go by walking from the station. I saw the Capitol, but all in moonlight, brilliant moonlight, because at this time, of course, there was a blackout.

Later, at Camp Shelby, I remember dropping back on marches, dropping back and dropping back further and having to be picked up by an ambulance, which always followed the march, so I did have trouble marching. In Hattiesburg, I think our basic training was about six weeks, which would have carried us into the middle of November. Then we were ordered to go to the maneuver area in Louisiana and Texas, where we set up an evacuation hospital and simulated casualties and all this, and we were out there, I think, another six weeks, which brought it to about the end of the year.

All the time I was on active duty, I was in the Surgical Department, but I was always at a lower echelon. A first lieutenant or a captain never got beyond being

ward surgeon. The more senior officers might choose to pick their cases, but I had a variety of experience.

Well, anyway, Bonnie and I had talked it over and she, as you know, is a rather elegant person, and I didn't want her to be a camp follower. A lot of the doctors' wives did follow the men around — they'd get a room in a rooming house somewhere. So she didn't come with me, and in fact she got a job selling and she was a very good salesman. She had done some selling in Slattery's in Boston so she had experience in a first-class store. She sold, I believe, dresses in Shepard's — that's what she did while I was in the service. I suggested that since I'd be on leave for New Year's, I could get a room for her in the hotel there, which was called the Forest Hotel, the best hotel in town, but it was a fleabag. So she came down and I would commute evenings unless I had to stay at camp — you might be off every other evening. She was able to stay several weeks.

A year from the time I was inducted I went overseas. Until we got to Australia we only saw one ship, which was a United States cargo ship. Our ship had a permanent list. If the ship went over too far one way or the other, the trim ship detail for the other side would be called on deck and they would have to stand there until they got the ship straight. Anyway, we landed in Brisbane in thirty days. People here call it Brisbane, but the Australians call it "Brisbon."

Then we went up through the inside passage with the Great Barrier Reef on our right. We eventually ended up in Milne Bay, which is at the very southern tip of New Guinea and this is where we disembarked. We were on that ship without getting off for forty-five days. Milne Harbor, shaped like a horseshoe, was deep with 4,500-foot mountains on either side — a magnificent tropical setting. We stayed there, I would guess, until about January, when we were ordered to take part in the invasion of Cape Gloucester, with the First Marine Division. See, an Evacuation Hospital couldn't go in on D-Day, on landing day, because they were too unwieldy an outfit. Other smaller medical units went in with the invasion troops. As time went on, they could set up our Evacuation Hospital with 400 beds, a good-sized outfit. We could do fairly definitive surgery. The only thing higher were the general hospitals. Most of the casualties would be in the first week, and then it would become quiescent. So we had these brief periods of excitement, and I was on three missions.

Subsequently, we went into Aitape, which is on the north coast of New Guinea, and we went in there with the 43rd division, which was rather nice for a New Englander, like myself, because the 43rd division were New Englanders and that was pleasant after having to get along with a bunch from Houston who were very pleasant boys, but they were also heavy drinkers and several of them have since died of alcoholism.

The commanding officer received a requisition for a medical officer. This was

where the anti-Semitism came in because the request came from a non-hospital. Here I was overseas with plates in my shoes presumably on limited service, and they assigned me to a field outfit, and it was because the commanding officer couldn't have cared less about me, and I always felt that there was an element of anti-Semitism in this. We were all in line to go into the Philippines eventually, but I should have been in an evacuation hospital, not in a field outfit. They were going in on D-Day.

I was sore at this point, I was very angry.

PB: What did that mean for you?

SJG: Well, it meant that I would be going in on D-Day and I would be taking care of casualties in the forward area instead of being in a hospital. I would be more like a battalion surgeon. And I was at this point a captain. But I never did receive my majority, which I probably should have received somewhere along the line.

PB: How long did that last?

SJG: It didn't last very long because I turned myself in. The commanding officer was a young major, who was Jewish, incidentally, and I told him the way I felt about it. And that I should never have been there in the first place and so forth. And I said, "I'm going to turn myself in." Now, I'm using the term medically on account of my feet. He said, "Well, doctor, you know, it's really been lovely having you, and I hate to see you go." "And I said, "Well, I have to take care of my own interests." It meant that I had to be evacuated. I went to the closest medical clinic and said, "My feet are bad." I took my plates out. So they took some x-rays. They found a lot of arthritis in my feet, which was secondary to my flat feet, and they said, "That's ridiculous, you shouldn't be in that outfit." They said, "We will evacuate you." So where do I end up? In the 30th Evacuation Hospital as a patient!

So now I saw the chief of surgery, a friend of mine. He was a Houston man, Pat Heard, and although I speak in rather bitter terms about the treatment I received, we were all very friendly. This guy incidentally was one of those who died of chronic alcoholism later, but he had x-rays taken, and he said, "See, it's ridiculous what they've done to you. We've got to evacuate you further." So, I had to go all the way back to a general hospital, which happened to be operated by the Mayo Clinic Group, and I was admitted there to the Orthopedic Service, and they had the x-rays and everything, and the young major came and said, "Well," he said, "you know, what can we do? It's patently ridiculous, and we will send you back with orders that you are not to be assigned to anything lower than an Evacuation Hospital."

PB: I see. Okay, now let me ask you this. Was there a real distinct possibility that you would have been sent to do up-front duty?

SJG: Correct.

PB: And you could have been just killed because you couldn't move around fast enough? Your legs.

SJG: Yeah. That was the worst scenario. Probably nothing would have happened, you know.

PB: But you would have been very uncomfortable.

SJG: I would have been very uncomfortable.

PB: Okay. So now you're back in Hollandia and you stayed there for the rest of the war?

SJG: Well, no, the outfit was assigned to a mission in the Philippines, so I had to go to the island of Palawan there. Palawan sticks out into the China Sea, the most westerly point that they had reached at this time. We stood offshore and we saw our first rockets; they had the cruiser and some destroyers and other naval ships, and they were shooting rockets in. Eventually the landing craft went ashore and we received notice rather early that things were under control and that we could come in. So they took us ashore. Whether it was the first day or not, I am not sure, but I believe it was, and then they assigned an area to us and we set the hospital up there.

The weather was miserable. We would have dry spells and wet spells and when there was a rainy season everything was wet all the time. We would wear a poncho. Occasionally in the rainy season it would get cold at night and we would put a sweater on, but beyond that, you were wet even when it was dry. So if it was raining you just paid no attention to it because you were wet anyway. You were continually wet. In fact, at one point, I got a fungus infection in my groin and I had to be in the hospital for a little while with it. That was a rough experience. We slept with mosquito nets all the time and we had mosquito bombs which later on had DDT in them. And there were rats, big rats everywhere. I was in the tropics eighteen months and those are the most miserable days of my life. That had nothing to do with morale or anti-Semitism or anything else. Just physically miserable.

And frustrated. The frustration had to do with my rank as much as anything. I got my captaincy, and the lowest rank in the medical corps now is captain, and considering that I was 35 years old when I went in — 38 when I came out — I would have under any other circumstances been a major. I certainly would have. But they didn't give out promotions. In the medical corps, promotions came very hard. Because there were so many officers basically, you see, and they had to keep them in the lower grades because that's where they would be doing the job they needed.

PB: I see, I understand. So that was your contribution to the war effort?

SJG: Yeah. I ended my overseas career in Palawan. From there I was shipped back to Brisbane, then across the Coral Sea and back to California in the summer of '45.

Editor's note: This interview took place early in 1990. Dr. Goldowsky died in Providence on November 5, 1997, at the age of 90.

WILLIAM L. ROBIN

I was born in Providence on October 6, 1922 and lived in Providence until 1952. I was educated in Providence schools and then went to Brown University. While at Brown, World War II broke out and I was eligible for the draft. As a matter of fact, I was supposed to go into the service in November 1942. I went to the draft board which at that time was in the Strand Building, and I met with the board, not knowing that Archibald Silverman was the Chairman. They were sympathetic but felt that it was time for me to go in. However, I explained to the board and Mr. Silverman that if I could stay at college for four more months until February of '43 I could graduate because I had done accelerated work through two summers in order to be able to try to beat the draft to the point where I could get my degree. Mr. Silverman, speaking for the board, said that I had to realize that I could be called up the day after I graduated, and that's exactly what happened. I graduated February 3, 1943, and the next day was in the United States Army, and interestingly enough, one of my close friends had the exact same experience — Alan Marcus — and we graduated together and went down the hill to get our degrees, and the following morning we were on the bus for Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

Seven days later, Alan and I ended up in Miami, Florida, where we took our basic Army Air Corps training. That took about six to eight weeks, and from there I went to Oklahoma where I attended a course in learning Morse code. Alan went into another unit so that was the last I saw of him for a while.

The basic training of the Army Air Corps was really minimal. It was basically to teach us Army discipline, and we didn't get anything like arms training. It was really incredible because later on as my story unfolds you'll realize that I ended up in an infantry unit, and I literally had to get weapons training from scratch.

For the first time in my life I was exposed to young men from all over, all kinds of backgrounds, and I had certainly not had that experience growing up in Providence and then later on going to Brown. What I knew was just a small segment of American society.

At the end of '43, I went into the Army Specialized Training Program. I was sent to the University of Wisconsin, and for some reason I ended up in a Spanish study program. Now, why? Spain wasn't in the war, but nevertheless they wanted Spanish area experts for some reason. Anyway I stayed there at the University of Wisconsin for about six to eight months. Now, my misfortune was that I was in the Spanish area

program, because if I had gone into the German program those men were assigned to units that took care of German prisoners of war and were being primed for actual occupation duty. In our case, what do you do with a fellow who has Spanish area studies and language? You send him to the infantry to be a replacement!

There's a tremendous difference in training between infantry and Air Corps. In the Air Corps we rarely saw a rifle, let alone learned how to use it properly. With infantry we had to learn how to use all the infantry weapons. I was in a rifle company, Company F, 385th Infantry Regiment of the 76th Division, but I saw myself as lucky that I was not shipped as a replacement. I was 20 years old, and I was one of the older people in this division, in the company, but I was not shipped out, and I stayed with the company until we went overseas, which was late '44.

PB: After the invasion?

WLR: After the invasion, right, and we were committed at the Battle of the Bulge in the cleanup operation. You know, one of the terrible things about being in a combat outfit as a replacement was the fact that you're not only put into a situation of such terrible stresses and strains, but the fact of the matter is you don't know anybody, and you're just stuck in there, and you're lucky if you survive and make friends or find some support. The support system was there for us, the guys that went over as a unit, which was unusual at that time because most of the infantry divisions that fought in Europe were already there. Usually they were just sending replacements in for the casualties.

The other thing was that I was able to utilize some of the radio communication skills, so I was assigned to the company commander, who was a captain. I was his link with the outside which was the battalion headquarters, and with the men who were actually in the foxholes. So I'm talking about being lucky in that respect. However, you have to remember that in a rifle company, even though I was with the captain — as much as possible we try to stay, you know, a little bit behind the lines and have a little more comforts — we were still constantly in the battle situation.

PB: You were targets.

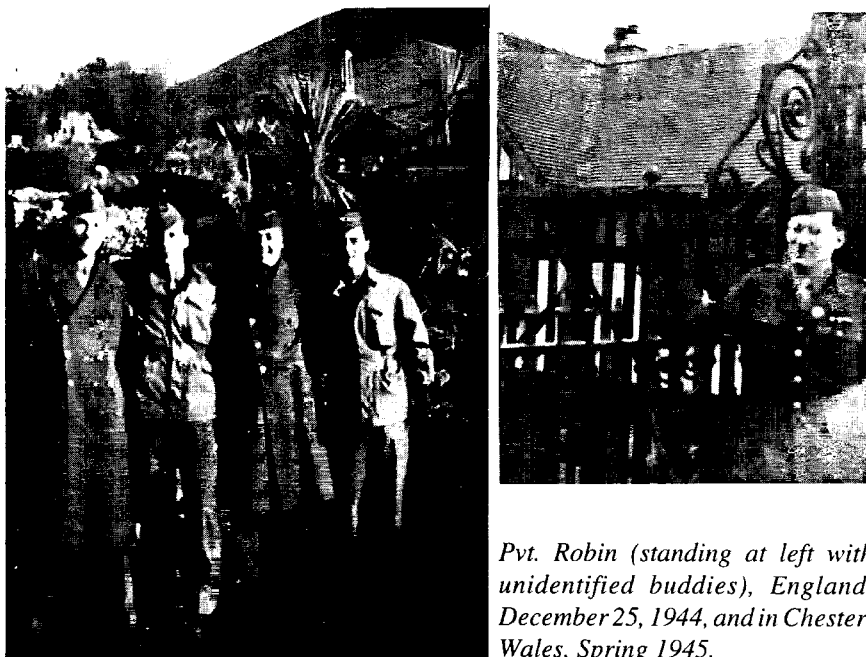
WLR: So we were targets for the mortars and the machine guns and the artillery.

PB: But you're getting ahead of the story.

WLR: Okay. We had crossed the Atlantic by convoy.

PB: How long did it take?

WLR: The thing is, on a liberty ship we stayed in the hold on hammocks, and you could imagine, you know, what was going on there with the vomiting in the sinks and all that, so I guess it probably seemed like a month. I don't think it took much



Pvt. Robin (standing at left with unidentified buddies), England, December 25, 1944, and in Chester, Wales, Spring 1945.

more than a week and a half or two weeks. Finally we came to England, a town called Bournemouth, where we were for about two weeks in preparation for crossing the Channel.

PB: Did you see anybody you knew there?

WLR: In England? No. I mean there was no one at that point; later on, Walter Weinberg entered the picture. I managed to leave the camp, and I found out that there were Jewish resort hotels in the area. Somebody told me that there was one still operating. Now, here we are, this is wartime, and I mean in England war was war with V-2s coming over and the whole thing, and yet with it all somehow or other some of these resort hotels, including one Jewish one, were able to stay open and manage to get enough stuff to feed the people on the weekend. So I went over, and I met the fellow who owned the Jewish Hotel, and I said to him, "You know," I said, "I'm Jewish, but my closest friends in my company are not Jewish, and I'd love them to come on a Friday. If we can get out of the camp on Friday night, would it be possible for us to get some real Jewish food?" And he said, "Well," he said, "if you bring me something of your supplies I can." He said, "You bring some rations of cigarettes, soap, you know, that kind of stuff." We went, I and three of my non-Jewish friends, but I prepared them, you know, and I said, "It's gonna be a Friday

night,” and I’m trying to explain to them somebody will be making Kiddush, and I said “We’ll probably have gefilte fish and chicken.” I mean, imagine, it’s just incredible. So we went, and sure enough, it wasn’t sumptuous, but it was far from Army food.

PB: Did you have gefilte fish?

WLR: Yeah, we had gefilte fish.

PB: And chicken soup?

WLR: And chicken soup. I’ll never forget meeting this man who was there with his wife and two of his kids, and we started talking, and I realized that this guy was about my father’s age and had come from Odessa. My father left Kiev in 1913, and this guy left Odessa, Russia, in 1913, and here we were thirty-one years later, and this guy was a typical British businessman, and I just couldn’t envision it, you know. It’s like, you know, almost surrealistic.

By early December, we went to Southampton and then got into Le Havre. Le Havre had a submarine base for the Germans, and so a lot of the civilians, we were warned, were anti-American, based on the fact that so many of the families had been destroyed or people or property destroyed, because how else can you bomb out the Germans and the submarine pens without bombing people? But there wasn’t any opportunity to worry about fraternizing or worrying about the anti-American feeling, because the next thing we knew we were in trucks and heading for Belgium and the forest and the Battle of the Bulge.

One of the sad things was seeing how many of the civilian families were broken up. You know, you saw young kids, you saw women, young women, one parent, and you saw older men. But there were no such things as young men because the men were either in battle, killed, or prisoners of war and so, if we stayed with somebody, and even if it was a barn, we would leave them cigarettes or soap; soap was something unbelievable. I can remember I gave an older man a bar of Lifebuoy soap, and he said, in French, I think the French word is “merci” or something, he says, “I will only use it to shave.”

When we were on our way to Bastogne, we came into a town, and there was a French bakery, and for some reason the officers, or especially the captain, didn’t tell the men, “Don’t buy any bread.” We just went into that little store and bought the whole place out, and it wasn’t until later that we realized what we had done. We had taken the bread right out of these people’s mouths, and who’s gonna stop us? We just went in and we had money, and the guy sold us the bread, but he probably was scared to death to say no.

Well, we ate it. I remember that they were trying to make arrangements to

resupply the town, with flour from American stores. Nobody went in and stole anything. We paid for it, but it was just the realization. I think it was the first realization of what the privation was and finally understanding what the civilian population was going through, to see the kids come around at night to pick up the scraps. They were like jackals all around us, and as soon as they saw that we'd finished eating and were scraping our plates into the garbage, then they'd swarm in and pick up the garbage. So that was, you know, that's how we saw the suffering of the civilian population.

Another interesting aside was that somewhere in one of those towns I'm telling you about in France, it was virtually deserted, and all of a sudden we see this young woman come along and it was pretty cold; after all it was December, and she's all bundled up, and she comes over to somebody and she says, "Where's the dance?" And this is in French, but there were guys who understood French and so somebody said to her, "What are you talking about, what dance are you talking about?" She says, "Well, there's gonna be a dance here tonight." The ludicrous thing is she was right! In the middle of all this, that little town made arrangements for a dance, and she came in from some village, God knows how many miles she'd walked to be able to go to this dance. Strange, strange little vignettes of things that happened.

I had another incident where we got into another one of these towns that had been bombed. I mean bombed to smithereens between German fire and American fire. With one of the guys I knew, I start walking, walking around, and we found a little church chapel that was virtually untouched. We go in, and the next thing I know he's sitting down, he's playing the organ. He could play! It was just one of the those things that was so out of place with everything.

But the worst thing was the elements. Under fire and living from hand to mouth, and there was no way you could stay warm. There was no way you could stay dry. It rained and about every two weeks, similar to the way the food kitchens would come up by truck, there would be mobile shower units that would come up. The way we would get warm clothing and get washed was to take everything off, and get under the showers and then you'd be issued new clothing because your old clothes were wet always.

Well anyway, from Belgium we went to Luxembourg, and we stayed in a little town which had been just evacuated in a matter of days by Germans, a town called Echternach. There we were getting ready for the invasion of Germany. It was at that point we were put into assault boats, and that's when the Germans were waiting for us. We had a terrific bombardment; I wasn't hit, but the boat was hit that I was on, and it overturned. I was able to stay afloat by holding onto the boat, and then by luck an Army Corps that was assigned to the same area fished some of us out. And so a certain number of men and boats made it but some of them were killed then and

there, and others just formed units and kept going.

I was saved but I had already developed trouble with my feet, with circulation. I was still able to walk, but I wasn't doing well. This was such a traumatic thing that even though I wasn't injured or wounded I said to the medic, "My feet are very bad, and I'd like to have somebody look at them." The medic said, "We'll send you back for a couple of days, and I'm sure your feet will be better," and that's all I thought was gonna happen. You know, I figured right after that I'd be sent back to my unit, which was in Germany. What was left of them. So anyhow, the doctors looked me over; I remember it was a MASH hospital. I mean, I'll never forget it, and the doctor said, "Well, we better send you back to France to a big hospital," because they'd had a lot of problems with guys who had been sent back to the front after a few days' rest and picked up something almost immediately once they got into combat again and ended up losing some toes or feet. So they sent me back to France.

PB: Where'd you go?

WLR: I went to Paris. I was still walking, but barely, you know? The toes were black. I was at the hospital connected with the Notre Dame Cathedral. In those days it was run by the church. The nuns actually took care of us, and what was interesting there was that the orderlies were all German prisoners of war who had been medical corps men in the German army.

PB: Were they decent?

WLR: Well, not only were they decent, they would lean over backwards to prove they weren't combat men. They were medical men. They were not people that you should hate because they weren't German fighting soldiers.

PB: Did they ask you about being Jewish?

WLR: Well, no. I never said anything, but one of the guys in a bed near me just thought he would really put the fear of God into one of those guys who had become very friendly. I had said something to one of my bedmates there that I understood a little German because I could understand Yiddish, but later on he told one of the German orderlies that was hanging around me, he says, "You better watch out for that guy because he's a Jew." Well, it wasn't that the orderly really was frightened, but he became distant at that point.

Anyway, I didn't stay in Paris very long, and then the orders came through that people in my position, and there were loads of them, were to be sent to England because they decided that we would never go back to combat again. When I got to England, I was sent to an American military hospital and of course that's when I got in touch with Walter Weinberg, who came to see me, and we saw quite a bit of each other at that time.

The thing that used to drive you crazy was here you were in England and right across the Channel is this horrendous situation going on, and these doctors didn't know from anything. They would tell you we were malingerers because we could have done something about not getting our feet in this condition. "Why didn't you change your socks?" So we would tell them, we'd say, "What kind of nonsense are you talking about? Do you think we had a choice?" Most of the men who were in my position, when they were sent back for even a few weeks, they got the same thing again, and most of those guys ended up with amputations. So the decision was made by the Army at that point and, of course, the war in Europe was rapidly coming to an end, and they said no more about this. They would not send guys back. So that's when I went to a convalescent center in the Midlands in England.

PB: What was your rank by then?

WLR: My rank was just private first class.

PB: Did the color come back to your toes?

WLR: Yeah, but I'm still not normal, no. I have poor circulation and there's tingling in my toes at all times. I never got back full circulation in my toes.

The war ended in April of 1945. Just previous, Franklin D. Roosevelt died and that was a very traumatic thing to go to the nearby town, leaving the convalescent center on the day after Roosevelt died, and finding all the shops closed and black drapes — and people would come over to us American GIs and say, "we're sorry" just as though it was a parent. It was incredible.

