

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes

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Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association
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Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island. Photo by John Hopf.

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Table of Contents

Notes from the Editor	161
Settlement of Jews in Rhode Island	163
<i>by the Honorable Max Levy</i>	
The Designation of the Touro Synagogue as a National Historic Site	177
<i>by George M. Goodwin</i>	
Wartime Experiences of Russian Immigrants, Part I	208
<i>by Merrill Percelay</i>	
A Common Civil Purpose: The Jewish Role in the Providence Community Fund	220
<i>by Adam Harris Skolnick</i>	
The Jewelry Industry, Industrial Development, and Immigration in Providence, 1790-1993	244
<i>by Richard A. Meckel</i>	
An Interview with Frederick Lee ("Skip") Weingeroff	259
<i>by Naida D. Weisberg</i>	
Ida Camelhor Silverman: The Early Years	272
<i>by Alene Silver</i>	
"In the Sufferer, Let Me See Only the Human": A Brief Look at Some Jewish and Non-Jewish Medical Oaths	285
<i>by Stanley M. Aronson, M.D., and Betty E. Aronson, M.D.</i>	
We Settled in the Suburbs: Founding Four Synagogues	297
<i>by Geraldine Foster and Eleanor Horvitz</i>	
Bibliographical Notes	318
Forty-sixth Annual Meeting of the Association	320
Necrology	322
Errata	329
Funds and Bequests	330
Life Members of the Association	331

Notes from the Editor

Jewish life in Rhode Island has always been marked by diversity, as a glance at the table of contents will illustrate. Costume jewelry and non-sectarian philanthropy, suburban synagogues and the Touro Synagogue, wartime experiences of Russian immigrants and the childhood experiences of a prominent Zionist, the oaths taken by doctors and the achievement of colonial settlers in Newport — this amazing range of subjects attests to the vitality and diverse nature of the Rhode Island Jewish community, past and present. The *Notes* celebrates that vitality and that rich variety of people, interests, and activities.

As always, publication of this journal is made possible by the rich variety of vital people who are willing not only to write articles but also to assist with prepublication chores. Thanks once again to Stan Abrams, Aaron Cohen, Eleanor Horvitz, Alene Silver, and Ann Sherman, among others, who cared enough to help.

Settlement of Jews in Rhode Island

by the Honorable Max Levy

The Notes, first published in 1954, will soon be celebrating its golden anniversary. But it was not the first journal of Rhode Island Jewish history: several short-lived magazines and newsletters appeared earlier. They have since disappeared, but they should be recognized for their efforts to record local history. One such journal was entitled the Rhode Island Jewish Chronicle, edited by Maurice W. Hendel. Only a single issue survives in our archives, dated September 28-29, 1935. We commemorate our predecessor by reprinting an account by Max Levy of notable Jewish settlers in Newport. I present the essay unedited so our readers can get a sense of the style and historical approach common at that time. How things have changed since then!

Max Levy, who died in 1941 at the age of 71, was a judge in the First District Court of Rhode Island; before that, he served terms as state senator and representative. Maurice Hendel, the journal's editor, died recently (1999) at the age of 90. He had been an assistant secretary of state in Rhode Island for twenty-five years; during that period he was reappointed in his office by seven governors. Both Levy and Hendel had been active in Jewish, fraternal, and civic organizations. Judge Levy served as president of the Touro Synagogue in Newport, while Mr. Hendel served as president of Temple Beth-El in Providence.

Those of the Hebrew faith are about to observe the coming of the New Year, and that most solemn day of days, the day of Atonement.

May it not be proper at this time to stop and note what has been termed "the most remarkable phenomena of the ages — the indestructibility and preservation of the Jewish race?"

It is properly said that the world is but after all a stage upon which not individuals alone but the several nations and races are players: that every nation has played a part, great or small: that each has endeavored to deliver its message for the centuries in which it lived. To Rome, we attribute government: Greece, culture: Phoenicia, commerce. The Jew throughout the ages we accredit with Monotheism or worship of a single God. During these ages, whenever and wherever he blundered or faltered, he paid a

fearful price and penalty. No other group or nation of people has suffered so much, and survived.

Upon the destruction of the Temple, the Jew became a wanderer upon the earth — a man without a country. There is not a continent or nation upon the face of the earth of which he is not an inhabitant or a part.

Innumerable forces of history during the ages have contributed to his destiny. The story of the Jews is at once admirable and a romance of human history.

Behind him stand the Babylonian captivity, Roman domination, Grecian absorption, medieval and later day persecution, so called modernistic massacre, but all have failed to wipe him out. He had outlived ancient Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Chaldia, and the dynasties of the past.

Removed from his Asiatic origin centuries and centuries ago, there is, however, a so termed "queer dualism" which makes him a creature old and new — "one foot resting on the soil of antiquity and the other on the foreground of today."

The Jew has always been a patriot of the land of his birth or adoption. He quickly attaches himself to the country wherein he may provide food and shelter and in which an opportunity for betterment of life is extended to him. A lover of freedom of conscience, and never failing recognition of the right of his fellow man to worship God in his own way, it is no wonder that, with this background, we find him upon the shores of America in the earliest days of its settlement.

With unbounded interest and pride we read of the coming of the Pilgrim and Puritan: of their trials, tribulations, sacrifices and of the suffering endured by them that they might worship God according to the dictations of their conscience. Thousands upon thousands make pilgrimage to their landing places upon the soil of our continent and gaze with awe and reverence upon the shrines erected to their memory.

How many of the readers of this article have given thought to the spirit and circumstances which actuated the coming of the Jew to this land, of their sacrifices, and of the suffering and privations which they endured that they also might have an opportunity to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, and that they too might have an opportunity to enjoy life alongside their fellow men, unrestricted and untrammelled.

Let us for a moment glance backward to the days of the Inquisition, and

give some thought to the sufferings of our co-religionists and of their sacrifices in those trying days.

Let us go back for a moment to the scene of that eventful day in August, 1492, when Queen Isabella, guided by a divine and merciful Providence, affixed the royal seal to the compact which sent Columbus forth on that memorable voyage, destined to the finding of a land whereon was to be found a refuge for the homeless and oppressed: — the rising of a temple of righteousness through the gates of which all mankind might enter and there live in peace and harmony with their fellow men.

Neither space nor time will permit of extended reference to that memorable voyage. It is sufficient perhaps that thought be briefly given to the accredited historical authority that among the crews of the various Caravels on that memorable voyage were a number of Marranos or secret Jews, who by royal authority or sanction contributed in a marked degree to the outfitting of the expedition and to the navigation of its Caravels across tumultuous seas, resulting in the unexpected and joyful discovery of the western hemisphere.

Let us attempt to visualize and rehearse in our minds the scene on that eventful day in October, 1492, when Rodrigues de Triana, the Jew, from the deck of his storm-battered little vessel espied the land ahead, and made proclamation of the finding of a continent, which was destined to become a haven of refuge and of peace, prosperity and happiness of all people of all lands seeking such.

The historian Kayserling says, "Where the history of the Jews in Spain ends, their history in America begins. The Inquisition is the last chapter of the confessions of Judaism on the Pyrennean Peninsula and its first chapter on the continent of the Western Hemisphere."

Many of the tortured and suffering wanderers and exiles of the Spanish Inquisition found their way to Holland, Portugal and Brazil. Some were scattered about in places now unknown.

While there is some evidence that Jews as soldiers and sailors in the employ of the West India Company landed in New Amsterdam (now known as Manhattan Island) as early as 1652, the first authentic record of the arrival of Jews within the confines of this country appear to have been that of Jacob Barsimson and Jacob Aboaf who reached New Amsterdam in the ship "Pear Tree" in 1654. These pioneers were followed by the refugees who arrived

from Brazil, then under the dominion of Portugal, on board the little ship "St. Caterina" in the month of September of the same year.

The greeting by Peter Stuyvesant was inauspicious. Hardheaded, irascible, influenced by the bigotry and prejudice of the age, he gave notice in definite terms that the new arrivals were not only unwelcome, but would not be tolerated and that they must cross the seas and seek another abiding place.

This small band was possessed of the spirit which "builds states and nations." Self-respecting, cognizant of their rights, seeking justice, ready to fight if need be for the recognition of their manhood, and fortified in their belief of the righteousness of God, they did not cringingly submit to the dictation and threats of deportation, but forthwith presented a petition to the Dutch West India Company that their rights be recognized and that they be permitted to remain in the new land.

April 26th, 1655 is characterized as "a most glorious one in the annals of Israel," for on that day came the reply from Holland that after many consultations it had been resolved and determined that the petitioners be granted leave to remain, upon condition, however, that they provide for the poor among them, and that such unfortunates, if any, be not a burden or charge upon others. These conditions were acceptable. Let the world judge as to how well they have been observed.

It was in the same year that Manessah Ben Israel enlisted the kindly favor of Oliver Cromwell, resulting in the admission of Jews into Great Britain, from which country they had been expelled in 1290 while under the rule of Edward I.

Then again in that year there occurred that historic event when Roger Williams addressed himself to Cromwell on behalf of the Jews in those memorable words, "I humbly conceive it to be the duty of the civil magistrate to break down that superstitious wall of separation . . . between us Gentiles and the Jews, and freely . . . to make way for their free and peaceable habitation among us."

There is much thrilling, interesting and soul-stirring historic data available which would probably be of interest to the reader. Time and lack of space will only permit of reference to a few of those which lead to the coming of the Jews to the shores of our now glorious country, of their relations with their fellow men, and of their sacrifices and contribution by every means at hand to the founding of our Government, and the growth of our nation.

For seemingly endless centuries the sufferers from the persecution of Spain and Portugal looked forward to a day of deliverance, to a land of liberty of soul and body.

Religion and personal liberty are integral parts of Jewish life—for these they have suffered untold privation, cruelty and death.

Upon the bell which rang out the joyful news of the proclamation of national liberty we find inscribed the familiar words from Leviticus, "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

With the enunciation of the "Livelie Experiment" by Roger William, the preaching of the doctrine of religious liberty by John Clarke and the declaration of the people of Portsmouth and Newport assembled in 1641, that on the Island of Aquidneck in the Colony of Rhode Island there was a land dedicated to the principle "that none bee accounted a delinquent for doctrine, provided it bee not directly repugnant to ye government and laws established," it is not to be wondered that the refugees from Holland, Portugal and Spain who had settled in the West Indies and other parts of the world, should seek the shores of the Colony and the protection of the laws and good will of a people whose signet consisted of a sheaf of bounden arrows, symbolic of strength and unity, and whose faith in mankind was inscribed in the motto, "Amor Vicet Omnia."

There is authentic record of the coming of the Jews from Portugal to the shores of the Island of Rhode Island as early as 1658.

These colonists soon after their arrival applied themselves to securing a burial place for their dead. With this objective Mordecai Campanell and Moses Pachekoe purchased of Nathaniel Dickens that little tract of land, located in Newport, since immortalized by the Poet Longfellow and the historian alike.

The deed of conveyance bears date the 28th day of February, 1677.

It is interesting to note that in this instrument of conveyance it is expressly provided "If it should so fall that ye Jews should all depart the Island again so as that there shall be none left to keep up and maintain the fences ... then the said land shall return again unto the said Nathaniel Dickens, his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns for him and them to possess and enjoy again as freely as if no such sale had been made."

A brick wall formerly enclosed the premises but they are now protected from intrusion by classic and substantial granite columns and iron palings,

and a gateway, which inspire at once reverence and the admiration of all who behold.

Within its sacred soil have been laid to rest some of the most illustrious in Israel.

In addition to the original purchasers and members of their respective families there lie the mortal remains of Rabbi Isaac Touro and his wife, Reyna Touro, Judah Touro, Abraham Touro, Moses Lopez and Rebecca Lopez, Aaron Lopez, Isaac Pollock, Moses Michael Hayes, Benjamin Levi, Moses Levi, Isaac Mendes Seixas, Moses Seixas, Jacob Rodrigues Reveira and others.

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

Close are the portals of the Synagogue,
No psalms of David now the silence break,
No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue,
In the grand dialect the Prophets spake.

Gone are the living, but the dead remain,
And not neglected: for a hand unseen,
Scattering its bounty, like a summer rain,
Still keeps their graves and their remembrance green.

By 1684 a number of families arrived from Barbadoes and other parts of the West Indies.

In order that their status within the Colony might be officially determined or passed upon, a petition was presented to the General Assembly at its session holden for the Colony in Newport by Simon Medus, David Brown and others.

That Legislative Body, on June 24th, 1684, in response to this petition, voted that the petitioners "may expect as good protection here as any stranger, being not of our nation, residing amongst us in this, his Majesty's Collony ought to have, being obedient to his Majesty's laws."

Here we have, centuries ago, a declaration of welcome and of official protection, indicative of the true Christian spirit of the Colonies, extending unto their fellow men the fullest, unrestricted rights and privileges to be enjoyed by any inhabitant of the land, subject only to the obedience of its laws.

The existing relations between the Christian and Jew in the Colony was most cordial indeed. It is perhaps not to be wondered at. The Puritan lived in the light of the Bible and loved to read it, not only as a base of his religion, but as a guide in political and secular life.

The Pilgrim fathers while crossing the broad Atlantic, read the Old Testament, spoke in the language of those of the Hebrew faith, and christened their children by the names of the prophets, biblical heroes and the Psalmists.

There was aroused among the Puritans a deep interest in the people of the Old Testament. Many of them were Hebraic students.

It is interesting to note in the order of studies required by Harvard College in 1655 that in the first year of their admission for four days of the week, all students were required to study Hebraic and that in order to qualify for the first degree, it was necessary that the scholar read extemporaneously the Pentateuch and all the New Testament in Latin.

The consequent influence upon the Puritan in his love for the Old Testament with the story of Israel's tribulations and experiences so much like his own, its priests and prophets, restoration and outlook into life, was probably inevitable.

The political and theological literature of the Revolutionary period, full of analogies, references and texts of the Old Testament all were undoubtedly destined to direct the minds of the people away from King and submission in favor of the Revolution and the establishment of a free Government.

The number of Jews within the Colony increased as the years rolled by. Many acquired distinction in the commercial, business, educational and social like of the settlement.

They have been referred to by unprejudiced writers as a people of sterling worth, culture and refinement.

At the beginning of the Revolution Newport had reached its pinnacle of fame as a commercial center and seat of learning. Its vessels sailed to all quarters of the then known world: its wharves were lined with warehouses, filled with merchandise for trade and barter on the shores of Africa, the West Indies and other centers. The town had reached what has been historically termed as its "Golden Era." Its prominence was such that as one historian has said, "It would be a bold prophet who said then that New York might one day equal Newport."

Much of this success has been attributed to the spirit of enterprise, industry and integrity of the Jewish merchants.

It is, of course, to be expected that with a settlement of an approximate number of three hundred souls, religious services were held in the community, and more especially on the more prominently recognized holy days and holidays.

Undoubtedly these services were held within the homes of the worshippers, first at one place, and then at another.

The time arrived when the people deemed it advisable to acquire the land and to construct thereon a house of worship.

With this in mind, Jacob Rodrigues Riveira, Moses Levy and Isaac Hart purchased from Ebenezer Allen of Sandwich in Barnstable County and Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England that lot of land described in the deed of conveyance as

One certain small parcel of land situate lying and being in the township of Newport aforesaid, containing by estimate 92 feet in front or breadth and 106 feet in length or depth, the same being butted bounded as follows: viz: Southerly on a street called Griffin Street, Westerly on land of Jacob Barney, Northerly on a street remaining to be laid out, and easterly on land in the possession and improvement of Matthew Cozzens, being the same more or less.

The instrument bears date the 13th day of June in the 32nd year of his Majesty's Reign, George II, King of Great Britain and Anno Domini, 1759. The consideration appears to have been fifteen pounds in the Colony's bills of credit.

The Synagogue was designed by Peter Harrison, a noted architect, who is said to have designed Blenheim Castle, King Chapel in Boston, the Town Hall in Newport and many other structures of historic interest.

It is considered one of the most beautiful pieces of Colonial architecture in the country.

The building is splendidly proportioned and is deeply impressive. The gallery is supported by twelve Ionic columns, and above these are twelve Corinthian columns supporting the beautifully proportioned dome.

In the east we behold the Ark, in which are some of the most interesting and historical scrolls of the law. In the center stands the pulpit from which passages are read during the services from these ancient scrolls of the law.

The dedicatory exercises took place December 2nd, 1763. Reverend Isaac De Abraham Touro performed the service. I know of no better way to picture the scene of that memorable occasion than to quote from the diary of that eminent Divine, Reverend Ezra Stiles, who says as follows:

Dec. 2, 1763, Friday. In the afternoon was the dedication of the new Synagogue in this Town. It began by a handsome procession, in which were carried the Books of Law to be deposited in the Ark. Several portions of the Scripture and of their service with a prayer for the Roznp family were read and finely sung by the priest and people. There were present many Gentleman and Ladies. The order and Decorum, the Harmony and Solemnity of the Musick, together with a handsome Assembly of people, in a Edifice the most perfect of the Temple Kind perhaps in America and splendidly illuminated could not but raise in the Mind a faint idea of the Majesty and Grandeur of the Ancient Worship mentioned in Scripture.

Let us for a moment take a hasty view of the contents of the building. Within the Ark are scrolls of the law of great antiquity, one said to have been brought to the shores of America by one of the refugees from the Spanish Inquisition: two of the scrolls bear the inscription Hayes & Myers, but no date. It is tradition that these scrolls were presented by two gentlemen of these names. One other scroll bears evidence of great age, but there appears to be no data at hand as to when it was brought to the edifice.

The silver tops and bells are fine examples of the silversmith's art.

Hanging from the roof are five massive bronze candelabra wrought by hand; two of these candelabra were the gift of Jacob Rodrigues Rivera and his son Abraham, and bear date 1765. Another was presented by Naphali Hart Myer, and bears date 1760: another one was presented by Aaron Lopez and bears date 1707.

The large candelabra before the altar bears no inscription, but is said to have been presented by Isaac Pollock in 1760.

Before the Ark hangs the perpetual lamp, always lit in accordance with religious custom. This appears to have been the gift also of Jacob Rodrigues Rivera and his son Abraham in the year 1765.

Upon the rail before the Ark stands the beautiful bronze candelabra bearing inscription Enoch Lyon, 1766.

On the balcony hangs a clock bearing the inscription Judah Jacobs, London, Anno Mundi, 5529.

A liberty loving people, sympathetic and of unbounded loyalty towards their brethren with whom they had much in common, the Jews cast their lot with the cause of the American Colonists, and throughout the days of the soul-stirring ordeal of the Revolutionary period gave so generously in man power and financial aid as to call forth from the Commander-in-Chief, our illustrious George Washington, official and personal expression of appreciation and esteem.

Mindful of the attributes displayed by the Jews in the cause of the colonists and national independence, Washington, on June 19th 1790, when in Newport, visited the Synagogue.

He was received in the presence of the gathered Congregation by Moses Seixas, the warden, who extended to him felicitations and welcome in the words,

Permit me of the stock of Abraham to approach you with the most cordial affection and esteem for your person and merits, and to join with your fellow-citizens in welcoming you to Newport.

The warden closed his felicitations with these words,

For all the blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal and benign administration we should send up our thanks to the Ancient of the Days, the great preserver of men, beseeching Him that the Angel who conducted our forefathers through the wilderness into the Promised Land may graciously conduct you through all the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life; and when like Joshua, full of days and full of house, you are gathered to your fathers, may you be admitted into the Heavenly Paradise, to partake of the waters of life and the tree of Immortality.

Washington's reply made a most deep and lasting impression, closing with these words:

May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the Father of all Mercies scatter light and no darkness in our paths, and make us all, in our several vocations, useful here, and in his own time and way everlastingly happy.

A copy of the local newspaper published on the occasion, containing a complete record of the welcoming address and Washington's reply is to be

found among the other ancient and historic relics within the building.

The Revolutionary War, so disastrous to the commercial interest and prosperity of Newport, induced the greater part of the Jews to leave the town. Commerce was at an end: the vessels had either been captured or destroyed. Only a remnant of what was once a successful, honored and respected group remained.

During the War the British forces took possession of the public buildings within the town and quartered their soldiers therein, as well as within the private homes of the inhabitants. It is, however, a most interesting and singular historic fact that though many of the public buildings and churches were desecrated by the British soldiery, such, however, was not the lot of Trinity Church, a branch of the Church of England, or the Synagogue. No damage was done to either of these institutions.

In March, 1781 the General assembly directed the Sheriff of the Colony to place benches within the Synagogue for the holding of Legislative sessions until the Colony House was restored and made fit for use.

Therefore we have the interesting historic fact that after peace was restored, the first session of the General Assembly was held within the walls of this sacred edifice: also that after the Revolution was at an end, the first session of the Superior Court of the Colony was held therein.

There not being a sufficient number of Jews to conduct the regular services in the Synagogue, it remained closed until 1882, when through the initiative of the late Isaac Levy it was reopened for service, there then being in the city of Newport a sufficient number of permanent and transient residents to constitute a religious congregation.

In the month of August, 1883 services were conducted with the synagogue by Rabbi Abraham Pereira Mendes of the Congregation Shearith Israel of New York. Rabbi Mendes continued in his service as Rabbi until his decease in 1893.

Like his illustrious predecessor, Rabbi Isaac Touro, he was a gentleman of culture, refinement and dignity. Loving and kind, he endeared himself to his co-religionists and the community at large.

Since that date the Synagogue, with occasional exceptions, has remained open for religious service.

Among those who gained pre-eminence and prominence in the Commu-

nity were Moses Seixas, Abraham Touro and Judah Touro.

Moses Seixas deceased in 1809, then holding the office of first president of the Rhode Island Bank. His funeral was held within the Synagogue.

Abraham Touro and Judah Touro, sons of Rabbi Isaac Touro, by their respective princely contributions made possible many movements of national and patriotic order. By their further contributions and testamentary bequests, hospitals and charitable institutions located in various cities, and regardless of religious or racial affiliations, were established and endowed.

In the city of Newport provision was made for the support of Redwood Library, the care of Touro Park, and the street leading to the ancient cemetery. Money was also provided for the purchase of the beautiful Park in the center of the city, commonly known as "Touro Park." By the generosity of these patriots the erection of the Bunker Hill monument was made certain.

Provision was also made by these benefactors for the construction in 1843 of the artistic granite walls and gateway surrounding the Synagogue grounds and for the enclosing of the Cemetery, to which reference has already been made.

Space will not permit enumeration of the many bequests and provisions which were made of a national and humane order.

Rabbi Isaac Touro died at Kingston in the West Indies, December 8th 1783.

Judah Touro removed to New Orleans in 1803 and spent the remainder of his days in that city actively engaged in public and philanthropic work.

In the War of 1812 he met with great financial losses, but mindful of the interests of the country, he entered the ranks as a soldier and participated in the Battle of New Orleans where he was wounded. His death took place January 18th 1854, and on June 6th of that year his body was interred in the cemetery in this city. "This last of his name he inscribed in a book of Philanthropy to be remembered forever."

Abraham Touro became a man of enviable reputation, and like his brother, Judah Touro, of large fortune. He amassed his wealth chiefly in commerce with the ports of the Mediterranean shores.

His death took place in October 1822, while in the 48th year of his life. His remains lie also in the cemetery in the city which was so dear to him.

The procession which accompanied the body to the Synagogue is said to have been the longest and most impressive of any in Newport for many years: the newspapers of that day state that the streets were crowded with the people; that the stores were closed: church bells tolled and there was sadness on every side.

“A benefactor of men had been taken from the midst of his people.” The press at the time records that approximately 150 Jews from various parts of the country attended the funeral, — a goodly number indeed when we consider the means of traffic prevailing at that time. The City Government assembled in solemn procession and marched to the Synagogue, where upon arrival thousands were found gathered upon the streets who could not gain admission.

Rabbi J. K. Goodheim of New Orleans conducted the services, and paid a glowing and eloquent tribute to the memory of the beloved dead.

At the close of the services in the synagogue, the procession was formed and headed by Rabbis and Jews from abroad, the Mayor and other officials of the city, president and directors of the Redwood Library, representatives of the various municipal organizations and citizens and strangers, proceeded to the cemetery.

The Commitment services were conducted by Reverend Mr. Lesser, who preached an eloquent sermon upon the life of the departed.

Resolutions of regret together with expressions of the esteem in which the deceased was held were passed by the city government and enrolled upon the records of the town.

The writer wished that he had the opportunity to present to the reading public at this time a more extended resume of the inspiring events which lead up to the coming of the Jews to American and more especially to the Colony of Rhode Island, and the part which they in their day played in the annals of the history of the establishment of our Government and Nation.

Perhaps it might be well at this time to invite attention to the declaration of the Honorable William Paine Sheffield on the fourth of July, 1876, on the one hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence,

Let no vandal hand of desecration ever be laid upon the Synagogue or graveyard, but let them remain and keep preserved forever as venerated memorials of a frugal and useful people, who, in their day and generation, contributed to the prosperity and renown of Newport.

Governments, customs, laws, habits, mode of life have undergone many transmutations since the pioneers set foot upon the shores of our land. The men who were instrumental in laying the foundation stones of the principles of our land then saluted a flag other than that which now symbolized our beloved country and to which we, in our daily prayer, renew allegiance.

Standing upon the summit of the century, and turning backward in our review of the events which have preceded us, we would be ungrateful for the blessings of a Divine Providence if we failed to do homage to those generations of men who by their toil and sacrifice, drove the furrows of civilization into the forests of the virgin land, and give their lives that we might enjoy its fruition.

Generation after generation of people have come and gone since the little band of Christian pilgrims and the little group of Jewish refugees landed upon the shores of Plymouth and upon the Island of Rhode Island.

Regardless of creed or religious affiliation, all were seeking liberty and opportunity to worship God and to live in peace and happiness.

Upon the threshold of the New Year, may we, as Jews, be ever mindful of our obligations to our country and fellow men. May we, by our conduct, forever deserve the good will of our fellow men. May we continue to remember that we are Americans: that we love this, our country, the land of our birth or adoption that we must be prepared at all times as those who came before us to give all within us for the preservation of these institutions.

Nothing is to be done or left undone which may justly give rise to the thought that those of the Jewish faith have in any manner failed in their contribution to the welfare and prosperity of their county.

May the writer, at this time, express the hope that God, in his infinite mercy, cause the sun to shine upon them, and to give unto them and theirs to come long, happy, and prosperous lives.



The Politics of Preservation: How Touro Synagogue Became a National Historic Site

by George M. Goodwin

Dr. Goodwin, a specialist in oral history and a regular contributor to the Notes, has written for journals such as American Jewish Archives, Faith and Form, Modern Judaism, and Rhode Island History. He is a member of the Executive Committee of RIJHA. His essay on the Touro Synagogue reveals a historical perspective that is in striking contrast to that taken by Max Levy sixty-five years earlier.

Museums, memorials, and monuments proliferate because people need and want them. In a country as young and vast as ours, some citizens may feel directionless without them. But they are not passively created and maintained; these landmarks are built and sustained by highly motivated individuals and groups. They each attract a circle of dedicated supporters, and sometimes dedicated detractors.¹

Many Jewish school groups journey to New York City, for example, where they visit The Jewish Museum and the nearby Metropolitan, take in a Broadway show, and explore the once-teeming neighborhoods of the Lower East Side. Since 1990, in addition to viewing a refurbished Statue of Liberty, it has become possible to explore the newly restored Great Hall on Ellis Island. Perhaps the best views of Lady Liberty and Ellis Island can now be gained from the top floor of another landmark, New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage, a living memorial to the Holocaust, which opened in 1997.

When seeking powerful symbols of Jewish history, religious school students have also been escorted to further destinations. Perhaps supplanting the New York monuments in terms of popularity and emotional impact is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opened in the nation's capital in 1993. On pilgrimages to Washington the Holocaust Museum is probably awarded more attention than many of the Smithsonian Institution's museums, the National Archives, the Library of Congress, Arlington Cemetery, or the presidential memorials. In fact, young Jewish visitors might never learn that the Jewish War Veterans also maintain a museum, as does B'nai B'rith.

For even more ambitious trips there are, of course, missions to Israel. But closer to home, since World War II student groups from throughout the Northeast have visited the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island. As North America's oldest synagogue, dedicated in 1763, it is one of the few places where students, teachers, and rabbis can experience — literally occupy — a colonial Jewish past. This is no museum: it is still used for its original purpose, so visitors to Congregation Jeshuat Israel can participate in or observe a traditional Sephardic service. But the Synagogue does not mean the same thing now for us that it meant to previous generations. This essay focuses on that one small sanctuary, only thirty feet wide by forty feet deep, Newport's Touro, and shows how its preservation, use, and symbolic meanings have evolved, culminating in its designation in 1946 as a National Historic Site by the federal government. Touro's significance has changed for each generation since its founding, and I suggest that it changed once again after acquiring this new status.

Touro Through Scholarly Lenses

From the beginning, the preservation of the Touro Synagogue was achieved not only by funding for its physical restoration but also (and perhaps more importantly) by words, by scholarship about the Synagogue and, more generally, about colonial Jewish history. First known as Nephutsay Israel (Dispersed Ones of Israel) and then Yeshuat Israel (Salvation of Israel), Touro has always been a remarkable, evocative building that inspired learned commentary. It was somehow destined for a lasting place in the American historical imagination.