That's when I met Fred Irving, who had been a classmate of mine at Brown and was an Air Force pilot who was shot down over Rumania and ended up in a German prison camp. Through him I met a lot of the guys who had been Air Force men who were shot down and ended up in prison camps and all of them wanted to tell their story. In most cases, the worst part of their confinement was the lack of food.

PB: What about Irving — Fred Irving was Jewish?

WLR: Okay, Fred had dog tags that said he was a Protestant, because when they flew they were given separate dog tags when they could possibly end up in Germany.

PB: You know, that's interesting because he could have been wounded or even killed and he would have been buried as a Protestant.

WLR: Buried as a Christian, yeah. People that Fred had introduced me to wanted to tell about the experiences on being shot down and how they finally ended up in German hands. In many cases, they were thankful when the Germans came for them because of the treatment they had gotten from the Rumanians. The Rumanian Guard was using them as target practice until the Germans came. And another man told me

a story about being in Rumanian hands in Rumania, and he went to the latrine there, and a little man came along who was the guy that did the dirty work cleaning out the latrine. He was a Jewish prisoner. And he said to the men — I don't know what language, maybe German — he said, "Have hope, have hope, have hope!" Can you imagine? I mean those are the stories that stand out. It's funny that to me the things I remember are the things that were not really combat related.

I was in the Army altogether two-and-a-half years. When I entered, I just turned 20, and I was 22-1/2 when I got out.

PB: And when you got out what did you want to do?

WLR: Well, there was a good opportunity for me in my father's business. This was the Shiloh Bottling Company in Providence. I was one of these guys who got married very shortly after getting out. I didn't even know Elaine until I got out. But we met very soon after because she lived across the street from an uncle of mine in New York City. And about six months later we were married.

You know, way back in late 1943, early 1944, before I ended up in the infantry and went overseas, I was assigned to this command air base with two little towns nearby, Warrensburg and Sedalia, Missouri. This was in the summer and I decided the first weekend I was given liberty to go into Warrensburg, which was the larger of the two towns. So I got to Warrensburg and it was a one-main-drag town and I immediately saw a sign that said Foster's Department Store. And knowing some Jewish Fosters in Rhode Island, I thought maybe this could be a Jewish-owned store. So I went in and it was actually a very small store, although it was called a department store, and there was a young woman who looked particularly attractive, and I went over and thought she might be a member of that family. Well, we had a brief discussion during which I told her something about myself and she told me something about herself: she was a University of Missouri undergraduate and was home for the summer working in the family store and, yes, they were Jewish. And just as I said, this young lady was very attractive so I already had visions that would make connections with her while I was in the air base there and eventually be invited to her home and then I'd have a Jewish home away from home. So I casually said to her, after we'd had quite a bit of discussion, I casually said to her that I would probably be free the following weekend and would it be possible for us to maybe go out together. And she drew herself up to her full height, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "Soldier, I don't date enlisted men." And that was the end of my fantasy.



THE LAST JEWISH STEAM BATH IN PROVIDENCE

BY NOEL RUBINTON

On Candace Street, once part of the bustling Jewish North End of Providence, an Irish man in his 70s approaches. "You're looking at the old baths," he says with a smile of recognition, glancing at the abandoned and deteriorating building at number 26. For him, a lifelong resident of the neighborhood and former Brown & Sharpe worker, the building was an important way-station. It was a place to take a shower on the way home from work in order to spare the family bathtub.

But for the Jewish community from the 1920s to 1968, this place — known variously as the Candace Street Baths, North End Russian and Turkish Baths, and Max's Turkish and Russian Bath — was far more. It was a place for ritual and relaxation. For first and second generation immigrants, mostly from Russia and elsewhere in Europe, it was a place to call home away from home, a place to talk about "the old country." There was nothing quite like it before in Rhode Island, and certainly not since.

Built and owned by the Vaad HaKashruth, the baths got their start in the 1920s, at a time when many apartments and houses were without hot water and when health clubs were unknown. From the start, the baths had formal and informal uses. For the sacred, the Mikveh held a crucial place. But it was on the social side that the baths made most of their name and impact.

"Everyone went there," recalls Ed Gershman of Pawtucket,¹ whose father, Isadore, took over the running of the baths in 1931 from a Mr. Fink, the first operator. Isadore Gershman brought his wife and seven children from Odessa in Russia to Providence in 1923. Gershman's job re-stuffing mattresses ended when his doctor told him to get out because dust was getting into his lungs. So he took over as the proprietor of the baths. His wife, Jennie, became the "Mikveh lady," and son Ed started working there after school and on weekends at age twelve, doing chores such as serving sandwiches and watching and learning from the masseurs, Mr. Geller and Mr. Ornstein.

There were always non-Jewish customers, including many from Providence's Italian community, and women were admitted to the baths at certain times. But Jewish men were the backbone of the business. "We had the elite clientele," Gershman remembers, reeling off a virtual who's who of Providence's Jewish business community at the time, names such as Hassenfeld, Lerner, Rosenberg, and Weiner. Often these successful men would come for a night out on Saturday, taking baths, then relaxing by playing cards, eating (the food usually came from the beloved Star Delicatessen), and talking late into the night. Some stayed overnight

Noel Rubinton, a graduate of Brown University now living on Long Island, is the Viewpoints Editor at *Newsday Magazine*.



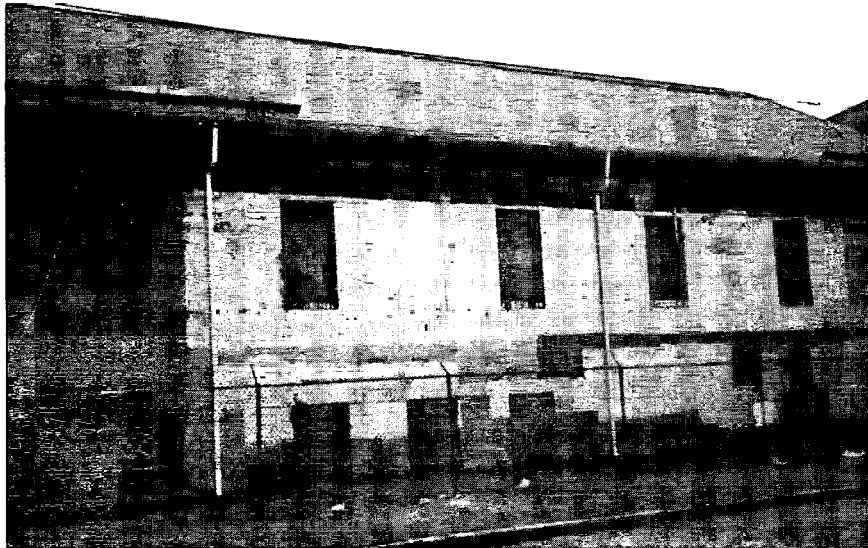
Left. Max Greenberg, Providence, June 14, 1963. Courtesy R.I. Jewish Herald. Opposite page. Max's Turkish and Russian Bath (boarded up), September, 1998. Photo by the author.

in the building's collection of private and dormitory-style sleeping rooms and went home the next morning. It was still before the age of television and there was a radio at the baths but it rarely went on during these evenings, Gershman said, because "they had their own entertainment." Yiddish was commonly spoken.

While the baths were closed on Shabbat morning, Gershman remembers going in with his father to help him clean up and take logs to heat the rocks that boosted the temperature to between 150 and 200 degrees. The facilities included a steam room, a pool, an area for showers and rubdowns, and the key places: the Turkish bath and the Russian bath. The Russian bath was perhaps the signature spot, with its three levels and benches. The higher the level, the higher the heat. To superheat the room, men would pour water into the furnace of fiery hot rocks. The Postik (bath house attendant) would use brooms to brush patrons with soapy water; then they would take a cold shower or go into the pool, where the water was kept at a temperature of about fifty degrees. Beyond relaxation, Gershman said the various procedures had medical benefits as well, such as helping people with arthritis.

Making the brooms for Pleytses (backrubs) was an important undertaking. Gershman remembers his father going foraging for hours in the woods around Twin Rivers and Douglas Pike in North Providence, now the site of Route 7. He would find small, soft oak leaves from saplings and then soak them and tie them up. Gershman still has one of his father's brooms in his basement.

In 1938, Max Greenberg went to work for Isadore Gershman at the baths.²In 1941,



Greenberg took over after Gershman left to help his sister, who had a bakery in South Providence. While the name changed to Max's Turkish and Russian Bath, much stayed the same. The clientele remained mixed, though predominantly Jewish; lox and corned beef were still staples of the menu; and Greenberg's wife, Fannie, ran the Mikveh while his three sons, Philip, Leonard, and David, helped him.

Max Greenberg had come to the United States in 1907 from Turkey;³ his parents were originally from Rumania. Greenberg had been in the jewelry business before coming to the baths. He was an active member of orthodox congregations in Providence, as well as many other Jewish organizations.

Running the baths, while rewarding for his father, was also hard work, Leonard Greenberg said. "It was blood money he earned there." The customers were loyal. Leonard says a group came regularly from Fall River and he recalls that the men would leave saying, "We'll see you in a week. We can live for a week now."

Leonard Greenberg remembers the excitement of giving rubdowns — "I acted like I knew what I was doing" — and getting a tip of five cents. Philip Greenberg said of the baths: "It was really beautiful, it was the place to be. What a Mechaye (pleasure) it was to have a Pleytse." The camaraderie continued to be an important part of the experience, as did the soft hats that men wore while they had sponges in their mouths so they could breath in the high heat. Many customers were heard to exclaim: "Ah, Mechaye!"

As time wore on, however, the appeal of baths like Max's began to slip. Health clubs, country clubs, tennis clubs, and other facilities became more common in Rhode Island and more open to Jews. The Jews that once made up such a big part of the North End population — the ready-made customer base for the baths — dispersed to other parts of the city. Then Jews from Providence moved to the suburbs.

But Max's still had its devotees. Aaron Cohen of Pawtucket remembers going with three other friends around 1953: "One of my friends decided we should give it a try. Already there were health clubs with steam baths, but this sounded like the real thing."⁴ And they weren't disappointed: "It was just a great way to relax," he said, "The atmosphere was so marvelous." Cohen and his friends all had young children at the time and it was a pleasant way to have a night out with friends once a week.

Cohen recalls a highlight that wasn't connected to the steam baths. One night word was passed that a young man had come to the Mikveh to bless his dishes and start a new home. As Cohen and others watched, the man brought his dishes to the Mikveh, said a prayer, and dipped each dish. "I had never heard of this before. That was an eye-opener for me," Cohen said.

But as much as Cohen and his friends enjoyed the baths, they only went for about a year. There were more and more choices elsewhere, albeit sans the religious and cultural atmosphere. Inspired by Max's, one of Cohen's friends even built a sauna in his new house.

Another person who enjoyed the baths in the 1950s was Morton Gilstein of Providence.⁵ In 1958 he was fresh out of college and says, "How I got started going I'm not really sure, but it was quite the place." He recalls: "You were handed a towel and a sheet by either Mrs. Greenberg or David. When completely undressed, you descended to the showers and then the bath. God, was it ever hot. If saunas are 120-150 degrees, this had to be close to 200. Max would lay you out on a bench, put an ice cold sponge in your mouth and cover your head with a cold towel. You then received a Pleytse — a vigorous scrubbing with a brush made of leaves. Finally, you would be hosed off and return upstairs." He remembers, too, the massages from an ex-boxer working there and "I would pay about four to five dollars for all this and leave feeling wonderful." In his time, Gilstein remembers being "easily the youngest present, as the baths became a gathering spot for Jewish elders."

Despite the enthusiasm of some, demand for the baths continued to dwindle, and Max's closed in 1968 after Max Greenberg died at age sixty-one. It never reopened. The building was converted into apartments for some years and closed down again. Now it is scheduled to be turned into a Hispanic church.

There is no evidence that there was ever another place in Rhode Island quite like the baths on Candace Street. There were other public baths, such as one on Quaid Street, but they were more utilitarian and had no Jewish connection. In fact, there are few Jewish-oriented bathhouses left anywhere in the United States.

With the demise of Max's, the baths, a remnant of the "old country," had, in the words of Philip Greenberg, become "a thing of the past."



NOTES

- ¹ Telephone interview with Ed Gershman, October 30, 1998.
- ² Telephone interview with Philip and Leonard Greenberg, September 11, 1998.
- ³ "Max Greenberg Works For Them All," article in *The Rhode Island Herald*, June 14, 1963.
- ⁴ Telephone interview with Aaron Cohen on November 1, 1998.
- ⁵ Letter from Morton Gilstein, August 30, 1998.



George Wein, Newport Folk Music Festival. Courtesy of George Wein.

THE NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL: A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

BY GEORGE M. GOODWIN

A jewel of the North Atlantic, Newport has for centuries symbolized maritime trade, naval power, religious tolerance, and pleasure—especially for the rich and powerful. To such observers as Edith Wharton and John Huston, even its decadence has been alluring. In recent decades, the miniature city on Aquidneck Island has enjoyed wide renown through music. In keeping with its own heterodox traditions, Newport has welcomed sounds from across the seas and around the nation; it has harbored extraordinary creativity. Given their involvement in countless artistic endeavors, it is not surprising to discover that Jews have played a part in that creativity. Yet the story of Jewish involvement in Newport's musical fame is not primarily about Newport's Jewish citizens. Instead, it resides with Jews from elsewhere, who lent their skills, talents, and daring to help create the ambience in which Newport's music flourished.

While Newport's jazz, opera, and chamber festivals deserve studies of their own, this essay focuses on the folk festivals, particularly their early period, from 1959 through 1969. Thanks to a flurry of scholarly studies and reminiscences by key participants, it is possible to look back with some ease and insight; the heady experience of ballads, banjos, bluegrass, and Baez has not been forgotten.¹

During the early 1950s, Newport was a delightful but sleepy place. In 1953, a few adventurous aristocrats, led by George Warren, a New Yorker, sought to provide greater musical sustenance. Their Newport Music Festival engaged the New York Philharmonic for two outdoor concerts, but due to inclement weather the effort was a resounding flop.

The next step was the introduction of jazz. Some controversy remains over who deserves credit for the idea of a Newport jazz festival. According to Burt Goldblatt, a photographer who attended all the concerts and published a documentary study, credit goes to John Maxon, the director of the Museum of Art at Rhode Island School of Design.² Though not himself a jazz fan, he predicted that a summer festival in Newport would be a wild success. Strangely, Maxon never made the effort to attend the concerts, and he left Providence in 1959 to be Curator of Modern Paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Without question, Louis Lorillard and his wife, Elaine, were instrumental in the creation of the jazz festivals. A Newport native, Lorillard was a descendant of Pierre Lorillard, the tobacco tycoon. He was descended from Livingston Beekman, a governor of Rhode Island, and Robert Livingston, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.³ While serving in Italy during World War II, he met Elaine Guthrie,

George Goodwin, Ph.D., lives in Providence and is an archivist at Temple Beth-El and a member of the Executive Committee of RIJHA. This article is dedicated to the late Norman Mirsky, professor of contemporary Jewish studies and sociology at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles.

a jazz aficionado and pianist who eventually claimed credit for the concept of a small summer festival in Newport.

Agreeing to bankroll the first concerts, the Lorillards contributed \$20,000. Among sixty-five prominent families who were invited to lend support, only George Warren accepted. When the Jazz Foundation of Newport, Rhode Island, was chartered in April, 1954, Louis Lorillard agreed to serve as its president. Sensing that a professional concert organizer was needed, Elaine turned to George Wein, a Jewish jazz promoter and bandleader working in Boston. As later events demonstrated, this was a fateful decision.⁴

Born in Boston in 1925, Wein, the son of a plastic surgeon, grew up in Newton. By fifteen years of age, he already led his own jazz band. After military service during World War II, he pursued pre-med studies at Boston University and graduated in 1950. He immediately launched a career as both a jazz musician and as a jazz promoter. His Storyville Club opened in Kenmore Square and soon moved to the Copley Square Hotel. The Hotel also became the site of his Mahogany Hall, which showcased his own Dixieland band as well as numerous stars.

When hired by the Lorillards for \$1,000, Wein was asked to produce two evenings of outdoor entertainment in July, 1954, at the Newport Casino. Seeking the best talent, he enlisted Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Gerry Mulligan, Stan Kenton, and The Modern Jazz Quartet. When 13,000 fans attended, an annual concert series seemed only natural, and Newport quickly became home to the outstanding American jazz festival of the late 1950s despite the facts that the town was accessible only by the Jamestown ferry and Mount Hope bridge, had few hotels, motels, or campgrounds, and was reluctant to accommodate blacks or interracial couples. In 1959, Wein's own marriage to a black earned his father's disapproval.

Brilliant and egotistical, Wein became one of the century's most successful impresarios. His illustrious Jewish colleagues would include Sol Hurock, David Merrick, Joseph Papp, and Harvey Lichtenstein. Based on the success of Newport, Wein launched jazz festivals in Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh. With the addition of festivals in Toronto, Nice, and Tokyo, his Festival Productions, headquartered in New York City, exerted an international influence.

The significance of the early Newport jazz festivals has been gauged, in remarkable personal terms, by Michael Fink, a Providence native.⁵ Growing up near North Main Street's Rhode Island Auditorium, he always felt the excitement of live entertainment. While still a student at Classical High (but looking considerably younger), Fink frequented the Celebrity Club, where he heard Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald, and he also became acquainted with New York's cellar jazz clubs. While living in Paris for two years, he met other jazz musicians. Consequently,

when Fink returned to Rhode Island in 1957 to teach literature at the Rhode Island School of Design, he felt that "the world had come to him" during the summer concerts. While seated on the lawn at the festival beneath a starry sky and a glaring moon, he was enraptured. Simultaneously, Fink felt excited, he reports, to be a spectator at the performance of first-rate jazz, a supporter of civil rights, and a witness to Newport's colonial Jewish heritage of discovery and innovation.

Another Jewish native of Rhode Island, James Tobak, grew up in Newport, and thought that his hometown was musically cosmopolitan even if it had only one traffic light. He attended his first jazz concert in 1958, at twelve years of age.⁶ Years later, when the folk festivals were in their prime, Tobak hosted many fraternity buddies who came to town. Sleeping on Middletown's Second Beach was the "cool" thing to do. But Tobak's older sister, Helen, scored even more points when she dated Bob Dylan's cousin, who was at Officer Candidate School in Newport.

Despite their extraordinary quality and popularity, the jazz festivals were not yet profitable. By 1959, Wein began searching for a new way to bolster revenues. He and his supporters, who had received a new charter as the American Jazz Festival, thought of attracting a somewhat larger audience through another genre, folk music. Toward the end of the Eisenhower administration, audiences were being captivated by lively and authentic American music. Since early in the century, in fact, folk music had been sought out, recorded, studied, performed, and interpreted— as if it might disappear forever. A small circle of devotees included literature professors, anthropologists, folklorists, ethnomusicologists, archivists, and amateur enthusiasts.

Many specialists believed that folk music still existed in various rural or isolated settings, where self-taught singers, instrumentalists, and dancers perpetuated traditional sounds not only for their personal gratification but for larger, communal needs. Accordingly, talented individuals were willing to forsake professional careers in order to protect their cultural identity and purity: there were important differences separating folk and commercial art. Even without Newport's folk festival, therefore, there would have been a folk music craze. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, it enjoyed widespread appeal, as demonstrated by the long-playing records (monaural at the time, not stereo) that were charted by *Billboard* magazine as the "Top 20 Pop Albums."⁷

The Kingston Trio, for example, enjoyed enormous sales, as did Harry Belafonte, especially his recordings of two concerts at Carnegie Hall. Joan Baez prevailed in 1962 and 1963 as a highly popular entertainer, though she was soon eclipsed by Peter, Paul and Mary, who enjoyed top sales through 1965. Jewish tastes fit this popular trend: in 1963, one of the most beloved albums was Allan Sherman's "My Son, The Folk Singer," a zany parody.

The Newport Folk Festival, under Wein's direction, appealed to this widespread interest. Robert Cantwell, author of *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*, views the success of the Newport folk concerts in symbolic terms.⁸ The concerts, he claims, were not only exceptional events or experiences — “happenings” to use the parlance of that era — but also a trenchant critique of middle-class values in a capitalist society. For Cantwell, Newport represented a dark and bitter morality play that juxtaposed old age and youth, wealth and modesty, corruption and idealism, past and future.

But perhaps the Newport Festival was even more remarkable because there was no living folk tradition in Rhode Island. The concerts could not feature any indigenous school or talent; indeed, few professional musicians even vacationed there. So as a shrewd businessman, George Wein had to find ways to exploit the national craving for folk music in a remote location. During his first summer, in 1959, he was eager to welcome stars such as the Kingston Trio. And he had the foresight to recognize the stars of an earlier era. Like the Newport jazz festival, the folk festival could soon be seen not as a completely innovative endeavor but as a link in a long chain of revivals.

Huddie Ledbetter (“Leadbelly”), the singer, songwriter, and master of the twelve-string guitar, who served long terms in Texas and Louisiana prisons, would have been a major attraction in Newport, but he had died a decade earlier. Similarly, Woody Guthrie, the legendary guitarist and singer from Okemah, Oklahoma, who had written and popularized hundreds of ballads such as “This Train Is Bound for Glory” and “This Land Is Your Land,” would also have been ideal, but he was stricken with a debilitating disease and unable to perform.⁹

Instead, Wein turned to one of Guthrie's most accomplished acolytes, Pete Seeger (born 1919), the son of a musicologist, who had taught and inspired his own legions of admirers and imitators over a two-decade career. With banjo in hand and chin uplifted, Seeger, like Guthrie, used music as a powerful weapon to oppose war, tyranny, hatred, exploitation, and misery.¹⁰ Seeger had become an outcast for his support of trade unions and other left-wing causes, and in 1952, when he defied a Congressional subpoena, he was blacklisted. By the time he came to Newport, his career was not yet fully rehabilitated.