The synagogue was not erected until a century after Jews first landed on Aquidneck Island; then, on December 2, 1763, the very day of its dedication, it received a suitably elaborate description in notes made by Ezra Stiles (1727-1795), Newport's illustrious Congregational minister, who later became president of Yale College, his alma mater.² (Stiles observed "There may be Eighty Souls of Jews or fifteen families now in Town."³) Stiles' drawing of Touro's ark, made on dedication day, was not noticed until the late 1950s, when his papers were re-examined in the Yale Library.⁴ The drawing shows a previously unknown design (with Hebrew letters), which suggests that the current ark dates only from a restoration in the late 1820s. The first illustration of the exterior, a woodcut in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, did not appear until August, 1874.

But by then the building had long been closed for services, a fact

observed in 1852 by a famous visitor to Newport, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who was more interested in poetic allusion than scholarly documentation. His poem, "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," originally published in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* in July, 1854, appeared four years later in his anthology, *Birds of Passage*. It paid tribute to a glorious but supposedly extinct Jewish past. In the sixth of twenty-four stanzas, Longfellow wrote

Closed are the portals of their Synagogue,
No Psalms of David now the silence break,
No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue
In the grand dialect the Prophets spake.⁵

Longfellow failed to comprehend how Jews could renew their faith and their institutions: the Touro congregation was re-established in 1881. And that is when serious research on the building and its colonial background began. By the late nineteenth century, Jews already established in this country sought to distance themselves from legions of newcomers; they sought inspiration — perhaps a sense of superiority — from their colonial forbears. As a result, Newport's pioneers figured quite prominently in the early lectures and publications of the American Jewish Historical Society. In 1893, for example, at the second annual meeting in New York, Max Kohler spoke on the Lopez and Rivera families. At the third annual meeting in Washington, D.C., Taylor Phillips, probably a descendant, spoke about the Levy and Seixas families. Two years later, Kohler spoke further about "The Jews in Newport." During the same era, when America's oldest congregation, Shearith Israel, erected its third synagogue in Manhattan, it reserved a room for its colonial-era artifacts.

Throughout the twentieth century, many of Touro's rabbis lectured and wrote about their colonial legacy. Particularly devoted to his subject and resourceful in his methods was Morris Gutstein, who served from 1932 to 1943. His major study, *The Story of the Jews of Newport: Two and A Half Centuries of Judaism, 1658-1908* (1936), laid a cornerstone for more critical research by professional historians. In 1948, with the creation of the American Jewish Archives on the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College, further impetus was given to the emergence of American Jewish studies as a distinct academic field — or at least one taught at Jewish seminaries. The Archives' founder, Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995), a polymath initially devoted to the medieval epoch, became a specialist in the colonial era.⁶ His landmark studies include: *Early American Jewry* (two

volumes, 1951-55); *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865* (three volumes, 1955-56); *American Jewry: Documents, Eighteenth Century* (1959); *The Colonial American Jews, 1492-1776* (three volumes, 1970); *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History* (1981); and *United States Jewry, 1776-1985* (four volumes, 1989-93).

Jewish life in Newport figured prominently in these works, of course, and several of Marcus' protégés, including Stanley Chyet, his assistant at the Archives and also a professor at the College, devoted further attention to Newport. In addition to many articles, Chyet published an important biography, *Lopez of Newport: Colonial American Merchant Prince* (1970). Launched by these studies of colonial Newport and the Touro Synagogue, Marcus' intellectual grandchildren went on to mine new riches. His progeny include Eli Farber, who wrote the first of five volumes in the American Jewish Historical Society's centennial reference, *The Jewish People in America* (1992). Younger researchers have also examined the roles of Jewish women and Jewish involvement in the slave trade. Art historians have documented colonial Jewry's fondness for portraiture.⁷

In addition, David C. Adelman (1892-1967), who had written a pamphlet about Judah Touro in 1936, organized the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, the oldest state or local Jewish historical society in America, in 1951. The Association's first formal meeting was not held until 1953, and the first issue of the *Notes* did not appear until 1954.⁸ This latter date was a key milestone: celebrations were held and scholarly talks were presented throughout Rhode Island — in synagogues and in public places — to commemorate the American Jewish Tercentenary.⁹

The Touro Brothers' Legacy

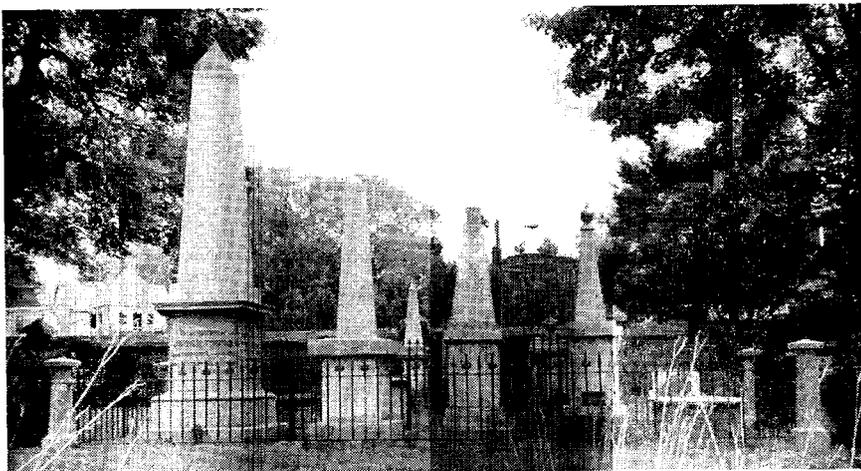
Scholarly research and communal pride, then, would have flowered even without Touro's physical survival. But the building *was* preserved, and the astonishing story of its care and maintenance expresses clearly another way in which the Synagogue's legacy was handed down — not only through scholarly words but also through practical deeds. As one of Newport's few brick buildings, Touro was among a small number of structures to survive the Revolutionary War. In 1781, when it sheltered both the Rhode Island General Assembly and the Supreme Court, Washington paid his first visit to the synagogue. Even after 1792, when the tiny Jewish community dispersed, the building was not abandoned. Havoc caused by the War of 1812 and the town's steady economic decline did not result in the synagogue's

demolition. Miraculously, something else happened.

Ownership of the land beneath Yeshuat Israel, purchased on June 30, 1759, remained among the descendants of the Seixas, Levy, Lopez, and Rivera families, who, even after affiliation with New York's Shearith Israel, never gave up hope that their beloved synagogue might be reinvigorated.¹⁰ The congregation's six Torahs were transported to New York for temporary safekeeping. Then, nearly a century before the germination of America's historic preservation movement, two individuals took extraordinary measures to protect both the synagogue and cemetery, which together symbolized the Jewish community. These brothers were Abraham (1774-1822) and Judah (1775-1854) Touro, sons of Isaac Touro (1738-1783), Yeshuat Israel's first hazan.¹¹ Along with Uriah Phillips Levy, who in 1836 purchased and began to rehabilitate Jefferson's Monticello, they can be seen as American pioneers of historic preservation.¹²

In 1822 Abraham Touro paid for the construction of a brick wall around the cemetery, which replaced a dilapidated wooden fence, and for a caretaker. Through a trust later known as the "Touro Jewish Synagogue Fund," he bequeathed \$10,000 to the congregation, which was administered jointly by the Rhode Island General Assembly and Newport's town council. Abraham, who was without heirs, also bequeathed \$5,000 to Newport for the repair and preservation of Griffin Street, which led from Main to the cemetery. In 1824, in recognition of such generosity, Griffin was renamed

Jewish Cemetery, Touro Synagogue. Photo by Eli Moss.



Touro.

In 1842, at a cost of \$2,000, Judah Touro replaced the cemetery's brick wall with granite and an iron railing. This led Newport's town council, using portions of Abraham's trust, to erect a granite wall, an imposing portico, and an iron railing around the synagogue. The cost was \$6,835.

Judah, a resident of New Orleans who was also without heirs, was buried in the Newport cemetery. As one of America's wealthiest and most philanthropic Jews, he bequeathed approximately \$500,000 to numerous synagogues and to an even larger number of Christian and secular charities.¹³ In Newport he left \$3,000 to the Redwood Library and \$10,000 for the purchase of the Old Stone Mill as a public park (which was named in his memory.) To Newport's Jewish community, Judah left an additional \$10,000, which the town council administered as the "Judah Touro Ministerial and Cemetery Fund." In addition to maintenance, the fund was intended to pay the salary of a "Reader" or a "Minister."

Beginning in the 1850s, a few decades after Jew Street became Bellevue Avenue, the synagogue was used occasionally by summer visitors. With the arrival in Newport of Eastern European immigrants, it seemed only natural that Touro would soon house a new congregation.

In 1881 Shearith Israel was granted temporary use of the building. The following year Newport's town council received a request from a second neophyte congregation to use the synagogue on a regular basis and to employ a minister using Judah Touro's endowment. Permission was granted, and Rabbi Abraham Mendes of London's Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue was hired. Touro was reconsecrated on May 25, 1883, and its Torahs were sent back home.

With Rabbi Mendes' death in 1893, Touro was once again placed in jeopardy. Another group, also calling itself Touro Congregation, sought use of the building. Shearith Israel's leaders, however, were adamantly opposed to Reform tendencies and insisted on Sephardic Orthodox observance. Consequently, a new congregation, known as Jeshuat Israel, was chartered on June 13, 1894. A new deed of trust was established in Rhode Island, transferring ownership from Touro descendants to Shearith Israel. "Rituals, Rites, and Customs" of Shearith Israel were stipulated both in the deed and in Jeshuat Israel's constitution. Indeed, four of Touro's nine trustees were to be elected by Shearith Israel.

Meanwhile, the Newport town council allocated funds from Judah Touro's trust to the larger, liberal group, enabling it to engage a rabbi. By 1899, both congregations sought exclusive use of the synagogue. A bitter legal battle, resembling a "civil war," lasted until 1902.¹⁴ Shearith Israel's will prevailed: even without Sephardic Jews, the Sephardic "minhag" was required.

In 1913, through the beneficence of the Touro Fund, land was purchased across Touro Street for a Jewish Community Center. In 1926 an additional allocation underwrote the move of the Levi H. Gale House, itself an 1825 landmark, to serve as the Center.¹⁵ Remarkably, the Touro Fund has not yet been depleted. Overseen by Rhode Island's treasurer and managed by professional investors, it has grown to \$2.7 million.

Role of the Federal Government

Governmental intervention represents another way in which Touro was preserved and dignified, but this has been relatively recent. Before Touro was designated a National Site, the federal government had no involvement in Rhode Island's preservation efforts. Indeed, before 1946, the Interior Department's involvement in all of New England (where President Roosevelt had been least popular) was limited to two projects. The first was a gift by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. creating Acadia National Park. The second, begun in December, 1935, was Derby Wharf National Historic Site. When completed three years later it became known as Salem Maritime National Historic Site, the first National Historic Site in the entire country. The site's most prominent feature was the Customs House, which had been transferred from the Treasury Department to Interior.

Tourists who imagine that governmental preservation of historic sites has been in place for centuries may be somewhat startled to learn that many of New England's most popular attractions — Plymouth Plantation, Historic Deerfield, Sturbridge Village, Mystic Seaport, Shelburne Museum, and Strawberry Banke — are postwar creations or recreations.¹⁶ Indeed, the youngest, Strawberry Banke, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was not established until 1958, following a failed preservation effort during the late 1930s.¹⁷

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a private organization based on European models, did not receive its congressional charter until 1948.¹⁸ Its first property, Woodlawn Plantation, adjacent to Mount Vernon,

was not acquired until 1957. And Mount Vernon itself had not been recognized as a historical monument until 1858, when its house and grounds were purchased by a private group, The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

New England's oldest guardian of historic buildings is the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, founded by Sumner Appleton in Boston in 1910.¹⁹ Presently, it maintains thirty-five house museums and properties, including four in Rhode Island (but none in Newport). While seeking to educate the public as well as preservation specialists, SPNEA has consistently opposed government support or intervention.

The most influential preservation efforts, helping spawn a national movement, were launched between the World Wars by leading philanthropists. In 1923, for example, Henry Ford purchased the Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts, and began assembling around it a collection of old buildings.²⁰ Ford's museum of Americana, Greenfield Village, in Dearborn, Michigan, opened to the public in 1933. Even more influential were efforts led by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to establish and rebuild Colonial Williamsburg.²¹ More than 200 structures opened to the public in 1934.

Rockefeller's impact in Providence was also substantial. Perry, Shaw & Hepburn, the Boston architects responsible for the Williamsburg restoration, were hired by Brown University in 1940 to restore University Hall (1770).²² As a Baptist, a Brown graduate of 1897, and husband of Rhode Island native Abby Greene Aldrich, Rockefeller also paid for the restoration of the First Baptist Meetinghouse during the late 1950s.²³

John Nicholas Brown (1900-1979), a supporter of Mrs. Rockefeller's Museum of Modern Art and a distinguished patron of modern architecture, played a key role in the historic preservation movement. As early as 1930, he supported the restoration of Newport's Brick Market. In 1941, only a few years after commissioning a vacation retreat from Richard Neutra, the prominent Austrian-Jewish émigré, he donated his ancestral home in Providence, the John Brown House (1786), to the Rhode Island Historical Society. In 1945 he rescued the Arcade (1828) from demolition, donating it to the Rhode Island Association for the Blind. In 1956, alarmed by the demolition of historic buildings surrounding Brown University, he helped organize the Providence Preservation Society.

Elsewhere in Rhode Island, there were scattered private efforts to protect endangered buildings. In 1931, for example, the Gilbert Stuart Memorial Association was formed to preserve the colonial painter's birth-

place in Saunderstown. A year later the state chapter of the National Society of Colonial Dames published a guidebook, *Old Houses in the South County of Rhode Island*. Additionally, the Little Compton Historical Society began to restore the Friends' Meetinghouse.

Given its wondrous architectural heritage, it is surprising to learn that the Preservation Society of Newport County was not organized until 1946. Though best known for its stewardship of the summer "cottages," beginning with the opening of The Breakers in 1948, the Society's initial effort was the rescue of Hunter House (1756). Its paneling was sought for the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Doris Duke's highly successful Newport Restoration Foundation was not begun until 1968.

All these preservation projects in New England were privately funded; before the New Deal, the federal government's ownership and management of historic properties resembled, somewhat appropriately, a crazy quilt. Most properties were Civil War forts and battlefields, which fell under the jurisdiction of the War Department. Perhaps the best known example was Virginia's Custis-Lee Mansion (1803), which had been seized from the Lee family in 1861 for non-payment of taxes. Though located within Arlington National Cemetery, the mansion awaited restoration until 1929. On several earlier occasions Congress provided authority and funding for individual historic properties: among early acquisitions were the Lincoln birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky, and the Petersen House in Washington, DC, where the President expired.

After the Antiquities Act of 1906, the Interior Department had also been responsible for a small number of Native American landmarks, most located in the Southwest. During the Hoover administration, Interior acquired a few additional properties, such as "Wakefield," Washington's birthplace in Virginia, and Colonial National Monument, a hodgepodge of sites in and around Yorktown, Williamsburg, and Jamestown. Morristown National Historic Park, Washington's New Jersey campground during the winter of 1779-80, received federal designation in early 1933.

In June, 1933, after only a few months in office, FDR ordered the transfer of all battlefields, parks, monuments, and cemeteries from the War Department to the Department of the Interior. These included properties within the states as well as the District of Columbia. Through the simultaneous creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps, tens of thousands of unemployed Americans were put to work, hundreds on preservation and

restoration projects. Cosponsored by Interior's National Park Service, the American Institute of Architects, and the Library of Congress, the Historic American Buildings Survey sent teams of architects, landscape architects, engineers, and historians throughout the country to map, draw, photograph, and research historic properties. Still in existence, HABS has now documented more than 30,000 structures.²⁴

Another documentation effort was created through the New Deal's Works Progress Administration. Its Federal Writers' Project produced highly detailed guidebooks to all the states. *Rhode Island: A Guide to the Smallest State*, published in 1937, contained descriptions of Touro and its cemetery as well as a historical sketch of Newport's Jewish community.

Between 1935 and 1943 the historical section of the Farm Security Administration sent more than a dozen photographers around the country to capture scenes of rural poverty. While concentrating on the South and Southwest, Walker Evans, Paul Strand, and Marion Wolcott, among others, found compelling subjects — some architectural — in New England.²⁵

But President Roosevelt did not consider historic preservation or documentation merely as useful ways of providing emergency assistance to the unemployed. As the scion of Hudson River Valley gentry, he had a personal interest in historic buildings. In 1940, for example, he was influential in obtaining Hyde Park's Vanderbilt Mansion (1898) as a gift to the National Park Service.²⁶ Having been approached as early as 1933 by the owner of Blair House, he hoped to purchase it for the federal government. The President was able to do so in 1941 through emergency war powers. President Truman resided there during 1948 when the White House itself underwent extensive renovation and restoration. Before his death, the President donated his own residence to the federal government and established the first presidential library under federal auspices.²⁷ FDR also deserves some credit for the Jefferson Memorial, which was erected in Washington between 1939 and 1943.

FDR's greatest piece of legislation regarding historic preservation was the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935.²⁸ It significantly augmented existing preservation policies, which had enabled the president to proclaim a National Monument or Congress to purchase an individual property. Under the new act, the federal government could purchase, receive, and operate properties with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, based on recommendations from an Advisory Board. Though lauded as a conser-

vationist for numerous accomplishments within the National Park Service, Harold Ickes deserves significant credit for implementation of the Historic Sites Act during his secretaryship (1933–1946), the lengthiest at Interior.²⁹ Unfortunately, Ickes' impact on the realm of historic preservation was totally overlooked in a recent thousand-page biography.³⁰

Established in 1916, the National Park Service never employed more than a few historians, and many left for military service during World War II. Indeed, as a nonessential government agency, the offices of the National Park Service were transferred from Washington to Chicago. Between 1933 and 1951, only forty-four Historic Sites were designated by the federal government. Of this group, only twenty Sites, including Touro, resulted from the Historic Sites Act. As previously mentioned, Salem Maritime was the nation's first. Though initiated in 1935, the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, in St. Louis, was not completed for decades — Eero Saarinen's 630 foot Gateway Arch not until 1968.

Over many decades, Interior's National Park system has expanded in numerous ways. As of November, 1998, there were 379 "units" or individual properties, extending throughout continental America, Alaska, and Hawaii as well as Guam, American Samoa, Saipan, the Virgin Islands, and Canada.³¹ But there are now twenty-one categories of properties within the system, whose characteristics are highly confusing. How do tourists or experts differentiate among National Battlefields, National Battlefield Parks, National Battlefield Sites, and National Military Parks? Or among National Historic Sites, National Historical Parks, National Memorials, and National Monuments? The differences are no less confusing among National Parks, National Parkways, National Preserves, National Recreation Areas, and National Reserves.

But sixty-five years after the passage of the Historic Sites Act, there are only seventy-five such sites within the National Park system. It is shocking to learn that though it is still called Touro Synagogue National Historic Site, Touro is no longer listed within the system. Presently, it is one of twenty-four properties now considered an "affiliated area."

Why Touro?

If it would be interesting to learn why or how Touro's status has changed, it would be even more interesting to learn why Touro was ever listed as a Historic Site in the first place. Was this a mistake? A fluke? An

example of political manipulation? Indeed, what would have been the fate of the colonial synagogue had it been denied federal recognition? At least, thankfully, Touro was never threatened by urban renewal. By contrast, Providence's oldest synagogue, erected on Friendship Street in 1890 by the Congregation Sons of Israel and David, was demolished in 1959 to make way for federal highways.

There is no evidence that any Touro member or any other Jewish leader in Rhode Island was excited about the federal government's emerging role in historic preservation. Though Touro would have been a strong candidate for designation as a Historic Site, there were several other possibilities. In Newport these would have included the Friends' Meetinghouse (begun 1700), Richard Munday's Trinity Church (1726) and Old Colony House (1741), and Peter Harrison's Redwood Library (1750) and Brick Market (1772).

An even more likely candidate, in Providence, would have been Joseph Brown's First Baptist Meetinghouse (1775), the third home built for the congregation founded by Roger Williams. In 1974, largely through the efforts of Senator Claiborne Pell, the doors of the Roger Williams National Memorial opened on North Main Street. Without having annexed the First Baptist Meetinghouse or any other building, the National Memorial consists of a modest visitors' orientation center. It was erected adjacent to the Roger Williams Spring, which had been presented to the city in 1928 by Justice J. Jerome Hahn of the Rhode Island Supreme Court in memory of his father, Isaac, the first Jew elected to public office in Providence.

The idea of obtaining landmark designation for Touro, it turns out, came from a New Yorker, Arthur Hays Sulzberger (1891-1968), from 1935 to 1961 the publisher and president of *The New York Times*.³² Sulzberger was affiliated with Temple Emanu-El, where he attended High Holy Day services and served as a trustee.³³ Over the years, the newspaper and radio magnate served on the boards of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Baron de Hirsch Fund, and the Jefferson Memorial Foundation. During the 1940s he was particularly active in the Red Cross. Beginning in 1945 he served nineteen years as a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, only the third Jew since 1875 to be so privileged.³⁴

The evolution and impact of Sulzberger's idea can be stitched together from several sources. The primary descriptive account, based on documents found in numerous federal archives, has been told by Charles Hosmer in his

encyclopedic studies of the historic preservation movement. Copies of some original documents, primarily from the archives of the National Park Service, have been graciously provided by Prof. Joel Gereboff of the Department of Religious Studies at Arizona State University, who is also studying Touro.

In February, 1944, against the backdrop of the Final Solution, Sulzberger, who had access to any Cabinet member or top government official, paid a visit to Secretary Ickes. He may have been influenced by his own editor, John Finley.³⁵ In 1935, Finley, a former president of Knox College in Illinois, sought Historic Site designation for Old Main, the only surviving site of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Unfortunately, the College's trustees eventually rejected the federal government's offer.

While primarily interested in Touro, Sulzberger sought designation for Catholic and Protestant churches built in the thirteen colonies. According to Hosmer's interpretation of Sulzberger's proposal, these buildings would serve as evidence of American religious unity during World War II.³⁶ Sulzberger may also have suggested Congressional authorization of a self-perpetuating Historic Church Advisory Board. Based on a memo at Interior, Ickes himself may have been interested in establishing such a board. According to Ickes, the board's purpose "might be a powerful influence in combating the rise of bigotry in this country and in the promotion of national unity."³⁷

Today it seems appropriate to examine Sulzberger's motives. No doubt the publisher felt that America had been blessed and benefited from a sense of interfaith unity. On a purely personal level, Sulzberger, a veteran of World War I, did all within his powers to rescue European relatives threatened by the Nazis. Indeed, he brought at least twenty-five to safe haven in this country.

But Sulzberger can also be seen as a proud American deeply conflicted by his Jewish identity. As publisher of *The Times*, he was thoroughly devoted to achieving journalism's highest standards, maintaining, if not lifting, his newspaper's reputation as the finest in the country. Though one of America's most powerful media barons, however, his power was limited by his own fear of violating standards of impartiality.

As demonstrated by Deborah Lipstadt in her meticulously documented study, *Beyond Belief*, Sulzberger correctly believed that his newspaper devoted full and accurate coverage to the Holocaust.³⁸ There were frequent,

detailed reports about the unfolding calamity. But her more incisive and haunting argument — difficult to refute — is that *The Times* somehow downplayed these stories. Rather than appearing as page-one headlines, they were more easily placed elsewhere. Lipstadt and other critics have further argued that *The Times* failed to set a national standard, allowing other, less important papers to minimize the horrors.

In 1946 Sulzberger visited Dachau and observed portions of the Nuremberg trials. He was never in the least bit oblivious to Jewish suffering. Yet, at the same time, he did not become enraged by such unspeakable suffering nor did he become convinced of the need for a Jewish homeland. Though by August, 1947, *The Times* supported the United Nations' partition of Palestine, he personally opposed Israeli statehood. Evidently, Sulzberger was unable to comprehend or accept the notion of a Jewish people. At best, he saw himself as a "coreligionist." Sulzberger believed, moreover, that the burden for preventing anti-Semitism fell largely upon Jews. Through stoic or exemplary behavior, they would fail to attract unfavorable attention and cause discrimination.

Sulzberger's sense of Jewish self-sufficiency extended to the Supreme Court, where he opposed the de facto existence of a Jewish seat. He advised FDR not to appoint Felix Frankfurter to succeed Benjamin Cardozo (the publisher's distant relative). In 1940, having disagreed with many of FDR's domestic policies, Sulzberger opposed his nomination for a third term. This must have placed a burden on his long-standing friendship with Henry Morgenthau, Jr., FDR's Secretary of the Treasury.

We might not expect, then, that such a man would be instrumental in the designation of Touro as a National Historic Site. Yet, on the other hand, there were several sources in Sulzberger's life that made for deep and positive identification with Judaism. First, Sulzberger's wife, Iphigene (1892-1990), was the daughter of Miriam ("Effie") Wise.³⁹ Her father, Adolph Ochs, had come to Cincinnati from Chattanooga to ask for the hand of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise's seventh child. Indeed, during the mid-1920s, the Ochs family had become one of the major benefactors of Wise's legacy, Hebrew Union College.⁴⁰ In addition to contributing \$500,000 toward its endowment campaign, Adolph and Miriam helped obtain comparable gifts from the Guggenheim, Rosenwald, and Schiff families. In 1946, while still a board member of the College, Miriam supported the selection of Nelson Glueck as president. Dr. Jacob R. Marcus was named the Adolph S. Ochs Professor

of American Jewish History. In 1973 Iphigene received an honorary doctorate from the College.

While Arthur Sulzberger had been an undergraduate at Columbia, Iphigene, the Ochs' only child, was an economics and history major at Barnard. In 1915 she began work on a master's degree in history at Columbia's graduate school. Iphigene's strong interest in family and American history prevailed throughout her life. During the War she was disturbed how little students knew about American history. On April 4, 1944, based on a standardized test given to 7,000 college freshmen, *The Times* published a story about their "striking" ignorance. Many students did not know, for example, that Lincoln was President during the Civil War. For its efforts *The Times* won a Pulitzer Prize, and many states passed laws requiring courses in American history.⁴¹

When trying to determine why the Bingham family's control of *The Louisville Courier-Journal* collapsed and the Sulzberger's control of *The Times* has endured, two historians of American journalism credit Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger with transmitting a powerful influence.⁴² She was the daughter, wife, mother-in-law, mother, and grandmother of five successive publishers.

Other facets of Arthur Sulzberger's ancestry enabled him to identify even more closely with Touro. His mother was none other than Rachel Peixotto Hays (1861-1938), whose family figured prominently in colonial America.⁴³ Having fled Spain and Portugal, they had settled in Holland for two centuries before leaving for another new world at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Michael Hays, the American patriarch, settled in New York City.⁴⁴ Jacob, the eldest of four sons, was a founder of Congregation Shearith Israel. All four of Jacob's sons, including Benjamin (1779-1858), were farmers in Westchester County and supported the Revolution. Indeed, Rachel Sulzberger was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She insisted that her husband, Cyrus, join the Sons of the American Revolution, as did Arthur.

Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto (1767-1828), born in Amsterdam, was another patriarch in America.⁴⁵ His son, Daniel (1800-1843), an 1816 graduate of Columbia (formerly Kings) College, was hazan of Shearith Israel for more than two decades. Daniel's son, Benjamin Franklin Peixotto

(1834-1890), a lawyer and a merchant, served as the first American consul in Bucharest and later as consul in Lyons.

Many of Sulzberger's ancestors were buried in Shearith Israel's historic cemetery in lower Manhattan. The cemetery itself became the subject of a major study, *Portraits Etched in Stone: Early Jewish Settlers, 1682-1831*, by the congregation's rabbi, Dr. David De Sola Pool, published in 1952. (It is possible that Sulzberger helped sponsor this study.) Family history was further proclaimed in the names of Arthur Hays Sulzberger's three sisters: Marian Effie, Ruth Rachel, and Judith Peixotto. He named his own son Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, and his son became Junior. Beyond the family connection to Touro, however, the son believes that his father had no broader interest in Newport and seldom visited Rhode Island.⁴⁶

The Difficult Path toward Federal Status

The publisher of *The New York Times*, then, had strong ancestral ties to the Jewish colonial worlds of both New York City and Rhode Island, ties that undoubtedly motivated him to aid in the preservation of the Touro Synagogue. Following Sulzberger's meeting with Ickes in February, 1944, the residual staff of the National Park Service — even without sufficient funding — was ordered to begin investigations. The superintendent of Morristown National Historic Park was sent to Newport. With Sulzberger, he also visited St. Paul's Episcopal Church (1761), in the decaying Eastchester neighborhood of Mount Vernon, New York, which in 1942 was designated a Historic Site. Though lacking architectural distinction, St. Paul's was closely associated with the career of John Peter Zanger, the newspaper printer acquitted in 1735 of seditious libel. Zanger's burial place was unknown, but Congressman James Fitzpatrick had lobbied hard for St. Paul's designation. Representing the Zenger Memorial Fund Press Committee, Sulzberger spoke at the designation ceremony, which several descendants of the original pewholders attended.⁴⁷

Ickes' staff at first saw little merit in Sulzberger's quixotic proposal to designate Touro and various churches. Nevertheless, the staff agreed to make a case for Touro before the National Park Service's Advisory Board. As authorized by the Historic Sites Act of 1935, the board consisted of eleven citizens, mostly professional historians — either professors, museum officials, or members of learned societies. A smattering of volunteers represented grass roots preservation projects. As might have been expected, the board appeared to be rather homogeneous: male, white, elderly, and

principally from the Northeast.