Wein also had the foresight to recruit another key figure in the folk movement revival, this one a Jew like himself. Born in Vienna in 1924, Theodore Bikel fled with his family to Palestine in 1939. Trained as an actor in Tel Aviv and London, he came to New York in 1955 to pursue roles on stage, in film, and on television. Though some of his colleagues could sing ballads in Spanish or Gaelic, Bikel was the most worldly. He mastered numerous tongues, including Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, French, German, Greek, Italian, Russian, and Zulu.



Theodore Bikel, Newport Folk Music Festival.
Courtesy of Theodore Bikel and Elektra
Records.

Like such aspiring actors as Belafonte and the Clancy Brothers, Bikel found stature as a singer, and in 1960 he published an anthology, *Folksongs and Footnotes: An International Songbook*. Bikel defined a folk song not in terms of who might sing it but what it could do, its emotional power: "It admonishes, lulls to sleep, calls to battle, rings with hope for the prisoner, with threat for the jailer, with joy for lovers, and with bitterness for him who might have but didn't. It heralds birth, boyhood, wedlock. It soothes, the weary, the sick, and the aged, and it mourns the dead."¹¹ At its richest and fullest, folk music is a celebration of life, an affirmation of human dignity, and a plea for social justice. In its quest to repair a ruptured world, Bikel believes, folk music conveys many values essential to Judaism.

Bikel occupies a special place in one family's memory. On Friday, November 22, 1963, Eugene and Arline Weinberg moved into their new home on Olney Street in Providence.¹² They planned to attend a Bikel concert that evening at Veterans' Auditorium. The artist transformed it into a memorial to the assassinated president Kennedy.

Bikel's memoirs open a window on the role played by Jews within the folk music panorama. Though few singers were observant, many practiced music as both an artistic and spiritual calling. Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary was born a Jew. One of The Limelites was Lou Gottlieb, who had earned a doctorate in musicology. Some of the original members of The Tarriers included Alan Arkin and Marshall Brickman; a third member, Eric Weissberg, had previously sung with The Greenbriar Boys. Jewish members of The New Lost City Ramblers were John Cohen and Tracy Schwarz.

The outstanding independent talent agent of the period was Harold Leventhal, who managed The Weavers, Pete Seeger, and a young troubadour from Minnesota named Dylan. In an earlier era, Millard Lampell was the Jewish member of The Almanac Singers. Pete Seeger's Jewish colleague in The Weavers was Fred Hellerman. Even Woody Guthrie found a Jewish partner. His second wife, Marjorie Mazia, was the daughter of a Yiddish poet, Aliza Greenblatt.

Equally important, a national folk music revival would never have occurred without the existence of a record industry in which Jews played prominent roles. In 1950, Jac Holtzman founded Elektra Records in New York City. Vanguard Records was founded by two brothers, Maynard and Seymour Solomon, in New York in the early 1950s (highlights of the Newport folk festival are currently available on twenty CDs issued by Vanguard). And Goddard Lieberson was president of Columbia Records.

But the record company executive most involved in American and international folk music was Moses Asch. Asch (1905-1986), who created and owned for most of its years the Folkways label, is a particularly fascinating and perplexing figure within a Jewish context. He had a meager Jewish education, was nonobservant, but gave his son an Orthodox Bar Mitzvah. Moses was the second son of Sholem Asch, probably the world's most popular Yiddish novelist and playwright before World War II. Born in Poland, reared in France and New York, educated in New Jersey and Germany, and a resident of New York City, Moses helped nurture an extraordinary number and variety of famous and anonymous artists. Still available, there are more than 2,000 Folkways recordings.

Asch was clever enough to understand that Yiddish stories and cantorial music would eventually serve as a bridge to larger markets. He was assisted by a dedicated and perceptive staff, which included such Jewish universalists as Marian Distler and Irwin Silber. Because its heyday was the 1950s, Folkways — more than any other recording or distributing company — paved the way for Newport. He signed a few of the artists whom the festivals introduced, but as Peter Goldsmith clearly demonstrates, Asch was not fundamentally interested in commercial success. His interest lay in assembling the century's most comprehensive and authoritative folk music archive.¹³

In numerous ways the early folk festival set high standards and bold precedents. Though the first, in 1959, lasted only two days, it was amazingly popular. More than 10,000 adults and children attended the major evening concerts in Freebody Park as well as a series of daytime panel discussions and workshops held at other locales. Because most programs were held outside, however, the elements often caused havoc.

Each festival featured scores of performers— veterans and neophytes, the

brilliant and mediocre, magnetic and shy— drawn from throughout America. The professionals received only \$50 and an honorarium for transportation and lodging. While the most expensive seat (on a folding chair) was \$5, many events were free. There was little intention of making a profit, but small surpluses were shared with grassroots organizations. Pulsating with energy, roaring with excitement, and overflowing with good will, the folk festivals were a natural preamble to the nation's Bicentennial celebrations in 1976.

Long before the term became a political slogan, the festivals were joyfully "multicultural." Without minority artists, the festivals would not have thrived. There were Native American and Hispanic performers, and women artists abounded, but given the pioneering contributions made by "Leadbelly," Josh White, Sonny Terry, and others, the music of black America was pivotal. Such groups as The Freedom Singers, which originated with civil rights protests in the South, came to Newport to rally support and recruit activists. If the Newport festival had an anthem, it was "We Shall Overcome," a ballad learned by Pete Seeger in 1947 and popularized by him a decade later. Almost all of the evening concerts, which ran well past midnight, closed with performers and audiences singing the hymn's simple but profoundly moving chorus.

As a result of riots at the 1960 jazz festival, the 1961 and 1962 festivals were canceled. Fifty spectators had been injured in a drunken melee at Freebody Park.¹⁴ When the festivals resumed in 1963, staggering crowds created vexing complications. Four-day attendance at the folk concerts was 46,000, surpassing the jazz concerts by 10,000. Newport had not yet devised a plan to feed, house, move, and control such an invasion. Many residents were alarmed to find fans sleeping in their yards. "Chickie" Friedman, who lived on K Street, was always upset to hear crying babies.¹⁵ She would invite them and their mothers inside her home. David Lansky, who had opened the Music Box on Thames Street in 1958, put in long hours as a concessionaire at the concerts.¹⁶ He was often irritated by the fans' inconsiderate behavior. One morning, before he could even open his booth, a customer reached inside for an album. When he went to reproach her, he noticed the biggest blue eyes he had ever seen. Judy Collins had not yet received a copy of her latest recording.

In 1964, editorial writers for the *Providence Journal* urged state officials to construct a suitable performance facility. They claimed that Newport "has what it takes to be the summer music center of the East— perhaps of the world."¹⁷ By 1965, without government subsidy, the main venue was moved to "Festival Field," an open site on Connell Highway north of downtown. This space accommodated up to 19,000 spectators. Jeff Brown, then a post-confirmation student at Temple Beth-El in Providence, remembers attending a Peter, Paul and Mary concert that year.¹⁸ When they sang Fanny Lou Hamer's "This Little Light of Mine," he recalls, the night was set aglow by thousands of matches and cigarette lighters.

For many fans and historians, the folk festival's most significant phase was 1963 through 1965. Attendance did not begin to dip until 1967, and there was a momentary lull before wrenching national upheavals. Pete Seeger and Theodore Bikel would continue their steady leadership, and new participants would include Richie Havens, Janis Ian, Joani Mitchell, and Buffy Sainte-Marie. But these three years were especially notable because of the participation of two musicians, both electrifying performers — especially when brought together.

Joan Baez, a minister's granddaughter, was born on Staten Island and attended Boston University.¹⁹ She appeared on the November 23, 1962 cover of *Time* magazine, and her version of "We Shall Overcome," which she recorded in Birmingham in 1963, became the standard.

Robert Allen Zimmerman, better known as Dylan, was born a Jew in Minnesota's harsh Iron Range.²⁰ An admirer of the Welsh poet, he took the name Dylan after moving to Minneapolis. Like Baez, Dylan was self-taught. He became a folksinger by immersing himself in recordings. By 1961 he found his way to New York City, both to meet his ailing idol, Woody Guthrie (also a harmonica player), and to seek his destiny. Within a year, Dylan gained a contract with Columbia and released his first album. By the spring of 1963, he acquired a manager, Harold Leventhal, and made his debut at Town Hall in New York. By July, he performed at a civil rights rally in Greenwood, Mississippi.

Only a few weeks later, Dylan made his first appearance at Newport, where he also cut three songs: "Blowin' In The Wind," "We Shall Overcome," and "With God On Our Side." Referring to Dylan and others, Ted Holmberg of the *Providence Journal* wrote: "It was one of those rare evenings when everything is so close to right that it is almost frightening, when the program builds to a certain climax inexorably and when even the elements combine to make loveliness a tangible thing: so tangible one feels as though one can reach out and touch it."²¹ More than any musical artist of his generation, Dylan decried the fragmenting social order. His extraordinary and provocative lyrics were echoed by many other singers.

When Dylan returned to Newport in 1964, Ted Holmberg described him as "a genius."²² The following summer, Holmberg called him "a hero" and "a demigod."²³ The journalist did not seem to care that the musician had moved in another direction. Embracing electric guitar with an entire band, Dylan was no longer "a folkie" but "a rocker." Pete Seeger was so incensed that he attempted to cut off his power supply, but Dylan's era at Newport was already over.

As rock music became deafening and apocalyptic, folk music grew mellower and more sentimental. Woody Guthrie died in 1967, so the 1968 festival included a tribute to him. His half-Jewish son Arlo was introduced to Newport audiences but though a personable entertainer, later known for doing rambling ballads, he did not

inherit the Guthrie mantle. Ever a marketing genius, George Wein offered three post-festival concerts that year, the peak year for attendance at the folk festival, when more than 73,000 made a pilgrimage to Newport. By the following year, however, attendance plummeted to 51,000. Seeger and Bikel performed, as did Baez, but there was little trailblazing talent.

This was the same summer that the Newport Bridge (later renamed in honor of Claiborne Pell) opened; even the improved access did not help the Festival. David Fenton, a Jewish member of the Newport city council until 1968, encouraged the festivals, which he thought most Newporters only grudgingly tolerated, but in vain.²⁴ Newport's robust encounter with folk music had reached a sudden standstill. Wein had been requesting better facilities since 1963; without them, he warned, a move elsewhere might be necessary.

But Fenton, among others, could not visualize another venue in town. Newport officials had grown weary of unruly and disruptive behavior, especially the drinking and marijuana smoking among fans at the jazz concerts, which continued to be well attended (in 1969, 80,000 spectators attended the jazz festival). According to Fenton, many Newporters resented the musicians' leftist sympathies, and they detested unruly young people. In 1969, a rampage occurred at a jazz concert, which forced Wein to hire more police and erect additional barricades. In 1971, there was a worse disturbance, and city fathers closed the jazz festival two days ahead of schedule. "Festival Field," only leased for concerts, had become highly attractive to developers; it eventually became a shopping center.

Wein was not discouraged. In 1972 he moved the Newport jazz festival to New York City, where he expanded it to forty-five concerts at five locations, taking place over nine days. Attendance climbed to 100,000. The master impresario attracted extensive corporate sponsorship, including Playboy and Schlitz. When Brown & Williamson, the tobacco company, became the festival's largest sponsor, the Newport moniker was replaced by "Kool." To date, more than twenty "Kool" jazz festivals have been held around the country. In 1981, Wein brought "Kool" back home to Newport. It seemed an ironic gesture, for the "Newport" brand belonged to Lorillard tobacco.

In 1986, Louis Lorillard, only 67 years but long divorced from Elaine, was laid to rest in Portsmouth. His former wife still resides in Newport, but she is troubled by the small coverage given to the festivals by the new Museum of Newport History. By the close of the Newport festivals, Pete Seeger had found a new cause, devoting his music to conservation and the clean-up of the Hudson River. Before his death in 1986, Moses Asch negotiated the purchase of the Folkways archive by the Smithsonian Institution. Though he never found stardom as an actor, Theodore Bikel became highly regarded as a humanitarian. He was a national leader of the

American Jewish Congress, and from 1975 to 1982 he served as president of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. He continued to sing, and his most enthusiastic audiences were often found in synagogues; in the last several years he has performed twice at Temple Beth-El in Providence.

In 1997, Dylan received government honors at Kennedy Center. It is difficult to argue with the assessment, however, that his most seminal work was created decades ago, during the period when he performed at Newport. Among her contemporaries, Joan Baez has been most loyal to Newport. She has appeared in summer concerts at Fort Adams State Park on a regular basis since 1988, when the ice cream moguls, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, revived the folk festival. But except for these Fort Adams concerts and Saturday afternoon programming on Boston's WGBH radio, there are no reminders in Newport of a movement that has faded away from the local scene. Has Newport erected any kind of memorial, or is a sculpture or a marker even appropriate?

Songs of freedom, equality, justice, and hope will forever be sung around campfires and in Sunday schools. They are part of our American and our Jewish inheritance. In time, folk music will surely experience still another revival. When that occurs, the adventure on Aquidneck Island will seem not so quaint or distant but quite vivid and timely—a marvelous prologue and a powerful prototype.



NOTES

- ¹ See Terry E. Miller, *Folk Music in America: A Reference Guide* (New York: Garland, 1986); this bibliography lists nearly 2,000 items. See also Neil V. Rosenberg, ed., *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
- ² Burt Goldblatt, *Newport Jazz Festival: The Illustrated History* (New York: Dial Press, 1977), p. xi.
- ³ D. Morgan McVicar, "Louis Lorillard: Founder of Folk Festival," *Providence Journal*, November 7, 1986, p. C, 2.
- ⁴ See Charles Mortiz, ed., *Current Biography Yearbook 1985* (New York: H. H. Wilson, 1985); and Barry Kernfeld, *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, Vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 193-194.
- ⁵ Interview in Providence on October 25, 1998.
- ⁶ Interview in Providence on October 31, 1998.
- ⁷ Bruce C. Elrod, *Your Hit Parade & American Top Ten Hits*, 4th ed. (Ann Arbor: Popular Culture, 1994). For biographical sketches of prominent folk artists, see Julia M. Rubiner, ed., *Contemporary Musicians: Profiles of the People in Music*, 22 Vols. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1993); and Colin Lark, ed., *The Guinness Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, 6 Vols. (New York: Stockton, 1995). See also references such as Albert Christ-Janer, and others, *American Hymns Old and New* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); B. Lee Cooper: *A Resource Guide to Themes in Contemporary American Song Lyrics, 1950-1985* (New York: Greenwood, 1986); and Robert Lissauer, *Lissauer's Encyclopedia of Popular Music in America: 1888 to the Present* (New York: Paragon House, 1991).

- ⁸ Robert Cantwell, *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival* (New York: Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 293-310.
- ⁹ See David Marsh and Harold Leventhal, eds., *Woody Guthrie's Pastures of Plenty: A Self-Portrait* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990).
- ¹⁰ See Robbie Lieberman, "My Song Is My Weapon": *People's Songs, American Communism, and The Politics of Culture, 1930-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); and R. Serge Denisoff, *Great Day Coming: Folk Music and the American Left* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).
- ¹¹ Theodore Bikel, *Theo: The Autobiography of Theodore Bikel* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 168.
- ¹² Interview in Providence on October 25, 1998.
- ¹³ Peter D. Goldsmith, *Making People's Music: Moe Asch and Folkways Records* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).
- ¹⁴ See Nicolas Slonimsky, *Music Since 1900*, 5th ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1994), p. 687.
- ¹⁵ Telephone interview in Middletown on October 25, 1998.
- ¹⁶ Telephone interview in Newport on October 25, 1998.
- ¹⁷ "Newport's Festivals Need Statewide Help," *Providence Journal*, July 28, 1964, p. 14.
- ¹⁸ Interview in Providence on October 23, 1998.
- ¹⁹ Joan Baez, *And a Voice to Sing with: A Memoir* (New York: Summit, 1987).
- ²⁰ See, for example: Robert Shelton, *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan* (New York: Morrow, 1986); Bob Spitz, *Dylan: A Biography* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989); and Anthony DeCurtis and James Henke, eds., *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll* (New York: Random House, 1992).
- ²¹ Ted Holmberg, "A Few Rare Hours of Beauty, Triumph," *Providence Journal*, July 29, 1963, p. 1.
- ²² Ted Holmberg, "A Magnificent Windup," *Providence Journal*, July 27, 1964, p. 1.
- ²³ Ted Holmberg, "A Triumph to the Final Note," *Providence Journal*, July 26, 1965, p. 1.
- ²⁴ Telephone interview in Portland on October 30, 1998.

JEWES AND VOTING RIGHTS IN RHODE ISLAND

BY AARON COHEN

During a good part of the first two centuries of Rhode Island's existence, Jews were unable to vote! In order to understand this fact, which seems incredible today, we must look at the early history of Rhode Island. Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636. In Rhode Island he started the famous "Lively Experiment" in religious liberty.¹ He insisted that the functions of government and religion be separated. It was a major contribution toward the American theory of separation of church and state.

This climate of religious liberty is what attracted the first Jews to come to Rhode Island in 1658. But did Rhode Island continue to practice what its founder preached? To a great extent it did; never has freedom of worship been suspended within Rhode Island borders. However, for nearly two centuries the spirit of Rhode Island's famed guarantee was violated to some degree because both the colony and later the state imposed civil discriminatory policies upon religious minorities. "After Williams passed from the scene, Rhode Island too often exemplified the condition lamented by the eighteenth-century Irish satirist Jonathan Swift: 'We have just enough religion to make us hate,' said Swift, 'but not enough to make us love one another.'"²

Rhode Island's religiously inspired litany of civil wrongs began in 1719, when the General Assembly enacted a code of laws containing a statute denying freemanship — the right to vote and hold office — to Catholics and non-Christians. In 1738 the arbitrary disqualification of Catholics was removed. The act that accomplished this, however, neglected to define the civil status of those professing the Jewish faith. The Rhode Island colony's refusal to naturalize Jews was another blemish on the charter's guarantee of religious equality. Although Jews enjoyed freedom of worship, none, however qualified or competent, was ever made a freeman of the colony. On the issue of naturalization, both the Superior Court and the General Assembly, in 1761 and 1762 respectively, rejected the citizenship petitions of wealthy Newport merchants Aaron Lopez and Isaac Elizer because they were non-Christians.

In August 1790, when George Washington visited Rhode Island following its ratification of the Constitution, he was greeted by many well-wishers, including the congregation of Newport's Touro Synagogue. In a grateful response to his warm welcome from the Jewish community, the President later wrote the congregation a now-famous letter which prophesied that the new nation would provide the world with a model society where all people would enjoy liberty and the natural right to the respect of their fellows. Washington also assured his Jewish audience that "happily the government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction,

Aaron Cohen is past president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and currently a member of the board of Heritage Harbor Corp., representing RIJHA.

to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens." Happily also, Rhode Island's legislature fulfilled Washington's aspirations in 1798 by passing "An Act Relative to Religious Freedom and the Maintenance of Ministers," which finally removed the civil disabilities imposed against Rhode Islanders of the Jewish faith.³

Despite the passage of the act in 1798, discrimination continued against minorities because Rhode Island operated under the Royal Charter of 1663 even after the Revolution and statehood. The admission of freemen (those who could vote or hold office) was in the hands of landed proprietors and their successors. Criteria such as a requirement for native birth could be enacted to discriminate against minorities. As far as the Jews were concerned, after 1791 there were so few Jews that the act of 1798 was not an important factor. The first Jews had come to Newport, Rhode Island, in 1658 and remained there until the Revolutionary War. The British occupation of Newport during the Revolution and then the losses during the War of 1812 destroyed the business and commerce of the city with a resulting loss of half its population. By 1822 there were no more Jews in Newport. The next Jewish resident of Rhode Island, Solomon Pereira, came to Providence in 1838; other Jews did not settle in Providence until the 1840s. So there were no Jews in Rhode Island from 1822 to 1838.

In 1842 a state constitution was adopted which changed the requirements of the Royal Charter that only property-owners could vote. This barrier was removed for residents, Jews, and non-Jews alike. The new state constitution now prevailed and ushered in a new era of popular government with equal rights for most citizens.

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¹ The term "Lively Experiment" first appeared in the Royal Charter of 1663 from King Charles II.

² Patrick T. Conley, *Bill of Rights and Rhode Island* (Madison House, 1991) p. 9.

³ Conley, *Bill of Rights and Rhode Island*, pp. 9-10.



Elizabeth Guny, Newport, R.I., 1918.

ELIZABETH GUNY AND OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN

BY ALENE F. SILVER

Elizabeth Abrams, born in 1895, was married in 1917 to Harry Guny, a pharmacist. The marriage was blessed with love but not with offspring. Years later when Elizabeth was interviewed for the *Providence Journal*, she said, "We wanted a family, but it just wasn't to be. So the next best thing, little by little, was that we got mixed up with everybody else's children."¹ And this was indeed what happened. Elizabeth became a surrogate mother to about forty-five children in the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island. Like a real mother she continued her relationship with them throughout the rest of her long life.

The Jewish Orphanage was founded in 1909.² It was needed then to take care of some dependents of the numerous penniless immigrants who arrived in Providence in the early twentieth century. By the 1940s the Home became superfluous, partly because of the increased affluence of that population, and partly because foster homes and adoptions were increasingly used instead of institutions to care for needy children. In 1924, however, the orphanage was flourishing. A new building on Summit Avenue had just been built (later sold to The Miriam Hospital). It had a capacity for seventy-five children and facilities for sleeping, dining, studying, and recreation. Its peak population was forty-eight children in 1927. The name was changed to the "Children's Home of Rhode Island" in 1939. In 1942 the Home closed, its work subsumed by the "Jewish Family and Children's Service."

Elizabeth Guny was on the Board of Directors of the orphanage from 1927 to 1942. She was the only woman on the Board from 1930 to 1942. She was a "hands-on" director. She visited the children frequently. She was attentive to smaller as well as larger needs. For instance, she donated twelve mirrors for the bureaus of the girls' dormitories. She contributed \$200 for a fence around the tennis court and gave stationery to confirmants so that they could write "thank you" notes for gifts.³

The director of the orphanage in 1933 was Dr. Maurice Stollerman, who wrote Mrs. Guny a number of times thanking her for her "genuine interest in the orphanage" and remarking on her "joy in giving," hoping that she would continue to visit. The children also wrote to the Gunys. One of the most memorable examples was a letter addressed to Mr. Guny sent by Rena Shatz, dated January 16, 1934.⁴ In this note she sketched a large husky man in swimming trunks, and printed the following message:

Dr. Silver is Professor Emeritus of Biology at R.I. College and a former Research Associate at Brown University with over twenty papers to her credit.

To Mr. H. Guny: Do you think this is a likeness of you? Look at the brawn. If you think he's a little huskier than you, you better watch out cause we will send him up for you. UNLESS YOU LET MRS. GUNY COME HERE MORE OFTEN. We need her as much as you if not more. O.K.

Rena Shatz, Jewish Children's Home.

Years later (1982), Mrs. Guny was the subject of an admirable article in the *Providence Sunday Journal*.⁵ The author, Martha Smith, had not only interviewed Elizabeth but had sought out and interviewed many former orphans, obtaining their memories of Mrs. Guny and descriptions of their ongoing relations with her. The following material concerning former orphans is taken largely from this article.

In the article Mrs. Guny recollected Rena Shatz, and how she had accidentally met her on Union Street in Providence a few years subsequent to the letter to Mr. Guny described above. Rena was crying because she couldn't get a job. "I looked down and her shoes were all tattered and torn; nobody would hire her. I took her into a shoe store and got her a pair of shoes. She wore her shoes and got a job in the Outlet. She took up nursing and graduated from Beth Israel Hospital in Boston." Later Rena was married but was killed in a car crash "while still young and pretty." Her photo, taken in a military nurse's uniform, had a place of honor in Mrs. Guny's living room.

Another orphan, Lillian Klitzner, said in 1982 about the Children's Home, "It was the only place I was really happy in my life. Mrs. Guny came almost every night and bathed and powdered us. We were all her children. When I graduated from high school, she was the only person in the whole world who came to see me graduate. She gave us all encouragement, especially two of the girls who were promised by the orphanage that they would have help with nurse's training. She made sure they got the money." Lillian Klitzner graduated later from Hunter College and became a social worker.

Another girl, June Williams (married name), was placed in the Home in 1927 when her mother was ill. It was through Mrs. Guny that she started piano lessons with a good teacher. In 1982 Mrs. Williams recalled, "we had a very close relationship since I left the Home. She came to my wedding, came to see the first house we bought, came to our first Thanksgiving in our new home. She was always there when I needed her. In the early '30s when I was in the sixth grade, I wrote a poem called *A Mother's Love* and sent it to 'Be Be' to comfort her when her own mother died. She never forgot it. She got it out not long ago and showed it to me. She's kept it all those years."

The boys also had fond memories of Elizabeth Guny and vice versa. Ben Weiss, who was 58 in 1982, recalled that he had entered the orphanage at age five and stayed until he was sixteen. His father had "taken off," and his mother was in the hospital and died soon after. "Mrs. Guny loved us all," he remembered. "She was as



*Guny and Robert Kotlen ("Popsy Boy"),
1938.*

interested in us, as if we were her own children. She never forgot a birthday and she always followed all our activities. She still does, sending out cards, letters, notes of encouragement. She was a constant in our lives, a wonderful, wonderful person."

Ben Weiss grew up to be an outstanding artist and realtor. Mrs. Guny said of him in 1982: "He's been pushed around plenty in life, let me tell you. And he's the best-natured kid you'd ever want to know. The Weiss boys were found in a vacant tenement; someone reported them. He's come a long, long way."

Then there was Louis Kramer who used to play cornet in the orphanage band. He became principal of Mt. Pleasant High School, and later was the Assistant Superintendent of Providence schools. He was in the orphanage from the age of five until sixteen. His father died when he was three, and his mother couldn't care for him; he was found roaming the streets. He said of Elizabeth Guny in the 1982 article: "Mrs. Guny exuded a warmth and friendship not usually found in an institution. She drove us on picnics and outings, provided so much affection. When I graduated from college the only gift I got was a fountain pen from her."

Dr. Saul Barber was a professor and administrator at Lehigh University in 1982. He recalled Mrs. Guny and the orphanage. "I think back to those days and she was the one who was always around, always jolly. I remember that she'd be there at all the outings passing out the hard-boiled eggs." He and his older brother entered the Home after their father died and their mother began working six days a week in a bakery. Later he moved out of state but Mrs. Guny spotted his name in the newspaper. "She read about my promotion and wrote to me." He and his wife and two children visited her and kept in touch thereafter. He added, "She was especially close to the girls. Many of them didn't have mothers and they flocked to her. They



*Guny and Jimmy White,
June 1977.*

needed that kind of warmth. She ended up being a mother figure throughout their entire lives.”

Elizabeth Abrams Guny had a brother, Jack Abrams, and a sister, Pauline Abrams Kotlen. Pauline had a single child, Robert Kotlen, who was the apple of Elizabeth’s eye. She took him on trips to Boston and to visit the orphanage. She had two pet names for him — “Popsy Boy” and “Goozy Boodle.” When Robert was in the Navy he received many letters from his aunt. These were addressed to Goozy Boodle Kotlen and caused a mild riot at mail call.⁶ Later in his life, Robert Kotlen served as President of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association for the years 1989 and 1990. In an interview in 1998 he remembered his aunt very fondly and smilingly remarked that “she was eccentric.” When pressed, he recollected an example. He saw her very frequently and had a key to her apartment. If she wanted to leave him a note she fastened it in a spring-mounted wooden clothespin clip and “threw it on the kitchen floor.” (Actually this seems to be an efficient means of ensuring that a note is not overlooked, as so often happens.)

There is an old wooden three-story apartment building at 117 Benefit Street in Providence, which is presently owned by the Providence Preservation Society. It represents the common type of building on Benefit Street before “gentrification.” This house was the Guny home where Elizabeth lived from the time of her marriage in 1917 until her death in 1984. Her husband died in 1963, but she remained there, occupying the third floor and renting the first two floors to students of the Rhode Island School of Design situated nearby. She loved the view of the state Capitol from her home and maintained a constant interest in the ubiquitous students. In later life she walked along Benefit Street every day, chatting with everyone and known to the students as “Aunt Be Be.” They incorporated her in a number of their movies.⁷ She faithfully attended their art shows, and they frequently visited her for “tea, food and moral support.”⁸

Elizabeth Guny lived to age eighty-nine. Among other bequests, she left an endowment to the Rhode Island School of Design for an annual scholarship, called "The Elizabeth and Harry Guny Scholarship Fund," to be given to a needy student. It is a fitting cap to a lifetime of affectionate concern for other people's children.



NOTES

- ¹ Martha Smith, "Aunt Be Be's Kids Are Legion," *Providence Sunday Journal*, May 9, 1982, Sec. E, pp. 1-3.
- ² Eleanor Horvitz, "Jewish Orphanage Was Uniquely Different," *Federation Voice*, December 1986, p. 23. The article and its references contain much of the factual material about the orphanage used in this essay.
- ³ Letters from Dr. Maurice Stollerman to Elizabeth Guny, Dec. 19, 1933; Jan. 10, 1934; Jan. 31, 1934; Feb. 1, 1934; Feb. 17, 1934; May 21, 1934; Nov. 11, 1935, in RIJHA archives.
- ⁴ Letter from Rena Shatz to Harry Guny, Jan. 16, 1934, in RIJHA archives.
- ⁵ Smith, "Aunt Be Be's Kids."
- ⁶ Taped interview with Robert Kotlen, May 8, 1998, in RIJHA archives.
- ⁷ This information is from Robert Chiapinelli, "Her Wit and Ways and Warmth Make Her Auntie Be Be," *Providence Evening Bulletin*, April 9, 1979, Sec. II, p. 1
- ⁸ Smith, "Aunt Be Be's Kids."

THE ACLU AND CHURCH-STATE ISSUES IN RHODE ISLAND

BY MILTON STANZLER

While the ACLU was involved in church-state issues at the national level within a few years after its founding in 1920 (the Scopes trial, Bible reading in public schools, etc.), the Rhode Island Affiliate and its early predecessors did not contend with any such issues until about 1961.

In our first Affiliate publication (*R.I. Civil Libertarian*, Volume 1, February 1961), I wrote to Affiliate members that "we are presently organizing a Church-State Committee, and we would welcome members and volunteers for this committee." The Church-State Committee began to function by organizing and debating some of the potential issues and deciding when and how to take action. The Committee was initially confronted with several difficult issues, such as prayers in schools and proposed legislation to provide textbooks for students in private and parochial schools.

In the years since the formation of the Church-State Committee in late 1961, the Affiliate and its volunteer lawyers have handled numerous issues relating to the infringements of the First Amendment's guarantees of religious liberty and the restrictions against the establishment of religion. Four major cases were brought by the Affiliate on behalf of citizens who volunteered as plaintiffs. One case was decided against the Plaintiffs by the Rhode Island Supreme Court. Three cases were decided by the United States Supreme Court, two of which were favorable to the Affiliate's position and one of which was adverse.

A. *BOWERMAN V. O'CONNOR*: THE TEXTBOOK CASE

In 1963, after much deliberation, including strong objections by the Rhode Island ACLU Affiliate at legislative hearings, the General Assembly passed a law which would permit public school departments to lend textbooks to students attending parochial and other private schools. The statute (RIGL 16-23-2) applied to textbooks in mathematics, sciences and modern foreign languages. Before each school year, the local School Committee was to advertise a time and place for students in private and parochial schools to pick up books which had been selected for use in those subjects. The statute was drawn to cover most objections which had been voiced by the Affiliate and other groups, including several religious organizations. However, based on the law at the time and the interpretation set out in several U.S. Supreme Court cases, the Affiliate voted to challenge the law.

Mr. Stanzler, an attorney, helped organize and then served as chairman of the R.I. Affiliate, ACLU, and has argued on its behalf before the U.S. Supreme Court. He received the William G. McLoughlin First Amendment Award on Nov. 12, 1998. This article was taken from Mr. Stanzler's recent book, *Eternally Vigilant: The Rhode Island ACLU Story* (Chapel Hill, NC: Professional Press, 1998).

In 1965, on behalf of several plaintiffs, the Affiliate commenced an action in the Providence County Superior Court against the Cranston School Committee. The complaint alleged that the loan of books to students in religious schools aided in the establishment of religion, in violation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, and in violation of Article 1, Section 3 of the Rhode Island Constitution. The case went before Superior Court Judge Fred Perkins who in a sixty-five-page opinion, held the statute unconstitutional. The Cranston School Committee appealed.

While the appeal was pending in the Rhode Island Supreme Court, the United States Supreme Court decided *Board of Education v. Allen* on June 10, 1968. That case held that a state was not involved in giving religious instruction when books were loaned to students. Relying on the decision in the Allen case, the Rhode Island Supreme Court a few months later held in the Bowerman case that the Rhode Island statute did not violate the First Amendment. The Court noted that the Rhode Island statute was even more circumspect than the New York statute interpreted in *Allen*, in assuring non-religious involvement.

The issue attracted a great deal of attention at the time. Using public funds to supply textbooks to students attending religious schools was felt by some to be a breach in the wall separating church and state. For a period of time, before and after the passage of the legislation, and while the case was pending, there were many debates and a great deal of press coverage on the issue. Representing the Plaintiffs and the affiliate were William J. Sheehan, Harold E. Adams and myself. Representing the School Committee of Cranston, were Edward W. Day Jr. and Abraham Goldstein. The Attorney General, Herbert DeSimone, intervened in support of the statute. Representing him was the Assistant Attorney General, Charles G. Edwards, who later became a Chairperson of the Affiliate. A brief opposing the Textbook Law was filed for the American Jewish Committee by Walter Adler and Leonard Decof. And a brief was filed in opposition to the Textbook Law by Louis Baruch Rubinstein, Sidney L. Rabinowitz, and Howard I. Lipsey on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith.

I do not recall that rancorous letters or similar harsh criticisms were directed toward the ACLU, or to any of the lawyers who participated in the textbook case. Indeed, compared to the strong emotions expressed during the Fair Housing campaign, or during the challenge to the creche in the Christmas display in a Pawtucket park, I can say that substantial civility prevailed on all sides while the textbook case was pending.

I believe I can say the same for the next case brought by the Affiliate. It involved the use of public funds for the payments of part of the salaries of parochial school teachers employed in the parochial school system.

B. *DICENSO V. ROBINSON* AND *LEMON V. KURTZMAN*:
THE TEACHER SALARY CASE

DiCenso v. Robinson was initiated by the Affiliate in 1969, shortly after a statute was enacted which provided that the State pay part of the salaries of parochial or religious school teachers who taught secular subjects in those schools. Since the final decision of the United States Supreme Court in June 1971, it has become a landmark case in the determination of what is or is not permissible, under the provisions of the First and Fourteenth Amendments, which prohibit governmental involvement in the establishment of religion.

Whenever this case is cited in scholarly or legal debate, it was always referred to as *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. The Lemon case was not the Rhode Island case nor was it an ACLU case. The Lemon case arose out of a Pennsylvania statute, which provided for state reimbursement of non-public elementary and secondary schools for costs of teacher's salaries, textbooks, and instructional materials in specified secular subjects. It was argued in the U.S. Supreme Court on the same day that the Rhode Island cases (*DiCenso* and *Earley*) were argued: March 3, 1971. The *Earley* case was part of the *DiCenso* case. The *Earley* group was permitted to intervene as defendants in the *DiCenso* case. They alleged that as parents of children attending Catholic schools in Rhode Island, they would be deprived of their right to the free exercise of their religion under that provision of the First Amendment if the teacher salary supplement law was struck down.

When the United States Supreme Court's decision came down on June 28, 1971, it was a consolidated opinion and referred to all three cases, but principally to the Rhode Island cases. However, because the opinion used the heading of *Lemon v. Kurtzman* first, it has always been referred to as the Lemon case or *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. But when it is cited in that manner, no one would ever know that a Rhode Island statute was involved or challenged. Yet the substance of the decision and its ensuing notoriety arose principally from the Rhode Island cases, both of which were tried and decided together in the United States District Court of Rhode Island.

Shortly after the law became effective in Rhode Island, on behalf of Plaintiff Joan Decenso and other parents sending their children to public schools, the Affiliate filed an action in the United States District Court for Rhode Island. It alleged that the state law, which afforded salary supplements for the parochial school teachers, was in violation of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. Under the rules and statutes at that time, a three-judge panel was assigned to hear the case. The panel consisted of the First Circuit of Appeals Judge Frank Coffin, Judge Hugh Bownes of the United States District of New Hampshire, and Judge Raymond J. Pettine, of the United States District Court of Rhode Island. The principal defendant was the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education, William P. Robinson. Under the statute

in question, Robinson's office was responsible for determining how much public money was to be given to the religious schools which applied for the salary supplements for their teachers.

Soon after the DiCenso case was started, a group of parents who were sending their children to parochial schools moved to intervene as defendants in the ACLU case. Their motion to intervene was granted. The case was tried in Providence before the three-judge panel in the early winter of 1970. As one would expect, a substantial number of lawyers participated in the case. I appeared for the Affiliate and the DiCenso Plaintiffs, together with Allan Shine, Richard Zacks, Benjamin A. Smith and Leo Pfeffer. Mr. Pfeffer was the counsel for the American Jewish Congress, and a nationally known author of books and articles on church-state issues. Representing Commissioner Robinson were Attorney General Herbert DeSimone and Assistant Attorney General W. Slater Allen. The Earley group (the Defendant-Intervenors) was represented by members of the law firm of Edward Bennett Williams, the renowned attorney from Washington, D.C., and by William and Richard McMahon of Providence. It was presumed that the Earley group's attorneys were engaged by the Diocese of Providence.

The decision of the three-judge court was handed down on June 15, 1970, and held that the statute violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. Judge Coffin wrote the opinion for the court, holding that there was and would be excessive entanglement between the state and religious institutions in following the procedures set out in the statute and in the administration of the statute. Judge Pettine dissented from that portion which held that the effect of the salary supplement for teachers was to support a religious enterprise, but he concurred with the majority's holding that "the statute invoked reciprocal embroilments of government and religion which the First Amendment was meant to avoid."

Both the State and the Earley group appealed directly to the United States Supreme Court (permissible at that time when the constitutionality of a state statute was in question). The Supreme Court agreed to hear the case. It was argued on March 3, 1971, on the same day the Pennsylvania case (*Lemon v. Kurtzman*) was argued. Charles F. Cottam of Providence was specially engaged to argue for Robinson and the State. Edward Bennett Williams argued for the Earley group, the Defendant-Intervenors. On the briefs with Williams and members of his office were Richard and William McMahon of Providence. Leo Pfeffer and I argued for the DiCenso plaintiffs and the Affiliate. Allan Shine was with us at the Counsel table in Washington. A number of other lawyers participated in preparation of our briefs. They included William J. Sheehan, Harold E. Adams, and Richard W. Zacks.

The cases had attracted considerable attention throughout the religious communities, and accordingly many *amici curiae* (friends of the court) briefs were filed by

organizations on both sides of the question. Twenty-six years later, I still have vivid memories of the most restless and sleepless of nights before that Supreme Court argument in Washington.

The decision in the case was handed down on June 28, 1971. The opinion was written by Chief Justice Burger. The Lemon case was reversed and remanded for further consideration, the lower Pennsylvania courts having permitted the financial aid to parochial schools. The decision in the DiCenso case was sustained: the Rhode Island statute was held to be unconstitutional.

In addition to Chief Justice Burger's opinion, a separate concurring opinion was written by Justice Douglas, with Justice Black also concurring. Justice Brennan wrote a separate concurring opinion; he particularly noted the provisions of the *R.I. Catholic Diocese's Handbook for School Instruction* which provided evidence of the religious atmosphere in the parochial classrooms, where the secular subjects would be taught. Justice Thurgood Marshall concurred separately with Justice Douglas in the Rhode Island case, and gave no opinion in the Lemon case. Justice White dissented in the Rhode Island case and concurred in the remand judgment of the Lemon case.

The opinion by Chief Justice Burger developed a three-prong test to aid in determining whether state action violated the First Amendment's prohibition of the establishment of religion. To withstand a challenge, a governmental practice or statute:

- must have a secular, legislative purpose
- must, as principal and primary effect, neither advance nor inhibit religion
- must not foster excessive entanglement with religion.

This test, so far, has survived the test of time (now 26 years), and the changing makeup of the United States Supreme Court. It had been applied in countless cases in the lower courts, state and federal, as well as in numerous cases before the United States Supreme Court. It has been the subject of innumerable articles in law journals, as well as religious and philosophical journals. It is constantly being supported or criticized. There are Justices presently on the Supreme Court who disagree with the test, and who have urged its amendment, clarification or reversal. Indeed, recent articles have indicated that it will not be long before the Lemon rule is amended, restricted or vacated. The ACLU has always argued that the test continues to serve well the First Amendment's prohibition of governmental entanglement in religious affairs.

C. *LYNCH V. DONNELLY*: THE CHRISTMAS-CRECHE DISPLAY CASE

In the 1960s several members of the Affiliate had complained about Christmas decorations and the creche on the steps of Providence City Hall. No action could be

taken at that time, because the likely reaction would overwhelm our meager resources, particularly the availability of lawyers. However, at the beginning of 1963, the Affiliate's Board did vote to suggest that members, as individuals, visit the Mayor of Providence to protest the exhibition of the Nativity Scene on the City Hall steps. Nothing came of that. But the issue was revisited some years later in the City of Pawtucket, resulting in one of the landmark Church-State cases decided by the United States Supreme Court.

The Affiliate's commitment to the First Amendment was clearly demonstrated when it challenged a Christmas display, erected and paid for by the City of Pawtucket, that included a Nativity scene (a creche) comprised of life-size figures in a private park in downtown Pawtucket. The ACLU contended that the City's use of the creche was in violation of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. Probably no case in the Affiliate's history has engendered more emotional outcry in the press, on radio talk shows and in letters to the editors. This was so even before the case went to trial before U.S. District Court Chief Judge Raymond J. Pettine in February, 1981.

The suit was commenced in early December, 1980. After the City of Pawtucket indicated that it would continue to use the creche in the display in future years, the ACLU and the City's attorneys agreed, with the consent of the Court, to forgo an immediate hearing in December 1980 and commence the trial on the issues in February, 1981.

The Affiliate was represented by Sandra Blanding and Amato A. DeLuca. Pawtucket was represented by its City Solicitor Maryfrances McGinn and William F. McMahon of Providence, specially engaged by the City. McMahon was one of the attorneys who represented the Earley intervenors in the *DiCenso v. Robinson* case. The plaintiffs included the Affiliate itself and Daniel Donnelly, George Kriebel, Robert Goodwin, and A. Gregory Frazier, members of the Affiliate and residents of Pawtucket. The defendants were Dennis Lynch, Richard Mumford, the City's Finance Director, and Guy DuFault, Pawtucket's Director of Parks and Recreation, who supervised the erection of the Christmas display.