Though it is not known how long he served, one of the original members of the advisory board was a Jew. This was Edmund H. Abrahams, who was head of the Joint Committee of Memorials of the City of Savannah, secretary of the Sons of the Revolution, and head of the Savannah Commission for the Preservation of Landmarks. From 1938 to 1940, Abrahams had served as president of Congregation Mickve Israel, which, having been founded in 1735, was the third oldest in America.⁴⁸

More influential than Abrahams, one of the board's most important members was Fiske Kimball (1888-1955), a distinguished architectural historian.⁴⁹ A Bostonian, he had earned a bachelor's and a master of architecture degree at Harvard. As a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, he began a lifelong interest in Jefferson. Both an architect and a historian, he taught at Jefferson's University of Virginia. Beginning in 1925, Kimball served as the director of the Pennsylvania (later known as Philadelphia) Museum of Art, the neoclassical pile atop Benjamin Franklin Parkway where he gathered several private collections to fill its vacant galleries.

In Philadelphia Kimball also gained practical experience in the politics of preservation. In 1939, for example, he helped save William Strickland's Second Bank of the United States ("Old Custom House," 1824) by arranging for its transfer from the Treasury Department to Interior. But his attempt to transfer ownership of Independence Hall from the city to the National Park Service was unsuccessful. As a result, designation of Independence Hall as a National Historic Park was delayed until 1956.

By late February, 1944, the Advisory Board had already formulated a list of twenty-two colonial houses of worship eligible for designation.⁵⁰ All of these buildings were churches, but only eight states and the District of Columbia were represented. Conspicuously missing from this list was Rhode Island. The Advisory Board had discussed criteria for designating colonial churches; the key factor, they determined, was "importance in the development of American architecture." Of far lesser importance was "historical associations."

Kimball was a large man with a forceful manner whose opinion carried much weight. Though unsuccessful, he had opposed designation of St. Paul's in Eastchester, insisting that it required extensive restoration. In St. Paul's place, he had proposed several other churches, which probably resulted in the Advisory Board's recommendation. Since 1925, Kimball, a

prolific writer, had considered Peter Harrison (1716-1775), the designer of Touro Synagogue, one of America's finest architects. In his introductory text, *American Architecture* (1928), Kimball characterized Harrison as "the prince of colonial amateurs."⁵¹ He highlighted many of his designs, including King's Chapel in Boston (1754) and Christ Church in Cambridge (1761), both of which were on the Advisory Board's list. Touro was identified in *American Architecture* as "the fine synagogue in Newport."⁵² Kimball also wrote the article on Harrison for *The Dictionary of American Biography* (1932).

Kimball was well acquainted with the earlier work of Norman Isham (1864-1943), an architect and a historian who taught at Rhode Island School of Design. Beginning in the 1890s, he had written on historic houses in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Beyond his own commercial practice, which extended over many New England states, Isham had overseen restorations of several Rhode Island landmarks, including the First Baptist Meeting-house in Providence and Trinity Church and the Brick Market in Newport. As early as 1913 Isham had become alarmed over the rumor that the Metropolitan Museum hoped to acquire Touro's interior for its new American Wing.⁵³

Kimball would have seen Touro in light of additional studies. Based on his comprehensive exhibition presented at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1938, Henry-Russell Hitchcock published *Rhode Island Architecture* the following year. In 1940 both Kimball and Hitchcock were instrumental in the formation of the American Society of Architectural Historians (later known as SAH), and both contributed to its scholarly journal.⁵⁴ Kimball may have been aware of the work of a much younger scholar, Antoinette Downing, who, shortly after moving to Providence and studying with Isham, published *Early Homes of Rhode Island* (1936). In 1952 he was surely thrilled to read Downing and Vincent Scully's majestic study, *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island: 1640-1915*. This was supported by the neophyte Preservation Society of Newport County, was published by Harvard College, and won the SAH's Alice Davis Hitchcock Book Award.⁵⁵ An entire chapter was devoted to Harrison's Newport career, following on the monograph, *Peter Harrison: First American Architect*, published in 1949 by Carl Bridenbaugh, a prominent Brown professor.⁵⁶

Was it more than coincidence that in January, 1946, two important articles about Harrison were published in SPNEA's journal, *Old Time New*

England? The first, by John Haley, was an overview of his career. The second, by Lee Friedman, focused on "The Newport Synagogue." It is quite likely that Kimball saw these. There is, of course, no reason to believe that Kimball had any particular interest in Jews or Jewish history. He was probably unaware of the American Jewish Historical Society or the evolving field of American Jewish studies. It seems unlikely that he would have known that Leon Huhner published *The Life of Judah Touro* that very year. But his key role was to accept the selection of Touro advanced by the publisher of *The New York Times*, Arthur Sulzberger.

In December, 1944, during meetings in Chicago, the Advisory Board approved Touro's nomination. Expressing no interest in Jeshuat Israel's cemetery, the Advisory Board did not advocate its inclusion within an expanded Historic Site. (Indeed, no other synagogue or Jewish cemetery has subsequently been designated a Historic Site.)⁵⁷ The Advisory Board forwarded Touro's nomination to Secretary Ickes for his approval. The director of the National Park Service explained in a memo of March, 1945 that Touro was worthy for designation as "one of the finest surviving examples of Colonial architecture and a building rich in historical association."⁵⁸ But what was the cause for additional delay?

President Roosevelt had suspended the designation process for the duration of the war. Indeed, for Touro to receive final designation, it had to be acknowledged "an exceptional case." On April 19, 1945, a week after FDR's sudden death, President Truman gave his approval to the Historic Site designation by signing a memo written by Secretary Ickes. In the very first sentence of this memo, Ickes pointed out that the idea for designation came from Sulzberger.

The President would have had no reason to question the synagogue's architectural importance. And like most politicians, he would not have been oblivious to a small political gesture. But more than that, Truman sincerely cared about the welfare of Jews, was attuned to politics in the Middle East, and was as horrified as anybody by the Holocaust.

Sulzberger, however, was not satisfied by Truman's response, which did not grant final approval. The publisher still favored designation of three historic churches from the thirteen colonies and the creation of a separate advisory board, and he undoubtedly conveyed his wishes to Mr. Ickes. Ickes thereupon made a stronger case: he, for one, knew the value of political symbolism. In 1939, for example, after the Daughters of the American

Republic had denied the use of Constitution Hall to the African-American singer Marian Anderson for an Easter Sunday concert, the Secretary had personally arranged for her performance on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.⁵⁹ Ickes himself introduced the contralto to the audience of 75,000. In his letter of May 21, 1945, therefore, Ickes explained to Sulzberger that two churches, San José Mission in San Antonio (1782) and Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') in Philadelphia (1700), had already been designated Historic Sites, and they would suffice for Catholic and Protestant buildings. The Touro's turn was next.

The San José Mission had been "an exceptional case," for it had been vigorously promoted by San Antonio's new Congressman (and later mayor) Fontaine "Maury" Maverick, even before March, 1935, when he had introduced legislation for the Historic Sites Act. Numerous obstacles had stood in the way of designating the Mission, not the least of which was a cooperative agreement between diocesan officials, the San Antonio Conservation Society, Bexar County, and the state of Texas. Such an agreement was not finalized until 1941.

Perhaps with Touro in mind, Ickes in his letter of May 21, 1945 explained to Sulzberger that if he still wanted to pursue the idea of establishing a Historic Church Advisory Board, he might approach Congress. But Ickes proposed still another idea, which he considered "perhaps a better solution." Why not approach the churches themselves without the government's involvement?

Sulzberger again insisted on including churches from the thirteen original colonies. In place of San José Mission, he suggested an obscure Catholic church, St. Francis Xavier (1767), near Leonardstown, Maryland, which he had mentioned in February, 1944. But Ickes' staff had dismissed this possibility, insisting on architectural excellence. Further, they preferred a building not requiring or having received extensive restoration.

At this point, Sulzberger began stirring resentment within the National Park Service, just as staff members commenced drafting an agreement between Interior, Shearith Israel, and Jeshuat Israel over governance of the proposed Historic Site. For example, the chief historian objected to the characterization of Touro "as a symbol of American unity and religious tolerance" because of the publisher's "persistence in injecting" this theme.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the "Memorandum of Agreement" between the three

parties was ready for approval on November 7, 1945. Six pages in length, it had five "whereas" clauses giving reasons for Touro's designation. The first clause: "the historic Touro Synagogue building, Newport, Rhode Island, is a splendid example of the architectural genius of Peter Harrison, one of the preeminent architects of the colonial period of American History." The second clause: "the Touro Synagogue building was used as a State House for the General Assembly of Rhode Island at the close of the Revolutionary War." The remainder of the document specified numerous conditions regarding the use and alteration of the building.

By this time, Sulzberger probably had concluded that his cause was hopeless. Perhaps he also had some premonition that Ickes' days in the Truman administration were numbered. Sure enough, on February 13, 1946, the Secretary resigned, leaving the "Memorandum of Agreement," not yet consummated. Evidently, further discussions were required before signatures were affixed by eight trustees representing Shearith Israel and four representing Jeshuat Israel. Then, on February 14, 1946, a memo was written by the director of the National Park Service, reviewing the history of Sulzberger's proposal and requesting signature by the Secretary of the Interior before a final agreement could be reached.

But who was Secretary? Not until March 5 was Julius Krug confirmed; he took office on March 18. Luckily, written authorization designating Touro a National Historic Site on March 5, 1946 had been provided by Oscar Chapman, who served as Acting Secretary for about five weeks. For thirteen years he had been one of Ickes' most loyal and able Assistant Secretaries, whose portfolio included the Bureau of Indian Affairs as well as responsibility for Hawaiians, Alaskans, Puerto Ricans, Virgin Islanders, and Filipinos.⁶¹ Sensitive to the needs of minorities, he had played a key role in organizing the Marian Anderson concert.

Though a Methodist, Chapman was also a Zionist. He was a member of the Christian Committee for Palestine. Indeed, during the late 1930s he had been a founder of the Washington branch of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People. Chapman was asked by President Truman to become Ickes' permanent successor. Having declined the offer, he accepted the position of Under Secretary. But when Krug resigned the secretaryship in November of 1949, Chapman accepted the appointment for the remainder of Truman's term.

Touro Becomes a National "Shrine"

The federal government assumed no financial responsibility for Touro's use or maintenance. Edwin Small, superintendent of Salem Maritime National Historic Site, began making annual inspections and offering consultations. He suggested ways to receive and guide visitors, and he oversaw publications. Small also made the fateful suggestion that Jeshuat Israel and the neighboring Newport Historical Society form an organization to support the property. In 1947 the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue National Historic Shrine was chartered by the state of Rhode Island, and Sulzberger became one of twenty-eight board members.⁶²

But where did the word "Shrine" come from? Though many historic sites are shrines in a patriotic sense, few are endowed with this explicitly religious terminology. Indeed, during the decades following Touro's designation, the National Park Service seems to have intentionally avoided use of this word.

On March 9, 1946, in its coverage of Touro's designation, *The Times* itself referred to the synagogue as a "Shrine of Judaism at Newport." In an unsigned editorial entitled "Two Historic Sites," published the same day, Touro was also compared to St. Paul's Church in Eastchester. Without elaboration, the editorial writer pointed out that in 1942 the church had been dedicated as "the American Shrine of the Freedom of the Press and the Bill of Rights."⁶³ The writer believed, moreover, that the federal government would "undoubtedly" extend its policy of recognizing historic houses of worship. The most likely candidate for a Catholic church, he suggested, was in St. Augustine, Florida.

The word "shrine" had been buried in the fourth "whereas" clause of the "Memorandum of Agreement." Touro, it explained, should "continue to foster on the part of the people of the Nation, through visits to this shrine, a sincere devotion to the United States and to the principles of religious freedom."

Beyond architecture, the designation of Touro can be seen within the ideological context of "The Four Freedoms," FDR's legendary eighth annual address to Congress, delivered on January 6, 1941. Two years later Norman Rockwell immortalized "The Four Freedoms" through his beloved series of covers for *The Saturday Evening Post*. On January 20, 1946, Sulzberger reaffirmed his belief in the "four fundamental freedoms" in a signed article for *The Times'* magazine section.⁶⁴

Touro National Historic Site was dedicated in a gala ceremony on Sunday afternoon, August 31, 1947. More than 1,200 gathered to hear a platform full of dignitaries, including Governor John Pastore, Senator Theodore F. Green, and Speaker of the House Joseph W. Martin, Jr. (from Massachusetts), who delivered the main address.⁶⁵ Dr. David De Sola Pool, rabbi and historian of Shearith Israel, gave the benediction. Patrice Munsel, a star of the Metropolitan Opera, performed. Dr. Francis Ronalds of the Park Service unveiled a large bronze plaque on the synagogue's exterior (southern wall), which replaced some older markers.⁶⁶

President Truman sent a congratulatory message to Bernard C. Friedman, president of the Friends. (An immediate past president of Jeshuat Israel, Friedman, a dentist, was also the son of the congregation's longtime cantor.) Perhaps using language employed in the Friends' own publicity, Truman referred to Touro as "a national shrine." The "shrine" terminology was echoed in several newspaper articles and in a handsome souvenir booklet published by the Friends a year later. Representative Aimé J. Forand of Rhode Island used the imagery of "A National Shrine" in a speech to the House on June 15, 1949, which was published in the *Congressional Record*.

A congratulatory letter was also sent to the Society of Friends in August, 1947 by the American Council for Judaism. Founded in 1942 by a fringe group of Reform rabbis and lay leaders in Philadelphia, this national organization vehemently opposed American recognition of Israeli statehood.⁶⁷ Bernhard Rogowski, chairman of the Council's New Haven chapter, attended the designation ceremony.

Though never a member of its board of trustees nor a financial supporter, Sulzberger backed the "Digest of Principles" announced by the American Council for Judaism in July, 1943. Indeed, having formulated the phrase "Americans of Jewish faith," he had been involved in drafting the platform and was sought as a vice-president. Sulzberger was afraid of compromising his paper's impartiality, however. And in November, 1943, the publisher came under heavy attack from Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver for his anti-Zionist sympathies.⁶⁸

The Many Meanings of Touro Synagogue

Like Sulzberger's intentions, Touro's significance as a Historic Site has always been open to interpretation. Indeed, its wealth of meanings seems not to weaken but to bolster its stature. Some see Touro simply as the oldest synagogue in North America. Others see it as a splendid example of colonial

architecture — in particular, a masterpiece by Peter Harrison. Despite the major hiatus during the nineteenth century, Touro also represents the continuity of Jewish life in America. At the same time, some may see Touro as representing a bitter conflict between Jewish denominations.

Arthur Sulzberger's own interest in Touro symbolized these contrary interpretations. Though bearing abundant pride in his own Sephardic ancestry, he was opposed to Israeli statehood, and he saw Touro's meaning in terms of American "self-sufficiency" and unity during World War II. Evidently, this view was alien to National Park Service officials, who were moved primarily by its splendid architecture.

And there were additional ways in which Touro's meaning could be interpreted. The Touro brothers' generosity and vision created a notable early chapter in the historic preservation movement. Through the administration of Abraham and Judah's trusts, the synagogue represented a mostly happy example of cooperation between church and state. At the same time, but seldom mentioned today, is the fact that most of Touro's colonial-era elders were members of King David's Lodge, so the synagogue also endures as an important symbol of American Masonic history.

Moreover, given the early congregants' entrepreneurial skills, Touro also symbolized eighteenth-century mercantilism. In addition, perhaps Newport, as represented by Touro, deserves recognition as a once benevolent outpost of the British empire. And as exemplified by Ezra Stiles' contact with several Jewish dignitaries, the synagogue further embodies an important example of interfaith cooperation and understanding.

So there are many possible interpretations of the value of the Synagogue that was recognized nationally after a tortuous process initiated by the intervention of Sulzberger and his allies. There can be no question, however, as to how the Society of Friends has most consistently and unabashedly interpreted Touro's importance. A large bronze plaque, erected outdoors in 1963, lists alphabetically more than 130 donors, including Arthur Hays Sulzberger and many other prominent New Yorkers, who made possible an extensive restoration.⁶⁹ The brief text on the plaque proclaims Touro "A Symbol of Religious Freedom in America."

This theme has been amplified and reenacted each August with the reading aloud of Washington's famous letter of 1790 to Newport's Jews, which followed his second visit to the synagogue. Echoing the words of

hazan Moses Seixas (Sulzberger's great-great-great uncle), the President declared: "For happily the government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support."⁷⁰ The custom of reading aloud the Washington letter began even before the Friends' creation, but it was mandated in their bylaws.⁷¹

A guest speaker, who follows the letter reader, is often a high government official (federal or state level), a top-ranking military officer, a diplomat, a university president, or a Christian clergyperson. The ideal speaker wears many of these hats. The only Presidential reader since Washington was Eisenhower, who appeared on September 15, 1958 (Rosh Hashanah).⁷² Many readers, particularly Rhode Island's Senators and Representatives, have become honorary members of the Friends' national board of trustees.

Why such a love affair with the Establishment? Yes, we Jews would probably be offended if our invitations were spurned; we seem to hunger for some kind of official validation of our legitimacy. Needless to say, on the grand ceremonial occasions of the Washington letter, there is little opportunity for disagreement or controversy. Remarks about the tensions and clashes that inevitably and often occur between church and state, especially in Rhode Island, are carefully avoided. Indeed, a notable civil libertarian, human rights advocate, or philosopher has never mounted Touro's "bimah." Would a committee ever consider a poet? Or, Heaven forbid, an architect?

Perhaps compared to Bristol's frivolous Fourth of July parade, Touro's reading of the Washington letter is an extremely dignified and uplifting ritual — especially for Jews. But to generations with no recollection of World War II or little experience of anti-Semitism, the Washington letter ceremony may now seem to some somewhat gratuitous or hollow because it usually overlooks the many, often conflicting, meanings that the Synagogue has represented to past generations. Currying favor with public figures may seem both self-serving and self-deluding. Besides, many Jews have themselves become authority figures: thanks in part to Washington, our freedom to be Jewish is unfettered.

In short, have the Friends become too successful? Has the latest message of Touro Synagogue been largely one of self-congratulation and glossy

theme-park success? In the late 1970s an extensive landscaping, fencing, seating, and lighting program resulted in Patriots' Park. The marble base of a large flagpole was adorned with the names and accomplishments of leading Jewish patriots from each of the original thirteen colonies. The Washington letter, reproduced in bronze, was affixed to a stone lectern. A Touro coin, proposed in 1963 for the synagogue's bicentenary, has not been minted,⁷³ but in 1973 the Franklin Mint produced a souvenir medal, available in gold, silver or bronze. In 1982, following two decades of appeals, the United States Postal Service was persuaded to issue a Touro commemorative stamp. The stamp too has been reproduced on a bronze plaque in Patriots' Park.

Furthermore, three tiny plaques within the Park, perhaps seldom noticed, pay highly unusual tributes (none to Arthur Hays Sulzberger). One, in memory of Herbert C. Pell (a Congressman from New York and father of Senator Claiborne Pell), acknowledges his "valiant efforts to help prevent the Holocaust." Two others, erected by the Lippman family of Akron, Ohio, in 1986, commemorate Raoul Wallenberg and unnamed "Righteous Gentiles" who "at risk to their own lives, saved their Jewish neighbors."

The Jewish cemetery too has received new markers, and the colonial Jewish community has been given ample recognition within the Newport Historical Society's new Museum of Newport History in the Brick Market, which opened in 1993. Religious themes will receive further attention in the Historical Society's Center for Newport History, when it is built within a few years besides the Friends' Meetinghouse. The same may be true of Heritage Harbor, now being planned by a variety of "partnership" organizations under the leadership of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Thanks to the generosity of a Touro descendant, plans are also unfolding for an impressive Touro Visitors' Center, which will serve both as a museum and a gateway to Patriots' Park.

In view of all this celebrity, is Touro in danger of becoming an overburdened symbol, a Jewish Plymouth Rock? Do Jews feel ignored, inadequate or insecure without a comparable icon? Do public symbols heighten the glory or do they somehow spare us the often heavy burden of living Jewish lives? As in the past, new meanings of Touro Synagogue will continue to evolve, and this is probably healthy. But let us not forget: Touro is a tiny building, on a short street, in a small town, on a narrow island, in the nation's smallest state. Perhaps its minuteness, more than its national

celebrity, its grand historical symbolism, or its architectural uniqueness, allows us to behold, in this timeless reminder of the worship carried on in another era, God's grandeur.



Notes

- ¹ There has been much recent discussion about the pitfalls and misuses of historic preservation. See, for example: Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: New Press, 1999); and Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999). These studies vary widely in their objectivity and accuracy. For an earlier study focusing on implications for Jewish education, see: Joel Gereboff, "Can the Teaching of Jewish History be Anything but the Teaching of Myth?" in S. Donald Breslauer, *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth: Challenge or Response?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 43-69.
- ² See: Antoinette F. Downing and Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915* (2nd ed., revised; New York: American Legacy Press, 1982), 85.
- ³ Jacob R. Marcus' estimate of the Jewish population on the eve of the Revolution may have been "as many as 2,500 souls in the colonies in seven towns and a number of villages." See: *United States Jewry, 1776-1985* (Vol. I; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 45.
- ⁴ Esther I. Schwartz, "Touro Synagogue Restored, 1827-29," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XVII (summer, 1958), 23. Schwartz wrote a more detailed article, "Restoration of The Touro Synagogue," for the *Notes*, III (October, 1959), 106-31.
- ⁵ See: Louis Untermeyer, ed., *The Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (New York: The Heritage Press, 1943), 280-3.
- ⁶ For an assessment of Marcus' impact and importance, see the 50th anniversary issue of *American Jewish Archives Journal*, L (1998), particularly, Jon Butler's "Jacob Rader Marcus and the Revival of Early American History, 1930-1960," 28-39.
- ⁷ In 1997 and 1998, a fascinating exhibition, "Facing the New World: Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America," was shown at The Jewish Museum in New York and the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. Many of the 87 portraits belonging to the American Jewish Historical Society were exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1990. For the exhibition catalogue, see: Richard Brilliant, ed. (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1997).
- ⁸ In the first issue of the *Notes*, however, Adelman explained that one of his reasons for founding the Association was to correct the imbalance, which placed too much emphasis on Newport history and not enough on Providence.
- ⁹ The numerous and varied celebrations conducted by the American Jewish Tercentenary Committee of Rhode Island, Inc., in Newport and in Providence, were described in the second issue of the *Notes*.
- ¹⁰ Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*, is the source of much of the following information.

- ¹¹ Isaac Touro's daughter, Rebecca Lopez, died in New York in 1833.
- ¹² For Levy's efforts and those of his nephew, Jefferson Monroe Levy, see: Marc Leepson, "The Levys of Monticello," *Historic Preservation*, March/ April, 1998, 44-51.
- ¹³ For a copy of his will, see: Max J. Kohler, "Judah Touro, Merchant and Philanthropist," in Abraham J. Karp, ed., *The Jewish Experience in America: Selected Studies from The Publications of The American Jewish Historical Society* (Vol. II: *In the Early Republic*; Waltham: American Jewish Historical Society, 1969), 158-76.
- ¹⁴ See: Bernard Kusnitz, "The 1902 Sit-In at Touro Synagogue," the *Notes*, Vol. VII (November, 1975), 42-72.
- ¹⁵ In 1971 the Gale House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. See: "Newport County, RI," in *National Register, 1966-1991* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1991). Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and administered by the National Park Service, the National Register has recognized more than 58,000 buildings, sites, objects, and districts, many of only local or regional interest.
- ¹⁶ For museum "villages," see, for example: Elizabeth Stillinger, *Historic Deerfield: A Portrait of Early America* (New York: Dutton, 1992) and Kent McCallum, *Old Sturbridge Village* (New York: Abrams, 1996).
- ¹⁷ One of Strawberry Banke's most surprising exhibits, opened in 1997, is the Shapiro House, which recreates the interiors of a Jewish home around 1920.
- ¹⁸ There are two indispensable studies of the preservation movement, both by Charles B. Hosmer, Jr.: *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965); *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949* (2 vols.; Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981). All three books have extensively aided this study. For a more recent, concise introduction, see: William J. Murtaugh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1997).
- ¹⁹ See: Jane C. Nylander and Diane L. Viera, *Windows on the Past: Four Centuries of New England Homes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2000).
- ²⁰ Begun in 1707 and known originally as Howe's Tavern, the Inn is considered the country's oldest in continual operation. Since 1863 it became widely known through the publication of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's book, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. In 1945 Ford relinquished ownership when he established the Wayside Inn Trust. For his anti-Semitism, see: Albert Lee, *Henry Ford and the Jews* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980).
- ²¹ See: Philip Koper, *Colonial Williamsburg* (New York: Abrams, 1986). For a critique, see: Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).
- ²² See: Antoinette F. Downing, "Historic Preservation in Rhode Island," *Rhode Island History*, XXXV (February, 1976), 3-28. Much material in the following paragraphs is derived from this source.
- ²³ For the history of the Meetinghouse and its restoration, see: Stanley J. Lemons, *The First Baptist Church in America* (Providence: Charitable Baptist Society, 1988). Also: "John D. Rockefeller, Jr.," in Martha Mitchell, ed., *Encyclopedia Brunonia* (Providence: Brown University Library, 1993), 81.
- In contrast to Henry Ford's reputation as an anti-Semite, Mrs. Rockefeller was renowned for her benevolence. See the letter written to her sons in 1928, which belongs in the collection of the American Jewish Archives, in: Jacob R. Marcus, ed., *The Jew*

- in *the American World: A Source Book* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 407-8. For a fuller portrait, see: Neil Harris, "Abby Greene Aldrich Rockefeller," in Edward T. James, ed., *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Bibliographical Dictionary* (Vol. III; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 186-7.
- ²⁴ See: *America Preserved: A Checklist of Historic Buildings, Structures, and Sites* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Cataloging Distribution Service, 1995).
- ²⁵ See: William H. Truettner, "Small-Town America," in William H. Truettner and Roger B. Stein, eds., *Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 111-142. The book served as a catalogue for an exhibition of the same name presented at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art.
- ²⁶ At the same time he built his cottage overlooking the Hudson, Frederick W. Vanderbilt erected "Rough Point" in Newport. Purchased in 1922 by James and Nanaline Duke, it became the home of their daughter, Doris.
- ²⁷ FDR's home and library contained extensive collections begun in childhood. In addition to postage stamps, he assembled huge holdings of books, paintings, prints, ship models, and birds' eggs and nests. See: Geoffrey C. Ward, *Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882-1905* (New York: Harper & Row, 1995), 158-60.
- ²⁸ The text of the Act is available on-line at: <www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/unrau-williss/adhia7.htm>.
- ²⁹ For the terms of Interior's secretaries, see: <www.doi.gov/anniversary/secretaries.html>.
- ³⁰ See: T. H. Watkins, *Righteous Pilgrim: The Life and Times of Harold L. Ickes, 1874-1952* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990).
- ³¹ For a complete list, on-line, see: <www.nps.gov/legacy/nomenclature.html>.
- ³² See: Hosmer, *From Williamsburg to the National Trust, Op. cit.*, 736-8.
- ³³ For biographical information on Sulzberger and his larger family, see: Susan E. Tift and Alex S. Jones, *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind 'The New York Times'* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999). Also: "Arthur Hays Sulzberger," in Maxine Block, ed., *Current Biography* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1943), 747-8; and Robert L. Gale, "Arthur Hays Sulzberger," in John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography* (Vol. XXI; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132-3.
- ³⁴ See: George M. Goodwin, "A New Jewish Elite: Curators, Directors, and Benefactors of American Art Museums," *Modern Judaism*, XVIII (February, 1998), 47-79.
- ³⁵ Hosmer, *From Williamsburg to the National Trust, Op. cit.*, 693-4.
- ³⁶ This sentiment found expression in 1951, when President Truman dedicated the Chapel of the Four Chaplains at Temple University in Philadelphia. The Chapel paid tribute to four Army chaplains, including one Reform rabbi, who during World War II sacrificed their lives for the survival of others. A similar ecumenical spirit was expressed in Max Abramovitz's design of The Three Chapels, erected at Brandeis University in 1955.
- ³⁷ Memo from Arthur Demeray, Associate Director of the National Park Service, to Hillory Tolson, Acting Director, February 16, 1944.
- ³⁸ See: Deborah A. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 170. The historian does not dwell on Sulzberger's culpability, however.
- ³⁹ See: David Kahan, "Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger," in Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, eds., *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Vol. II; New York: Routledge, 1997), 1,356-8.