The trial was held in February, 1981. In November, 1981, Chief Judge Pettine issued a lengthy decision in which he concluded that "by including the nativity scene in its Christmas display, the City of Pawtucket has violated the Establishment Clause of the Constitution" and he enjoined the City from continuing this practice.¹ The City's appeal to the First Circuit Court of Appeals was argued on April 7, 1982 and was decided on November 3, 1982.² The majority decision sustaining Chief Judge Pettine was written by Senior Circuit Judge Fairchild of the Seventh Circuit. Circuit Judge Hugh Bownes joined in the decision, while at the same time writing a separate concurring opinion. Circuit Judge Levin H. Campbell wrote a dissenting

opinion.

The lawyers representing the City in the appeal were William F. McMahon and Spencer V. Viner for the City Solicitor of Pawtucket. On the appeal, Sandra A. Blanding and Amato A. DeLuca continued to represent the ACLU. A number of lawyers from the Boston area, including Alan Dershowitz and Susan Estrich, filed an *amici curiae* brief on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Congress, New England Region. They supported the Affiliate's position.

After the Circuit Court's opinion, the City sought and was granted a review by the United States Supreme Court. It was argued on October 4, 1983. In the United States Supreme Court, William F. McMahon argued on behalf of the City. Supporting and arguing the City's position as *amicus curiae* was the Solicitor General for the United States, Rex E. Lee. The argument for the Affiliate and the other Plaintiffs was made by Amato A. DeLuca. A substantial number of *amici curiae* briefs was filed with the Supreme Court arguing both in support of and in opposition to the Circuit Court's and Judge Pettine's decision.

On March 5, 1984, three years after the trial, the Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, reversed the Circuit Court and Judge Pettine's decisions.³ The Supreme Court's decision was written by Chief Justice Warren Burger. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor filed a concurring opinion, Justice Brennan filed a dissenting opinion, in which he was joined by Justices Marshall, Blackmun, and Stevens. Justice Blackmun filed a separate dissenting opinion in which he was joined by Justice Stevens.

Obviously, given the close vote and the variety of separate opinions, the decision was not an easy one for any of the Courts which heard the case. Consider, for instance, that it was Chief Justice Burger who wrote the majority opinion which set out the *Lemon v. Kurtzman* test decided in the Affiliate's *DiCenso v. Robinson* case. Indeed, at the outset of the Pawtucket decision, Burger quotes from the *Lemon* decision to explain the meaning and purpose of the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment. But the Pawtucket opinion focused on the use of the creche during the Christmas season and whether there was a secular purpose for the display of the creche. Justice Burger wrote that:

the Christmas Display included many of the figures and decorations traditionally associated with Christmas, including, among other things, a Santa Clause house, reindeer pulling Santa's sleigh, candy-striped poles, a Christmas tree, carolers, cutout figures representing such characters as a clown, an elephant, and a teddy bear, hundreds of colored lights, a large banner that reads 'Christmas Greeting,' and the creche at issue here.⁴

The majority applied the *Lemon v. Kurtzman* test and concluded that there was "a

secular purpose for including the creche, that the city has not impermissibly advanced religion, and that including the creche does not create excessive entanglement between religion and government." In his dissent, Justice Brennan stated that the majority properly looked to the settled test announced in *Lemon* and that

applying that test to this case, the Court reaches an essentially narrow result which turns largely upon the particular holiday context in which the city of Pawtucket's nativity scene appeared. The Court's decision implicitly leaves open questions concerning the constitutionality of the public display on public property of a creche standing alone, or the public display of other distinctively religious symbols such as a cross.⁵

Notwithstanding the narrow limitations of the decision, Justice Brennan went on to explain his strong disagreement with the majority's decision, as did Justice Blackmun. Indeed, as Justice Brennan wrote, the opinion of the majority has been construed in later cases to be applicable in the narrow sense that it applies rather specifically only to the use of a creche in a secular setting as described above. Much more was to be said later in news and law review articles, editorials, speeches and even a book entitled *The Christ Child Goes to Court* by Wayne R. Swanson, published by the Temple University Press in 1990.

The case, filed by the Affiliate in mid-December 1980, had not gone to trial until February 1981. The reactions during that interval were such that they were included in the evidence at trial, to demonstrate the divisiveness that ensues when religious issues and traditions become intertwined with political and governmental action. This evidence was used by Judge Pettine in arriving at his decision, but was specifically rejected by the majority of the Supreme Court.

What indeed was that evidence? What were the reactions to the filing of the case? At the trial, Steve Brown testified about the public reaction to the Affiliate's prosecution of the lawsuit. This reaction was documented from the phone calls received at his office, and the responses to the three-hour call-in talk show in which he participated. He also collected and introduced "Letters to the Editor" published in Providence and Pawtucket newspapers. Brown reported that some of the callers felt that the ACLU was "making a mountain out of a molehill" and that they regarded the display as secular in nature; that others did not regard the religious element as incidental or minor; and that still others claimed that the City had a right to sponsor and support the religious views of the majority.

Mayor Lynch's impression was that people were shocked over the suit because it questioned what had been an accepted community tradition for over forty years. "They're outraged again over questioning of what is good for all." He criticized the lawsuit for bringing into the community a divisiveness that "had never been seen" before in Pawtucket. People "thought it was very small of anybody to question what

had been accepted by the community for so many years as a good thing.”

Approximately seventy letters relating to the creche and/or the lawsuit were introduced as part of the evidence. Only three did not support the City or the Mayor's position. After reviewing the letter, Judge Pettine summarized their contents: the ACLU was criticized as “petty,” but the intensity of the feelings expressed in the letters “belies any suggestion that the writers regarded the lawsuit as a trivial matter.” He quoted the Mayor's statement that “I've never seen people as mad as they are over this issue.” The Judge went on to write:

Overall the tenor of the correspondence is that the lawsuit represents an attack on the presence of religion as part of the community's life, an attempt to deny the majority the ability to express publicly its beliefs in a desired and traditionally accepted way.⁶

Pettine quoted the Mayor saying,

The people absolutely resent somebody trying to impose another kind of religion on them I think the denigration, trying to eliminate these kinds of things is a step towards establishing another religion, non-religion that it may be.⁷

After reviewing other comments made by the Mayor and clippings and statements of other religious leaders, Judge Pettine concluded his review of some of the evidence:

In sum, the atmosphere has been a horrifying one of anger, hostility, name-calling and political maneuvering, all prompted by the fact that someone had questioned the City's ownership and display of a religious symbol.⁸

In his book *The Christ Child Goes to Court*, Wayne R. Swanson writes about the public's reaction to the case:

ACLU spokesman Stephen Brown publicly condemned the mayor's media event as an example of the kind of divisiveness that is generated when religion is used for political purposes (the Mayor conducted a news conference condemning the suit in front of caroling children at the creche). Not only did publicity from the suit arouse the feeling of the citizens of Pawtucket and Rhode Island, but national media and press coverage sparked letters and phone calls to the mayor's office from all over the country.

Press, radio, and television had a field day with the story. The nativity scene dominated local radio talk shows. Callers bombarded the air waves with praise for Mayor Lynch and disdain for the ACLU. Steve Kass, WHJJ talkmaster, reported, “In terms of steady constant comment, I can't think of anything else that has outraged more people. People said they dialed for

hours and couldn't get through."

Swanson goes on to quote a *Pawtucket Times* editorial:

The ACLU suit against the City of Pawtucket is absurd. The problem here, surely, is not that the City is promoting religion with taxpayers' money. The problem is that a group like the ACLU, set up to defend the liberties of all of us, has apparently found itself with so few important battles to fight that it has the time, money, and energy to squander on this absurd nitpicking at a season tradition that brings pleasure to us all.

Swanson continues:

Over 90 percent of the mail and phone calls that came to the Pawtucket municipal officers and to the ACLU was on the side of the city. Donnelly, ACLU co-plaintiff, was shunned and verbally attacked by individuals who recognized him from television and newspaper photographs. Donnelly said: "I knew the suit would not make me the most popular person in Rhode Island. But I wasn't prepared for the intensity of the reaction. Co-workers gave me the cold shoulder. People just assumed that I was an atheist or anti-Christ. They didn't even want to hear what I had to say.

I am a Roman Catholic and I felt torn about objecting to anything that was tied so closely to my background. But I didn't feel comfortable with public depictions of spirituality. I've been concerned that various religious groups are becoming more and more political and are trying to impose their views on the larger society. To me the Nativity Scene represented a concrete example of that."

Swanson describes Donnelly's personal pain:

The emotional scars inflicted on Donnelly by the controversy were deep. When queried by a newspaper feature writer whether he would ever again take a stand for a controversial belief that clashed with mainstream public opinion, he replied, "NEVER."

A similar query could be directed to the Affiliate and Steve Brown. Was the case worth the time, the effort, the cost and the abuse? Truth to tell, I wondered and raised the same questions as I sat on the sidelines watching the progress of the case through the newspapers and while reading all the abusive letters to the papers. Both before the Pawtucket Creche case was brought, however, and after the loss, Steve Brown believed that the issue was worth fighting. He believed that there were important gains to be made by making the public more aware of the issues at stake:

The educational importance of the lawsuit cannot be overstated. The suit created a healthy debate throughout Rhode Island on the meaning of the First Amendment and freedom of religion. The cumulative effect of this debate was an extremely positive one, as more and more people began to

seriously consider and understand the principle for which the ACLU was fighting.... In talk shows and personal appearances I found more and more people supporting the ACLU's position every year.

In his book Swanson said:

While the Supreme Court's decision seemed to give a green light for the uncontrolled sponsorship of creches and other religious symbols by cities and towns ... that did not occur.¹⁰

Steve Brown has given other examples of the educational value of the debate: for instance, the rejection by one town of an attempt to place a creche in front of the Town Hall by a private organization; a court challenge to the display of a crucifix on public property in East Greenwich where there was less hostile reaction from the public; the decision of Mayor Joseph Paolino not to return the creche to the Providence City Hall steps. Paolino said that "the placement of any one religion's symbols on public property to express faith politicizes that faith and detracts from the sacred meaning those symbols hold." Mayor Paolino's decision was even supported by Bishop Gelineau, who stated that "it seems so improper to allow a symbol of peace and good will to become a source of division and controversy."¹¹

What about Judge Pettine's reaction to the majority opinion in *Lynch v. Donnelly*? It is especially rare to read or hear a trial judge publicly express an opinion about his reversal by a higher court. With characteristic courage and aplomb, Judge Pettine expressed his views in comments he made at a forum on the separation of church and state at Temple Emanu-El in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 26, 1984. Judge Pettine commented on the Supreme Court's decision, but also on the broader issue of a judge's responsibility in his role as a judge, in contrast to his own personal views and religious convictions. Here is an edited compilation (quoted in Swanson's book) of that evening's remarkable talk.¹²

I hesitate to comment on an appellate review of any of my cases. I never have. But the Nativity Scene case has caused such an eruption of emotion and I have been the target of such unimaginable vilification, that I feel free, now that the highest court has spoken, to do so.

In weak self-defense I like to point out that thirteen judges heard *Lynch v. Donnelly*.¹³ If you add them up, you will see that seven said the city-sponsored Nativity Scene was unconstitutional and six found the practice constitutional.

More to the point, I found the Supreme Court decision offensive and its analysis of this question disturbing. By allowing the creche, the Court has equated this holy symbol with tinsel, ornaments, reindeer, candy cane, and jolly old St. Nicholas. It seems the Court is willing to alter its analysis from term to term in order to suit its preferred result. There is no question

government now faces the possibility of becoming involved in accommodating various demands of religious groups. There will be competing efforts by different religious sects to gain support of the government. In deciding to whom permission is to be granted, are we now going to allow government to decide what is and what is not a religion, who is or who is not entitled to equal courtesy? We can only pray that the Supreme Court ruling will not give rise to an insensitive profusion of government sponsored displays. I hope that government officials will act with restrained sensitivity.

The Constitution is a documental blessing and its moral guidance in the pluralistic society is its tolerance and understanding of all. To some non-believers the effect of the Court's decision is tacit coercion to accept the Christian faith. The appearance of government as sponsoring a religious view destroys the neutrality it should have. If we feel that others should be molded in the cause of our moral religious thinking, the only weapon is teaching through debate without the imprimatur of government for one side or the other. If we fail to do this, history tells us that we may find, through change of circumstances, that we are no longer free in thought and worship because another sect has won the political rights.

I owe every respect to my confessor. Indeed in his roles as such, he is monumentally awesome, and I subject myself to him. But as a citizen in the voting booth or a judge in the exercise of my duties, I respect all men, all religions, and listen objectively to the beliefs of others, divorced from my own personal convictions.

Certainly my personal religious morality has been contrary to some of the issues argued before me. As a judge, I am a public figure serving a pluralistic society. In such a role, I must consider, impartially and objectively, the convictions and beliefs of others. I speak from personal experience as a Catholic layman who is a federal judge in a democratic polity serving a heterogeneous mass of people. No God-fearing person wants to run counter to the didactic dogma of his faith, and that is good. But it seems to me God never intended that public officials and voters who conscientiously seek political justice should dispense their public trust only for those who comport with their beliefs. Not unlike the Kingdom of God, this Republic is open to all.

In this writer's opinion, these words of Judge Pettine should be studied and remembered by all who want to live and work in a free and just society.

D. *LEE V. WEISMAN*: THE INVOCATION AT A PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADUATION

This case was initiated by the Affiliate on behalf of Daniel Weisman, and his daughter, Deborah Weisman, in June, 1989, in the United States District Court of Rhode Island. It was filed four days before Deborah's graduation from the Nathan

Bishop Middle School, a public junior high school in Providence. Daniel was the husband and Deborah the daughter of Vivian Weisman, then the Chairperson of the Affiliate. The graduation ceremony was to include an invocation and benediction to be delivered by Rabbi Leslie Gutterman of Temple Beth-El in Providence. Four days before the ceremony was to take place, Chief Judge Francis Boyle of the United States District Court denied a request for a temporary restraining order. The Court declined to prevent the inclusion of a "prayer to deity" in the invocation and benediction because the Court did not have "adequate time to consider the important issues of the case."

The graduation took place on June 20, 1989, and Deborah and her family attended. Rabbi Gutterman gave the invocation. He was not told he could not appeal to a deity. Rabbi Gutterman's prayers were as follows:

Invocation

God of the Free, Hope of the Brave

For the legacy of America where diversity is celebrated and the rights of minorities are protected, we thank You. May these young men and women grow up to enrich it.

For the liberty of America, we thank You. May these new graduates grow up to enrich it.

For the political process of America in which all its citizens may participate, for its court system where all may seek justice we thank You. May those we honor this morning always turn to it in trust.

For the destiny of America we thank You. May the graduates of Nathan Bishop Middle School so live that they may help to share it.

May our aspirations for our country and for these young people, who are our hope for the future, be richly fulfilled.

Amen

Benediction

O God, we are grateful to You for having endowed us with the capacity for learning which we have celebrated on this joyous commencement.

Happy families give thanks for seeing their children achieve an important milestone. Send Your blessing upon the teachers and administrators who helped prepare them.

The graduates now need strength and guidance for the future; help them to understand that we are not complete with academic knowledge alone. We must each strive to fulfill what You require of us all. To do justly, to love

mercy, to walk humbly.

We give thanks to You, Lord, for keeping us alive, sustaining us and allowing us to reach this special, happy occasion.

Amen

The Affiliate was again represented by Sandra Blanding, and the City by its City Solicitor. The parties agreed to the facts of the case so there was no trial. The lawyers submitted briefs to the Judge. On January 9, 1990, Chief Judge Boyle handed down his decision.

This Court finds that because a deity is invoked, the practice is unconstitutional under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, as construed by the United States Supreme Court.¹⁴

After Judge Boyle's decision, the City and the School Board appealed to the First Circuit Court of Appeals. Here the City was represented by Joseph A. Rotella and the Affiliate was again represented by Sandra A. Blanding.

On July 23, 1990, the Circuit Court sustained Chief Judge Boyle. The majority opinion was written by Circuit Judge Juan Torruella. He was joined by Senior Circuit Judge Hugh Bownes, who also wrote a separate concurring opinion. A dissenting opinion was written by Circuit Judge Levin H. Campbell.

Circuit Judge Torruella wrote a very short majority opinion. He noted that Chief Judge Boyle of the District Court held that the benediction and prayer violated the Establishment Clause under the second prong of the "Lemon test." He said:

We are in agreement with the sound and pellucid opinion of the District Court and see no reason to elaborate further.¹⁵

In his concurring opinion, Senior Circuit Judge Bownes wrote that he "was compelled to make some additional comments . . . because of the significance of this case and the strong emotions that it and other Establishment Clause cases generate." Then in a footnote he wrote:

I am troubled by a report in the *Boston Globe* that officials at a school in Rhode Island have intentionally violated Judge Boyle's ruling by having a prayer at graduation. This blatant disregard for the law drew howls of approval, applause, and cheers at the graduation. Similar disobedience of the law has followed decision in other recent prayer cases.¹⁶

Circuit Judge Bownes wrote also about the historic background of church-state relations in Rhode Island:

Over three hundred and fifty years ago, Roger Williams was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for, among other "heresies," arguing

that civil government should be completely separate from religion. He traveled south and founded what became the State of Rhode Island, which was the first colony to require the separation of church and state. Since that time the people of Rhode Island have been sporadically involved in probing the permissible intersections between religion and government.

And here the Judge cited the United States Supreme Court decisions in the Christmas display case and the teacher salary supplement case. Then he explicated his views in an erudite opinion, and took issue with Judge Boyle's opinion which stated that if "GOD had been left out of the benedictions the Establishment Clause would not be implicated." Said Judge Bownes: "This, in my opinion, is too literal and narrow an interpretation of prayer and of what is acceptable under the Constitution. The Constitution prohibits prayer in public schools and not merely references to a deity."

Shortly after the Circuit's decision, the City and the Providence School Committee petitioned to the U.S. Supreme Court for review of the Circuit Court's decision. Argument before the Supreme Court was on November 6, 1991. Charles J. Cooper argued for the City and the School Committee. He had been an Assistant Attorney General in the Reagan Administration. The appeal by the School Committee was said to cost about \$50,000. The Bush Administration filed an *amicus* brief in support of the School Committee. Solicitor General Kenneth W. Starr argued for the United States. He, together with a number of other *amici curiae*, urged the Supreme Court to revise the Lemon test "in the light of its persistent tendency to invalidate practices with substantial historical sanctions." Many organizations, including religious ones, opposed any change in the Lemon test. Sandra A. Blanding, continuing her brilliant dedication to ACLU causes, argued for the Weismans and the Affiliate.

Judge Boyle and the First Circuit Court were sustained. Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the opinion for the majority, joined by Justices Blackmun, Stevens, O'Connor, and Souter. Blackmun and Souter wrote concurring opinions. Each of their opinions was joined by Justices O'Connor and Stevens. A dissenting opinion was written by Justice Scalia, who was joined by Chief Justice Rehnquist, and Justices White and Thomas. Rejecting the "invitation" of the School Committee and the *amici curiae* United States "to reconsider our decision in *Lemon v. Kurtzman*," Justice Kennedy wrote:

the government involvement with religious activity in this case is pervasive, to the point of creating a state-sponsored and state-directed religious exercise in a public school. Conducting this formal religious observance conflicts with settled rules pertaining to prayer exercises for students, and suffices to determine the question before us.¹⁷

Of course, there was a great deal of reaction to the decision, both pro and con, not

only in Rhode Island but all over the country. The text of Rabbi Gutterman's prayer had been republished in many articles and is reprinted here as evidence of what the courts consider religious practices which may not be compelled in public schools. Indeed, there was a great deal of publicity about the case as soon as it was filed. As in the Christmas display case, critical letters were published in the press about the ACLU and the Affiliate. The Weisman family received harassing phone calls and threats from all over the country. Daniel was a tenured professor at Rhode Island College. Vivian, his wife, who was chair of the Affiliate during the time that the case was pending, recalls that some of the administrators at the College did not look too favorably on Daniel's having brought the lawsuit.

By all accounts, however, the adverse reactions were not as vicious or frightening as those generated by the Christmas Display case. As time went on, and particularly after the favorable Supreme Court decision, public reactions seemed to be more supportive than when the case was initially filed. But, of course, there was some disrespect, and the blatant attempts to violate the District Court's decision, as noted by Judge Bownes in his Circuit Court concurring opinion, must not be forgotten. Unfortunately, there will always be critics who fail to comprehend the need to be eternally vigilant in order to protect the hard-fought, cherished protections embodied within the Bill of Rights.



NOTES

- ¹ *Donnelly v. Lynch* 525 F. Supp., 1150 (D. R.I. 1981).
- ² *Donnelly v. Lynch* 691 F.2d, 1029 (C.A. 1st 1982).
- ³ *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668, 79 L.Ed. 2d 604, 104 S. Ct 1355 (1984).
- ⁴ 104 S. Ct. @ 1358.
- ⁵ 104 S. Ct. @ 1370.
- ⁶ *Donnelly v. Lynch* 525 F. Supp. 1105 @ 1162.
- ⁷ *Ibid* @ 1162.
- ⁸ 525 F. Supp. @ 1180.
- ⁹ Wayne R. Swanson, *The Christ Child Goes to Court*, pp. 20-21.
- ¹⁰ Swanson, p. 162.
- ¹¹ Swanson, pp. 162-165.
- ¹² Swanson, pp. 165-167.
- ¹³ Judge Pettine, three court of appeals judges, and nine Supreme Court Justices.
- ¹⁴ *Weisman v. Lee*, 728 F. Supp. 68 (D. R.I. 1990).
- ¹⁵ *Weisman v. Lee*, 908 F.2d 1090 (C.A. 1st, 1990).
- ¹⁶ *Weisman v. Lee*, 908 F.2d @ 1091, 1092 (the school referred to by Judge Bownes was located in Cumberland).
- ¹⁷ *Lee v. Weisman*, 112 S. Ct 2649 @ 2655 (1992).