- ⁴⁰ See: Samuel E. Karff, ed., *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), 114-6, 120, 175.
- ⁴¹ "Pulitzer Prize Announced," *New York Times*, May 2, 1944, I, 1. For details about the prize-winning story, see: "Survey Speeds Reforms," *Ibid.*, I, 17.
- ⁴² Tift and Jones, *Op. cit.*, 587-9.
- ⁴³ Susan Roth, "Rachel Hays Sulzberger," in Hyman and Moore, eds., *Op. cit.*, I, 358.
- ⁴⁴ See: "Hays," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1971, VII, 153. Stephen Birmingham's popular history, *The Grandees: America's Sephardic Elite* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), is an unreliable source.
- ⁴⁵ See: "Peixotto," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1971, XIII, 213.
- ⁴⁶ Letter to author, September 19, 2000.
- ⁴⁷ "Free Press Shrine Hailed at Service," *New York Times*, May 4, 1942, p. 6.
- ⁴⁸ See: Saul J. Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry* (Congregation Mickve Israel, 1983), 349.
- ⁴⁹ See: Lauren W. Bricker, "Fiske Kimball," Garraty and Carnes, eds., *Op. cit.*, Vol. XII, 675-6.
- ⁵⁰ Memo from Demeray to Tolson, February 25, 1944.
- ⁵¹ Fiske Kimball, *American Architecture* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1928), 43.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 44.
- ⁵³ Downing, "Historic Preservation in Rhode Island," *Op. cit.*, 12. Pendleton House (originally known as Colonial House), the wing for American art erected by Rhode Island School of Design in 1906, was the first such wing in the country. See: Carla M. Woodward and Franklin W. Robinson, eds., *A Handbook of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design* (RISD, 1985), 21.
- ⁵⁴ See: Elisabeth B. MacDougall, ed., *The Architectural Historian in America: A Symposium in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Society of Architectural Historians* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1990). There are essays about Kimball and Hitchcock.
- ⁵⁵ In 1987 the Society of Architectural Historians established a book award in Downing's honor.
- ⁵⁶ After earning his doctorate at Harvard, Bridenbaugh (1903-1992) taught at Brown in two eras: 1930-42 and 1962-69. Between, he founded and directed the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Colonial Williamsburg and was the Byrne professor of American history at Berkeley. In 1962 Bridenbaugh ended his term as president of the American Historical Association with an infamous speech, a denunciation of a new generation of historians who came from lower-middle class or foreign backgrounds. Many listeners thought that he was referring in particular to Jews. See: Butler, *Op. cit.*, 32-3.
- ⁵⁷ Though religious properties are generally excluded, several synagogues have been added to the National Register of Historic Places. A few have been documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey.
- ⁵⁸ Demeray to Ickes, March 27, 1945.
- ⁵⁹ Watkins, *Op. cit.*, 649-53. The Lincoln Memorial itself had been dedicated in 1922.
- ⁶⁰ H. K. Kahler to Newton Drury, June 26, 1945.
- ⁶¹ See: Stuart L. Weiss, "Oscar L. Chapman," in Garraty and Carnes, eds., *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, 713-4; also, "Oscar L. Chapman," *Current Biography* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1949), 101-3.

- ⁶² The Society of Friends has some records of its own history in the Bernard Kusnitz Archives. Two scrapbooks from the Society's early years contain invitations, newspaper clippings, photographs, and miscellaneous items. Additional records of the Society gathered by David Adelman and his brother-in-law, Dr. Seebert Goldowsky, are found in the Archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.
- ⁶³ *New York Times*, March 9, 1946, I, 12. These words had been quoted from FDR's letter, which was sent to St. Paul's for the designation ceremony. Indeed, the President's mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, had been the first chair of the church's restoration committee. Basil O'Connor, once the President's law partner, chaired the designation ceremony. See also: *New York Times*, May 4, 1942.
- ⁶⁴ Arthur Hays Sulzberger, "With Faith in Our Democratic System," *New York Times*, January 20, 1946, VI, 5.
- ⁶⁵ "1,200 at Dedication of Touro Synagogue as National Shrine," *Providence Journal*, September 1, 1947, unpaginated as found in Friends' scrapbook.
- ⁶⁶ An undated photograph in Friends' scrapbook shows a plaque that once adorned the west wall, to the right of the entrance. It simply read: "Jewish Synagogue, Dedicated 5523-1763." Another photograph shows a freestanding marker (a plaque within a brick obelisk), which stood in the yard near the synagogue entrance. From the photo, the text is indecipherable. The monument was dedicated on August 20, 1939. See: *Providence Journal*, August 21, 1939, 1.
- ⁶⁷ See: Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942-1948* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).
- ⁶⁸ See: *Ibid.*, 55, 69, 70, 88.
- ⁶⁹ The chair of the restoration campaign was the legendary New York developer, William Zeckendorf (1905-1976). In Chicago, through the efforts of his architect, I. M. Pei, he assisted with the restoration of Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece, the Robie House (1906).
- ⁷⁰ The letter, which once belonged to Touro and was hung within the sanctuary, was acquired under mysterious circumstances by a private collector. It now belongs to B'nai B'rith's Klutznick Museum in Washington, D.C.
- It may not be commonly known that Washington addressed similar letters (also in reply) to other Jewish congregations. These included a separate letter to Savannah and a group letter to Philadelphia, New York, Richmond, and Charleston. See: Lewis Abraham, "Correspondence Between Washington and Jewish Citizens," in Karp, ed., *Op. cit.* (Vol. I: *The Colonial Period*), 352-61. It is not known, however, whether these congregations have instituted their own letter-reading ceremonies.
- ⁷¹ The letter was read on Sunday, February 21, 1932, for example, to commemorate the Washington Bicentenary. See: Friends' scrapbook.
- ⁷² See: Rabbi Theodore Lewis, "Touro Synagogue National Historic Site," *Newport History*, XLVIII (summer, 1975), 311.
- ⁷³ *Providence Journal*, September 25, 1963, 22.



Boris Efes, Air Observation Officer, Soviet Union, World War II.

Wartime Experiences of Russian Immigrants

Part I

by Merrill Percelay

With these interviews we return to the theme of war. In "Notes from the Editor," in the 1998 issue of the Notes, I wrote that "it is important to know not only the place we came to but also the places we came from." Here are the wartime stories of four Jewish immigrants who came to Rhode Island from the Soviet Union after unbelievably harsh experiences during the German invasion in the Second World War. Like the Holocaust survivors, they brought memories to their new country, memories that are almost unimaginable but that have become part of our Jewish heritage. And these people, whether as soldiers or civilians, did more than merely survive: they demonstrated to the rest of us those human qualities that have always counterbalanced the brutality and unreason of aggression.

Mr. Percelay, a lifelong resident of Pawtucket, is a retired businessman in textile manufacture and real estate development. His interviews were conducted with the assistance of Nina Ivanova, who translated and acted as project coordinator.

1. Boris Efes

I was born in 1914 in Stareslivia Mogolofsky in Byelorussia, U.S.S.R., the second of three sons. I attended a Jewish school, starting at the age of seven or eight, as did my brothers. In this school we learned non-Jewish subjects, but everything was taught in Yiddish. In the evenings we attended the Cheda where we studied the Torah and all Jewish subjects.

Both of my parents were orthodox. My father and mother were business people: they had a grocery store, and my father also dealt in fruit orchards, but this was only after the revolution. He rented orchards in Moscow, Leningrad, and a number of other cities. After the revolution (1917), Jews could pursue any occupation they wanted to or they could own land. Before the revolution they were strictly limited in what they could do.

But then in 1928 the government closed all business, Jewish and non-Jewish. Collectives were organized. The rich were sent to Siberia and the peasants were sent to the collectives. In 1928, my father wanted to go to Palestine, but my mother did not want to go because she had many family

members in Russia. My father owned a very large house but left everything and went to a small village where he joined an all-Jewish agricultural collective located about forty kilometers from our home. I was then fourteen. We moved to the collective willingly, not under government direction. In 1930, many other people, both Jewish and non-Jewish, came to the collective, the leading collective in all of Byelorussia. My father was head of the collective for five years before he died: he was a good organizer and manager.

In 1930, there was a famine and times were very difficult. After the seventh grade I attended an automobile mechanic school for three years. I did very well in this program and became chief mechanic for the area, then an instructor in the auto mechanic school for one year. By the time I was twenty-one years old, I became the chief instructor for all of Byelorussia with twenty-two districts under my responsibility. I remained there for seven years, until the war began, and also studied advanced auto mechanics.

During all these years I encountered no anti-Semitism. Even after being drafted into the army in 1939 I had no problems caused by being Jewish. I started as sergeant because in 1936 I had completed a six-month course to be an air and ground observer. At the observer's school I learned to identify every type of aircraft, both ours and those of other countries.

Before 1941, people told Stalin that Hitler was preparing for war against Russia, but Stalin did not believe them. Instead he told the people that America, England, and other countries were the aggressors. When war came, Russia was almost destroyed and wanted desperately for the allies to open the second front. America sent many supplies to Russia, but above all Russia wanted the second front to be opened by the allies to relieve some of the overwhelming military pressure of the Germans.

In June of 1941, I received a telephone call to report to headquarters in ten minutes. I called my mother and told her that the shooting had begun. I told her that she must go far away from our town of Orsha in Byelorussia. Orsha had a population of approximately 100,000; it was an important rail center and was certain to be bombed. I had my mother driven to Chust, a town just outside Moscow where she lived with my chauffeur's mother. When I was serving near Moscow I asked for a two-hour leave during which I had my mother sent further east to a town called Saratov on the Volga River, hundreds of miles east of Moscow. My mother had a brother living there. When my father was dying he told me to make sure I took care of my mother

and this I tried my best to do.

During the entire war, from 1941 through 1945, my duties were principally air and ground reconnaissance, observation, and identification. I entered the army in 1941 as a sergeant and retired in 1964 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. The following is a list of battles I participated in and my advancement in rank:

- 1941 — Sergeant, Chief of Station, VNOS (air observation information), Orsha, Byelorussia
- 1941 — Master Sergeant, Commander, VNOS Company, Smolensk, Russia
- 1941 — Master Sergeant, Commander, VNOS Battalion, Moscow, Starhina, Russia
- 1941-1942 — Second Lieutenant, Commander VNOS Battalion, Stalingrad, Russia
- 1942-1943 — First Lieutenant, Commander SCOUT (reconnaissance detachment unit), Stalingrad
- 1943-1945 — First Lieutenant, Assistant Department Head, Staff Corps (duty command point), Staff Corps, Ukraine, Romania and Hungary
- 1945-1953 — Captain, Assistant Department Head, Staff Corps, Odessa, Ukraine
- 1953-1959 — Major, Lt. Colonel, Department Head, Staff Corps, Odessa
- 1959-1964 — Lt. Colonel, Head Department Staff Corps, Severomorsk, Russia
- 1964 — Lt. Colonel, Retired

From 1946 to 1949 I attended evening classes at the University; from 1949 to 1951 I attended Senior Officers School; and from 1951 to 1958 I attended higher academic courses.

My duties in observation required that my unit determine the number of aircraft, their type, and their headings. Similarly tank and troop movement was observed by us and reported. Because of the nature of my unit's operation we were as close to the action as possible, sometimes even behind enemy lines. Artillery and rocket fire were guided by our observations and

tactical judgments were made based on our reports. We had no radar at the time and all observations were made visually, sometimes even from tree tops. At times we wore civilian clothes so as not to be detected by the enemy. If we were found out we would be shot. The clothes were supplied by local civilians. The observations we made were critical and they had to be accurate. I was very good at this and as a result was promoted frequently.

We started fighting in Orsha and then retreated to Smolensk. The battles were of great intensity. From there we retreated to Moscow and from there we went to Stalingrad. All of the fighting during the war was terrible, but Stalingrad was the worst. In July 1942, 350 German aircraft bombed the city and although we shot down fifty airplanes, the city was virtually destroyed. I had seven observation points under my command, and from these positions I would see the whole picture. We could see thousands killed. After the attack everyone, including my commander, crossed to the other side of the Volga. I was selected from about one hundred officers to remain in command. The situation was critical. Food, ammunition, and supplies were in extremely short supply. However, one anecdote comes to mind. Our armies counterattacked and surrounded the German general, Paulus, and his army. The German dropped food and supplies to him by air. A certain amount would miss the target and since we were so close these drifted to our area. At times we dined on the finest food and wine intended for the general himself. At first I thought this might be a trick and the food poisoned. I tried it first myself and proved it was good, then allowed my men to share it.

The weather was extremely cold. My men wore whatever they could to keep warm, even women's shawls. Not only was it cold but it was very windy. It was bad for us but worse for the Germans. The cold actually helped us. They were not used to such weather and were not equipped to handle it. The suffering was so great it is hard to describe. Between the cold the fighting and the shelling and the bombing, it was hell. We struggled and fought from house to house, building to building. Stalingrad was the most important and most terrible battle I participated in. Because of the nature of my responsibility as a forward observer, I served within 200 to 300 meters of the actual fighting for four months — October, November, and December 1942 and January 1943. By the summer of 1943, the Soviet army gained the initiative and we were thankful to be alive.

Part of the main Russian force fought and pursued the Germans all the way to Berlin. Another force fought and advanced on the Germans through

the Ukraine, Romania, and Hungary. I fought with the latter. It was another two years before the war finally ended. All of the battles were especially dangerous for me because my duties in command of observation brought me as close to the actual fighting as possible. However, for me the fighting at Yassa in the Ukraine and Debretzen in Romania was the worst after Stalingrad. With the end of the war I sought to be demobilized but was ordered to remain in the army and did so until my retirement in 1964.

During my Stalingrad service in 1942 I met Feona, who was later to become my wife. She was studying at the Harkov Medical school, which had been evacuated from Harkov to Stalingrad. Shortly thereafter we were separated. She was evacuated again with the medical school to Chikalov. I was sent west with our now advancing army. In 1943, Feona graduated as a doctor and was sent to Varyshilovgrad to practice as a civilian doctor there. She contacted the bureau whose job it was to locate people and found that I was then in Harkov, which was close to Varyshilovgrad. She wrote to me, I called her by telephone, she came to Harkov and we were married. We came to Rhode Island, where our children were living, in November of 1981.

2. Raisa Kerdman

I was born in 1918 in Jmerinka Vinnitsa in the Ukraine. From the age of ten I lived with my older sister in Harkov, Russia, north of the Ukraine. The reason for this was that my parents moved to Crimea looking for a job related to agriculture.

In 1941, just before the war broke out, I graduated from the Harkov Medical College. I got a job as a doctor in a small town, Lutsk, in the Ukraine. Before I could get there the town had fallen to the Germans and was occupied by the Nazis. Then I was sent to a hospital in the city of Kremenchug. The war was extremely difficult. The Soviet army struggled for each city, town and village. Kremenchug was given up to the German army after a hard battle and I returned to Harkov.

I then made the decision to go to the front as a volunteer with a medical battalion. I applied for a medical battalion several times, and in 1942 I was finally sent to the front as a surgeon. Our hospital was located close to the front and conditions were very hard. We usually lived in tents or small houses but sometimes out in the open. We experienced a lack of drinking water. Food was very simple, usually various dry foods, concentrates, and

toasts. Very often we were forced to take water for drinking from a river or stream and even from puddles. There was a great lack of medicines and bandages. Often we worked in the operating room twenty hours a day. We took turns sleeping and slept wherever we could find the room. One day I woke up and discovered I was sleeping in a stable near a horse and could not remember how it happened that I was there. When we changed our location we often walked many kilometers. We could convey only the most seriously wounded soldiers in the horse-drawn wagons.

Very often our operating rooms were under enemy fire and were bombed. Sometimes we set up our camp in the forest to be hidden from the German army and bombing aircraft. Our job was very hard physically and psychologically. We saw so many suffering people, dying and disfigured. Sometimes we couldn't save the badly wounded and it was so terrible to feel that.

One day I was crawling to save a wounded soldier — to carry him to a safe place and help him — when a mine blew up only two steps from me. I was severely wounded. One leg was torn away and the other was badly injured. I was brought to the military hospital for serious surgery. I was literally pulled out of death's door thanks to the selfless efforts of the doctors. They did their best to save me, but I faced death because of gangrene. For a long time I was lying on the cold ground, on straw, with minimum medical aid, waiting for evacuation to the war hospital. Only after a long period of time was I delivered to a rear hospital.

I spent more than eight months in different hospitals for the badly wounded. I changed hospitals because my condition was so bad. Finally I was transferred to a hospital in the city of Orenburg (Chkalov at that time) in Siberia. It turned out that the Harkov Medical College was evacuated to this city too. It was a wonderful but unexpected meeting with some old colleagues.

After my forced demobilization because of serious wounds I was accepted to work in the Harkov Medical College. I had to live somehow. I was there for twenty-nine years. First I took the post-graduate course and then worked in the department of ophthalmology. I was the only Jew in this department. I think I was fired most probably because of that, after twenty-six years of working there, although I was a veteran and an invalid of the Patriotic War. By that time there were already fewer Jews in the Harkov Medical College than there were before and during the war. In wartime I had

not felt any open anti-Semitism nor did I have a bad experience in that way; I was awarded two Orders of the Patriotic War and fourteen military medals.

My parents were killed by the Nazis in Crimea in a city called Simpheropol. There a lot of Jews were gathered from many different places in Crimea to be killed only because they were Jews. I don't even know where they are buried.

I raised two adopted daughters. One daughter came to America twenty years ago. She now lives in San Francisco. I came to Providence with my other daughter's family in 1991.

3. Eva Beninson

I was born in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) in 1928. My father was a scientist, a chemist by profession. My mother was a bookkeeper. They were born in the Ukraine and came to Leningrad in 1920. They lived there until they died, during the siege of that city by the Germans.

On Sunday, June 22, 1941, we went for a ride to our dacha which we rented with some friends. We came back to Leningrad the same day because I had to have my last violin lesson before vacation began. But on the 22nd of June everything changed. The war began. The vacation was over, the lessons were over, childhood was over. I was thirteen years old at that time.

My family stayed in Leningrad, but I was evacuated with the children of my school to Vishera, about 150 kilometers away. It was not too far from Leningrad but very soon my mother came to take me back home. As we were riding to the city our train was bombed; fortunately we got home safely. Very soon after that Vishera was occupied by the Germans. In September bombing began every day, we went to bombshelters, and the general storehouse with food for the people was destroyed by fire. The blockade of Leningrad had begun. It lasted from the end of August 1941 to the end of January 1944. Starvation started, the ration of bread decreased. From November we started to receive a quarter of a pound of bread and sometimes nothing else. The winter of 1941-1942 was the most terrible time. In the month of December 1941, 53,000 people died of starvation. The same number had died during the whole of 1940.

From the beginning of December, a big lake, Ladoga, which is east of Leningrad, froze solid. This lake was then used as a road for delivering food to Leningrad. This lake roadway was bombed by the Germans but it was the

only way to bring supplies to save people. On this road every day hundreds of cars moved with food, fuel, and ammunition. The roadway was named "the road of life."

Our family had no food in reserve at home. There was no electricity, no heat, no radio, no telephone, and no transportation in our city. In our room we put a small iron stove. We burned everything that we could, including furniture and books, because we were freezing, and we boiled water and cooked anything we could find in it. One day we were lucky because we got some joiner's glue and made jelly from it. Water pipes were broken because of the great frost; the people had to bring water in pails from the river Fontanka or Neva. We had a balcony from which we got clean snow which we used for water. Then in February my father died from starvation. And my mother's sister, who lived with us in our apartment, died also. The appearance of the street was terrible. Dead people were brought to the morgue on a sledge. They were wrapped in sheets. At that time they were buried in common graves.

My mother and I were hardly alive when our relative, Naum Ramm, the father of my cousin Irene Ramm, came to us in the spring of 1942. He took us to the port area where his family lived. The conveniences of life were a little better there. We were in a warm apartment with our relatives. But by this time we were under fire. Every day the Germans bombarded the area. We had to sit beside the wall of a building wondering where the shells would fall. When it became warmer we returned home.

Very soon my uncle Naum put me in a hospital. I was exhausted and had gum disease. I remember the other children I saw there. They were small, never smiled, never laughed, never played: they were exhausted. It was a good hospital and little by little they returned to life. Finally I recovered too. My uncle Naum saved my life. I was brought home and learned that my mother died while I was in the hospital. She too had been placed in a hospital but it was too late for her.

After that my relatives supported me and I lived with them for a while. Then I went to school and very soon left Leningrad for a new village nearby. There we weeded and gathered the harvest. We had permission to eat some of the vegetables we had gathered. We ate carrots, cabbage and so on. It was good for us. We children helped our city to get in the harvest. I worked with my schoolmates during the summer of 1942 and 1943. For this job the other children and I were rewarded with the "Defense of Leningrad" medal.

The blockade was broken at the end of January 1944. Life resumed.

After I finished the seventh grade I entered the technical college and became a radio technician. I worked for five years and then went to the university. Upon graduation I became a radio engineer and lived in Leningrad until coming to the U.S.A. in January 1993.

4. Irina Ramm

Thousands of pages have been written about the Great Siege of Leningrad, and yet everyone who has lived through it has his own personal experiences and memories about it. I stayed alive only because of my family, specifically my father and older sister. By the time World War Two started my sister was seventeen. I was born in Leningrad in 1930 and had never left the city; in 1941, I was eleven and my parents sent me to a summer camp near Leningrad. That is where I first heard about the war with Germany. No one had any idea of what we were facing. The summer camp administration thought the war would be finished before fall. But they warned parents to bring some warm clothing just in case the children would have to be evacuated. It so happened that in a short while all the children were sent back to Leningrad.

Until September the situation in the city remained tense and panicky but there was still food and fuel. Many people left the city. Long lines formed at the stores. People were trying to get any staples that would allow them to get through the rough times of war. The situation in Leningrad changed for the worse in September, 1941. The Nazis came close to the city. Air raids and shelling started. The main food storage facility was destroyed by bombs and burned. Authorities had to cut rations. The Great Siege had started.

My father was a chief civil engineer involved in seaport construction. He had to stay at work around the clock because his work was considered to be of great strategic importance. The area where we lived at the time was not bombed heavily and we stayed in our apartment but with no heat, no water, and almost no food. That winter the weather was especially severe. At first we carried water from a distant hydrant but when the hydrant froze we started making water out of snow. We could not contact my father because the telephones did not work. The bread ration was set in December at one pound for four people. It was heavy, raw, black like coal, and almost inedible. But even this product was not always available. We took turns

waiting for it in long lines. We became very weak.

One day my father came home unexpectedly and told us we had two hours to pack our things. He decided to move us with him to the seaport area where some of his colleagues had brought their families already. There were plenty of spare apartments, many people having been drafted. My father's decision saved our lives. Although the seaport surroundings were very dangerous because of continuous shelling, there we had some food and heat, and this was much more important to us. In February 1942, the Germans moved very close to the Dirovsky District, the district of the seaport. By that time there were not less than two air raids and several artillery bombardments every day. Our building was damaged.

There was no water in our building but it could be found nearby. There was plenty of firewood around. My father installed a small wood stove (called a Bourgeois stove) and we used it to heat the room and cook some food. We lived a well-organized communal life. Every member of the community had to give all of his food coupons to a central kitchen in order to get soup and porridge everyday. The soup was made of grain and a little coconut oil. The porridge was very thin. But it was food, hot food. I remember my sister and I looking out the window for the food to be delivered. When the delivery people appeared we shouted "Hurray! They are coming".

Of course there was no electricity, candles, or kerosene. We used small oil lamps that my father designed himself. We laughed with father that with his engineering education he could design so many different kinds of lamps. Because of his position he was eligible for an additional bread ration. As a supplement to our regular meals we used joiner's glue, which we boiled to the consistency of jelly and then added some spices. We thought it was delicious. We also used vegetable-oil varnish. We were hungry all the time. By the way, starvation is the surest way to lose weight.

We did not have toilets. We suffered in every imaginable way, but we lived. My parents were well-organized people. My mother made us get up early in the morning and help her with the household. She taught me some Russian language and math because there was no school in 1941 and 1942. My sister used to go to the black market to change a little something for food. It was illegal and very dangerous, but she did it for the family. We lived surrounded by the shrill sound of shells and sirens and we almost adjusted to this phenomenon, but it was harder to adjust to air bombardment. The

German airplanes made a very specific low-pitched noise. We would hug each other almost breathless in the corner of the room and stay like that until the planes went away. We heard explosions nearby and the barking sound of Soviet anti-aircraft guns. Then everything would go silent. We could breathe again. We were alive.

Most of the time I stayed inside because of weakness, cold, and danger. But sometimes I walked outside with my mother and sister. The almost deserted streets were covered with dirty ice and snow and frozen filth. A few weary people went about wrapped in frayed coats and blankets, dragging their feet in the snow. Very often we saw people pulling sleds with the dead bodies of their relatives wrapped in white sheets. We were so accustomed to those scenes that we hardly paid any attention. Death was everywhere.

However, there is one instance I will never forget. All the management of the seaport was located in a big red building near our house. One day the bombardment was especially heavy. The red brick building was destroyed along with our food kitchen. Rumors spread that the remainder of the soy milk was to be divided among the population of the seaport because, with the storage area destroyed, it could not be locked up. My parents allowed me to go get some. The main facade of the building was still standing. I turned the corner and saw a huge pile of debris. There were pieces of wood, glass, and furniture. Then I saw several people trying to get something out from the bottom of the pile. I then noticed a piece of human body. The people put it on a hand carrier and then loaded it on to a dump truck. The truck was almost full of body parts — arms and legs, gray with cement dust. I stood numb; for a while I could not move. I do not remember how I got home. The only thing I can remember is the jangling of the cover of my empty milk jar.

We stayed in the seaport area until summer. In the spring everyone started digging a kitchen garden. By fall we harvested vegetables that sustained us all the next winter. From the summer of 1942 to the end of the war we lived in our apartment but our family grew smaller. My grandmother died and my sister volunteered for the army. Our life was very difficult, but it was better than the first year.

I cannot retell all of the horrors of every one of the nine hundred days of the Blockade, but we were lucky. Almost everyone in my family survived.





Max L. Grant, 1946.

A Common Civil Purpose: The Jewish Role in the Providence Community Fund

by Adam Harris Skolnick

In the 1999 issue of the Notes, Adam Skolnick's prizewinning essay, "Creating a Civil Judaism," discussed the leadership of Max L. Grant in establishing non-sectarian Jewish philanthropy in Providence during the 1920s, especially through the founding of The Miriam Hospital. In this follow-up essay, Mr. Skolnick traces the further development of Jewish philanthropy in the 1930s, primarily through its contribution to the Providence Community Fund.

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Through the creation of The Miriam Hospital, a large portion of the Jewish community of Providence united in a common cause. The writings of Max Grant and other Providence Jews demonstrated that this effort was a Jewish expression of goodwill to all residents of Providence, whatever their faith. By the 1930s, most Jews in Providence no longer saw themselves exclusively as a community within a community. Whatever their private and social associations or their involvement in their religion, they viewed themselves publicly as Americans, and as such, for both philosophical and pragmatic reasons, shared in the national effort of surviving the Depression (e.g., through the programs of the New Deal). After the 1930s, when it became economically beneficial for the Jewish community to join with non-Jews in a common social service initiative, they would justify their new collaboration using similar terms of goodwill. Through their role in the Providence Community Fund, Jews in Providence began to express a new self-conception as moral and responsible citizens of America.

Discourse that overlooked boundaries between Jews and Christians was used in justifying Jewish cooperation in the Providence Community Fund. The Fund was comprised of thirty-two non-sectarian causes and six Jewish-affiliated causes that cooperated to raise funds for the needy of Providence. As the leader of the Jewish agencies in the Providence Community Fund, Max Grant stated "it is supremely important that Jews give, not only as

members of the Jewish community, but as members of the general community."¹ The Jewish role in the Providence Community Fund, as coordinated by Max Grant, was the prime example in Providence of the erosion of traditional, insular philanthropic boundaries and the establishment of new boundaries of common morality. The metamorphosis of Jewish identity that occurred when Jews began working alongside non-Jews was much greater than when they had worked alone. Jews in Providence formulated innovative conceptions of Jewish responsibility and community in America through their role in the Providence Community Fund, building on notions developed in previous decades that had set the foundation for future social service without regard to religion.

If this collective effort at uniting Jews and Christians in the public sphere seemed like a new phenomenon, unions of Christians and Jews were not unprecedented in earlier eras. Indeed members of different religious groups had bonded for a common purpose long before 1930. During the Revolutionary War and subsequent wars Jews and Gentiles fought together on the battlefield for their nation.² However, as Daniel Elazar states, the integration of Jewish individuals is distinct from the collective integration of Jewish institutions.³ Thus early individual Jewish contributions to non-Jews, such as the financing of the Revolutionary War by Haym Solomon, were not yet steps in the formation of an American civil religion.⁴ The latter only took place once various groups began working together and discussing common concerns in unprecedented ways.

The standard set before World War I by organizations such as the Committee on Goodwill Between Christians and Jews had been based on Americanizing, or in many cases proselytizing Jews.⁵ This was not a shared venture but rather an unequal relationship in which established Christians preached to immigrant Jews. And even when relationships were equal, such as personal friendships between individual Jews and non-Jews, or private dealings (e.g., in business) with non-Jews, they would not constitute a civil religious phenomenon if there was no public acknowledgment of solidarity. Private associations between Jews and Christians may have been more accepted than communal associations because these associations were based more on economic status than on religious status. An individual wealthy Jew would have been viewed favorably (or unfavorably) more for his wealth than his religion; only later did ethnicity become more important than financial status in social relationships, when relationships between

religious communities began to involve a common moral denominator.

Collective public cooperation between the Jewish community and other religious communities was not significantly present, in fact, prior to the 1920s. Before this period there was no *need* to amalgamate philanthropic efforts; the Jews were adequately providing for themselves. In the late 1920s, however, problems brought about by overlapping services provided by Jews and non-Jews prompted both groups to cooperate in order to provide more efficient social services for the needy of Providence. As early as 1909, a report of the Rhode Island Bureau of Industrial Statistics had stated that "in many cases the handling of persons requiring such varied aid is more efficiently done by one agency than by a cooperation of a number of separate agencies ... a closer cooperation between the various agencies may result in more economical and efficient work."⁶ Then, after the Depression set in, many social service organizations were in financial distress. By combining their fund-raising efforts, these organizations could maintain their services (i.e., survive as an institution).

And once different groups started to cooperate for greater efficiency, a new philosophy gradually developed. Jewish and Christian Americans began to justify their collaboration by espousing common moral sensibilities. When they were forced to cooperate financially, the boundaries of responsibility of each religious group became more dynamic and collective. Although the main focus of this essay is on the philosophical implications of cooperation, the initial compulsion exerted by financial necessity was crucial.

To the Jewish population in 1930, composed mainly of immigrants and their children, the fall of the Bank of the United States that marked the beginning of the Great Depression "brought economic setbacks, stalled mobility, and frustrated expectations." Since most Jews of the time were recent immigrants who had little invested in the stock market, the crash of 1929 was not the only cause of their economic troubles. The failure of the Bank of the United States, for example, caused many Jews to lose more than just the money they had invested: they were in danger of becoming victims of insecurity and fear. The Bank had been founded by an East European Jew, Joseph Marcus, and thus represented the immigrant's faith in the promise of America. The editors of the *Day*, a Yiddish newspaper, urged Jews not to fret: "America, for sure, is not going under," they wrote. The decline of available jobs was also especially troubling to immigrants who had been

raised to believe in the promise of America. "A generation of American Jews, still actively engaged in constructing Jewish identity and community in America" had to rethink this American promise and their role in bringing it to fruition.⁷ Along with other immigrant groups, Jews viewed the Depression as part of a constant challenge to survive in America, a challenge that had begun when immigrants first began arriving, long before 1930. The Depression came on the brink of the rise of East Europeans to power and forced them to make "difficult personal and communal decisions that influenced the shape of American Jewish life for decades to come."⁸ And one of those decisions was the resolve to work together with non-Jewish groups for the welfare of all.

Another factor involved in that decision was the wish to avoid or at least curtail the threat of anti-Semitism caused by a perception that the Depression had not hit the Jewish population as severely as the non-Jewish population. The employment pattern of Jews may have lessened the impact of the Depression: in New York for example, where more than forty percent of Jews lived in 1930, there were few Jews in heavy industry and unskilled labor, which were the sectors hardest hit by the economic decline. Compared to twenty-one percent of Italian youth who reported that their families accepted relief, only twelve percent of Jewish youth accepted relief. "Jewish concentration in white-collar and skilled occupations resulted in a less severe economic dislocation relative to groups that predominated in manual and unskilled positions."⁹

The perception that Jews were not as affected by the Depression was a public relations nightmare. Jews began seeking means to avoid appearing as a segregated or parochial political constituency. Jewish political leaders, during Christmas and other Christian holidays, rose in support of non-Jews. In 1938, after Jews had already served as Governor of New York and as Secretary of the Treasury, prompting anti-Semites to term the New Deal the "Jew Deal," Jews became wary of additional discrimination. *New York Times* publisher, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, urged President Roosevelt not to appoint Felix Frankfurter to the Supreme Court, as Louis Brandeis was already on the Court and appointing two Jews might provoke increased anti-Semitism. Others, however, saw the rise of Jews to prominent positions as a means of combating anti-Semitism, asserting that if a Jew could be elected to a prominent position, then that was proof of the refusal of Americans to embrace anti-Semitism. Whatever their position, many Jews of the 1930s

perceived a sharp increase in anti-Semitism even though there were fewer public displays of anti-Semitism compared with the 1920s. That perception made them bend over backward to encourage cooperation and to avoid parochialism. In 1934, for example, the F.E.S. (Federation Employment Service), a private organization, was established to provide employment and supplement governmental assistance for Jews. However, the F.E.S. realized that parochialism would invoke criticism, so an F.E.S. report stated that the organization "has sought to be as cooperative as possible in relation to its sister public and private agencies."¹⁰

But Jews in Providence and Boston were not reacting solely to the economic pressure of the Depression or a negative public perception of Jewish economic superiority when they joined with other local social service groups; they were also, proactively, establishing an efficient welfare network. The Jews first joined the Community Fund in 1928, before the Depression had begun. Thus their impetus to join was, at least initially, not based on financial hardship. Efficient fund-raising practices may have been their first motivation. Dr. Wilensky, director of Beth Israel Hospital in Boston stated in 1934, "above all, community planning for health should be logical and sound. It should not duplicate, it should not exceed the needs of the community. It should not build upon hope but on a sound financial foundation so that the quality and quantity of service might not be affected by insufficient funds."¹¹ Joining the Fund, therefore, may have been based on efficient community planning.

This strategy of coping with economic necessity through rational cooperation was novel in the history of Jewish communal philanthropy. Throughout American Jewish history, Jews faced economic hardships and had not turned for help from their non-Jewish neighbors. Jews were now acknowledging that they could not, or chose not to, endure the economic challenges of the pre-Depression years, and then the Depression years, alone.

Max Grant first stated this concept of a shared social responsibility in 1924 in his letter "To the Jews of Providence." He later appealed to Jewish voters in 1932 stating that "the privilege denied to Jews in other lands must not be neglected here."¹² Clearly Grant was pleased by his lot in America and appreciated the available freedoms for Jews. He believed that Jews must participate in their government. He believed that Jews must help their fellow citizens, so that they would receive help in return. Help eventually came in

the form of collaboration in the Providence Community Fund.

In its general form the community fund was at first simply a means of consolidating fund-raising activities and was not necessarily geared toward a philosophy of social service. The community fund, or charity chest idea, had begun after World War I in hopes of centralizing the collection of contributions. By 1928, of twenty-one cities with populations similar to that of Providence (200,000 to 500,000 people), seventeen supported their philanthropic activities through community funds.¹³ By 1930 Jewish social service confederations in forty cities were affiliated with community funds.¹⁴ A 1925 editorial recommended that the Jewish charities of New York adopt the charity chest idea used by the fur industry to raise funds for workers' benefits because "one drive a year, organized and conducted by fur men, to cover every man in the industry, whether he is an employer or an executive" would prove beneficial in reducing the time and effort of solicitors and increasing revenue.¹⁵

The community fund concept had its roots in the leagues of Jewish philanthropies and associated Christian charities that had been established in the late nineteenth century, the first examples of cooperation in community service.¹⁶ According to Daniel Elazar, there were three phases in the development of the Jewish polity: leagues of Jewish social service organizations that were purely nominal; confederations, which involved a common fund-raising effort; and federations, which involved not only fund-raising but also planning of other activities for a given Jewish community.¹⁷ In the nineteenth century the Jews of Providence created several leagues of social service organizations, such as the "Jewish Societies of Providence," listed as contributors to the Rhode Island Hospital. Providence Jewry did not enter the confederation stage until much later than many other cities and it did not establish a Jewish federation until 1945, fifty years after the first federation was formed in Boston.¹⁸

The Jews did not join the Providence Community Fund until they had already formed confederations and links with non-Jews in order to help shape and become integrated into American society. On June 27, 1927, the Jewish Community Center, The Miriam Hospital, the North End Dispensary, the Montefiore Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association, and the South Providence Ladies Aid Society united to form the Jewish Federation of Social Service. (This "federation" would be more accurately termed a confederation, according to Elazar's definition, because it was limited to

social service work.) Max Grant served as the president of this confederation for over six terms.¹⁹ On July 6, 1927, six months after it had been founded, the five organizations, along with the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island, accepted membership in the Providence Community Fund.²⁰

This was part of a process of integration of Jews into their surrounding societies: Jews had been defined by intellectual, political, and social boundaries "that kept the Jews 'in' and the Gentiles 'out'."²¹ They had been responsible for their fellow Jews alone. By the 1920s, Jews in America had, for the most part, reconciled or forgotten their nationalistic differences and united to support non-Jews, to whom they wanted to be linked for reasons both of efficiency and improved community relations. During the Depression, these relationships would become even more important as Gentiles were not only recipients of care but fellow caregivers. When Jews and Christians worked together in a common non-profit cause, the Jewish community became philosophically linked to, and responsible for, the Providence community in matters of social service.

Max Grant, based on his unique position in the Jewish community, encouraged his fellow Jews to contribute to the general community by espousing his well-formed vision of brotherhood to all. Grant stated in 1930, when he studied the feasibility of Jewish participation in the Fund, that "The Miriam Hospital and the North End Dispensary, while under Jewish auspices, are no more Jewish than the Lying-In-Hospital under Protestant auspices is Protestant." He mentioned the relatively small percentage of Jewish patients served at both Jewish-sponsored organizations as evidence of their non-sectarian purposes.²² In 1934 in an appeal for the Providence Community Fund Campaign, Max Grant, along with the leaders of each of the six Jewish groups involved (including future Governor of Rhode Island, Walter Sundlun), used phrases such as "cooperation of all races and creeds," "city-wide cooperation" and "members of the General community" to request the support of their fellow Jews.²³ Harry Silverstone of Bridgeport stated at a regional conference of communal agencies, that "our relationship to the Chest [community fund] is very closely interwoven with our relationship to the community of which we are a part."²⁴ Thus, at least in public discourse, joining the Fund was an expression of the Jews' new relationship of dependence and responsibility for all Americans.

Non-Jews may also have begun to transform their relationship to Jews, and their entrance into the Fund may have been modeled after the Jewish

example of civil Judaism. In establishing The Miriam Hospital, Max Grant had hoped that non-Jews would follow his lead and establishing organizations to serve those of all faiths. Several editorials were published in the 1920s praising the efforts of the Jews in supporting non-sectarian causes. The *American Hebrew* published one such editorial by William D. Guthrie in 1924, who asserted that Jews “knew and know no difference of creed.” He concluded by asserting that non-Jews should “emulate the generosity and humanitarianism of our fellow citizens of the Jewish faith.”²⁵ Thus just as German and East European Jews learned to work together to help those in need in the 1920s, Jew and non-Jews could collaborate in the 1930s.

Collaboration among different religious groups proved less difficult than eliminating divisions within the Jewish community had been earlier, due to the desperate times of the 1930s, which forced economic and later philosophical agreement. The first step was overcoming the view of Christians as alien. Once there was a philosophical common denominator between Jews and Christians it would be easy to justify cooperation.

In 1933 Max Grant opened a Christmas editorial in a major Providence newspaper with the preface “my Christian brothers”²⁶ Grant continued, quoting the Apostle Paul (like his mother he seemed comfortable in both traditions) by stating, “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all.”²⁷ Max Grant was one of the first co-chairmen of the National Conference of Christians and Jews and was reputed to have said that “no race, no color, no creed has a monopoly on righteousness or evil.”²⁸ He concluded his essay on Christmas in 1933 by urging American Christians to spread the message of social unity to their Christian brethren in Germany.²⁹ If American Christians were to see themselves as a worldwide united faith, Grant presumed that they would also expand their ethnic boundaries by including Jews. However, efforts such as these were generally unsuccessful since the church rarely spoke out on refugee or political issues affecting Jews.³⁰ Nevertheless, Grant stressed common Judeo-Christian goals of rewarding virtue and punishing vice, and he called on his fellow monotheists to ensure religious toleration. Grant was expressing core axioms of his Reform Jewish faith of the 1930s. Later in life he stated, “I believe in all religions because you can’t prove any of them. All you can have is faith, you got to have faith.”³¹

Max Grant was soon recognized worldwide for his good relationship with those of different faiths.³² In 1935 he was invited to serve as one of one

hundred prominent men to be honored by the World Fellowship of Faiths, and in 1939 he was joined in his civil religious efforts by Father Dillon, president of Catholic Providence College, who supported religious cooperation in philanthropy and stated "all who believe in God have much in common."³³ In 1962, the Bishop of Providence noted Grant's long history of giving to non-Jews.³⁴ Indeed Grant was widely recognized as ecumenical in his philanthropy.³⁵

By defining Judaism's moral tenets as broadly as possible, Grant and others could merge them with the tenets of other religions. For example, by defining Judaism as "a force for character building and towards good citizenship, Jewish values were transformed into an American ideal."³⁶ Thus, for some, Judaism became defined simply as a moral community of good citizens, like Protestant and Catholic communities. Perhaps the most well-known example of the broadening of religious definitions came in 1925, when Rabbi Stephen Wise argued in front of a full house at Carnegie Hall that the Jews ought to recognize Jesus' teachings as prophetic.³⁷ Of course, not everyone agreed. Some observant Jews argued vehemently against this suggestion. For them, the interfaith movement was unacceptable. Thus many observant Jews in Providence refused to join the Providence Community Fund or other unions of Jews and Christians. Others who avoided Jewish-Christian unions were those who were adherents of no religion; such individuals shunned notion of civil religious rhetoric because of its vague religious content, however limited that content was.³⁸ If, however, some observant Jews and the non-religious refused to accept new models of Christian-Jewish cooperation, other Jews and Christians began to define their public community as religiously tolerant members of all religious communities.

Thus the period between the dawn of the twentieth century and the first publication of Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* in 1955 (which cited Judaism as one of the three pillar religions in America although its adherents in this nation never exceeded three percent) saw the rise of several cooperative societies between Christians and Jews.³⁹ Historians, such as Henry Feingold, have rooted the birth of civil religion in 1915 when Horace Kallen recommended religious pluralism in an article in the *Nation* and used the symphony orchestra as an analogy, with each faith playing a different part. Later in 1927 Rabbi Isaac Landman organized the Permanent Commission on Better Understanding between Christians and Jews. Rhode Island

also witnessed attempts at Jewish-Christian goodwill. On April 28, 1934, at the request of Max Grant, Jewish co-chairman of the Rhode Island Seminar on Human Relationships, "Brotherhood Day" was observed. This was a national program, established by the National Conference of Christians and Jews that President Franklin Roosevelt termed "an opportunity for concerted thinking on a vital problem of national welfare."⁴⁰ On this occasion Max Grant stated,

When Protestant, Catholic and Jew, in this blessed land of ours, marching forth from Church, Synagogue and Cathedral, with cross and star high in the air, unitedly resolve to protect the institutions that are as dear to us today as they were to the framers of the constitution, no power on earth can threaten them! When we preserve those institutions, we protect not one religion, but religion itself — we safeguard the rights not of a few — but the happiness and liberty of all!⁴¹

Historian Henry Feingold attributes these early twentieth century efforts primarily to a response to anti-Semitism, as well as a concerted attempt at increased assimilation.⁴² Yet even if some of the motivation for good relations was reactionary, the assertion that Grant and others were responding only to anti-Semitism in their efforts to work with Christians is dubious. Although anti-Semitism was especially virulent in the 1920s, Max Grant did not mention anti-Semitism as a major impediment to his personal success. He did claim in 1930 that "bridging the chasm of difference of social standards [by participating in the fund] ... will go a great way in the elimination of prejudice, *if it exists* [italics mine]." Indeed, most of the discourse on anti-Semitism in Providence during the 1930s seems to have been focused on the rise of Nazism. A search of *The Jewish Herald* of Rhode Island and Southern Massachusetts during the 1930s reveals that most articles on anti-Semitism describe its manifestations abroad. Articles with titles such as "Growth of Anti-Semitism is Noted" and "All Creeds of City United Against Anti-Semitic Acts" seem to assume that readers will understand that the articles refer to conditions in Germany. Although there is little evidence in *The Jewish Herald*, there was, no doubt, some anti-Semitic rhetoric in Providence at the time. It is doubtful, however, that the Jewish role in the Providence Community Fund was solely to combat anti-Semitism. If joining the Fund had been solely a reaction to anti-Semitism, it would likely have followed the model of organizations such as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, or other ideological unions at

which the universalism of Judaism and Christianity could be espoused at annual dinners without investing large sums of money or entrusting management of the funds to non-Jews!⁴³

Furthermore, the Fund did not, like some other organizations, reduce Judaism to a generic moral community or suppress any evidence of the specific role of the Jewish community. In the context of the Fund, the difference between Jewish and non-Jewish organizations was clearly delineated. The fund-raising campaign highlighted the six Jewish organizations, which were still autonomous and clearly Jewish, while working together for the common support of all of the groups. If the goal of the fund had been assimilation, the Jewish affiliation of formerly Jewish-sponsored organizations would have been intentionally diminished. The Jewish role in the Providence Community Fund was primarily neither reactionary nor an attempt at assimilation. Membership in the Fund was the ultimate expression of the Jewish community's desire to be responsible for, and thus a part of, the larger non-Jewish community, while retaining its distinctive character.

Jewish participation in the Fund represented a shift in the Jewish tradition of a strict focus on Governor Stuyvesant's caveat against becoming a burden on their nation. Arthur Levy of Providence, committee chairman of the Jewish Family Service, stated in 1934 that "Jews are no longer taking care of their own. For many years we have prided ourselves that we have kept the promise traditionally supposed to have been made by the first Jewish settlers to Governor Peter Stuyvesant ... we haven't kept that promise for years ... since 1929, it must be considered settled that the Jews have become very largely dependent upon public funds for the meeting of charitable needs."⁴⁴ But if, as Alfred Kutzik argues, the Jews' self-sufficiency had served to unify them, then how did so many Jews remain united, and what was the fate of the Jewish philanthropies?⁴⁵ The answer is that Jewish philanthropies were not eliminated; they merely took on a new role. They became a supplementary means of strengthening ethnic culture and commitment.⁴⁶ Jewish philanthropy

supplied [Jews] with the signs by which they recognized one another. Philanthropy drew upon and reinforced a feeling of Jewish solidarity at a primal level, one which transcended differences of ideology, nationality and religious practice. It was identity-constructing both for the individual who engaged in it, and for the community which was created by it.⁴⁷

As Jewish welfare agencies became less independent, contributors began to define themselves as part of the national community, suffering or prospering with the rest of the nation, no longer as self-sufficient visitors.⁴⁸ In 1930, at the National Conference of Jewish Social Service, I.M. Rubinow, general secretary of B'nai B'rith, posited that Jews no longer needed to carry the burden of Governor Stuyvesant. In a paper entitled "What Do We Owe To Peter Stuyvesant?" he argued against the idea of a distinct Jewish burden to care for their own.⁴⁹ The elimination of Jewish exclusivism, under the pressure of financial necessity, represented a major shift in American Jewish philanthropic ideology. This was even more apparent when the Boston Jewish community in 1931 had exhausted its resources and requested the assistance of "a group of Gentiles" to assist the Federation of Jewish Charities.⁵⁰

Entrance into the Fund represented an example of an active, even proactive, American Jewish community that, to some extent, formed a defensive economic union with non-Jews to prevent the economic tide from manipulating them both. Although some treatments of Jews in history portray Jews as passive bystanders to the forces of anti-Semitism around them, Max Grant and his fellow Rhode Island Jews were extraordinarily active in their positive contributions to American civilization while at the same time caring for needy co-religionists.⁵¹ In 1934, Arthur Levy of Providence stated that, "we [Jews] are a small minority in this country and in the development of public aid departments, we must not allow that minority to be lost sight of ..."⁵² Levy viewed Jewish collaboration as a means of teaching the government how to provide for specifically Jewish needs, such as Passover relief and the need for kosher food.⁵³ He stressed the importance of cooperation in a national effort at social service in order to set an example to the government, which was beginning to establish social service programs through the New Deal.

Collaboration in the Providence Community Fund was part of this national movement towards participation in community funds in order to better organize social service. Throughout the nation there were debates about the benefits of community fund affiliation. Maurice Hexter and Samuel Goldsmith, two of the foremost communal service professionals in the nation, conducted a study on this subject.⁵⁴ Hexter was cautious about affiliation because he thought that Jews might be perceived as receiving more than they were raising. Moreover, he was concerned that the commu-

nity fund bureaucracy (joint leadership) might curtail the opportunities for Jewish leadership, which would weaken the Jewish community. Jewish survivalists argued against community fund-affiliation because they viewed Jewish confederations and federations as an expression of Jewish unity and identity. Nevertheless, according to Hexter and Goldsmith, by the late 1930s, sixty-five percent of Jewish federations were affiliated with community funds.⁵⁵

Why were so many Jewish communities affiliated with community funds? Was it really economically beneficial? On December 16, 1930, Max Grant gave a talk entitled "A Study of Fund Raising In Connection with the Providence Community Fund," which analyzed the benefits of Fund affiliation.⁵⁶ He began by noting the increase in sums allotted to the Jewish institutions in the fund from 1928 until 1930 and by estimating the total expected allotments to Jewish institutions to be \$74,207 in 1931. Grant mentioned this expected allotment as a mark which the Jewish community must equal or exceed with their contributions.

Since Providence Jews were part of a common fund-raising effort on behalf of both Jewish and non-Jewish social service, they had to ensure that the Jewish organizations were not *perceived to be* spending more than the Jewish fund-raisers were raising. If this had been the case, the Jewish community would be deemed to be collaborating in the Fund at the expense of non-Jews, which would provoke anti-Semitic sentiment. Grant was determined to demonstrate that the total amount raised by Jewish contributors surpassed the budgets of the Jewish agencies within the Fund. The amount and source of past Jewish contributions were divided into two groups. The total Jewish contributions (747) of ten dollars or more in 1930 amounted to \$61,163.20, as calculated from newspaper lists of contributors. This number of large donors represented about one in every twenty Jews in Providence in 1930 (approximately 20,000).⁵⁷ Thus, like The Miriam Hospital, which raised its funds from the entire community, the Jewish contributions to the fund were collected from the majority of the Jewish community, not simply a few wealthy donors. As further evidence of the community effort involved in fund-raising, Grant cites 674 additional contributions of less than ten dollars. The total number of contributors was 1421; about one-tenth of the Jewish population of Providence contributed to the fund! Considering that the number 20,000 also represents women and children, the rate of giving per family was actually much higher than one in

ten. In effect, a gift to the Providence Community Fund was akin to the half-shekel, mentioned in the Book of Exodus, that was taken as a community tax in biblical times.⁵⁸ It represented an acknowledgment of membership in the Jewish community and was a means of uniting Jews of different backgrounds behind a common cause.

Although the fund-raising effort was quite impressive, when all of the contributions from 1930 were counted, they amounted to \$6,783.80 less than the expected allotment from the fund for 1931. This certainly did not bode well for the public image of the Jewish community as fellow moral and responsible citizens. Grant explained this discrepancy by reevaluating the nature of The Miriam Hospital and the North End Dispensary, two of the six Jewish organizations in the fund. These organizations, he argued, must not be classified as part of the Jewish allotments of the fund because

the North End Dispensary during the last twelve months has given fifty percent of its services to non-Jews. The Miriam Hospital during the same period in its out patient department has given seventy percent to non-Jews, and its regular services forty percent of its patients were non Jewish. The appeal for these institutions whether in or out of the chest would be on a non sectarian basis, just as the appeal of the others hospitals is.⁵⁹

With this change in classification, removing the allotment to the North End Dispensary and The Miriam Hospital as Jewish causes, the total budget for the other four Jewish organizations amounted to \$46,897 compared to \$67,413.20 raised by the Jewish community for the fund. Thus the Jewish community, based on amount of giving rather than the number of contributors, was raising more than it was spending.

Grant did acknowledge, however, that just as The Miriam Hospital and the North End Dispensary were not specifically Jewish expenditures, some of the contributors were not necessarily contributing as Jews. He noted the contribution of the Jewish-owned American Silk Spinning Company as an example. Although it was owned by Jews and was classified as a Jewish contribution in the annual reports of the Fund, Grant questioned, "whether they themselves contributed as Jews"⁶⁰ Grant did not explain the basis for this assessment, but his assessment was quite probable since, like The Miriam Hospital and the North End Dispensary, the American Silk Spinning Company was not nominally Jewish. Thus Max Grant could not definitively prove that Jews were raising more than they were spending,. Although

classifying The Miriam Hospital and the North End Dispensary as non-sectarian would decrease perceived Jewish expenditures, this savings was countered by the decrease in Jewish contributions by reclassifying organizations, such as the American Silk Spinning Company, as non-sectarian.

The net result was that, according to Grant's estimation, there would be fewer Jewish beneficiaries and fewer Jewish contributors. If the budget were then reevaluated, the Jewish community was still not raising significantly more than it was spending. Grant, along with other Jews who sought to demonstrate the magnanimity of the Jews of Providence on behalf of their city, was displeased. However, it should be noted that mere rhetoric about giving one's fair share improved Jewish public image, even if Jews did not actually contribute their fair share. In other words, Grant's study of Jewish contributions and expenditures was itself a public demonstration that Jews acknowledged the need to contribute their fair share.

Grant was frustrated with the perceived inability of the Jewish community to raise sufficient funds for "Jewish" organizations in the Fund. How did the Jews of Providence manage to support their agencies *before* joining the Fund? Aside from benefitting from better economic times, Jews used different fund-raising methods in the 1920s. Only a small percentage (thirty-five percent) of funds were raised through annual subscriptions. The balance of the funds for the six Jewish organizations was derived from "dances, programs, raffles, showers and a multitude of other independent activities."⁶¹ When these organizations became dependent solely on annual subscriptions, even though the fund-raising effort was more efficient in organization, they were unable to raise as much.

However, Grant was not disappointed by the Jewish role in the Fund: Jewish contributions were impressive. Rather, he was disappointed in the expectation of some non-Jewish organizers of the Fund that Jews would be solely responsible for providing workers to raise money from Jews. Providence Jewry, Grant argued, had never maintained Jewish social service organizations entirely on their own. There had always been a few donations by non-Jews to Jewish causes. Joining the Providence Community Fund, Grant argued, made these non-Jewish contributions to Jewish causes more apparent because all contributions were strictly classified as Jewish or non-Jewish. Since the Jews maintained a separate fund-raising division within the Fund, their contributions were closely monitored and their dependence on non-Jews was thus highlighted. Grant was resolute that Jewish coopera-

tion had to be better coordinated to ensure that the Jews were contributing equitably; this would require additional leadership from the Jewish community.

Grant recommended a new method of cooperation that would regulate Jewish contributions more efficiently by forming an executive committee of nine members, six of whom would be the presidents of the six Jewish organizations and three of whom would be elected by the six presidents. This committee would establish a procedure for cooperation each year before the fund-raising drive was to begin. The committee would also only focus on raising money from contributors of ten dollars or more; contributions under ten dollars would be handled by workers of all faiths. The purpose of focusing Jewish fund-raising efforts on larger contributors was to "make the work agreeable and pleasant to our best workers, because they will only have good cards to deal with."⁶² This new organizational strategy was designed to better monitor the Jewish role in the Fund. It ensured that Jews were *perceived* as contributing their fair share. However, although the executive committee would solve the logistical questions of cooperation, the philosophical debate over the Jewish role in the Fund continued to rage.

Joining the Providence Community Fund forced the Jewish community to redefine its relationship to its non-Jewish neighbors. If, as Woocher asserts, "philanthropy gradually came to express the meaning of 'Jewishness,'" then a common philanthropic effort with Christians presented a dilemma.⁶³ Jews began to ask questions such as "who is a Jew?" and "what is a Jewish organization?" At the New England Conference of Jewish Communal Agencies a prominent leader stated that "To the extent that we, as Jews, have social service needs, there is perhaps no difference except in that there must be an adaptation in terms of a different culture and background."⁶⁴ The extent of this adaptation, this difference, was, however, not specified. Separate appeals to Jews for the Providence Community Fund may have been an adaptation of the standard appeal. *The Jewish Herald* ran editorials specifically targeting Jews, stating that "this week *we* [Jews] are all invited to subscribe, not only for the five great institutions which *we* have developed but for all the 38 great agencies [*italics, mine*]."⁶⁵

According to Beth Wenger, Jewish identity was strengthened more by cooperative Jewish philanthropies than by separate appeals in the Providence Community Fund. Many Jewish leaders in the 1930s used philanthropy as a means of cementing Jewish ethnic consciousness. Jewish social

workers included cultural programs as part of their efforts. However, in a period when the government was carrying much of the burden for social service and Jewish communities were joining community funds, Jewish independence in philanthropy needed to justify itself. "By accepting responsibility for a broader agenda, Jewish social workers legitimated their continued importance to the community."⁶⁶ Indeed the boundary between particular Jewish goals and universal goals was fine, and Max Grant had to use careful language in his appeal to the Jews of Providence.