Perler's Bakery, 207 Willard Ave., Providence, about 1947. Courtesy Providence Public Library and R.I. Historical Society.

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH BAKERS: BAGELS TO ZWETSCHGENKUCHEN

BY ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

The early Jewish settlers brought with them the customs and religious practices that centered on the family. Food played a major role, given the importance of the dietary laws and the table-centered rituals involved in Judaism. Many cookbooks in all parts of the world have been devoted to Jewish cooking, but no subject is more important than the making of bread and bakery products. At sundown on Friday eve Jews usher in Shabbat, the seventh day of the week, the scripturally-ordained day of rest. After reciting the Kiddush, the master of the house recites the Prayer over Bread: "Blessed art Thou, our Lord, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth." He then cuts the Challah (traditional Sabbath and holiday loaf of white bread baked in braided or twisted form) and gives a slice to each member of the family. The prayer over bread is recited daily before every meal; however, on the Sabbath eve there is a blessing over two symbolic loaves of bread.¹

Among the early Jewish Rhode Island settlers, not all families relied on their local Jewish bakery for their Challah. The bakeries permitted the housewife who made the dough herself to bake her bread in their large ovens once they had completed their own bread baking. This was a carry-over of the European practice; for example, Tillie Brody Reuter remembered that when she was growing up in Russia, her grandmother made Challahs and brought them to a bakery that not only baked them but even sold some of them for her!² Similarly, in Rhode Island, "people would knead their own Challah, and Kessler's Bakery Shop or Lorber's would allow the Jewish women to come in with their Challah and bake it so they would have it for the Shabbos."³

In the early years of the 20th century, if a housewife lived in the North End of Providence she had her choice of such bakeries as Brody's at 15 Douglas Avenue, Hochman's at 160 Chalkstone Avenue, Kessler's at 134 Orms Street, or Korb's at 585 North Main Street. For those who lived in South Providence, there were such choices as Kaplan's Bakery at 300 Prairie Avenue, Perler's Bakery at 207 Willard Avenue, and Snell's Bakery at 200 Willard Avenue. Many of these men had learned their trade in Europe or had a history of bakers in their family. To determine the number of bakers there were in Rhode Island during any year, I consulted the Providence City Directories, with special Rhode Island Business sections, along with information compiled by David C. Adelman, founder of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, under the headings "Jewish Family Names from 1860 in Providence" and "Naturalization Lists through 1906" (see Table 1).

Eleanor Horvitz, librarian-archivist of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Society, has contributed many articles to the *Notes*.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF JEWISH BAKERIES IN RHODE ISLAND

<u>Name</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Years</u>
August, Joseph	Central Falls	1915-1968	54
Brody, Albert & Ben	Providence	1920-1947	28
Feldman, Samuel	Woonsocket	1903-1909	7
Feldman, Isaac	Woon. & Providence	1912-1935	24
Guttin, Alex & William	Providence	1948-1998	>51
Hochman, Joseph	Providence	1924-1951	28
Kaplan, Abram	Providence	1910-1921	12
Kaplan, Barney	Providence	1933-1961	29
Kaplan, Barry	Providence	1982-1998	>18
Katz, Julius	Providence	1909-1923	15
Kessler, Hyman	Providence	1901-1923	23
Korb, Philip & Edmund	Prov, Pawt, Warwick	1911-1998	>88
Loeber, Abram	Providence	1905-1926	22
Perler, Isadore & Jacob	Providence	1927-1970	44
Rosenthal, William	Providence	1887-1901	15
Schechter, Samuel & Frimet	Providence	1886-1908	23
Schwarz, Abraham	Providence	1891-1901	11
Snell, Samuel	Providence	1916-1950	35
Sweet, John	Providence	1923-1950	28
Yaffe, Hyman	Providence	1904-1925	22

Table 1

SCHECHTER'S BAKERY

There are many stories connected with the Jewish immigrant bakers who settled in Rhode Island, predominantly in the Providence area. According to Frimette Silverman Roberts, who obtained her information from "family lore," her grandfather, Samuel Schechter, was the first Jewish baker to open a bakery in Rhode Island (1886).⁴ Adelman's Naturalization Lists confirm the information that Samuel Schechter's date of entry from Austria was in 1881 and the date of his naturalization, 1893. Frimette Roberts states that her grandfather came to the United States by himself, leaving behind his wife, Frimet, with their two children. Eventually they were able to join Mr. Schechter, and three more children were born in the United States, Frimette's mother being one of the youngest.

Samuel Schechter was the first Jewish baker recorded in the 1886 Providence City Directory, but by 1898 there were two more — William Rosenthal at 717 North Main Street and Abraham Schwarz at 13 Ambrose Street. Schechter's home and bakery were in the same building at 51 Black Street, an area now identified as the



Street peddler in front of Hyman Yaffe's bakery, 175 Chalkstone Ave., Providence, about 1910. Courtesy R.I. Historical Society.

back parking lot of the Marriott Hotel.

Unfortunately, Schechter did not live very long after establishing his new life, his trade, and his family in his new country. The 1900 Providence City Directory lists Frimet Schechter as a widow at 51 Black Street. She was left with her youngest child, Rebecca, only two years old, as well as the older siblings, but she assumed the management of the bakery. In 1909, the granddaughter reported, her grandmother had to close the bakery because she no longer could afford to run it, completely dependent as she was on hired help to stay in business.

THE BRODY BROTHERS BAKERY

The story of the Brody brothers is similar to the Schechter story in that their father, Gabriel Aria (English name, "Louis") Brody emigrated to the United States by himself, and his family followed at a later date. But unlike Mr. Schechter, he was a Hebrew teacher and not a baker. That the sons worked as bakers when they

emigrated has been attributed to the fact that they may have learned the trade in Russia.⁵ However, in tracing the oldest son's arrival and work career in the United States through the Providence City Directories, we find that Benjamin did not work as a baker until he and his brother Ira opened up the Brody Brothers Bakery at 629 North Main Street in 1920. In 1919 the two brothers were in the military service — Benjamin in the U.S. Army and Ira in the U.S. Navy; it might be conjectured that they learned the trade of baker in their military service for it was after they were discharged that they opened their bakery on North Main Street. In 1923 Ira left Providence and the bakery to move to Lowell, Massachusetts, where he became a printer.

Tillie Brody Reuter recalled coming to the United States in 1921 with her mother and brother, Albert. She was twelve years old at the time, and later she began to work at the bakery. She waited on customers and later advanced to the job of cashier. She described their bakery as being like so many Jewish bakeries of that era. They mostly concentrated on bread (rye, seeded rye, and sisel bread, which was round-shaped and sold by the pound) and rolls. The pastry they did make might be an item such as honey cakes for the holidays, or she recalls a pastry called fluden, which consisted of a layer of nuts and rich pastry cut in a diamond shape. A more detailed recipe describes this as a dough consisting of flour, baking powder, sugar, oil, eggs, and water; fillings were layered with such ingredients as ground walnuts, cinnamon-sugar mixture, shredded coconut, thinly sliced apples, jam, and raisins.⁶

The bakers worked through the night in preparation for the customers who were expected by dawn for their fresh bread and rolls. And they might deliver an order on rare occasions. They also took special orders if a housewife was planning a large affair at her home, but did not consider themselves caterers. If bread products were left over from the previous day, they would be sold at half price the next morning.

It is not clear how long the bakery was located at the 629 North Main Street address, but with Ira leaving for Lowell in 1923 there may have been a change in Benjamin's life. In 1925 a Brody's Bakery is located at 207 Willard Avenue in South Providence. For the first time we note that Albert is listed in the 1933 city directory as a baker with his brother Benjamin at 15 Douglas Avenue in the North End section of Providence. This information is corroborated by Albert's son, Leonard Brody, who writes, "My father and Uncle Benny owned the bakery jointly. I remember we lived above the bakery, then moved to Eaton Street and then to Tyndall Avenue."

When the bakery closed in 1947 or 1948, Louis Brody said his father Albert worked at a bakery on Orms Street and then for Alex Guttin as well as for a bakery on Willard Avenue and at the Rainbow Bakery. He retired in 1972 and died in February 1986 at the age of 78. His obituary stated that he had been a baker for forty-five years and added that he had also worked for Korb's Bakery.

THE AUGUST BAKERY

There were five brothers by the name of August who emigrated to the United States from a town in either Poland or Russia — Gerson, the oldest; Joseph, who came to Rhode Island and stayed there; Abraham, Michael, and Jack. According to Beverly August Schwartz, daughter of Michael, all the brothers were bakers in the country of their birth.⁷

The August bakery was founded in 1915 at 24 Central Avenue in Central Falls, Rhode Island, by Joseph August. According to the Pawtucket City Directory, Joseph August operated this store until 1932, then opened a second bakery in Central Falls at 136 Broad Street. Brothers Michael and Gerson were in Providence for a relatively short period, Michael working as a baker for his brother Gerson. Abraham is also mentioned briefly as being a baker in Providence.

The only members of the August family whom I contacted were the two sisters, Beverly and Jessica. From Jessica it was learned that her father Michael came to this country first and then brought his wife, Flora, who joined him in 1921 with three children.⁸ Their first home was in Pawtucket on Jackson Street near the Central Falls line. Beverly was born in 1927. The father was working as a baker for one of his brothers but decided to open his own business in Everett or Revere, Massachusetts. Unfortunately it was during the depression years, and the bakery was not a success. When Beverly was six years old the family moved to Florida. Gerson too moved to Miami and became very successful in the restaurant and bakery businesses. Beverly believed that her uncle sold the lucrative bakery business to either Holsom or Arnold Bakeries. Jessica said that Abraham had settled in Orlando, Florida, and owned a hotel in Miami Beach.

There were interesting recollections by the two daughters about what life was like growing up in a home where the father was a baker. Jessica described watching her father's large hands as he kneaded the dough for Challah. Her sister remembers his not being home during mealtime and that he worked during the night. The children had to be quiet during the day while he slept.

Because Joseph stayed on the longest in the Rhode Island area, there is more documentation on the history of his bakery. His son Sidney worked with him. There are stores listed in Providence, which Sidney ran, at 390 Cranston Street and 1907 Westminster Street during the 1950s. The last record of the August bakery was in 1963 at the 1907 Westminster Street address in Providence.

KORB BAKING COMPANY

Philip Korb, according to his obituary of December 5, 1941, had come to Rhode Island in 1903. He was fifty-seven years old at the time of his death. It was reported

that nearly one thousand persons attended the funeral of this man, the founder of Korb Baking company in 1907.⁹ The Providence City Directory, however, records the bakery for the first time in 1911 at 629 North Main Street. The bakery started out as a cooperative, but when that did not work out the three men who had been involved in the bakery's origins set up the business with the following officers: President, Philip Korb; Secretary, Sol Vigo; and Treasurer, Samuel Korb.¹⁰ By 1912 the store's address was at 593 North Main Street. Each location of the bakery seemed to be of short duration: in 1916 at 593 North Main and 391-1/2 North Main Street; in 1919 at 593 North Main Street and 51 Black Street. The Black Street Store was no longer listed in 1923; Korb's was now at 43 Douglas Avenue. Then in 1925, three locations: 345, 591, and 593 North Main Street. By 1935, in addition to a 581 North Main Street address, there was a location at 764-1/2 Hope Street.

In 1942 Edmund Korb, son of Philip Korb, was listed as manager at 585 North Main Street, and by 1943 he became president of the company. David Korb, son of Samuel Korb, did not work in the bakery itself but drove one of the delivery trucks while going to high school and college in the 1930s. He described this large bakery business as conducting wholesale and retail business, furnishing bread and rolls to the large downtown hotels such as the Narragansett and Crown. David recalled the good relationship between the brothers Samuel and Philip and their brother-in-law, Sol Vigo. Since Philip had the most money to invest in the business, he took the leading role and was president, with the other two men as minor partners.

David also recalled the huge machine for making the dough. He compared its size to a mid-sized automobile. The principal of how it worked he compared to a cement mixer. It was located on the top floor of the building, and the dough was put into a long wooden container for its ripening stage. He described the bakery at 16 North Main Street as consisting of two buildings, one containing the brick ovens, the other store being the bakery that sold rolls, breads, and pastry. An article in the *Providence Sunday Journal* of February 2, 1986 described three huge ovens, one brick-lined. It also referred to the several hundred bags of flour per week that Korb's used, trucked in from mills in Buffalo, N.Y.¹¹ David said he had a fringe benefit as a relative who worked for the company. While out on a date, around eleven p.m., he and his date would stop at the bakery and watch the bakers making the fresh cinnamon rolls. Sampling them was a real treat.

Korb's made their own bagels; David said that they made the bagels the original way by boiling the dough first and then baking them in the brick ovens to give them a hard crust. The policy of the bakery was to sell any products left over from the night before at greatly reduced price the next morning by eleven a.m. This policy saved on waste and benefited the customers at the same time. According to the 1986 article in the *Providence Sunday Journal*, because of the continuous longevity of Korb's Baking Company, "it seems almost everyone who grew up in Rhode Island has

stories about the bakery, including the people who worked there. Korb's has about 100 employees, many of them high school students who work part time after school and on weekends. Generations of families have worked in Korb's and couples have met and married while working there."

To bring Korb's up to the present, they have three stores, two in Pawtucket: the main store, which opened in September, 1961, with baking facilities at 540 Pawtucket Avenue, another store at 508 Armistice Boulevard, and a third at 1917 Warwick Avenue in Warwick. Following the tradition of their ancestors, the present Korbs are not bakers but instead are bakery businessmen. Edmund Korb who took over from his father, Philip, is in charge of the business, and his son Richard works with him, sharing management responsibilities.

MAX SIMMONS, BAKER

Max Simmons' answer to why he became a baker is a very logical one: "My grandfather was a baker in Russia, my father came to this country as a baker, my oldest brother was a baker. Since I never went to college, I had to learn a trade, and that is how I too became a baker."¹² Max's first job as a baker was with the August Bakery on Central Avenue in Central Falls in 1939. His work was interrupted by his enlistment in the Navy in May, 1942. He reached the rank of Third Class Signalman, his ship the old four-stacker destroyer, *U.S.S. Green*. First they escorted ships going to Europe, and later saw a lot of action in places like Iwo Jima and Okinawa. His term of service was forty-four months. Six months after his discharge in January 1946 he married.¹³ With the responsibility of a wife and a son, he had no choice but to return to his work as a baker.

In 1947 he opened his own bakery, calling it the Modern Bakery, at 211 Willard Avenue. It was at this time that he changed his name from Simkofsky to Simmons in order to have the same name as his brother, who had gone into the candy business in Brockton under the Simmons name. However, his bakery was not a success. In the 1950s he went to work for the Snell Brothers' bakery, also on Willard Avenue. (Only one of the Snell brothers had married, and he went to work for Korb's Baking Company, where Max's father, Louis Simkofsky, had worked for thirty-two years.) When questioned about whether he was a member of the Hebrew Bakers' Union, Max explained that only those bakers who made rolls and breads were members. He had learned to be a pastry baker and they were never unionized.

What kind of pastry did Max create? His simple answer: "Whatever was required." For a Jewish bakery he might make Kichel (Yiddish for cookie), but very often he worked in non-Jewish bakeries. He also worked part-time for his brother who had opened up a bakery in Warwick. He devoted twenty years to Collyer's Bakery in Washington Park, sharing much of his expertise with their bakers. Since he was not part of the Hebrew Union Bakers, he could not bake rolls and breads in

the Jewish bakeries but did so for the non-Jewish places. He tackled many types of pastries, but did not decorate cakes, although he was able to do so. That job, which he declared took artistic ability, was undertaken by his sister, who decorated cakes for Rainbow Bakery.

When discussing the logistics of a baker's hours, Max did not consider them odd. His hours might start anytime from two a.m. to five a.m., depending on what he was producing. In contrast, Snell's bakers, who made the bread, would come to work at five p.m. and work until three a.m. Max reminisced about the years when a man driving a bakery truck might walk up three flights of stairs to deliver a half a loaf of bread and three rolls. At one period, Korb's had five or six trucks on the road delivering to restaurants, stores, etc. He thought they gave up that aspect of their business as unprofitable.

In summary, how did he feel about the occupation of a baker? "One of the hazards is that you are always on your feet. There is no coffee break or lunch hour. You worked eight hours straight through on Sundays and holidays. I would never recommend it. I would never do it again. Never. Never." But now that he is retired, Max Simmons works part time as a pastry baker. He explained, "I have to have some place to go."

THE KAPLAN FAMILY BAKERS — FOUR GENERATIONS

Just as the Korb Baking Company has been a very successful and thriving business since its founding, the Kaplan bakery dynasty is still flourishing. However, in the latter case, the offspring of the founders, Abraham and Rose Kaplan, are running three separate bakeries. According to Stanley Kaplan,¹⁴ his grandfather Abraham, his wife Rose, and their infant son Barney had emigrated from Russia to Rhode Island in 1902. Another branch of the family cites family records that date emigration to 1905, and claims that Abraham was employed as a flour miller in Russia.¹⁵ Additional information from this source relates that soon after their arrival they moved into a two-story building at 51 Black Street in the North End of Providence and that by 1910 they had opened Kaplan's Bakery in that building. This is interesting, for according to the Providence City Directory Frimet Schechter had to close her shop in that same building in 1908.

By 1929 the Abraham Kaplan family had moved to the South Providence area where they founded a Kosher bakery at the corner of Prairie Avenue and Bogman Street. Barney, who had learned the baker's trade from his own father and had also worked in several bakeries throughout the city, was a working partner in the bakery and continued to run the business after his father's death. Barney's son Stanley described the difficult life of his working parents in the bakery business. His father did the baking in the back of the store and his mother waited on customers in the front. Preparations for the baking began at eight p.m. and continued through the

night. Customers arrived as early as six a.m., when they would find Mrs. Kaplan ready to wait on them. As they acquired a full route of customers, Mrs. Kaplan had to come in earlier than six a.m. to prepare orders for delivery. Stanley accompanied his father on the route before he went to school; this was during the depression of the 1930s.

Not only did they work long hours, but it was a seven-day-a-week business. Only on the High Holidays and during Passover was the bakery closed. There was no such thing as the family sitting down to an evening meal together, for the bakery was open until nine o'clock at night.

This branch of the Kaplan family continued when Barney Kaplan purchased the building that housed the bakery. In 1946 he sold it to Benjamin Matusow and moved to Cranston. Benjamin Matusow changed the name to Ben's Bakery and later moved the business to Broad Street. Stanley also moved to Cranston eight years later. Barney did not retire when he sold his bakery but went to work for Stanley and in 1958 opened up the Rainbow Bakery with Al Brody, another employee of Ben's Bakery, in a rented building at 728 Reservoir Avenue.

Barney's son, Murray, recalled the early years of the Rainbow Bakery when as a child of ten he helped his father. This meant that on his way to school he would help mix the sourdough and repeat the process during the lunch hour. After eight years Barney Kaplan purchased an empty lot at 800 Reservoir Avenue and in February 1964 construction on a new bakery began (Al Brody had left the business at this time). Unfortunately, Barney died on December 30, 1964 at the age of fifty-nine. He was survived by his wife, Leah, four sons — Stanley, Daniel, Murray and Harold — and two daughters, Mrs. Gerald Maldavir and Eva Kaplan.

Stanley related that he worked for the August Bakery in Central Falls for a few years, then started and ran a small business in Buttonwoods for about eight years, and in 1980 moved to his present location on Hope Street in Providence. At the present time his only son Barry, a fourth generation baker, works with his father in the Hope Street bakery.

Leah and sons Murray and Danny carried on Barney's vision for their new store. After Leah's death in 1979 her sons ran the business, Murray specializing in cake decoration and pastries, Danny in charge of bread and bagels. In 1987 Danny left to start his own bakery, "Barney's," named in honor of his father. It opened at 727 East Avenue, Pawtucket with the addition of a wide variety of soups, salads, bagels, muffins, etc. as "take-out" or to be eaten at tables on the premises. A second "Barney's" was opened in 1994 at 870 Oaklawn Avenue in Cranston. And here we have a fourth generation working with the father: Daniel's children, Michelle and Bruce, are involved in the operation of Barney's.

Murray's career was featured in an article in the *Rhode Island Monthly* of February 1998. Murray, after many years of practice as a master cake decorator, gained great renown by "creating replicas of famous buildings like the State House cake he baked for Rhode Island's celebration of the Bicentennial in 1976. It weighed several hundred pounds and was Murray's greatest challenge ever." And now still another fourth generation child, Murray's son Scott, is involved in the family business.