In the 1934 appeal on behalf of the Providence Community Fund, Grant outlined the role of Jews in representing their community to the wider Providence population. He used three main techniques to encourage Jews to give liberally. First, Grant asked community members to contribute to the six Jewish causes and *then* asked them to contribute to the thirty-two non-Jewish causes. Indeed, he argued that some of the non-Jewish causes, such as Red Cross, District Nurses and Lying-In Hospital "cater to Jewish needs exactly as they do to all others, without discrimination." This point was likely true, although some of the money would be directed towards specifically non-Jewish, sectarian cases such as the following listed in 1935: Church House, Home for Aged Colored Women, and the Y.M.C.A.⁶⁷ According to an editorial in *The Jewish Herald*, Jews who once gave only to Jewish causes were being asked to contribute, albeit a small portion, not only to unaffiliated, non-sectarian causes but to non-Jewish, sectarian causes.

Next, Jews were reminded that the ball tickets, raffles, bazaars, program advertisements and tag days were no longer used as methods of fund-raising. Having only one fund-raising drive each year, Grant posited, would be much less annoying to the Jewish public. "For 365 days, we have the deep personal satisfaction of knowing that we have done our part for those who are most unfortunate," the editors of *The Jewish Herald* concurred.⁶⁸ The third tactic was the most controversial. Max Grant stated that "the Community Fund has brought about a spirit of neighborly cooperation among all classes, races and creeds, the value of which especially to us in these times, is beyond price."⁶⁹ Grant would not have used this tactic if Jews at the time had not valued being good neighbors. *The Jewish Herald* also used such terms to solicit the cooperation of Providence Jewry stating that "We have linked arms in genuine American teamwork with our non-Jewish neighbors."⁷⁰ Here we see that Grant's tactic of solicitation and his vision of civil religion were

shared by his fellow Providence Jews. He was not merely espousing his personal views; as the director of fund-raising, he had to use whatever tactic appealed to the greatest number of Jews in Providence. Indeed, the concern of appearing un-neighborly was the most crucial tactic in his appeal. He even asserted that "we must explain and apologize for every Jew who can give ... but who gives little or nothing" as they impose "an extra burden of embarrassment upon all the Jews in the community." Thus Grant was confident of the Jews' desire for good relations with their non-Jewish neighbors. The following year the motto of Grant's appeal was "be a good neighbor."⁷¹

Indeed Max Grant was fundamental in the development of civil religion in Providence. At least publicly, through his statements and writings, he urged the cooperation of all faiths toward a communal purpose. Of course, it is quite clear that his universalism only extended to other religious people. In an interview in 1970 he was asked to state his opinion on the role of Jews in the community. He responded,

I could be as good a Catholic or a Protestant as a Jew. I believe in religion because the other words for religion are faith and belief You can't be a member of society, unless you're willing to have faith and belief And that's why I'm a religionist I believe in eternity and that's one of the things that all religions believe in And the synagogue is only one symbol of it, just as the cathedral and church is Once [an individual] gets into a house of God, a place of worship, something transcends all his opinions, and he succumbs to it.⁷²

Thus, as expressed here, civil religion is not a manifestation of any specific religion but of religion in its most general terms.⁷³ As Grant himself stated, "I'm not a secular man." But he valued Judaism as one of many necessary religions. Characteristic of other Reform Jews, he stated, "I believe in religion, ... all religions I think the various cultures are necessary and it's up to those in a certain group to see that their culture is perpetuated."⁷⁴ Privately he believed in Judaism and its survival, but publicly he believed in the importance of religion in general. He also believed that Jews had a unique role in setting an example to non-Jews in how to aid needy citizens of all faiths. In this sense his philosophy was that of the Reform movement. "Jews, through their trials and tribulations, have a lot to give to society because they have sensed the wrongs, and perhaps they know best how to cure them," he said.⁷⁵ Grant was conscious of the

power of philanthropy to unite disparate groups; he believed that it was Jews' responsibility to set an example of universal goodwill.

In *Judaism as a Civilization*, Mordecai Kaplan, who began as an Orthodox rabbi, claims that "it is only natural that as the work of philanthropy advances, it should become more self-conscious as an integrating factor of Jewish life."⁷⁶ Indeed the unifying effects of both the development of The Miriam Hospital and the decision to join the Providence Community Fund were quite conscious on the part of Jewish communal leaders. However, it is unlikely that the Jewish communal leaders of the time sought to eliminate Jewish particularism. To the contrary, Kaplan asserts that there was a great emphasis upon Jewish identification in the 1930s coincident with a desire to be viewed as universal. Most Jews wanted to become integrated into American society, but also maintain their Jewish identity. Many second-generation Jews, whose parents had been more religiously observant than they, wanted to ensure Jewish survival without a high degree of religious observance and thus tailored private Jewish social services to teaching Jews about their heritage.

In order to maintain Jewish life, Jewish leaders often assessed differences between Judaism and other religions; however, before the 1920s these differences were primarily based on religion. Kaplan introduced the idea of separating Judaism the civilization from Judaism the religion. Jews and Christians might disagree over religious matters, just as Reform and Orthodox Jews might disagree, but as Americans they had a common civilization. Jews were different from non-Jewish Americans in individual type rather than in essence. Jews were not "the other;" they were simply a different type of moral citizen of the United States.⁷⁷ In other words, Jews and Christians in America shared a common moral framework and a common national heritage, but they differed in their specific religious beliefs. Therefore, both groups began to expand their sphere of responsibility to include those outside their immediate communities.

This view of Judaism as outer-directed as opposed to inward-directed is the most significant product of the development of civil religion. However, being outer-directed means much more than supporting Jewish causes outside America, such as creation of the state of Israel and Zionist activities. Although Jonathan Woocher suggests that the mission to Israel is the most important civil religious ritual, civil religion in Providence was established long before the state of Israel or the Holocaust.⁷⁸

In fact, civil religion was not a Jewish phenomenon at all, but rather a “common national historical venture” in which Jews expresses solidarity with non-Jews. It was an expression of the unity of the Jews of Providence and their desire to unite, because of both economic and philosophical reasons, with their fellow religious citizens. Israel and the Holocaust simply provided a rallying cry around which Jews could unify after World War II. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for Jews in Providence, the desire to unite for the benefit of the entire Providence community was obviously independent of Israel. The involvement of Jews in a civic philanthropic venture — their ability to cooperate with non-Jewish groups — was due to the strength of their community after the late nineteenth century, their effort at finding a common ground with other religions, their diminution of the significance of anti-Semitism, and their financial impetus for concerted action. Once they had accepted their civic responsibility as a Jewish community, Jews in Providence, led by Max Grant, could cooperate with a larger group of other faiths to widen the social and political boundaries of Jews in America.



Notes

- ¹ “Community Fund Drive Starts November 18, 1934” (poster), Rhode Island Jewish Historical Assoc. Archives.
- ² Sydney Gumpertz. *Jewish Legion of Valor* (New York: Alexander Press, 1946) 59-66.
- ³ Daniel J. Elazar. *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976) 24.
- ⁴ Gumpertz, p. 63.
- ⁵ Henry L. Feingold. *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920-1945* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 123.
- ⁶ R.I. Bureau of Industrial Statistics. “Charitable and Philanthropic Agencies in Providence,” Part 4, *Annual Report for 1909* (Providence: E.L. Freeman, 1910).
- ⁷ Beth S. Wenger. *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise*. (New Haven: Yale, 1996) 13-15.
- ⁸ Wenger, pp. 1-15.
- ⁹ Wenger, pp. 15-18.
- ¹⁰ Wenger, pp. 158-164.
- ¹¹ *Proceedings of the New England Conference of Jewish Communal Agencies*, Providence, RI, Oct. 13-14, 1934.
- ¹² “An Appeal to the Jewish Voters of Rhode Island,” *The Jewish Herald*, 6/17/32.
- ¹³ “A New Era for Providence,” *First Annual Report of the Providence Community Fund*, 1927.
- ¹⁴ Alfred K. Kutzik. *The Social Basis of American Jewish Philanthropy* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1968) 659.

- ¹⁵ Samuel Samuels. The Fur "Charity Chest" Explained: New Method of Philanthropy Eliminates Embarrassment of Drives," *The American Hebrew*, March 20, 1925, p. 573.
- ¹⁶ *Proceedings of the New England Conference of Jewish Communal Agencies*, Providence, RI, Oct. 13-14, 1934, p.52.
- ¹⁷ Elazar, p. 160.
- ¹⁸ Hadassah Davis. "Jewish Federation of Rhode Island: Fifty Years of Giving," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Nov. 1995; and Elazar, p. 160.
- ¹⁹ "Max L. Grant Again Named President of the Social Service Group," *The Jewish Herald*, April 6, 1934.
- ²⁰ "Jewish Family Service," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Nov. 1989, p. 329; and "How the Providence Community Fund Began," *First Annual Report of the Providence Community Fund*, 1927.
- ²¹ Shaye Cohen. *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 8.
- ²² Max Grant. *A Study of Fund Raising in Connection with the Providence Community Fund*, 1930.
- ²³ "Community Fund Drive Starts November 18, 1934" (poster), Rhode Island Jewish Historical Assoc. Archives.
- ²⁴ *Proceedings of the New England Conference of Jewish Communal Agencies*, Providence, RI, Oct. 13-14, 1934.
- ²⁵ William Guthrie. "A Broad-Minded Tribute to the Jew," *The American Hebrew*, June 6, 1924.
- ²⁶ It was common for Jewish leaders to praise non-Jews during Christian holidays, just as Christians supported Jews during Passover by distributing *matzoh* (Wenger, p. 150).
- ²⁷ "Christmas," *The Providence Journal*, December 23, 1933, p. 12.
- ²⁸ "Max L. Grant Dies; Active Philanthropist," *The Evening Bulletin*, October 11, 1974.
- ²⁹ Max Grant. "Christmas," *The Providence Journal*, Dec. 23, 1933, p. 12.
- ³⁰ Feingold, p. 254.
- ³¹ Joe Forchia. "He Celebrates by Giving Millions" [source and date unknown], Rhode Island Jewish Historical Assoc. Archives.
- ³² It is important to note that this paper is focused on the Jewish entrance into the Providence Community Fund and is thus limited in providing evidence for non-Jewish motivations for participating in civil religion.
- ³³ "Fr. Dillon Urges Religious Drive," *The Providence Journal*, 1/23/39.
- ³⁴ Letter to Max Grant from Leon Hurwitz, 4/15/35, and letter to Max Grant from the Bishop of Providence, 6/3/63, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Assoc. Archives.
- ³⁵ However, although he was a leader in this area, there were other Jews who thought that collaboration with non-Jews was the best means to combat anti-Semitism and who wanted to fulfill the American promise of success through hard work and community.
- ³⁶ Woocher, p. 28. Louis Brandeis, for example, believed that being a good Jew meant being a good American (Feingold, p. 168).
- ³⁷ Feingold, p. 123.
- ³⁸ Jonathan S. Woocher. *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) 83.
- ³⁹ Will Herberg. *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York, 1960).

- ⁴⁰ "Seminar Leaders of Three Faiths Extol American Ideals in National 'Brotherhood Day' Observance Tomorrow," *The Providence Journal*, April 28, 1934, p. 11.
- ⁴¹ Max Grant. *The Providence Journal*, April 28, 1934, p. 11.
- ⁴² Feingold, pp. 122-23.
- ⁴³ However, perhaps such a financial collaboration (the Fund) was necessary to prove that Jews really were willing to support their rhetoric with capital.
- ⁴⁴ *Proceedings of the New England Conference of Jewish Communal Agencies*, Providence, RI, Oct. 13-14, 1934, p. 55.
- ⁴⁵ Kutzik, p. 34.
- ⁴⁶ Wenger, p. 204.
- ⁴⁷ Woocher, p. 32.
- ⁴⁸ President Calvin Coolidge said, "No Jew should ever look upon our institutions as an alien. His people have had their tremendous share in making them. If they are imperfect, his is a part of the blame. If they surpass all others, his is a part of the glory. In either event, they belong to him equally with others" (preface to Gumpertz).
- ⁴⁹ Kutzik, p. 641.
- ⁵⁰ Kutzik, p. 941.
- ⁵¹ One of Henry Feingold's theses, that the Jews *reacted* insufficiently to anti-Semitism in the 1920s and 1930s and were thus unprepared for the Holocaust, is an example of such a passive treatment of Jews.
- ⁵² *Proceedings of the New England Conference of Jewish Communal Agencies*, Providence, RI, Oct. 13-14, 1934, p. 59.
- ⁵³ *Proceedings of the New England Conference of Jewish Communal Agencies*, Providence, RI, Oct. 13-14, 1934, p. 59.
- ⁵⁴ Woocher, p. 35.
- ⁵⁵ Woocher, p. 36.
- ⁵⁶ Max Grant. "A Study of Fund Raising in Connection with the Providence Community Fund," December 16, 1930 (unpublished), Rhode Island Jewish Historical Assoc. Archives.
- ⁵⁷ Kutzik, p. 495.
- ⁵⁸ *Exodus* 30:13
- ⁵⁹ Max Grant, "A Study ...", p. 3.
- ⁶⁰ Max Grant, "A Study ...", p. 4.
- ⁶¹ Max Grant, "A Study ...", p. 4.
- ⁶² Max Grant, "A Study ...", p. 9.
- ⁶³ Woocher, p. 32.
- ⁶⁴ *Proceedings of the New England Conference of Jewish Communal Agencies*, Providence, RI, Oct. 13-14, 1934.
- ⁶⁵ *The Jewish Herald* (Providence, Rhode Island), November 8, 1935, p. 4.
- ⁶⁶ Wenger, p. 159.
- ⁶⁷ Annual Report of the Providence Community Fund, 1935, Rhode Island Historical Society.
- ⁶⁸ *The Jewish Herald* (Providence, Rhode Island), November 8, 1935, p. 4.
- ⁶⁹ "Community Fund Drive Starts November 18, 1934" [advertisement].
- ⁷⁰ *The Jewish Herald* (Providence Rhode Island), November 8, 1935, p. 4.

- ⁷¹ "Community Fund Drive Starts November 18, 1934" [advertisement].
- ⁷² Interview with Max Grant, September 14, 1970, tape transcribed by Adam Skolnick, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Assoc. Archives.
- ⁷³ Robert Bellah asserted in his essay, "Civil Religion in America," *The Religious Situation: 1968* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), that civil religion is not a manifestation of any specific religion but of religion in its most general terms (pp. 331-354).
- ⁷⁴ Interview with Max Grant, September 14, 1970.
- ⁷⁵ Interview with Max Grant, September 14, 1970.
- ⁷⁶ Mordecai Kaplan. *Judaism as a Civilization* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1994) 60.
- ⁷⁷ Kaplan, p. 177.
- ⁷⁸ Woocher, pp. 150-154.

The Jewelry Industry, Industrial Development, and Immigration in Providence, 1790-1993

by Richard A. Meckel

*Jewish workers were relative newcomers to one of Rhode Island's principal industries, the manufacture of costume jewelry. Not until the twentieth century did sizable numbers of Jews come to that industry as laborers, managers, jobbers, and owners. Soon that involvement will be reflected in an association between the JHA and the Providence Jewelry Museum in the Heritage Harbor Museum complex. We celebrate this association by reprinting two items from *Diamonds are Forever, but Rhinestones are for Everyone!*, an oral history of the costume jewelry industry in Rhode Island, edited by Naida D. Weisberg (Providence: The Providence Jewelry Museum, 1999; available with a \$30 donation to the Museum) and reprinted with her permission. A short history of the industry will be followed by an interview with a successful Jewish owner of a local costume jewelry firm.*

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On February 12, 1919, when Rhode Island's World War I doughboys paraded triumphantly through a victory arch set up on Exchange Place in the heart of downtown Providence, they were returning to a city in which two thirds of the population were either immigrants or the children of immigrants, and to a state which, since 1870, had the highest percentage of foreign-born residents in the country. Rhode Island's doughboys were also returning to a city which, despite its location in the smallest state in the union, had for over half a century been one of the leading manufacturing centers in the nation. Indeed, having benefited from a wartime boom that had reversed a trend of industrial decline apparent in the first decade of the century, Providence could still boast that it was a world leader in the production of textile goods, especially woolens and worsteds, and that it was home to the world's largest machine tool factory (Brown & Sharpe), file factory (Nicholson File), screw factory (American Screw), and silverware factory (Gorham). It could also boast of being the home of a diverse collection of some 1,500 other manufacturers producing everything from

rubber goods to salad oil.

That Providence, as a major manufacturing city, was also an immigrant city was no accident. Limited in population and thus in its source of potential workers, Providence had long had to import workers as a prerequisite for industrial expansion. In the history of Providence, industrial growth and immigration have been inseparable partners.

This is especially true in the area of jewelry manufacturing, particularly the production of relatively inexpensive or costume jewelry. When World War I ended, Providence ranked as the nation's leading producer of costume jewelry, an honor it had held since the 1870s. Throughout the city, but concentrated especially in an area bounded by Pine, Chestnut, Dorrance, and Eddy Streets, close to three hundred manufacturers and jobbers, employing over 14,000 workers, combined to produce millions of dollars worth of costume jewelry findings (unfinished components). Among these manufacturers were a few big concerns. Otsby and Barton, a ring manufacturer located on Richmond Street after 1903, and Uncas Manufacturing, located on Atwells Avenue, each employed close to five hundred workers during rush periods. However, for the most part, the industry was made up of small concerns usually having no more than thirty or forty employees.

Because of the semiskilled nature of much costume jewelry work, the plethora of small production units, and the low level of capital required to start a factory or job shop, Providence's costume jewelry industry, like the garment industry in New York, was one which lent itself to a high level of immigrant employment and entrepreneurial initiative — to both opportunity and exploitation. With the exception of a small number of skilled operatives and jewelry tool makers, wages of jewelry workers were the lowest in the manufacturing sector. Home work and piecework were common. And women, many of them immigrants or children of immigrants, constituted close to half of the labor force. Yet at the same time, workers were able to labor on their own at night, often with the help of their families, assembling parts jobbed out to them or easily purchased from findings shops. And the hope among Italian, Portuguese, Jewish, and other immigrants was always there that, from such work, savings might accumulate to establish a small concern and grow into something substantial. Italian immigrants living on Federal Hill, for instance, were well aware that fellow immigrant Vincent Sorrentino's Uncus Manufacturing Company had such a modest origin.

In the eight decades since 1920, Providence's jewelry industry has undergone many changes. Although still containing some manufacturers and job shops, the jewelry district is no longer the hub of the industry. Many concerns have moved to exurbs, suburbs, or outlying industrial parks. Yet Providence can still justly claim to be the capital of the costume jewelry industry. Moreover, as was true in the early decades of the century, the majority of the industry's work force, as well as a significant proportion of its small producers and jobbers, continue to be immigrants or the children of immigrants.

The Development of the Industry in Providence, 1790-1850

Through the last decade of the eighteenth century, Providence's economy, like that of most American port cities, was essentially an agricultural and mercantile one, relying on the sea for trade with England, the Caribbean and China. Manufacturing production was centered in the shops of small artisans — blacksmiths, tanners, coopers, millwrights, ships' carpenters, and weavers — who produced what was needed to carry on commercial agriculture and sea trade as well as to provide the implements of daily life for the residents of Providence and its environs.

Among these artisans was a small group of goldsmiths and silversmiths who hand-fashioned silver plates, teapots and trays, tankards and other fine housewares, and various types of eighteen-karat gold and sterling silver jewelry for wealthy area merchants like the Browns and the Ives. Two of these were the Dodge Brothers, Nehemiah and Seril, the latter of whom opened the city's first jewelry-making shop in 1793. Together and on their own, the brothers experimented with various methods by which relatively inexpensive base metals like copper could be gilded or bonded with gold or a gold alloy and then rolled out to produce stock for making less expensive jewelry. Whether Nehemiah finally developed the process by himself, as he is generally credited with doing, or whether he did it in conjunction with his brother, he is the one who in 1798 began producing the nation's first cheap jewelry — thus making Providence the American birthplace of the costume jewelry industry.

Within seven years three other gold and silversmiths had opened establishments on North Main Street near the shop of Nehemiah; and, using his stock, they and their assistants were hand-fashioning cheap jewelry. Their products seem to have gained instant popularity, for by 1810 there were a hundred craftsmen in Providence turning out \$100,000 worth of

jewelry. Ten years later, their number approached 300 and the worth of their product has risen to \$600,000. At the same time, craftsmen using the same or similar methods began producing cheap stock and jewelry in Attleboro, Massachusetts, and New York City.

Jewelry manufacturing continued to expand in Providence in the decades before the mid-nineteenth century, especially after 1844 when Thomas Lowe emigrated from England and introduced an improved and cheaper method for producing plated stock. Producing what is known today as rolled gold plate and gold filled, Lowe's method involved contacting silver containing gold alloy with a copper alloy, then heating this for several hours. The silver was "sweated out" of the gold and bonded with the copper; the result was a product vastly superior to and cheaper to produce than the stock first developed by the Dodges. The quality of rolled gold plate stock greatly increased the popularity of cheaper jewelry and helped create a boom in the trade that lasted until the Panic of 1857. That boom was extremely good to the jewelry craftsman-entrepreneurs. It took little capital to start a venture, only enough to purchase some stock. It was also good to jewelry workers. Skilled craftsman that they were, they enjoyed among the highest wages of any workmen in Providence.

As the jewelry industry was growing in Providence, so too were other industries. Most important of these was the textile industry, which had its birth in the state with the 1797 opening of Samuel Slater's mill in Pawtucket. Especially after the introduction of the power loom in 1817, the state's textile industry grew significantly, if erratically, in the decades prior to the end of the Civil War, particularly in the Pawtucket and Blackstone Valleys. In Providence, the textile industry grew more slowly. Nevertheless, by 1840 there were thirty cotton mills in the city.

Other industries were also developing. In large part prompted by the growing textile industry's need for machinery and steam power, various metalworking shops and factories were established. In the 1820s. Robert Thurston and John Babcock opened their steam engine factory in the Fox Point section of the city and dominated the area's production of power plants for textile mills until displaced after mid-century by the giant Corliss Company. In 1842 the Butt Company was incorporated to manufacture braiding machines, and in 1845 the Providence Tool Company opened to manufacture sewing machines. A year later the Providence Machine Company was founded and began producing parts and machinery for cotton

mills, particularly English fly frames; and in 1848 the Phenix Iron Works opened to manufacture machinery for dye houses and bleacheries.

The development of the metalworking industry in Providence was instrumental in the ongoing growth of the jewelry industry, for it attracted and served as a training ground for a pool of skilled machine toolmakers who would construct the jewelry manufacturing machinery that would be increasingly critical as the industry mechanized.

As Providence was undergoing industrial development in the first half of the century, its population was changing dramatically in size and composition. Between 1790 and 1850, the number of people calling Providence their home increased from 7,614 to 41,513. During the early years of the nineteenth century, much of that growth was produced by natural increase and the in-migration of native born Americans from rural Rhode Island and other states. But immigration also played a part. English weavers, loomers and spinners arrived to work in the state's and city's expanding textile industry. English and German jewelry craftsmen came for work in the expanding fine and costume jewelry industry as well as in the silver plate industry. And although their numbers were small, they had a definite impact.

After 1845, the city and state also became the destinations of increasing numbers of poor Irish immigrants, driven from their homeland by famine and poverty. Indeed, by 1865 the Irish constituted sixty-five percent of all immigrants to the state. Poor and with few if any industrial skills, the Irish entered the work force at the bottom, working as laborers and ditch diggers and as unskilled operatives in textile mills. Although evidence is scant, few, it seems, entered the jewelry industry, whose work force was still made up of craftsmen who individually fashioned each piece of jewelry by hand.

The Era of Expansion and Heavy Immigration, 1850-1920

After suffering a severe but temporary setback during the Panic of 1857, and a significant disruption during the Civil War, Providence's jewelry industry entered a period of tremendous expansion that by 1880 would make the city the country's leading jewelry producer. In 1875 Providence had 133 firms employing 2,667 workers. By 1900 there were over two hundred firms, employing more than 7,000 workers and producing a product valued in excess of \$13 million. By 1905 jewelry workers numbered almost 8,500 and the worth of the goods they produced had nearly doubled to \$24 million. That growth continued for another decade and a half before leveling off.

As has been true throughout the history of the industry, the expansion was fueled by technological innovation and aggressive merchandising. Of particular importance was electroplating, which came into fairly widespread use in Providence after 1860. Essentially, electroplating involves coating a metal with another metal by immersing the object in a solution and applying low voltage electricity. The metal applied is generally nickel, gold or silver. This process is less expensive and more flexible than the older process — first called sweat-plate and later rolled-gold plate — which involves fusing the coated metal to the base metal in a furnace. Electroplating can also produce various shades of gold; this is called “coloring,” and individual pieces can be coated after they have been formed or assembled.

Providence’s costume jewelry industry also benefited from the development of rolled gold seamless wire in the 1880s. This could be used to make chains with no exposed base metal. Combined with the growing popularity of inexpensive watches, that development enabled Providence manufacturers to fill large orders for plated gold watch chains. Finally, technological innovation in the machine tool industry, in which Providence was a national leader, gave the city’s costume jewelry manufacturers access to an ever increasing array of stamping and cutting machines that could be used to produce buckles, watch cases and chains. The machine tool industry also provided the mechanical production basis for a flourishing jewelry findings industry.

Technological innovation and the increased productivity would have been all for naught, however, without the expansion of markets for the goods that Providence costume jewelry manufacturers were producing. Hence, the period also witnessed aggressive merchandising and the opening of new markets, not only in the United States but also in South America, Europe, and even in Africa. Indeed, by 1900 costume jewelry and accessories produced in Providence could be found in most areas of the world.

It was also during this period of expansion that the center of costume jewelry production shifted from its traditional home on North Main Street to an area southwest of downtown. This is an area bordered today by Pine, Dorrance, Chestnut, and Eddy Streets. By the 1860s, firms were moving into existing buildings. Often several firms would occupy a single structure. Over the next half century the area was architecturally transformed as several investors and some major manufacturers constructed buildings for the express purpose of housing jewelry manufacturers. Some of the larger

of these structures, such as the Otsby & Barton factory at 118 Richmond Street, still exist and continue to be occupied by jewelry and plating firms.

As Providence's jewelry industry was undergoing major expansion, the city itself was experiencing an industrial boom that made it one of the nation's leading manufacturing centers. At the center of the boom was the tremendous growth — both in the city and in the state — of the textile industry. Although that industry had grown significantly during the pre-Civil War decades, it was not until after 1865 that it really flowered. With supplies of woolen and cotton goods depleted by the war, the industry benefited from unprecedented demand. Indeed, between 1865 and 1875, the number of Rhode Island textile workers expanded to 22,600, an increase of forty-three percent. Similarly, the number of spindles in operation increased seventy-five percent, to nearly 1.5 million. Although increasingly challenged by southern mills and wounded by business fluctuations, recessions and panics, Rhode Island's textile industry continued to grow through the turn of the twentieth century, in part by consolidating, increasing productivity, and moving into the production of higher quality goods, like worsteds, cambric muslins, jackonettes and sateens. Yet even cotton textile production, which faced the brunt of southern competition, grew. In 1895, Rhode Island had 88 cotton manufacturing firms employing over 25,000 workers and producing a product valued at over \$24,000,000. At the top of this industry were a few giants. The largest of these was the combination controlled by the Knight Brothers, which, under the trademark "Fruit of the Loom" ran twenty-one mills employing 7,000 operatives.

In 1900 Providence contained only twenty-five percent of the state's total textile industry, but ranked first in the nation in the production of worsted goods and second in the production of woolens. Olneyville was the site of the giant Riverside, Providence and National Worsted, Weybosset, and Atlantic Mills. The Wanskuck Mill was located in the city's North End. Yet unlike the textile mill villages that dotted the state, Providence's industrial base was relatively diversified.

Consonant with the growth of the textile production in the second half of the nineteenth century had been the growth of other major industries. Chief among these were firms involved in metal work in the production of steam engines, machine tools, textile machinery, screws, and files. In the second half of the century, other companies producing steam engines joined Thurston and Babcock. By far the largest of these was one incorporated in

1856 by George Corliss, who had migrated to Providence in 1844 and had patented a highly efficient steam engine five years later. A prolific inventor who eventually held sixty-eight patents and who designed and built the 1,400 horse power engine that powered the machinery displayed at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, Corliss produced what were considered in the late nineteenth century to be the best steam engines available. By the time of this death in 1888, his Corliss Steam Engine Company, employing over a thousand workers and occupying nine brick buildings spread over five acres off Charles Street in Providence, was the biggest enterprise of its kind in the world and made Providence the nation's leader in steam engine production.

Another part of Providence's metal work industry that experienced a tremendous growth in the second half of the century was machine tool production. At the center of this growth was the company of Brown and Sharpe which was incorporated in 1863. Developing such critical machine tools as the Universal Miller and the Universal Grinder, as well as such measuring devices as the vernier and micrometer calipers, the company grew from a small concern to an industrial giant. By 1902 it employed over 2,000 workers in an enormous plant on Promenade Street that spread over two city blocks.

Other giant Providence metal work concerns included the Nicholson File Company which by 1883 had become the largest file producer in the nation, and the American Screw Company which was also a national leader. In precious metal work, the Gorham Silverware Company, incorporated in 1865, emerged as a leading producer of flatware. Located on Steeple Street, it secured the contract to manufacture all of Tiffany's silverware and expanded to 450 employees by 1872. In the latter decades of the century, under the aggressive leadership of Edward Holbrook, the company advertised its products worldwide and actively recruited English, German, and French designers. Outgrowing its Steeple Street quarters, in 1890 it constructed the world's largest silverware factory in the Elmwood section of the city.