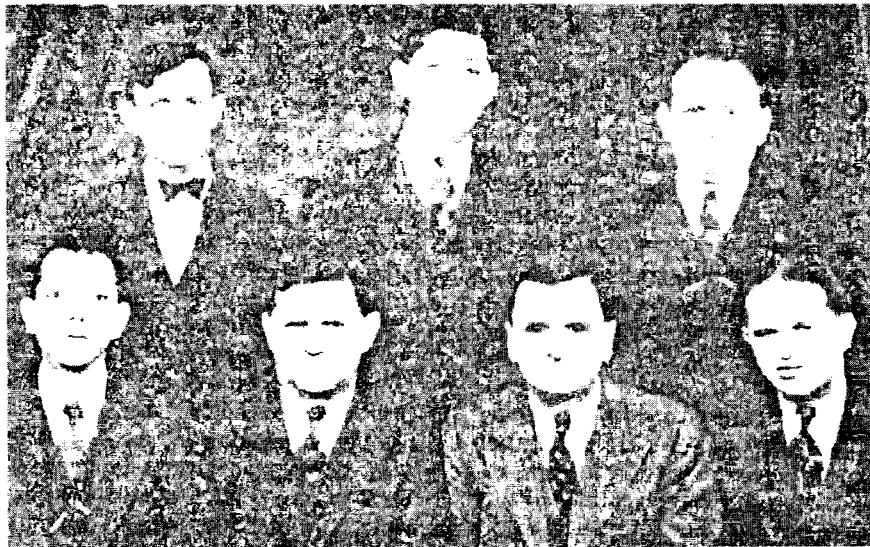
B. FLINK AND SONS

Essential to the baker were the ingredients of his bread-making, such as the many varieties of flour, yeast, oil and those ingredients used in special types of breads and rolls. One such supplier was B. Flink, Inc. (the "B" refers to "Benjamin," who started the business). The family originated in Fall River and moved to Providence in 1899, establishing a bakery supply business at 1224 Chalkstone Avenue. In an interview with Ellis Flink it was learned that his grandfather, Benjamin Flink, had been a flour merchant.¹⁶

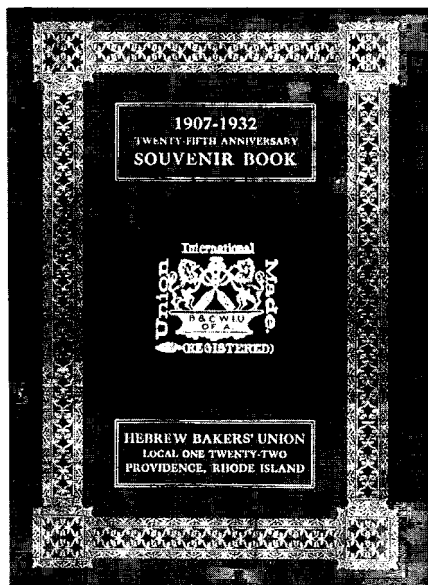
An account book kept by the Flink company dated 1898-1900 was donated to the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association by Ellis Flink. The Yiddish entries were made by his grandfather Benjamin, those in English by his father, Abe Flink. One entry, dated 10/22/00, reads as follows: "To: Mrs. F. Schechter — 5 gals. oil \$2.50." By this time Mrs. Schechter as a widow had taken over the management of her husband's business. Ellis Flink added that Frimet Schechter was sister to his grandmother, Mrs. Benjamin Flink.

Ellis tells an anecdote about his grandfather, who was very fond of his horses and did not favor using the popular invention of motor vehicles. One Fourth of July the barn on Ashburton Street that housed the horses was set on fire by a rocket from some fireworks. Some of the horses were lost in the conflagration, but it led to the replacement of the horses by motor trucks. The year — 1929!

Flink & Son sold flour and jam to many of the local Jewish bakers including Hochman's, Korb's, two of the Kaplan stores, Snell's, and also many of the Polish bakers. Large tank trucks met the delivery of the flour by train, a siding being assigned in Yard 17. The flour came from several states; the names of the flour reflected the area in which the wheat grew or the grade of wheat, for example Empire High Gluten, Royal Crown, Fancy Clear, Duluth Superior Milling Company, and Spring Wheat. There were those that were high in gluten (the substance in wheat and other cereal grains that helps dough rise). In addition, Flink advertised the oil it sold: Simico Shortening, Century, and Pure Salad Oil. The flour was delivered to the bakers in ninety-eight-pound bags, using a chute into the bake shop for delivery. Ellis Flink recalled the big ovens, heated by coal, which the bakers used; he commented that the warehouses were not heated.



Above: Arrangements Committee, 25th anniversary, Hebrew Bakers Union, Providence, 1932. Standing: Joseph Fish, J. Kessler, B. H. Brody (Treasurer). Seated: Alfred Davis, Hyman Abrams, J. Landy (Chairman), Al Brody (Secretary).



The 25th anniversary souvenir book.

The company grew not only through its bakery supply business but also through its wholesale grocery business, with warehouses in what is now the present location of the Marriott Hotel at Orms and Charles Streets in Providence, and in Attleboro. It employed 250 people in the warehouses and had fifty trucks. Eventually the Flinks gave up the flour supply part of the business and the company went public. It was sold in 1979.

THE HEBREW BAKERS' UNION

Reference has been made to the Hebrew Bakers' Union: it was Local Number 122 and had been founded in 1907. In commemoration of its twenty-fifth anniversary, an affair was held on April 23, 1932 in Zinn's Banquet Hall, Providence. A letter accompanying the souvenir book (published in Yiddish and English) described the difficult life of the baker and the formation of the union to rectify those conditions:

Twenty-five years ago, a very small number of us, who slaved long, dark nights to bake bread for others, ourselves did not have enough to eat. The conditions under which we worked were extremely hard. . . . The bakers gathered and made it clear to themselves; this can go no further! Talk about a union began, which will defend the interests of the bakers; and Local 122 was founded.

Many struggles did we endure during that time. True, we have not attained everything, we have a great deal to struggle for. Meanwhile today, in the day of our 25th year Jubilee, let us take a fresh enthusiasm for our continuing striving until the end, until no longer will there be oppressors and oppressed.

BAGELS

Bagel Box, Bagel Break, Bagel Express, The Bagel Factory, Bagel Finagle Deli, Bagel Gourmet, Bagel Station, Bagel East, Bagel Bazaar, Bagels Etc., Barney's Bagels, The Big Apple Bagel Co. A new phenomenon, this bagel explosion? Hardly. A history of the bagel reveals that although the American Jewish community has been credited with the popularization of the bagel, it has been part of culinary history for about 300 years.¹⁷ The bagel (originally named "beugel") originated in Vienna, Austria in 1683. After the second partition of Poland, many Jews left Austria and Germany for Galicia, bringing their ethnic foods with them. As today, the "beugel" was circular with a hole in the middle. Descendants of these Jewish emigrants came to America and founded the first beugel bakeries in New York City, its name soon Americanized to bagel.

It is difficult to speculate on the origin of the bagel in Rhode Island. Korb's Baking Company, around 1910, may have been among the first, if not the first, to make and sell bagels to its customers. There is reference to other bakeries who imported their bagels, although they made their own breads and rolls.

Several individuals have spoken in glowing terms about the Bagel Factory on Constitution Hill. As children they reminisced about how a parent would take them to buy the bagels, and they described the delicious aroma of these bagels, hot out of the oven. Joslin Davis, who had a delicatessen at 339 North Main Street, recalled the bakery very well.¹⁸ It was owned by someone named Frager in the vacated John Sweet bakery at 363 North Main Street.

Today there is a continued increase in the production and sale of bagels, with many varieties from which to choose. Bagel shops continue to open up at frequent intervals, often including menus of bagel sandwiches and assorted drinks. Stanley Kaplan talked about the boiled kind of bagels, which he called the traditional kind his father used to make, when Kaplan's started on Prairie Avenue in 1929. "A lot of bagels today are bagel-shaped but aren't real bagels. A real bagel has to be put into boiling water before it's baked. Boiling makes the surface shiny and the dough elastic. But some today cut out the boiling part; the texture is different."¹⁹ Bagels are Barneys' claim to fame, according to Donna Lee. That bakery had been making the boiled and baked kind for twelve years at the time she wrote her article.

The saga of the bagel goes on and on (or should I say, "round and round"). In *The Rhode Island Jewish Herald* of March 26, 1998, there is evidence that bagels have even invaded the temples, according to the article entitled "Torat Yisrael Houses Bagel Cafe." "It is a successful operation every Sunday, with bagels provided by Rainbow Bakery of Cranston. Students come for Sunday School and before class may have a quick snack or a nutritious breakfast of juice, hot chocolate, and a bagel. The parents may partake of coffee and tea with their bagel." These bagels have served to increase socialization, just one of their wonderful features. May all such tasty and satisfying bakery products, everything from bread and bagels to Zwetschkuchen (plum pies made for Rosh Hashanah), continue to nourish us in body and spirit!



NOTES

- ¹ See, for example, *The Community Cookbook* (Woonsocket Hebrew Ladies Sisterhood and Congregation B'nai Israel) p. 11; and Joan Nathan, *Jewish Cooking in America* (NY: Knopf, 1994) p. 7. For an interesting discussion of yeast in ancient and modern baking, see Elizabeth David, *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* (London: Penguin, 1977) p. 69.
- ² Interview with Tillie Brody Reuter, August 17, 1998.
- ³ Eleanor Horvitz, "Jews of the North End," *Rhode Island Historical Notes*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Nov. 1979), p. 16.
- ⁴ Interview with Frimette Silverman Roberts, July 21, 1998.
- ⁵ Interview with Mollie Sklut and Tillie Brody Reuter, August 17, 1998.
- ⁶ Recipe improvised from *From Flour to Flower*, Emanu-El Sisterhood and Garden Club, Providence, RI.

- ⁷ Interview with Beverly August Schwartz, August 16, 1998.
- ⁸ Interview with Jessica August Kelman, July 10, 1998.
- ⁹ *Providence Journal*, Dec. 5, 1941.
- ¹⁰ Interview with David Korb, July 19, 1998.
- ¹¹ *Providence Sunday Journal*, Feb. 2, 1986.
- ¹² Interview with Max Simmons, July 21, 1998.
- ¹³ Pearl Braude, Interview with Max Simmons, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Nov. 1997).
- ¹⁴ Interview with Stanley Kaplan, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Nov. 1994), p. 463.
- ¹⁵ Sara Wise, "Rainbow Bakery Celebrates 40th Anniversary with New Cafe," *Rhode Island Jewish Herald*, Oct. 23, 1997.
- ¹⁶ Interview with Ellis Flink, August 25, 1998.
- ¹⁷ June Roth, *The Bagel Book* (NY: Grosset and Dunlop, 1978) pp. 10-11.
- ¹⁸ Interview with Joslin Davis, Spring 1998.
- ¹⁹ Stanley Kaplan quoted by Donna Lee, *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, Oct. 25, 1995).

JEWES IN ANCIENT AFRICA

BY RICHARD LOBBAN

The first kingdom of Jews was formed by King Saul's unification of the wandering Judaic peoples and consolidated by the subsequent reign of his son, King David (c. 1010-970 BCE). The third in this dynasty, King Solomon (c. 970-930 BCE), is credited with the construction of the first temple at Jerusalem, which housed the famed Ark of the Covenant. Long before that great period of political power and cultural development, and then again long after it, the Hebrew people had extensive experiences in Egypt and other North African countries. This essay surveys the ancient Jewish presence in Africa, which provided an important historical foundation for later Jewish life and culture.

JEWES IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Originally migrants from Mesopotamia, the sons of Abraham crossed into Africa and reached the Nile valley. Perhaps this crossing occurred in connection with the migration of the Hyksos "Shepherd Kings," whose origin may be found in ancient Canaan. These Hyksos arrived in Egypt in the 17th century BCE. Centuries later, the defining moment in Jewish history took place in Africa during the Exodus from Egypt led by Moses, probably during the long reign of the New Kingdom pharaoh Ramses II (1279-1212 BCE). The first inscribed reference to Jews ("Habiru") in Egypt is on the temple of Ramses III (1182-1151 BCE) at Medinat Habu in Western Thebes. Following the Exodus, Jews were among the earliest arrivals in Carthage in Tunisia under the Phoenicians in the late 9th century BCE. Probably they were also present in the Phoenician satellite trading towns such as Cadiz (Gades) in southern Spain from as early as the 6th or 5th centuries BCE.

By the 7th century BCE, after the Jewish state had split into the two kingdoms of Judea to the south and Israel (Samaria) to the north, the Hebrews became vulnerable to attack by the Assyrians. It is well known that several pharaohs of the Nubian Dynasty XXV had close political and military ties with the Judeans. Most notable in this respect, and recorded in the Bible (II Kings, 19:9; Isaiah 37:9-10), is Taharka. His relationship with King Hezekiah of Judea was based upon their common interests in resisting Assyrian aggression. Ultimately, both failed in this task. It appears that at some point in the 7th century BCE groups of Jews moved to the Nile valley, perhaps while still occupied by Nubian pharaohs. They went in many directions, some to Egypt, others up the Nile to Lower Nubia and Ethiopia, through the Arabian peninsula and especially to Yemen, and some as far west as modern

Dr. Richard Lobban is Professor of Anthropology and African Studies at Rhode Island College. This talk was first presented at the University of Massachusetts-North Dartmouth on 19 November 1997, in memory of Judith Weiss Cohen, writer, historian, and patriot (1924-1997). The lecture was sponsored by the Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture, The Center for Jewish Culture, and the Cape Verdean Student Alliance. Special appreciation for support is offered to Steve Gorban, Chancellor Peter Cressy and singer Judy Frankel.

Tunisia, where they built the synagogue of La Ghriba on the island of Jerba. Then in the 6th century BCE, the Jews remaining in Judea were dispersed by the Babylonians, following the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem.

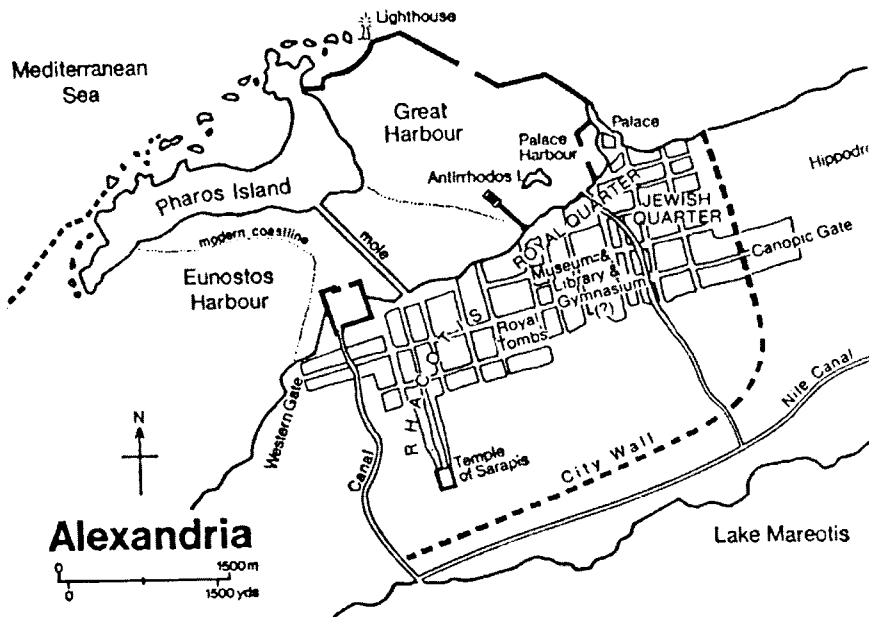
Under the more liberal Persian rule in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, Jews found renewed tolerance and were allowed to return to Judea and to their beliefs. This was especially the case in 538 BC under Persian King Cyrus. The Second Jewish Temple was completed in 515 BC. But Jews continued to travel and emigrate to Egypt; a Jewish community was established there under the reign of Darius I in 494 BC. A Jewish temple and military colony was also established on Elephantine (Yeb) Island at Aswan on the frontier between Egypt and Nubia well before 525 BCE, until its destruction about 410 BCE. This settlement had been established in the period of the dispersal during the Babylonian occupation of Israel.

Relations between these Aswan Jews and the local Egyptian priests were complex. Some of the priests believed that the Jewish temple there was an affront to the Elephantine ram god of Khnum, and the temple was destroyed or badly damaged. The local Jewish leaders sought approval from embarrassed local authorities to rebuild, but the temple soon disappears from the record. Some researchers, such as Graham Hancock, have thought that the Ark of Covenant passed through Aswan on a trip to Ethiopia, where it may still reside at the town of Axum.

While the precise location of the temple at Aswan is still in question, numerous documents, deeds, letters, and contracts written in Aramaic were found to date from the period 495-399 BCE. The documents reveal Jewish links to other Egyptian communities of (Samaritan?) Jews at Migdol in the northeastern Delta at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and at Pathros in Nubia. Their presence related to the Persian military defense under Darius against Babylonian expansion into Egypt.

It appears likely that there were Jewish soldiers in the military forces of Pharaoh Psammetichos II in his attacks on Napata in Nubia. Perhaps it was at this time that some Jews fled up the Nile to the River Atbara in modern Sudan. From there they may have ventured into the Ethiopian highlands to establish the roots of the Falasha (Baet Israel) Jewish communities of Ethiopia.

During the time of the Ptolemies, the city of Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, was approximately one quarter Jews, some of whom played a military role in the defense of Egypt at Aswan. With some exceptions, like the Jewish revolt against Antiochus IV (175-63 BCE), Judaism was generally tolerated by the Greeks. A Tel Yehudiya district of modern Alexandria still exists as a reminder of this presence. The long experience of Jews as a minority group within a majority culture was heavily conditioned in Alexandria.



Jewish Quarter in Alexandria, Egypt, during the reign of the Ptolemies. Source: M. Grant, Cleopatra (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972),

It was at this Alexandrian period that the Greeks were themselves split between the Ptolemaic branch in Egypt and the Seleucid branch in the Near East. Jews were much caught up in this rivalry, although they were marginal to both sides. Judea was the common battlefield for the five successive wars between these two groups of Greeks. Then as now, Jews were not isolated from world events; this was especially the case during the reign of Antiochus III, who conquered Jerusalem in about 200 BCE. Then Antiochus IV resorted to severe repressive measures to draw taxes from the colonized Jews and force them to renounce their religion. The Maccabean revolt of 166 BCE blocked the objective of Antiochus IV: the Jewish holiday of Chanukah commemorates this resistance and victory over the Seleucids in 165 BCE, a victory that was much celebrated by Jews under Ptolemaic rule in Egypt.

Roman expansion around the Mediterranean in the first century BC brought Judea under the authority of Pompey in 63 BCE. Roman Emperor Caligula first appointed Herod as king of Judea in 37 BCE. Serving afterward under Augustus (Octavius), Herod (37-41 CE) was abhorred by his Jewish subjects, who were much oppressed by Roman rule during these perilous times. In 31 BCE Roman rule was established in Egypt as well, following the Roman victory at Actium over the weak Ptolemaic forces of Cleopatra VII. The Romans reluctantly offered a measure of local autonomy to Egyptian Jews to practice their religion. Other Egyptians felt that this

was a special privilege, and cases of rioting and looting against the Alexandrian Jews followed. Jews resisted militarily and with diplomatic means as they sought a return to stable relations. A famous contemporary Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, is said to have stayed in Middle Egypt for several years as a child with his parents while events settled down.

Either passive and active resistance or compromises characterize the Jewish-Roman relationships in this period as well as in the following centuries. This is well illustrated in the case of the Jewish philosopher Philo, who resided in Alexandria and was known for his ardent defense of Jewish rights during the administration of Caligula. On the other hand, Philo's nephew, Tiberius Julius, actually served as the Roman prefect of their Egyptian colony and was actively engaged in the military suppression of the Jewish state at Jerusalem and in killing his fellow Jews during the Jewish revolt of 66-70 CE (and the fall of Masada in 73 CE) under Nero and his successors.

These struggles have been carefully chronicled by the famed Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (born in 37 CE), who has sometimes been appraised by modern Jews as a Roman "collaborator" for helping to put down the turbulent "extremist" Jewish uprisings. Such predicaments of notable Jews who have stressed their uniqueness and devotion to their religion, but suffered for their efforts, have long been a confounding feature of Jewish life.

Roman persecution led to dispersal of Jews throughout the Middle East, across North Africa, and into eastern and central Europe. Jews had been present several centuries BCE in ancient coastal Algeria (Tripoli) as well as Alexandria, which had a huge concentration of Jews since Ptolemaic times. But in the first and second centuries CE, Jews and proto-Christians experienced savage repression and martyrdom under Roman rule in Africa, causing further dispersal into the Sahara and westward across North Africa.

JEWIS IN AFRICA AFTER THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

After the arrival of Islam in the Middle East after the 7th century CE, Jews from Arabia again spread through the Levant, the Nile Valley, and the Maghreb, even crossed over to Spain and Portugal. One cannot fail to mention the Ben Ezra synagogue in Cairo, which dates to 882 CE, and its famed and extensive Geniza document collection. This synagogue functioned until 1967 and has recently been rehabilitated.

With Jews and Phoenicians, and later Arabs, established in North Africa from very early dates, it is not surprising to have claims or accounts of their presence in the western Sahara. They were probably present in ancient Ghana — Tekrur and Tuat — as traders in the first few centuries CE. Even before the spread of Islam, Jews

were in Tamentit, where traces of Jewish architecture can still be seen, by the 6th century CE. By this time, or no later than the 8th century, there were also Jews at Mzab, Tafilalet, and Sijilmasa. They persisted in these places until the late 14th-century persecution by Moroccans, and were reported by the famed medieval Arab historians. Later, the travels in 1447 of the Genoan Antonio Malfante (Benedito Dei) were recorded; he may have been among the first Europeans to reach Timbuktu.

Middle Eastern and North African Jews played key roles in navigation, astronomy, commerce, science, and particularly cartography. For example, the 14th century map-maker Abraham Cresques and his son Jehuda in Majorca produced the famed Catalan Atlas showing Mali and African locations with more precision than before.

Jews were involved in many activities, including complex irrigated agriculture, which they probably introduced to the western Sahara. According to Jacob Oliel, they served there as rabbis, translators, scribes, apothecaries, negotiators, and (especially) traders. Trans-Saharan trade concentrated on gold, leather, salt, and slaves, which passed through the Saharan commercial centers in which Jews made their homes. Jews were also involved in tailoring, metalwork, gold and silver fabrication, metallurgy, and embroidery. Jewish traces are also seen in Hebrew tombstones, epigraphy (inscriptions), and toponyms (place names), especially around Tamentit and Tuat. The interaction between Jews and Berbers deserves special attention because Jewish symbols and iconography (pictures) still persists in Saharan jewelry and decorative tapestry styles, according to the fascinating work of Labelle Prussin. Jews were certainly present in Timbuktu of Mali, according to the research of Jacob Oliel and Joseph Williams. Oliel has done fascinating research on the much later but extensive 19th-century sub-Saharan travels to Mali by the Algerian Rabbi Mordechai Aby Serour.

After the expulsion and forced conversion of Jews in Iberia in 1492 and thereafter, many fled to Turkey where they formed Ladino communities. Very quickly, Ottoman Turkey became a regional power and established itself in Egypt by 1517 under Sultan Selim I; the last Christian kingdom of Nubia at Soba had fallen to Islam in 1508. Apprehensive of Turkish and Islamic dominance of the region, the Portuguese sent Francisco Alvares to Christian and Jewish Ethiopia to try to create a political and military alliance of Christians to contain Muslim Turkey. Apparently his route was through Nubia in today's Sudan and southern Egypt, which had been Christian from the 5th century.

Then in 1522 the Spanish king sent a Jewish traveler, David Reubeni, to Soba, Sennar on the Blue Nile, and Ethiopia to determine their chances for toppling the Muslims and reinstating Christianity in the Sudan. The tolerance of the Muslim

world for Jews at the time made Reubeni's travels safe and acceptable. Upon his return, Reubeni reported to the Spanish king and to the Pope with a plan to encircle and resist the Turks. The plan was gradually engaged and by 1541 the first major Portuguese expedition was sent to Ethiopia in a search for political and military alliances with the mythical Prester John. In the 17th century the Portuguese were still sending priests on papal missions through Nubia and to Ethiopia.

Numerous Jews made their homes in Khartoum during the Turkiya (1821-1885). There is the case of Vita Hassan, a Tunisian Jew who was trapped by the Sudanese Mahdi in the southern Sudan with Emin Pasha, for whom he served as an apothecary until they managed to escape through East Africa. To cite a more recent example, Daniel Nassun Curiel, an Egyptian Jew, was a founder of the Egyptian and Sudanese Communist Parties in the 1940s. These parties played central roles in developing Arab nationalism and anti-colonial agitation.

I conclude this survey with the mention of two Ashkenazi Jews, Ruth First and her husband Joe Slovo, both residents of South Africa. They were long-standing members of the African National Congress of South Africa, the party headed by Nelson Mandela. She was murdered by a bomb placed by the South African terrorist police in support of racist apartheid; she lost her life and her husband lost his arm in the explosion. Ruth First profoundly contributed to the liberation of Africa from racism, and she was directly responsible for making key contacts which launched my own research in the Sudan in 1970.

CONCLUSION

I have sketched some reference points in the extremely long history of Jews in Africa, stretching from the 17th century BCE to the present. Ever since the emergence of the Jews as a political, religious, and ethnic group in Africa with the Exodus from Egypt led by Moses, Jews have been linked to most of the major events in North African history as active and highly skilled participants in science, trade, politics, and arts and crafts, both in and outside their religious communities. As elsewhere in the world, the roles played by Jews has been complex as well as diverse. Synagogues (now barely functioning) still exist in the Maghreb and in Cairo and Khartoum. In Khartoum and Wad Medani, there were Jewish families like the Basiyounis still living there until the 1970s, or even the 1980s. Crypto-Jews of Portuguese origins, such as Rufina Bernardetti Da Silva Mausenbaum of Johannesburg, are discovering their lost identities in southern and Portuguese-speaking Africa. (I met this woman through the world wide web, and she is soon expected to visit New England to meet others rediscovering similar origins.) Clearly this research has only begun, but this brief sketch may whet your appetite for further study.



SOME SUGGESTED READING

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BY LOIS ATWOOD

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Rhode Island references on pages 6, 8, 11, 27, 30, 50, 105, 151-53, 156.

Making a Life, Building a Community: A History of the Jews of Hartford, by David G. Dalin and Jonathan Rosenbaum (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1997), 326 pages.

Rhode Island references on pages 10, 11, 14, 21.

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"A New Jewish Elite: Curators, Directors, and Benefactors of American Art Museums," Part 1, by George M. Goodwin, pages 47-79.

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Rhode Island Portraits in Sound: The Fascinating Stories of Famous and Little-known Rhode Islanders, audiocassette written and produced by Florence Markoff, Bookmark Productions, 1998.

Narration by Florence Markoff and Norm Jagolinzer.

A Taste of Honey: Recipes from Yesteryear to Today, compiled by Cranston-Warwick Hadassah Cookbook Committee: Stella Pollock, Assisted by Anne Berger, Goldie Cohen, Shirley Mittleman, Pat Hanson, Estelle Kortick, Leila Sock, Harriet Koslow, and Carol Idlis (Olathe, Kansas: Cookbook Publishers, Inc., 1991), 120 pages.

Recipe donor names listed throughout.

A Taste of Tradition: A Collection of Culinary and Fine Arts from Temple Emanuel, Providence, Rhode Island, compiled, edited and published by Temple Emanuel, Providence, RI, 1997, illustrated, with art index and bibliography, 196 pages.

Recipe donor names listed throughout.

Tender Comrades: a Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist, by Patrick McGilligan and Paul Buhle (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 776 pages.

Dr. Buhle is Visiting Professor of American Civilization at Brown University.

Toy Wars: The Epic Struggle between G.I. Joe, Barbie, and the Companies that Make Them, by G. Wayne Miller (New York and Toronto: Times Books, 1998), 348 pages.

The story of Hasbro, with local references throughout.

Western States Jewish History, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1998) (Calabasas, California: Western States Jewish History Association), 190 pages.

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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
FORTY-FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING
MAY 17, 1998

The forty-fourth annual meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was called to order at 1:35 P.M. by Mel Topf, chairperson of the day. He greeted the audience and called on President Aaron Cohen who conducted a short business meeting.

Mr. Cohen asked that the minutes of the previous meeting be waived, which was approved. He then presented the amendment to the constitution establishing an Endowment Committee, which was approved. Jack Fradin, Treasurer, reported on the financial condition of the Association.

Aaron Cohen paid tribute to Judith Weiss Cohen, editor of the RIJHA *Notes* for eleven years, and Seebert Goldowsky, M.D., vital members of the Association, who recently died. He expressed his appreciation to the RIJHA volunteers and staff during his tenure of four years. He then presented a progress report on the development of the Heritage Harbor project. This report is on file.

Eleanor Horvitz, Librarian/Archivist, reported on the value of the archives to the continuation of the Rhode Island Jewish community. She noted particularly the Jewish Home for the Aged records, and photographs of the Congregation Temple Beth Israel. She invited the audience to view the photographs of the Temple activities taken by Fred Kelman, which were on display.

The Publications Chairman, Stanley B. Abrams, announced the publication of the book *Jews of Rhode Island 1658-1958*, by Geraldine S. Foster, Eleanor H. Horvitz, and Judith Weiss Cohen. This book is in the *Images of America* series, published by Arcadia Publishing of Dover, New Hampshire. Mr. Abrams stated that the new edition of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* Vol. 12, No. 3, was now available. He introduced the editor of the next issue, Dr. Leonard Moss, who invited members to submit articles for consideration. Dr. Moss's curriculum vitae is on file.

Anita Fine, Nominating Committee Chairperson, asked that a single vote be cast to approve the slate of officers as presented in the report on file. Upon this vote of approval, Melvin Zurier installed the officers. He introduced Eugene Weinberg, the new President.

Mr. Weinberg expressed his gratitude to Aaron Cohen for his progressive leadership and devotion to the Association, and presented a gift of appreciation on behalf of the membership. He named as his appointments to the Executive Board, Phyllis Berry and Zita Brier.

Mel Topf introduced the speaker of the afternoon, Professor Maud S. Mandel, visiting Professor in the Brown University Program in Judaic Studies. Professor Mandel addressed the meeting with a talk entitled "My Brother's Keeper: the Impact of American Jewry on Post World War II French Jewish Life." The lecture focused on the impact of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee which raised money for international relief. She credited this association with the survival and rebuilding of the French Jewish community after WWII. Professor Mandel then responded to questions from the audience.

Geraldine Foster presented a copy of the newly published book, *Jews of Rhode Island 1658-1958* and announced that they would be offered for sale after the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 P.M. A social hour and collation followed. Phyllis Berry chaired the hospitality committee with the assistance of Anita Fine and Anne Sherman.

Respectfully submitted,
Lillian Schwartz
Assistant Secretary

NECROLOGY — December 1, 1997 - November 30, 1998

ABEDON, M. LOUIS, born in Providence, son of the late Samuel and Bessie (Brenner) Abedon. He attended Boston University and was a 1929 graduate of Boston University Law School.

Mr. Abedon was a member of the Massachusetts and Rhode Island Bar Associations. He served as U.S. Commissioner for the U.S. District Court of Rhode Island from 1954 through 1971. He was president of the Rhode Island Trial Lawyers Association.

Mr. Abedon was a member of Temple Emanu-El and a member of the Rhode Island Republican State Central Committee. He was a member of the Redwood Lodge, Jewish Community Center and the Jewish Federation.

Died in Providence on March 13, 1998 at age 91.

BECK, DR. IRVING A., born in Providence, son of the late Harry and Elizabeth (Temkin) Beck. A graduate of Brown University, he majored in biology and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received his medical degree from Harvard Medical School with the highest academic honors.

Dr. Beck was an army veteran of World War II and served as a captain in the Medical Corps. He served in the China-Burma-India theater of the war.

In 1962, Dr. Beck became Chief of the medical service at The Miriam and Providence Lying-In Hospitals, and consultant to Rhode Island and Roger Williams Hospitals.

He was president of the Providence Medical Association, governor of the American College of Physicians, and president of the American Osler Society.

Known for his literary scholarship and medical historiography, Dr. Beck taught medical history at Brown University. He received Brown Medical School's W.W. Keen Award "for distinguished achievements and service to the community and to Brown."

In 1986 Dr. Beck was awarded the Ralph O. Chaypode Memorial Award by the American College of Physicians. He was a member of the Francis S. Countway Library in Boston, the John Carter Brown Library, the Grolier Club of New York, and the Italian History Club.

Died in Providence on January 26, 1998, at age 86.

BERNHARDT, HELENE F., born in Providence, daughter of the late Daniel and Helen (Moss) Donig. She was a lifelong Providence resident who devoted her life to philanthropy and community service.

She was a member of Temple Beth El since being confirmed in 1921. She was a past president of the Beth El Sisterhood, and, with her husband, jointly chaired the temple's 125th and 135th anniversary celebrations. Mrs. Bernhardt established the Talking Books Fund at the temple.

She was active at the Jewish Home for the Aged, the National Council of Jewish Women, Brandeis University Women's Association, the American Red Cross, and Insight.

Died in Providence on June 13, 1998, at age 91.

BRIER, SARA ROBINSON, born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, daughter of the late Mendel Mawchum and Zirel (Abrich) Udisky, she lived in Providence for over 80 years.

Mrs. Brier served four terms as a Rhode Island Democratic delegate to the Electoral College for presidential elections.

She was a former president of the Rhode Island chapter of Brandeis University Women's Association and the Providence Chapter of Hadassah. She was a member of the board of The Miriam Hospital Women's Association, Temple Emanu-El, the Council of Jewish Women, and Bannister House.

Mrs. Brier was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on March 14, 1998, at age 90.

GEREBOFF, SADYE, born in Plymouth, Massachusetts, daughter of the late Abraham and Sarah Sherman.

She was a member of Temple Emanu-El, the Congregation Beth Jacob in Plymouth, the Providence Hebrew Day School, and the Women's Association of the Jewish Home for the Aged.

Mrs. Gereboff was a volunteer for the American Red Cross, and helped to finance and create scholarships at the Providence Hebrew Day School and Boston University.

Died in Providence on April 10, 1998, at age 89.

GROSS, HERMAN, born in Pawtucket, son of the late Frank and Rose Gross.

Mr. Gross was president and treasurer of Fairhope Fabrics Inc., a textile manufacturer, until retiring in 1992. He was also president of Newell Realty Corporation in Providence.

He was an Army veteran of World War II. He graduated from Harvard University in 1933 and attended Harvard Law School. He was a member of Temple Beth El and the Brotherhood.

Died in Providence on February 13, 1998, at age 86.

HUBERMAN, MARSHALL, born in Brooklyn, New York, son of the late Sol and Lillian (Kirschner) Huberman.

A graduate of New York University in 1963, Mr. Huberman was a member of Temple Emanu-El.

He was also a member of the American Institute of Food and Wine. He was the owner of the Providence AAMCO Transmission Company.

Died in Providence on May 10, 1998 at age 56.

ISENBERG, DOROTHY, born in Russia, daughter of the late Aaron and Minicha Sherman. She was a Providence resident for most of her life.

Mrs. Isenberg was president and founder of the Grandparents' Guild Trust, an organization that benefitted the Children's Museum of Rhode Island. She was the first woman recipient of the Key to the City of Pawtucket.

She was an active participant of the American Funds for Israel Institutions. She was honorary director of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra and founder of the Friends Society of the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra.

Mrs. Isenberg was a founder of First Night of Rhode Island and founder of the Ruth Tripp Scholarship Fund. She was a board member of Trinity Art Center and the Rhode Island Festival Ballet.

She received an annual award for Outstanding Achievement from the United Arts Funds. She was a member of the Jewish Home for the Aged, Hadassah, Pioneer Women, the Women's Association of The Miriam Hospital, Hillel Foundation, and the Rhode Island Zoological Society.

Mrs. Isenberg was a member of Temple Beth El and a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on December 4, 1998

REEVES, DR. WILLIAM E., born in Providence, son of the late Charles and Minna (Conors) Reeves. He was an internist and geriatrician.

Dr. Reeves was a graduate of Harvard University and a 1959 graduate of the New York Medical College. He was a member of Temple Emanu-El.

Died in Providence on February 13, 1998, at age 73.

SAKLAD, DR. ELIHU, born in Boston, the son of the late Jacob and Mary (Karger) Saklad. A Providence resident since 1932, Dr. Saklad was a graduate of Tufts College and received his medical degree from Tufts Medical School in 1931.

During the depression, Dr. Saklad worked for the Providence health department as a city physician and treated the sick and indigent in their homes.

He was an Army veteran of World War II, serving as a captain in the Medical Corps from 1944 to 1946 in Oakland, California.

An anesthesiologist, he practiced at Rhode Island, Providence Lying-In, Charles V. Chapin, Pawtucket Memorial, and South County Hospitals.

He was a clinical instructor of anesthesia at Brown University School of Medicine, and was a past president of the New England Anesthesia Society. He was a member of Temple Emanu-El.

Died in Providence on April 20, 1998, at age 91.

SCHLOSSBERG, HARRY, a lifelong resident of Providence, son of the late Joseph and Bertha (Goldberg) Schlossberg. He attended the University of Rhode Island and was a graduate of Bryant College.

Mr. Schlossberg was an Army Air Force veteran of World War II. He was a member of Temple Beth El and of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island. He was also a member of Cove Haven Yacht Club.

Mr. Schlossberg was a partner in the former J. Schlossberg and Son Insurance Agency.

Died in Providence on November 27, at age 84.

SILVERSTEIN, PEARLE W., born in Providence, daughter of the late Benjamin and Leah (Sherman) Weinberg. Mrs. Silverstein attended Brown University and the American Laboratory Theater School in New York.

She appeared professionally in several stage productions. She was a member of the Providence Players and the Barker Players.

Mrs. Silverstein was a life member of The Miriam Hospital Women's Association, the Jewish Home for the Aged, the National Council of Jewish Women, B'nai B'rith and Hadassah.

She was a trustee at Temple Beth El, a charter member of the College Hill Society of Brown University, a member of the Collectors Club of Rhode Island School of Design, and a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Palm Beach, Florida, on March 29, 1998.

TEMKIN, JACOB N., born in Providence, son of the late Charles and Rose (Pullman) Temkin. He was a 1946 graduate of the University of Rhode Island. Mr. Temkin was co-founder of the Fast Break Club of basketball boosters. He was treasurer of the URI Foundation, and president of the URI Century Club. He established the Jacob N. Temkin Scholarship Award.

Mr. Temkin was a former president of Temple Emanu-El and Friends of Touro Synagogue in Newport. He was a former chairman of the Rhode Island March of Dimes.

Mr. Temkin formerly worked at Temkin Tobacco and Candy Company. He was associated with Mutual Benefit Life Insurance and Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance. He was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on July 26, 1998, at age 74.

ZARAKOV, LILLIAN, born in Boston, the daughter of the late Nathan and Eva Silverman.

A former resident of Brookline, Massachusetts, she was a 1926 graduate of Smith College and a member of the Smith Club of Rhode Island. She was a member of the Harvard Class of 1927 Alumni Association.

Mrs. Zarakov was the former associate director of Camp Zakelo in Harrison, Maine. She was a member of the American Camping Association, the Harrison Maine Historical Society, International House, and Hadassah.

Died in Providence on February 16, 1998, at age 94.

ERRATA

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 3

"Table of Contents"

Page 322, line 9, should read "JEWISH VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II: ORAL HISTORIES
— PART IV."

"A White, Black, Jewish Family"

Page 326, line 26, should read "Ten years later ..."

Page 327, line 11 and following pages, should read "Slowey."

Page 329, line 20, should read "about 1811 ..."

Page 330, line 13, should read "Richard's father, Gustavus Myers, became a prominent attorney, serving on the Richmond City Council for twenty-five years, eleven years as its president; he was also one of the three men who negotiated the surrender of Richmond with Abraham Lincoln. Myers drew the wills ..."

Page 331, line 19, should read "George Barclay ..."

"A Yiddish Broadside, Providence 1910"

Page 406, credit below document should read "Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society."

FUNDS AND BEQUESTS OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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ARNOLD T. AND ALICE AXELROD GALKIN	<i>General Fund</i>
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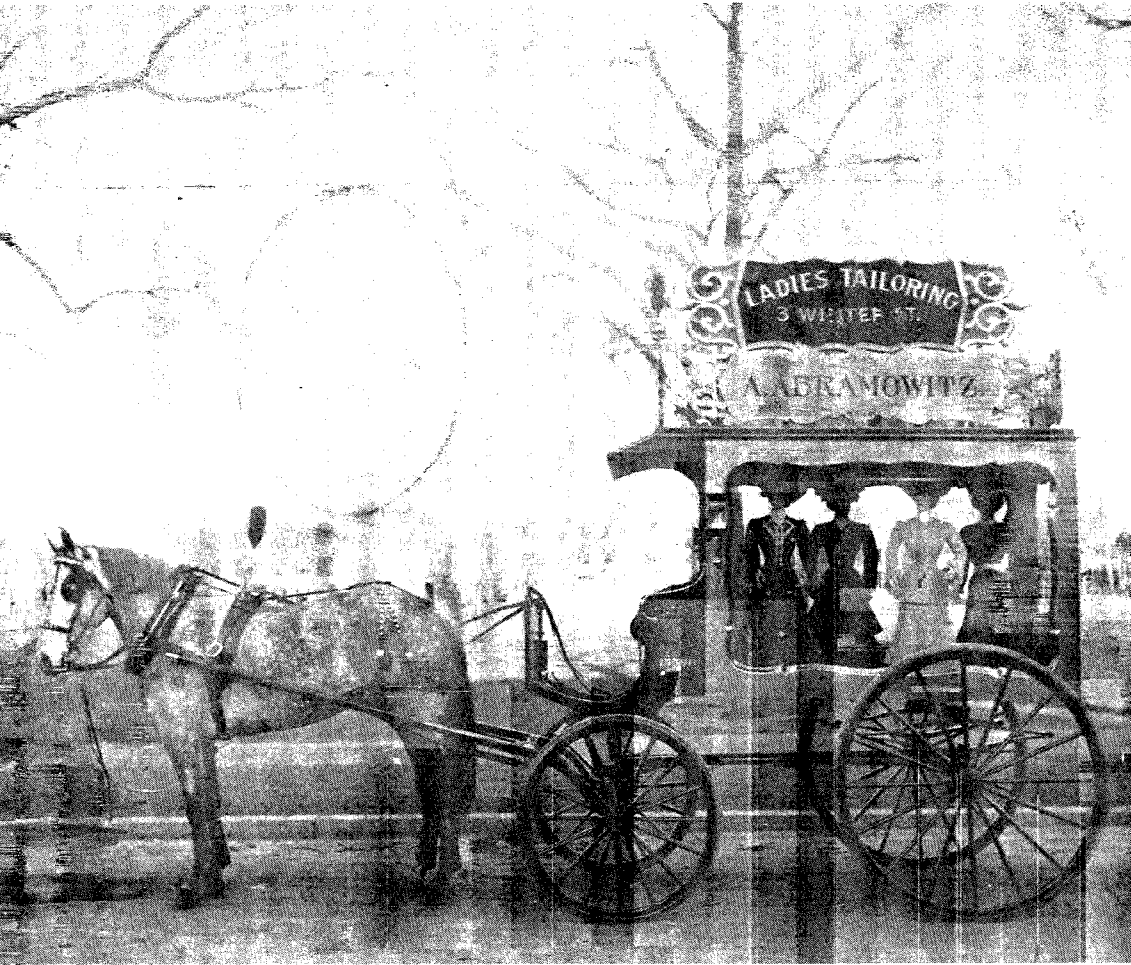
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Display wagon with brass frame and fittings owned by Abraham Abramowitz, lady's tailor, Providence, about 1900.