Concurrent with its dramatic industrial expansion, Providence vastly increased its population. Between 1865 and 1925, the number of Providence residents increased almost fivefold, from 54,595 to 267,918. Only a small part of this growth was due to natural increase. Most came from in-migration and especially from immigration. Moreover, the source of that immigration changed significantly in the latter part of the period. In 1800, nine tenths of

the immigrant fathers of Providence school children came from the British Isles, primarily from Ireland. By 1900, only half did. The source of this new immigration was Southern and Eastern Europe, principally from Italy and to a lesser extent from Russia, Poland, Armenia, and the Azores. Indeed, especially after 1911 when the Fabre Line initiated passenger service between Naples, Palermo, Lisbon, the Azores, and Providence, Italian and Portuguese immigrants flooded into the city and the state. By 1915, Italian immigrants and their children constituted fourteen percent of the city's population.

It was no accident that the city grew through immigration as its industrial base expanded, for immigration provided the needed workers for that expansion; and industrial growth provided the motive for settling in Providence. Long mechanized and with an abundance of operative jobs for unskilled or semiskilled laborers, Providence's textile mills offered employment opportunities, if low wages and little security, to immigrants whose competencies had been shaped by peasant agriculture. The mills also offered employment to women. As a result, a large percentage of Providence's work force was female and, atypically, more women migrated into the city than did men. Indeed, by 1910 one third of the females over sixteen in Providence were gainfully employed.

Opportunities for employment for unskilled male and female workers were also plentiful in the jewelry industry after the turn of the century. Unlike with textiles, however, this represented a major break with the past. For most of the nineteenth century, costume jewelry, like the higher grade jewelry, had been hand fashioned individually from base metal to finished product by skilled craftsmen; and they were distinguished from their brethren working in fine metal and precious stone jewelry only by the materials they worked with and the products they created rather than by skill. This began changing toward the end of the century with the development of machines to cut, shape, and cast the basic components of individual jewelry items. In short, mechanization and mass production came to the costume jewelry industry.

With mass production came a dramatic transformation of the work force. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the craftsmen capable of fashioning a piece of jewelry from beginning to end had largely disappeared from the costume jewelry work place, except for those few specialty concerns that fashioned "art" jewelry. In their place was a labor force

stratified by function and skill. At the top were the precision toolmakers, die cutters, and mold makers who produced the machines and dies and molds that produced the jewelry components. Also at the top were senior platers who were responsible for regulating the chemical solutions and electrical energies to produce just the right shade of coloring. These machinists and platers were highly valued craftsmen and their wages reflected that fact.

At the next level were journeymen platers, polishers, and tool setters. And below them were the bench workers who increasingly made up the vast majority of the jewelry industry work force. Bench workers set stones, soldered findings, linked chains and rings, enameled pieces, and generally assembled the machine-cut or cast pieces into finished jewelry. Considered to be engaged in unskilled labor, bench workers were frequently women and sometimes children and were paid wages or piecework rates that placed their earnings among the lowest in the manufacturing sector. By 1905, women accounted for thirty-five percent of the jewelry manufacturing employees; by 1930, fifty-four percent; and by 1980 nearly seventy percent.

If mechanization divided up the work force, it also divided up the manufacturing process so that various components of that process could be "jobbed out". This led to the creation of small job shops specializing in one aspect of manufacture: plating, polishing, stamping, linking, or stone setting. It also led to the proliferation of home work; that is, the jobbing out at piecework rates of specific tasks (such as chain linking or stone setting) to individuals who, often with the help of their families, did the work in their homes. By 1918, home work in jewelry exceeded that in any other industry in Rhode Island.

The turn-of-the-century transformation of the manufacturing processes and work force in the costume jewelry industry was not replicated in the production of precious metal goods. Although Gorham and other silverware manufacturers mechanized, their work force remained largely male, native born or northern European, skilled, and well paid. The 1905 Rhode Island census listed 1,149 gold and silver workers in Providence, of whom all but forty-eight were men and all but twenty-two were born in North America or northern Europe. Indeed, although foreign-born workers outnumbered native-borns, the vast majority of the former were from England, Germany and Scotland. Recruited and hired as skilled workers, employees in the silverware industry earned wages that were on average thirty-six percent higher than those earned by Providence's costume jewelry workers.

The disappearance of skilled craftsmen from the work forces, the declining wages, the increasing employment of women and sometimes children, and the mounting reliance on piecework and home work all earned for the industry criticism from social reformers and organized labor. Child welfare advocates lamented that children in Italian families on Federal Hill were ruining their health and wasting their lives linking chains, stringing beads, and setting cheap stones. A 1918 Children's Bureau investigation of child labor in Providence found jewelry home work so common among Italian children that they would frequently bring chains with them to school to link at recess. Similarly, labor organizers blasted the industry for being exploitative. For instance, an organizer for the International Jewelry Workers Union characterized the Providence jewelry industry as a "Black Hole in Calcutta."

Not surprisingly, industry spokesmen and factory owners looked at the situation differently. Defending the piecework, homework and jobbing out, Edgar M. Docherty, president of an industry trade group, explained in a 1922 interview with the *Providence Journal* that the practices were widespread because they allowed immigrant families to earn extra income and gave immigrant entrepreneurs the opportunity to become manufacturers themselves. Although self-interested, Docherty's explanation was not entirely incorrect.

Especially among the Italians, economic opportunity for new arrivals was significantly limited. Although some came with craft skills that were translatable to the Providence economy, most did not. When they could find work, it was generally as laborers and unskilled factory hands — work for which the wages were minimal. In 1920, over half the Italian-born, working males in Providence averaged wages of only \$10 a week. Working hard for little return was not a new experience for the Italians who immigrated to Providence. Most came from agricultural regions in southern Italy where subsistence was the most they could hope for. The experience of scarcity had oriented them toward a family economic collectivity in which survival depended on combining various sources of income and in which all members of the family were expected to contribute. Home work was thus an extension of the family economic organization which Italians had known in Italy and was viewed by Italians as a means by which women and children could provide an expected supplement to the father's income. And, for the more ambitious families, home work and jobbing held the promise —

however hard to realize — of eventual independence and relative prosperity as small manufacturers or jobbers.

To be sure, the criticized practices also immensely benefited jewelry concern owners, giving them a source of cheap labor that could be tapped during rush periods and ignored when things were slow. They also kept production costs low by depressing wages and by allowing for piecework rates that occasionally amounted to little more than a few cents an hour.

The small size of many of the jewelry concerns also attracted immigrant workers who tended to gravitate toward employment in places where others of the same nationality worked. Immigrants, historically, have tended to secure jobs through personal contacts. Between 1915 and 1935, for instance, over half of the Federal Hill Italian men who worked in jewelry factories had kin employed in the same place. Indeed, some small concerns, and especially those run by immigrant entrepreneurs, had their labor forces made up entirely of relatives and neighbors. Jewish families, though not as numerous as those of Italian and Portuguese background, were also attracted to the industry in increasing numbers during this period.

Jewelry factories also attracted female immigrants by shaping work hours and schedules to fit the needs of women with children. As is still true today, “mothers’ shifts” paralleling school hours were common. The seasonal nature of employment was also attractive to women who saw their earnings as supplementary to their husbands’ wages and rarely desired full-time, year-round employment. Yet, as in other “sweat shop” industries that job out work, seasonally employ large numbers of women, and offer entrepreneurial opportunity to workers with little capital, immigrants paid a price for the benefits they derived from Providence’s jewelry industry. Wages remained low; job security was always fleeting; union organization proved exceptionally difficult; and health and safety conditions in the small job shops run on a razor-thin profit margin continued, in many cases, to be abominable.

Continuity Amidst Declining Industrial Production: 1920 to the Present

In 1920 Providence was still an industrial giant, but it was one teetering on collapse. The incipient decline that had been interrupted by the war re-emerged during the twenties and became a headlong spiral during the Depression of the 1930s. With the end of the war the bottom fell out of the

cotton textile industry. By 1939 there were barely thirty cotton textile plants in Rhode Island, whereas in 1919 there had been almost 160. Overall, the state lost 20,000 textile jobs. The machine tool industry also suffered near collapse. In 1919 it had employed 11,000 machinists; in 1939 that number had shrunk to 4,000. Other industries and businesses were also hard hit and jobs disappeared with frightening speed. By the time of Roosevelt's inauguration, thirty-two percent of Providence's workers were unemployed and some 230 businesses had failed.

The jewelry industry also suffered, but less so than most. And by 1939 it had recovered somewhat, registering only six percent fewer jobs than it had in 1919. Indeed, that would be the pattern for the rest of the century. As Providence's industrial base continued to shrink, the jewelry industry would occasionally falter but would retain its strength and size.

World War II brought a respite for the industrial decline that had beset the state and its largest city since 1920. State-wide, wage earners in manufacturing increased almost twenty percent between 1939 and 1947. But the respite was temporary. What was left of the textile industry disintegrated after the war. As mill after mill closed, the textile work force declined seventy-five percent between 1945 and 1982 — a loss of some 43,000 jobs. Other major industries also closed or departed. In 1946 American Screw abandoned Providence for Willimantic, Connecticut. Eight years later, Nicholson File relocated its operations to Pennsylvania and Indiana. In 1964, Brown & Sharpe left the city for North Kingstown. And Gorham, which merged with Textron in 1967, also relocated its main factory elsewhere in Rhode Island.

As the century came to a close, then, the industrial wonders that made Providence a national manufacturing center were all but gone. So too were the legions of industrial workers they once employed. The city's 1990 population of 160,728 is only sixty percent of what it was at its peak in 1925. And whereas in the first decades of the century over seventy percent of Providence's work force was employed in manufacturing, in the last decade only some thirty percent were.

Only the jewelry industry, specifically costume jewelry, remained a national manufacturing leader. In 1947, Rhode Island jewelry firms, most of which were located in Providence, were producing forty percent of the nation's low-cost jewelry. Indeed, the decline of industrial manufacturing in Rhode Island in many ways benefited the jewelry industry. The steady

loss of industrial jobs produced a growing pool of workers, many with metalworking skills, which could be tapped by jewelry firms. Hard times among Providence's and Rhode Island's working-class families also encouraged wives and daughters to seek work to supplement family incomes. Hence, the jewelry industry, which had always depended on seasonal employees, had a large supply of such employees available to it. Finally, the closing of mills and factories made available a large number of industrial work spaces that could be rented cheaply. Among with the sharp decline of other industrial employment opportunities, this encouraged many workers to start their own small manufacturing or job shops.

The postwar history of the jewelry industry was not, however, one of steady growth and prosperity. Although it increasingly dominated industrial manufacturing activity in the state, the industry had good periods and bad periods and underwent many changes. This was particularly true in Providence, which watched many firms fold or move to the exurbs, suburbs, or outlying industrial parks. Through the 1950s, for instance, there were enough jewelry manufacturing firms still operating in the Chestnut Street district to allow for the formation of a daily lunch club composed of company owners and managers. By the late 1960s, however, so many firms had moved out of the jewelry district that daily lunches could no longer be maintained.

The postwar era also saw dramatic changes in Rhode Island's and Providence's immigrant population, the traditional source of so many jewelry industry workers. By 1950, three decades of war, depression, and restrictive immigration quotas had transformed the population from one heavily made up of new immigrants and their children to one in which the vast majority of the population had either been born here or had resided here for several decades. Indeed, although Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, and other southern Europeans continued to immigrate to Providence, along with Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe, their number was but a tiny fraction of the masses who arrived in the decades straddling the turn of the century.

As in the rest of the country, this low level of immigration began to rise dramatically after 1965 when a new federal immigration law removed the national quota restrictions which had been in effect since the 1920s. At first, the sources of the new wave of immigration matched that of previous ones, especially as foreign-born American citizens brought over family members from whom they had long been separated. But, by the 1970s, volatile

economic conditions in Asia and in Central America were propelling mounting numbers of Asian and Latino immigrants to Rhode Island and the rest of the country.

In 1960 Rhode Island had only a handful of residents of Hispanic origin. But by 1970 that handful had grown to nearly 7,000; by 1980, to over 19,000; and by 1990, to over 40,000, close to 24,000 of whom reside in Providence. Although from several countries of origin, this group of Hispanic immigrants has in particular been composed of large numbers of arrivals from Santo Domingo, Guatemala, and Columbia.

In 1960 Rhode Island also had only a small number of residents of Asian origin. In the 1970s, however, refugees from war in Southeast Asia began arriving in significant numbers, many of them settling in Providence. In particular, immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos have swelled Providence's Asian population.

As with those who come before them, many of the new immigrants have found work in the jewelry industry, often laboring for the children or grandchildren of earlier waves of immigrants. In several ways, the industry they have entered is dramatically different from the one which employed Italians, Portuguese, Jewish, and other immigrants earlier in the century. Especially since the 1970s, many of the larger firms operate in modern plants where working conditions are relatively good and where employees receive benefit packages similar to those offered in other industries. But in several other ways the industry is similar. Seasonal employment and a high turnover rate still characterize it. So too does the hiring of women to do most of the semiskilled or unskilled bench-work. Estimates are that over seventy-five percent of the solderers and stamp press operators and over ninety percent of the carders, stringers, and linkers are women. As in the past, the industry offers these women such benefits as "mother's shifts" and employment when needed in exchange for low wages and little job security.

The industry is also still one which offers immigrant worker-entrepreneurs with little capital the opportunity to start their own shops with a few family members to help. And as immigrants continue to enter the city and the state, one suspects this will remain true for some time to come.



An Interview With Frederick Lee (“Skip”) Weingeroff

by Naida D. Weisberg

Ms. Weisberg, a drama therapist, has co-edited Creative Arts with Older Adults (second edition forthcoming). She serves as project director for a program for older Hispanics in South Providence and has produced a video entitled “What Does It Mean to Be Hispanic in Rhode Island?” Her husband, Alfred, is director of the Providence Jewelry Museum. For her oral history of the costume jewelry industry in Rhode Island, Ms. Weisberg and her colleagues spoke to many workers and owners. Here is an interview with “Skip” Weingeroff, Chairman of the Board of Weingeroff Enterprises, now retired.

I was born in Albany, New York in 1932, the only child in my family, and I lived there about six months. My grammar school and high schools were all over the eastern part of the United States because my father was a traveling manager for a company called Interstate Home Equipment. It was a company that was “fifty cents down and fifty cents a week,” and they would sell merchandise house-to-house. It was a very big company in its day, before the advent of discount houses and television. They would send my father to an office that wasn’t doing well — let’s say in Hartford or Providence or Rochester — and they would give him probably a five or ten dollar raise, and we would move to that city. He’d get the place running better, and then they’d give him another five dollar raise, and we’d be off to another city.

Principally, I went to two years of high school in Buffalo, New York, and a year and a half of college at the University of Buffalo. After my first year of college in Buffalo, we then moved to Providence. And the actual reason that we moved was that, when I was about seventeen years old, my father went into business in Buffalo with a man names George Glick. They brought costume jewelry in Providence, and they boxed it.

I don’t think up to that point — we’re probably going back to 1949 or 1950 approximately — I don’t think that anybody had ever done that yet. They bought necklaces, bracelets, and earrings, put them in paper boxes, put a \$19.95 price tag on them and sold the sets for two dollars down. They would go house-to-house and sell this jewelry set for two dollars down; and the collector would come by and collect fifty cents a week and sell something

else. Out of a storefront, they started this new jewelry industry.

After that, they went on to buy an interest in a company called C & G Manufacturing Company. There were two brothers, the Chusmirs; and my father and George Glick became their partners so that they actually became manufacturers of this boxed jewelry that they were selling.

And that was here, in Rhode Island?

Yes, in 1950 or '51. At that point, I went to school at Bryant College for a business degree, and that's how I got into the jewelry business.

This is what happened. My father went into business with George Glick and the Chusmirs. It was about the time of the start of the Korean War. And my father didn't get along too well with the Chusmirs. But George Glick, his partner from Buffalo, said to my father, whose name was Louie, "Louie, listen, don't get upset; just stick around a couple more years, and we'll learn the business, how to manufacture the goods, and if you're unhappy, we'll go out in business on our own." My father made very fast decisions, and he decided not to stay there. So he took the money he received from that company — which in today's terms would be very little money — and my father and I opened up a little jewelry company in the Leach Machinery Building on Charles Street, about, I'm going to guess, 1500 square feet. And we went into the manufacturing business of jewelry. I really have to give my father credit because, at that point, I probably was eighteen or nineteen years old, and my father made me a partner. He didn't say "Here, come to work for me and I'll give you thirty dollars a week;" my father made me his partner. I, unfortunately, went into the Korean War, so I had to leave the business.

My father decided to take in a partner, even though I was really against it. I thought my father could carry on for a couple of years without me because he certainly was a good salesman. But he was sort of influenced by a good friend of ours, Harold Dick, who had a brother-in-law — I'll call him "Al L." — who wanted to be in the jewelry business. So he took Al L. as a partner in the business. I really was angry with my father, but how can you be angry with your own father at nineteen or twenty years old? I had only met Al L. one time, and I really didn't like him. I didn't think he was capable. They went and they opened up a company in Olneyville called Frederick Lee. My name. Nice, big, new factory. And Al L. was now a partner. Then I started to get these letters from my father, phone calls, whatever. He really



Frederick Lee ("Skip") Weingeroff.

didn't think Al L. was too much on the ball, which I had sort of predicted. So when I came out of the Army, after a couple of years' service in Korea, Okinawa, and Fort Dix, I went to Al L. and said "Al, I'd like you to go home and sort of retire from the jewelry business. I'll send you your salary every week, and you can come in and check the books, if you want, once or twice a year; but I really want to run the company. And if you don't like that, Al, then you buy us out, or we'll buy you out: we'd prefer to buy you out." Well, unfortunately, he *did* have the money to buy us out, and so we sold our interest in the Frederick Lee company to him.

My father started back into business on Stevens Street, which is off North Main Street — again with a little more money than he had the first time, but not much more — in the cellar, with two or three employees, manufacturing primarily men's jewelry, like cuff links, which were very strong in that day. In passing, I'll say that about two years later I bought the Frederick Lee company for next to nothing because Mr. L. ran it into the ground. Once again I was my father's partner, making metal boxes and manufacturing men's jewelry. We called our company Aristocrat Metal Boxes.

We then spread out to two factories, one little factory in the cellar for the box company and one little factory in the cellar for the jewelry company. My father was the salesman and I, really, was on the inside of the company, being a pretty young man with not much knowledge. But we were doing well, I thought, and I think that we probably made money in the first year. However, my father was on the road, and I really didn't have enough money to pay the bills.

Our landlord was a Mr. Ben Alberts from MasCo. I think it was MasCo; they sold Admiral television sets. And he was very well known in the city and quite a rich man. I remember waddling up to his office because I think I weighed about 250 pounds in those days, and I knocked on his door and there was this great big office and the desk was piled high with papers. And Mr. Alberts said, "What do you want, Skip?" I said, "Well, Mr. Alberts, I didn't come here to borrow money, but I need your help. I need to find a different bank because my bank won't lend me any more money at this point." Mr. Alberts knew how hard we were working; I was probably working fourteen hours a day, and I think he respected the fact that I was working hard, both my father and I. He marched me into his bank and — I don't remember the numbers, it's so many years ago — but let's say my line of credit was \$10,000 or \$15,000. And I was looking for another \$5,000 or \$10,000, and the bank told me, "We're going to give you \$30,000." It was \$5,000 or \$10,000 more that I really wanted. "Just change your account. We've heard what Mr. Alberts has said, and we'll be happy to be your banker." If it hadn't been for Mr. Alberts' help that time, maybe we wouldn't have succeeded. There we were in the cellar, manufacturing jewelry, manufacturing boxes.

With how many employees at that point?

Maybe we got up to twenty. It's so many years ago. I do know that my salary was fifty dollars a week, which was a lot of money then.

From there we moved around the corner to North Main Street into a much bigger factory. Our line of jewelry was still, principally, men's. We had two or three salesmen on the road, and one of my salesman in Chicago said, "Why don't you box a pen and pencil with cuff links and a tie bar? It would probably be a nice gift set." To make a long story short, we bought from Waterman Pen and Pencil Company, which was a big name in pens and was doing very poorly. It is now BIC. We bought a ball-point pen and mechanical pencil from them and put them in a box with cuff links, a tie bar, and a money clip. The pieces of jewelry had a black plastic inset in the finding and a rhinestone glued in the middle so it looked like onyx with a diamond. So picture, if you will, cuff links, a tie bar, a money clip, a black Waterman pen and pencil set, in this lovely metal box, advertised in *Life* and *Saturday Evening Post* because Waterman was, in fact, advertising; and I put it together, and it probably cost me about \$1.20 to make, and I put a selling price on it for two dollars.

My first call was from my salesman in New York, Abe Shapiro, who had sold balloons to carnival jobbers, and he said that he had a customer who wanted to buy 5,000 sets. Well, you've got to understand that 5,000 sets was an order for \$10,000, which was one heck of an order. And I said to him, "Well, give him five percent off." And I'll be darned it the next day I didn't open up the mail and there was an order for 5,000 pieces at \$1.90. And I went on to sell about a million and a quarter sets in four months, and if I could have produced two million sets or better, or three million, I bet I could have sold every one. But that was as many pens and pencils as Waterman could turn out and as many boxes as I could make, and I think that I, personally, shipped all million and a half, or whatever, sets myself. I lifted every one of the boxes off, had the girls fill them, then I packed them up and put them on the trucks, and it was the first great item we ever had. It provided me with a very nice profit; and it sort of was the start of what were some very fun years in the jewelry business and very successful, with that first item.

Did this have the Waterman name on it?

Everything, including the jewelry.

What about the mood ring? Was that soon after?

No, that was a long time after, in the '70s. That was after I moved to Branch Avenue, years later, from North Main Street, and I had done all kinds of hot items from men's medallions to Elvis Presley to Star Wars jewelry. This was before the time when, if you made a good item you couldn't be knocked off within a week from the Orient, and you could make a decent profit. I'd suggest the mood ring could have been one of the most successful items that I've ever had. One day, I think, in September, I had a customer say to me that he had just gone into a department store in New York and he bought a ring; and he asked if I could make the ring so he could buy it for \$1.50 or less in base metal. This thing was in sterling, for fifteen dollars, and he thought he could use a lot of them, so he sent me this thing, a mood ring. And, I must tell you, I looked at it and it changed colors like a thermometer, but I did not grasp the fact that I might be sitting with the most wonderful item in the world. Well, I made up about a half a dozen samples, and instead of charging him \$1.50 or \$1.25, I was able to charge him \$.90 and make a nice profit. I had heard that another manufacturer, named Russ DiOrio, had the ring at the jewelry show — I guess he was selling them at about \$1, \$1.10 — and it was selling extremely well. And he was one only one with it.

An interesting part of the story is that I didn't know where you find the paper that makes the ring change colors. That was hard to find, but with some help I found that NCR made the paper. And the paper was \$.75 a sheet. And I guess you could punch 1,000 rings out of that. I decided to sell the item for, I guess, around a dollar a piece. It was amazing. I mean, you just literally could sell all you could make. I want to suggest to you that the price at NCR went up overnight from seventy-five cents to seventy-five dollars. And I guess they had to be making money, where it used to be \$.75 a sheet. So NCR did very well.

I started to ship hundreds of thousands of pieces a week. Tons of people were knocking on my door, and I remember that K-Mart wanted to buy like three or four hundred thousand rings. But I was very loyal to all the jobbers and my other customers, and I told K-Mart I had to honor the orders I had first. And they were willing to give me another twenty-five or fifty cents a ring, they wanted it so badly. But being a good supplier to my people, I didn't want to sell them out to make more money. I must tell you it worked in reverse. I thought K-Mart respected a businessman who was taking care of his customers, but K-Mart shut me off for the next two, three, or four years, where I couldn't sell them because of my honesty.

At the end of the year, I shipped one million rings a week. Made by hand. You would cast it, but you would have to insert the stone, one at a time. We'd rack and plate them and insert the stones. And I must have had 150 girls working fifteen hours a day, Saturdays and Sunday mornings, turning out mood rings. They had a little card attached that read, "If it's green, you're in love," for example. You know, crazy little things. I don't think anybody really believed it, it was just a fad. It's like the hula hoop. It was just a wonderful jewelry fad that doesn't happen too many times, and it was wonderful to be part of it.

How many years did the craze last?

It probably lasted strongly for five months, then started to die. Lots of people got in it; there was lots of competition. But while it lasted, if you're shipping a millions rings a week, it's not a bad business. Okay?

What was the mood ring actually made of?

Well, the ring is cast in a rubber mold, so it's made out of the regular cast metal. Some of them had a steel shank attached to them. Or some were cast with the shank being the cast metal. Some of the rings were adjustable, some

of the rings were sized. You then plated the ring either gold or silver, regular plate. You then took this NCR paper and cut out a piece. It's like what they use in a thermometer. It's paper with liquid underneath it. And then you put it in the piece by hand, you inserted a plastic bubble on top of it, and you hit it on a foot press.

I remember one day I went over to see my friend, Russ DiOrio, who wasn't happy that I was a competitor because he could ship all that he could make. So I sat with him, and he said, "I want to show you something." He had a puncher, and he was making holes in paper like kids do in school so they can put their paper in a notebook binder. He was showing me how he was punching these little round circles out of the scrap, and he was turning them into kid's rings. So actually the material cost nothing because it was from the scrap you threw away. So I thanked him; I all but kissed him on the cheek. I went home and started making earrings and kids' rings and probably sold a million of those — where the inside cost nothing. It was in and out. Affordable, inexpensive jewelry.

People remember the Nehru suits. I made men's medallions for them. I was hanging bottle openers at the end of chains. Ash trays. Anything I could hang, I hung, because you couldn't ship enough men's medallions for the Nehru suits. Okay? So I sold, who knows, a million and a half of those.

When you're in the middle of this kind of terrific selling situation, how do you plan for the next one?

You don't. It's all by luck. You have a feeling it's going to be good, you grab the item, you make it fast. In the old days, we had very good distribution because we had seven or eight salesmen on the road; we went to shows where there were jobbers. Not only were there jewelry jobbers, but there were wholesale jobbers, jobbers that sold candy and toys; and they also sold jewelry. And if they wanted to buy jewelry, which they all did, they only had a couple of places to buy it, and I was one of them. So, Weingeroff made for what was called this other hustler-jobber trade.

And what would happen is that a hustler-jobber in, let's say, Reading, Pennsylvania, had, maybe, fifty or sixty people who go on street corners or in bars and sell items. Now in the old days, they could carry money, they could sell items, they could put the money in their pockets and go home safely. Today, if you walked into a bar with a pocketful of cash, you might be scared to death that somebody's going to hit you over the head coming

out. Those hustlers don't exist today like they used to. One, because you have discount stores that you didn't have then. Two, you have television to mass advertise items, like the Home Shopping Network, and what have you.

But the greatest costume jewelry item that I have ever seen, that amounted to the most dollars, and will never, ever probably be duplicated again, was the advent of cubic zirconium. And cubic zirconium was nothing more than a grown mineral. It's cut like a diamond, and when it first came out, I think that a one carat cubic zirconium stone that looked like a diamond, with the quality of diamond, was about \$1.50 to \$2 a stone. Let me suggest the same stone today is probably like \$.20 to \$.25. We got in at the beginning of cubic zirconium. And I would say from 1985 to 1991, we shipped more cubic zirconium jewelry than any other item we ever had. It was used in religious jewelry, rings, necklaces, earrings, pendants. It was put into base metal, cast metal, gold-filled, sterling, gold, and is still a huge item.

For you, still?

No. Certainly not for me because a country called Thailand makes the jewelry at a tenth our price; their labor and their markup are so small.

Now one more: in 1985, I got a \$300 order, C.O.D. from my salesman in Florida, for a radio station in Tampa. And I shipped \$300 worth of merchandise to a fellow named Bud Paxson who sold the merchandise on radio. Mr. Paxson then, with another man, named Roy Spear, founded a company in Tampa called Home Shopping. And I became their supplier. They sold their merchandise in 300,000 homes in the Tampa Bay area on cable TV, and you would come to the warehouse to pick up the merchandise and pay for it. So Home Shopping Network decided to go nationwide, twenty-four hours a day. And I received a call from my salesman who was doing a very nice business with them: "They are going on nationwide TV and they're talking about placing an order for costume jewelry for one million dollars."

I went down to meet with Mr. Spear and Mr. Paxson, and they asked if I would sell them one million dollars worth of goods and give them credit. And I said to them, no, I wouldn't give them one million, I'd give them whatever they want. Mr. Spear said, "What do you mean by that?" I said, "Do you want two million? Do you want three million? Do you want four million? I'm going to give you whatever credit you want. You've just got to promise to pay me in forty-five days. You've gotta sort of remember what

I'm doing for you today, and I will become your biggest supplier." They thanked me, and I went on to do so much business with this one customer that I closed down every other aspect of the company, and just supplied them. And the orders that I received from them have never been received by any costume jewelry company before or now. It was unbelievable.

Mr. Paxson is probably one of the nicest people I've ever known. Mr. Spear, who is a very tough businessman, treated me in the most wonderful way. And it was wonderful business for five or six years. When they left the company, my business with them went way down: the merchandise changed, it changed greatly — from twenty-five percent costume jewelry to maybe five percent. And Bangkok came about. But in the days that it lasted, it was wonderful, it was super, it was exciting.

What kind of jewelry did you sell them?

I sold them everything. I sold them cubic zirconium jewelry. I sold them genuine stone jewelry. I sold them necklace sets, earring sets, men's sets, pearl sets. I sold them anything you could put on TV that looked beautiful and was a good bargain. And today, that business is about a 2.5 billion dollar business. I'd say one billion of it is jewelry. You've got Joan Rivers and Nolan Miller and people like Kenneth Lane on QVC. I was the first to do jewelry with Kenneth Lane. On Home Shopping, I wanted them to put on celebrities, live. They didn't want to. It was a mistake. QVC was smarter and did it. As a matter of fact, QVC became the bigger company.

Do you have anything to do with QVC?

I am a very big supplier of QVC. I am a very big supplier of Joan Rivers. I think we should be even bigger suppliers because I think we do a very good job for everybody.

When we started to lose this tremendous volume in the home shopping industry, I changed the direction of the company in a lot of ways. One, I started to make much better and higher-priced costume jewelry, where we'd make the same quality that Monet would turn out today. We make incredible items in here that I think very few people can make. Like Joan Rivers' eggs that she's selling on TV. They retail for \$129 now for collectible eggs.

We own the Oscar de la Renta brand name, which is something we launched three years ago. My daughter, Lisa, runs the shipping and handling of the de la Renta line. She used to work in their New York showroom. We own the Jay Strongwater name, which is in Saks Fifth Avenue and better

department stores. He's a designer who is also our associate. In New York we have a company called NuLook that makes little story cards with jewelry on them in displays.

These are different names you have within your company?

Within the company. We have a company called Inwear that sells in stores like Wal-Mart and Target. We bought Imperial Pearl, a company that was in business for seventy-five years. Just the molds and dies. However, we have with us Keith Marcello, the former owner's son. We sell to people like Disney. We sell to QVC. We sell to jewelry jobbers. We probably manufacture about eighty-five percent of what we sell, and about fifteen percent we import.

Sometimes we bring it in finished, sometimes we card it. We buy finished items that we have copyrighted or that we have created. And I guess what we're looking at is — if we're still here, which I think we're definitely going to be — we're probably going to be only one of about ten decent jewelry manufacturers left in this state. It's been a very difficult three or four years for everybody in the jewelry business, as everybody knows. Now why did it happen? It happened because we allowed the imports to come into this country without the necessary duties to protect us. I was one of the first to go to Japan to create goods over there; and then Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea. And now, the biggest force of all, Red China. And if we don't impose the duties, then I guess another twenty-five percent of this city will go out of business. There will probably be ten or twelve of us left. And if we're good at what we do, we're probably never going to make a huge living, but we can make a good living and we'll stay in business.

Are you the CEO of the company?

I'm Chairman of the Board, but what does that mean? I'm on the phone every day, but truly, after being a very hard-working man, I'm probably not working one month a year steady. For my son, Greg, it's much harder to run than the day that I ran it. And a lot less fun, and a lot more expensive, and a lot less rewarding. But he's working very hard at it. We own Gem Case. Gem Case is the manufacturer of metal boxes. We are probably one of the best in the world at making metal boxes. It's run by a woman president, Linda Haley, who does a great job. And I own half of a company in Lakeville, Massachusetts, called Thompson Box that makes paper boxes, photo albums, picture frames, doing extremely well. Their prospects of doing more business and growing are terrific.

Is Greg in charge of all of that?

No. That's what I do. And I have partners that can take care of it without my being there daily. And Greg takes care of the jewelry business. I give him all the advice I can, and sometimes I give him too much advice.

We've got two or three designers who sketch things; we've got four "in house." We've got three, four, five modelmakers, at times, in here. We take trips to department stores. We spend all our money trying to make things that sell.

What I always thought I had is a very good sense of what women will wear. It used to be that you wanted to make costume jewelry look like gold. But today I think costume jewelry's got to look like costume jewelry, more than look like gold. Because you can buy sterling and 10K gold with genuine stones for the price of expensive costume jewelry today. So you've really got to make costume jewelry that looks like costume jewelry. And I guess we're looking for a fad. Y-necklaces were a fad. But because we did not have the distribution that we used to have, we missed that fad. In the old days, because of the seven salesmen and the shows and very little competition, we could come out with a fad and sell it — quickly, in big quantity.

What about the ratio of women to men in supervisory and managerial jobs?

Today, compared to twenty years ago? Many more women. Many more women holding jobs in the executive-type positions and doing well at it. A particular example, Iraida Gerey, senior vice-president in charge of sales. Linda Haley, president of my Gem Case company. For a bright woman, there's as much opportunity in the jewelry business as for a man.

Were there ever any strikes?

Never.

A union?

No union.

What effect have the government's regulations had on the company?

Well, we haven't done plating here in a good many years. We send it out, but we're partners in one of the bigger plating companies that does most of our work. We built a new building; we spent a fortune on pollution equipment. We're inspected regularly like anybody else, and we certainly try our hardest to stay within the laws.

How have changes in technology affected the business?

You know, that's hard to say. Really, we're backwards. We still glue by hand. It's basically the same casting machine that we've used for years. We still link by hand more than we do by machine. We still polish by hand more than we do by machine. We still pack the jewelry by hand. We've had no cost saving in years, but I don't think anybody's going to really develop a way to glue automatically, for example. Now let me just put it this way. If I glue, for two cents a stone, for a cheap stone in here, they glue in the same stone in China for an eighth of a cent. Now you put thirty stones in a piece and it costs me sixty cents; over there it costs three cents. Now how do you compete? You don't.

So what's the biggest kick that you could have now?

That I could have? That my son, who is the president of Weingeroff Enterprises, has a successful money-making company and that his customers like him, the people who work for him like him, that people will have respect for him, enjoy working here, and they'll go home with a smile rather than a frown on their faces.

He started working here twenty years ago and he's forty-one now, so he's been here a lot of years. He started costing when he began, and he worked his way up and had a lot of fun when it was good with me and had a lot of problems in the last five years with the way business is. You know, in the old days, I knew everybody who worked for me, and I'll tell you a cute story. When I finally moved from Branch Avenue to this nice, brand new building — which must be ten or twelve years ago — I had probably about 110 employees. Most of them, I think, were Italian because Branch Avenue was a predominantly Italian neighborhood. I would say that ninety percent of the employees had been with me for years. They knew me by my first name, and I knew them by their first names. But when we moved to Cranston, we weren't on a bus line, and I figured we'd lose over half our employees. Well, I want to tell you, one quit, two retired, and all the rest of them came.

How old is your oldest employee? Who's been with you the longest?

Oh, God, he's still here. In an advisory capacity. His name is John Folco, and he's been with me for almost forty years. He was my treasurer, and then my bookkeeper, Julia Sheridan, has probably thirty-five years; she comes in occasionally to help out if I need her. There are some people here with me thirty years or more.

So how do you feel about the current business situation?

Years ago, this city could offer somebody the opportunity to own their own company, go into the jewelry business without a big bank loan and work hard at it and be their own boss and make a living. It's a shame that doesn't exist today. It's a shame that what was an industry isn't an industry anymore. I guess that costume jewelry, overall, is not a big part of the economy that fuels this United States, but it was for Rhode Islanders. I don't think that I would sit here and tell newcomers to go into the jewelry business today. The industry's just had it, like the textile industry in this part of the country. It's just had it. I mean, listen, if Coro can no longer be here, if Monet and Trifari were just sold — those wonderful companies — and if Napier is offered for sale and nobody is buying, it's a sign of the times.

And very smart people ran those companies. They worked hard. Jimmy Winoker at B.B. Greenberg worked hard at what he did. Certainly a very brilliant man in the jewelry industry. Unfortunately, he lost his business. I'd say that if people want to work in the jewelry industry, there's always a chance for a good salesman, there's always a chance for good modelmakers to make a living, and they're hard to find today — good plant managers and people like that. Samplemakers. The jobs are not plenty, but for the good ones there'll always be a job because there'll always be an industry. But it's something that I wouldn't set my sights on if I was going to learn a trade.

Do you think there's any possibility of something happening to turn it around?

No. I would say that the only thing that could happen is that they impose an unfair duty on the countries that import. That will not happen. In terms of this, the world is much smaller today; you can't impose unfair things on other countries that are going to allow us to export.

As you tell it, you're had a truly exciting career. What are you most proud of?

Well, I'm most proud that I started in a business with \$60,000, with my father, in a cellar, and that I have three children that I think I've brought up pretty well. And I'm most proud that in the United States of America somebody with very little money — and I still only had two and a half years of college — went into the jewelry business and worked very hard and reaped the rewards of it.



Ida Camelhor Silverman, 1900.

Ida Camelhor Silverman: The Early Years

by Alene F. Silver

Dr. Silver, a frequent contributor to this journal, is Professor Emerita of Biology at Rhode Island College and a former Research Associate at Brown University, with over twenty papers to her credit. Here she discusses a prominent Zionist of Providence. Accompanying the article, we reprint a letter of thanks to Ida Silverman from David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister. The framed original is on display in the RIJHA office.

Introduction

In May of 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed. This was the culmination, though not the end, of a long and bitter struggle to create a Jewish homeland. Ida Silverman of Providence was probably more responsible for this outcome than any other individual in Rhode Island. During the preceding two decades she had traveled the world, bringing the message of Zionism to audiences in Europe, Canada, the U.S.A., the British Isles, Australia, and South America. Her intelligence and passion were communicated by her unique oratorical gifts, and she succeeded in eliciting from her hearers both emotional conviction and monetary contribution.

Her efforts were recognized by prominent figures in the early Jewish state. Chaim Weizmann, the first President of Israel, and David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, were among those who thanked her personally more than once.¹ American Zionists also acknowledged her work. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, a leading American Zionist, was a friend who encouraged her when she felt despondent about enemies in the American movement. (American Zionists were not an amicably united group during the nineteen twenties.)

Ida Silverman's effect on audiences was described by an English reporter in 1942.² He had accompanied her for several weeks during her speaking engagements through the embattled British Isles; at that time Britain was at war with Germany and the situation of German Jews was catastrophic. "So saturated with horror are we," he wrote, "that ... we can no longer react emotionally to the dull repetition of Jewish misery. There has been almost a transformation from characteristic 'Anglo' Jewish interest in Palestine to quite a passionate zeal for Eretz Israel. And this has been the

achievement of the quiet-mannered woman from Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A.”

“In a Glasgow suburb,” he continued, “the audience would not leave Cash, cheques, coins came in a steady stream to the platform. An eighty-year-old woman offered her wedding ring. A soldier handed over his week’s pay. A small girl asked if she could give her pocket money, two shillings, for Palestine. A comfortably attired woman said, ‘I have never parted with money so easily.’” The reporter credited this phenomenon to the “affection which this woman of Providence arouses everywhere.”

The official career of Ida Silverman has been admirably described by Helen Morris in her 1980 article, “Ida Silverman: Nobody’s Puppet.”³ The present essay is an attempt to present aspects of the individual behind the impressive *curriculum vitae*. The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association is fortunate in possessing an abundance of material written by or directly related to Mrs. Silverman. In addition, there is a lengthy interview taped in 1972, when she was eighty-nine years old,⁴ and this tape is not mentioned in the Morris article. With so much documentation, it seems possible to gain credible insight into the personality of this unique woman.

Mrs. Silverman described herself succinctly in 1953, when she was seventy years old, to a reporter from the *Providence Evening Bulletin*: “And who was I? Mrs. Nobody from Nowhere, a housewife with four children and not much education.”⁵ This will hardly do! We want to know more about the early life of a person who rose to such prominence from certainly humble beginnings. Many facts given by her are helpful in providing information about her early life. Some items are questionable in that she sometimes gave conflicting statements. And then there are certain events about which she was entirely silent, some of which we have been able to clarify.

Ida Marcia Camelhor was born in Kovno, Lithuania (at that time part of tsarist Russia) on October 31, 1882. She was the youngest of eight children, six of whom died in infancy. When she was eight months old her parents, her twelve-year-old brother and Ida left Kovno for America, her father clutching a Torah in one arm and Ida in the other.⁶ They crossed the frozen Niemann River “all wearing four pairs of socks,” and eventually arrived in New York City in the lower East Side. From the bare data, one might guess that the Camelhor men did not cope very successfully with the exigencies of the New World. The father was a Torah scholar who was a peddler in New York and

later a grocer in Providence. The son moved to Alabama for a while, running a variety store.

Ida Camelhor moved to Providence when she was ten. She attended public schools through about one and a half years of high school and then went to work. She married Archibald Silverman in 1900 when she was eighteen and he was twenty. He was also a Russian immigrant and he went on to considerable financial success in the jewelry business. The couple had four children between 1902 and 1914. Ida Silverman was later able to pursue an energetic and successful career as an ardent Zionist in good measure due to the enthusiasm and financial backing of her husband.

Mrs. Silverman was widowed in 1966 when she was in her eighties. In 1972 she moved to Israel and died there in 1973. She was buried on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. During the latter part of her life she received many honors, and her obituaries were eloquent testimony to her contributions to the Jewish state.

What forces motivated this exceptional woman and made her so successful in her chosen enterprise? I believe we can gain some answers by examining certain events in her early life and her reactions to them. We can read her own words in her scrapbooks, in newspaper interviews, in letters, and especially we can hear her speak at some length of her early life in the long 1972 taped interview.

Ardent Zionism

Whence the great emotional drive for a Jewish homeland? Consider that Ida Camelhor had a deep love for her father. The extensive interview with Mrs. Silverman published in the *Providence Evening Bulletin* in 1953 when she was seventy bears the headline "Mrs. Silverman Gives Dad Full Credit for Her Achievements." "My father," she stated, "was really a great child psychologist. He taught me religion in a way so that I felt very close to it. He made God seem very intimate."

In addition to piety, Ida, even as a small child, had a feeling of her own worth, a definite ego. In her papers of the 1930s and 1940s is a page in her handwriting that is written carefully and seriously, with insertions and corrections.⁷ It combines the love of Judaism gained from her father with her own self-confidence:

I remember, I remember . . . I remember at the age of five, trying to interpret my first conscious recurrent dream to my father. He,

being ultra-orthodox, considered it almost a sin to translate dreams, and tried to discourage me from telling mine. When, however, I asked him, "Why then could Joseph explain dreams in the Bible?" my quick and startling answer impressed my father to such a degree that he not only permitted me to tell him my dreams, but thereafter oft-times asked me to interpret his as well. This was the beginning of the rare dream interpretations of my life — each one having had an especial significance as a portent of something important.

Perhaps this was a hint to her of a future role as a Joseph leading her people.

Again she refers to her father in an interview in 1957:⁸ "I knew I must aid in creating a homeland for my people and I recalled the words of my greatest teacher, my father: 'If I am not for me, who will be; if I am only for myself what am I; if I don't do for myself today then when?'" (A paraphrase of Rabbi Hillel's famous dictum, ending "If not now, when?")⁹ These words were mentioned by Mrs. Silverman more than once, and their wisdom impressed her. There is no doubt that self-reliance, idealism and readiness to act characterized much of her life.

For example, one of the most telling incidents of her early life occurred while she was in elementary school in Providence. She recalled this in great detail in the taped interview of 1972, when she was eighty-nine. Remarkably, she gives the name of the principal, even spelling it out:

Mr. Noyes, N-O-Y-E-S, a tall man, he's a little bit hunch-backed, was the principal. And while I was in "shul," synagogue, for the High Holy Days, if you please, the children in the school selected a play. Every year there was an Anthony Prize given, and it was won by the person who did the best — something to read that was unknown to them until then, and then the play. Well, it seems that while I was away for the High Holy Days they selected *The Merchant of Venice*. Well, I was tiny, the littlest girl in the play, but I did not like *The Merchant of Venice* to be given publicity, as it were. There were going to be five judges at the show and two of them were going to be priests, two high school teachers, and the fifth, someone at the school. And I went to ask the principal, having first asked the teacher, "Why couldn't you wait till another day when I could have convinced them not to read *The Merchant of Venice*?" And she told me, and she was right, that they had selected it, and all the leading parts were taken, and I said "May I go to see Mr. Noyes?" And he, in order to see me, would always lift me up onto a chair, and he smoothed my curls. I had curls in those days

(laughing). And I said "Can't we change it from *The Merchant of Venice*? It's only been two days!" "No, it's too late. They were very enthusiastic."

I was the only Jewish girl. So naturally I had to make the best of it.

There were fifteen students nominated for this prize, the Anthony Medal. They had cards, 1, 2, 3 etc. instead of names, and the order was given in the great big auditorium that "*no one was to applaud.*" I read the sight reading well, but when it came to Signor Antonio and then Shylock, I spoke for Shylock. There was a hush in that vast audience. The applause was deafening, as they all stood up like one to applaud me. Despite the order not to applaud, anyway they applauded me.

The result was that the fifteen boys and girls were asked to go down to their home rooms, and the results of the contest would be brought down. Sure enough, Mr. Noyes came down and he said to me, "You go into my study and wait for me." I was unsuspecting, naturally. I saw the response. Nobody had seen anything like it. So I waited. Eventually he called out the name of the girl, and she was a *poor reader*, who won the prize. And then he stood me up on the chair, smoothed my clothes, and said, "Please don't cry. I know you want to, but don't. You did not get the medal."

I cried, naturally. It was a disappointment! I wouldn't have felt that way if they hadn't applauded and stood up. ... I said to myself, "How could I expect otherwise from the judges? I was the only Jewess and I gave a sympathetic view of Shylock."

Righteous indignation against injustice in her personal life was linked to the plight of Shylock and by extension to all Jews in an anti-Semitic world. Zionism was a natural outlet for these convictions. In addition, Ida Camelhor received an indelible impression of her ability to move an audience.

An Intelligent Debater

What about the actual content of Mrs. Silverman's message? That is, how good was she as an intelligent and forceful polemicist? We cite two examples, one in 1927, notable in that it elicited congratulations from Chaim Weizmann (later the first President of Israel), and the other from 1945, part of a letter to a noted British politician.

1) A news article in the *Providence Journal*, dated January 1, 1927, quoted the Reverend A. T. Brooks of Providence, who had just returned

from a trip during which he had spent a few days in Palestine.¹⁰ He concluded that the Zionist movement was nearly a total failure. Ida Silverman, who had visited Palestine at length several times since 1925, answered him in a long letter to the editor published two days later.¹¹ She refuted all his statements and in conclusion she advised him to stick to preaching and marrying. In her scrapbook is a telegram sent to her, dated January 9, 1927, from Chaim Weizmann: "Many thanks, your article in reply to Brooks. It is an excellent statement. Heartiest congratulations though I know you need no thanks from me. Weizmann."¹²

2) We have a copy of a long letter by Mrs. Silverman sent in 1945 to Leslie Hore-Belisha, a British politician with whom she corresponded.¹³ He had asked her why the countries of the world refused to give asylum to German Jews fleeing Hitler. Her answer was a long essay on anti-Semitism, Hitler, and the need for a Jewish homeland. (Hore-Belisha was a Jew of Sephardic descent who was Secretary of State for War in the British Cabinet during World War II. He was raised to the peerage in 1954.)¹⁴

We will quote two paragraphs from the Silverman letter to show how cogently she urged the case for Zionism, especially at this crucial time at the end of World War II and three years before the establishment of the state of Israel. We can see in her response the same indignation, clear logic, and sympathy for the oppressed that she expressed almost half a century earlier to Mr. "N-O-Y-E-S":

Yes, my friend, the world at large made it quite clear that they were not interested in the Jewish case, when, in 1933 Hitler started on his program of Jewish extermination (after having proclaimed his intentions far and wide) and no nation protested against his atrocities, no, neither did the Christian Church. The callous indifference, this absolute silence, was most significant. It proved conclusively to Hitler that which he already knew, namely, that the lack of protest was to him, *an endorsement of what he was doing*.

But Hitler's propaganda, his doctrine of hate and persecution, could not have taken effect so readily if the soil were not favorable for the seeds of Hitlerism to be sown. What greater encouragement did he need than the fiasco — nay, mockery — of the Evian conference in 1938? Thirty-two nations had been called together to find a solution to the problem of the German Jews — 400,000 were still in Germany and their very existence was threatened — all it needed was that each of the countries represented admit a few, just

a mere handful, as it were. With the exception of Australia's offer to admit 15,000 (of which number, by the way, only 7,000 have thus far entered) no other country volunteered to accept any of them, not even the United States, that had convened this conference. Can you imagine Hitler's satisfaction and joy? This was exactly what he had anticipated and this was all he needed to prove how little we were wanted anywhere.

Mrs. Silverman's writing, like her speeches, was specific, cogent, vivid, and moving. Her words were her own, and demonstrate a high degree of intelligence. As a child she had been outstanding in this respect, and she had felt outraged then too if her mental ability was not recognized. She remarked, when she was eighty-nine, that when she moved to Providence at the age of ten, "I went to the Candace Street School and they set me back *two years* because I knew too much and it wasn't good to know too much. It isn't good to have a precocious child." And when she entered Central High School "the teachers did not know what to do with me. They had to keep me with children of my own size and years. You understand, don't you?"¹⁵ From comments like these we can understand her early intolerance of injustice.

Ida Camelhor and her Family

Although Ida Silverman referred to her father with great admiration for his piety, she almost never mentioned her mother or her brother. In fact, she never gave a name to anyone in her family. She often stated that she was "orphaned at age fifteen."¹⁶ This statement we find to be misleading on two counts. The word "orphaned" usually implies the death of both parents, although the dictionary permits the word to stand for the death of only one. Ida Camelhor's father died in 1899 when she was almost seventeen. Her mother was still alive in 1915, since Mrs. Silverman remarked in the 1972 tape that her mother, an orthodox Jew, would not attend the Bar Mitzvah of her daughter's oldest son in the reformed Temple Beth-El.

In a second instance, Mrs. Silverman stated that her mother "was greatly embittered by the loss of all but one of her children."¹⁷ Mrs. Silverman forgot to mention her brother in this case, but she stated elsewhere that her brother died at age twenty-nine.¹⁸ In the 1972 tape we hear that "my mother and I went to live near my brother, who lived near the Point Street Bridge (in Providence); when my father did come (after settling his affairs in New York) we moved to Bernon Street." This checks out with the Providence City Directories of that time. In 1893 an Abraham Camelhor is listed as a

clothing dealer at 502 Eddy Street. Two years later there is a Louis Kamelhor [sic], grocer, at 59 Bernon Street. In 1896 both Abraham and Louis Camelhor are listed living at the same address, 57 Bernon Street, with the distinction that this address was the home of Louis, but the place where Abraham boarded. Louis's grocery was still at 59 Bernon Street. We conclude that Louis was the name of Ida Camelhor's father, and that Abraham was her brother.

According to the City Directory of 1900, Louis Camelhor died on October 23, 1899. His death is also recorded in the Rhode Island Department of Health,¹⁹ which gives his full name, Hyman Louis Camelhor, his age, fifty-six, and the cause of his death, stomach cancer. Ida Camelhor was eight days short of her seventeenth birthday. The 1900 City Directory also notes a Mrs. Mary Camelhor, grocer, at 59 Bernon Street, house at 57 Bernon Street. This is the only listing in the Directories of those years for Mary Camelhor, presumably Ida's mother. Apparently she ran the grocery for the year following her husband's death.

After 1900 there is no mention of Abraham Camelhor. Ida Silverman stated in 1972 that her brother died at age twenty-nine. Since he was twelve in 1882 when the family left Russia, he would have died in 1899-1900. There is no record of his death in the Rhode Island death records. If Mrs. Silverman was correct in this case, then her brother would have died very close to the time of her father's death.

What about her mother, Mary Camelhor? Here we encounter a strange and unexpected situation. Mary Camelhor's husband died in October 1899. Her daughter Ida was married on December 4, 1900. The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association has one of the original wedding invitations.²⁰ It states, "Mr. and Mrs. S. Levin [sic] request your presence at the marriage ceremony of their daughter, Ida, to Mr. Archibald Silverman, December 4, 1900. Bride's residence, 57 Bernon Street." This invitation gives the name of Mr. and Mrs. S. Levin as the parents of Ida (no mention of Camelhor) and gives her residence as the same 57 Bernon Street where the family had lived for the past five years.

It was logical to assume that Mary Camelhor had remarried between October 1899 and December 1900. Ida Silverman never mentioned this in all her writings and interviews. We searched for relevant documents for a long time before finding, in a Brides' Register kept by the State of Rhode Island, the record of the marriage of Mary Camelhor to Simon Levin on

August 10, 1900, "both previously married."²¹

Simon Levin is well documented in the Providence City Directories. He was a manufacturer of soda water, in business with his three sons at 208 Chalkstone Avenue from 1893 to 1900. The following year, 1901, he is listed at a different address, no longer with his sons, at 249 Chalkstone. He was then listed as a grocer, and remained at that address until he died in 1914. It would seem that Simon and Mary, having married in August 1900, then took over the Camelhor grocery business, moving from Bernon Street to Chalkstone Avenue in 1901.

Recently a great-granddaughter of Simon Levin confirmed and extended our knowledge of these events.²² She stated that Simon Levin's first wife, Etta Levin, had died on June 25, 1900, and that Simon had then remarried "the mother of Ida Silverman." She remarked that the Levin family felt that Simon's second wife did not bring much of material value to the marriage. The Camelhors were clearly not conspicuous for their worldly goods, although they did produce a woman who gave much of inestimable value to the cause of Judaism and Zionism.

Thus, in the space of ten months Ida Camelhor was, in effect, orphaned. On October 23, 1899, her father died. Ten months later, on August 10, 1900, her mother remarried, and her brother probably died the same year. These events undoubtedly left a deep imprint.

In a newspaper interview published in December 1960, on the occasion of the sixtieth wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Silverman,²³ there is a brief reference to their circumstances around the time of their marriage in 1900. It states, "Soon she was working for the man she was to marry. 'I was naturally attracted,' Mr. Silverman said, thinking back to those days. 'I was lonely,' his wife recalled." It does not require a great leap of the imagination to understand that this must have been an understatement of her feelings in 1900. Is it too much to suggest that the grief for her beloved father was compounded by her mother's prompt remarriage? In the event, Ida Camelhor showed the self-reliance recommended by Hillel and her father. She embarked upon a highly productive, happy and successful life in spite of the events of 1899 and 1900.

Ida Camelhor's brother remains an enigma. Many statements of his sister implied that she was an only child. This may reflect a common case of sibling rivalry, although the eleven-year difference in age may account for it. We do not know anything about the father's attitude, but it would be usual

for a pious Jew to greatly value his only son. Perhaps the little girl wished to supplant her sibling in his privileged position of older male child. And one might say, in that case, that she did achieve that problematic childish goal: she became famous while he is unknown, his death not even recorded.

Conclusion

The young Ida Camelhor seems to have been an ambitious, imaginative, intelligent and talented child, emotionally very close to her father. She may have cherished an image of herself as the only child of a loving father (and perhaps an unloving mother), a child who could become a leader of her people like the Biblical Joseph. The conjunction of Jewish need and Ida's talent for oratory can be foreseen in her early success in the role of Shylock. Her self-confidence was a necessary attribute in her adult role. Her father's regard, love and admiration for her ability must have contributed greatly to this self-confidence.

She was greatly attached to her father, then, and not close to her mother or brother. As a child she already showed a lively sense of righteous indignation toward injustice, both on her own behalf and that of the Jews. Her intelligence, self-confidence and self-reliance, and her great talent for oratory, can be traced back to her earliest years.



Letter from David Ben Gurion to Ida Silverman

Ideh-Boker, 10.5.70

My dear Mrs. Archibald Silverman,

I join you with all my heart in your prayer to go to your and our Home as soon as possible, and will be happy to meet you and to be your guide in all places you want to visit—and, please, come as soon as possible.

Yours,

D. Ben Gurion

25 Channing Ave.

Providence, R.I.

U.S.A.

Edith Bowen, 10.5.70
My dear Mrs. Archibald Silverman
I join you with all my heart in
your prayers to go to your sweet
Home as soon as possible, and
will be happy to meet you and
to be your guide in all places
to you want to visit - and, please,
come as soon as possible
yours
D. Bowen Jones

25 Channing Ave
Providence, R.I.
U.S.A.

Notes

- ¹ A. F. Silver, "Ida Silverman," *Rhode Island Jewish Herald*, April 23, 1998, p. 6.
- ² A. L. Easterman, "Providence Sent Us 'Ida Leben'," *Zionist Review*, June 26, 1942.
- ³ Helen Morris, "Ida Silverman: Nobody's Puppet," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1980, pp. 109-129.
- ⁴ Ida Silverman, taped interview by Florence Markoff, 1972. Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Archives.
- ⁵ Lucille Elfenbein, "Mrs. Silverman Gives Dad Full Credit for her Achievements," *Providence Evening Bulletin*, Dec. 5, 1953.
- ⁶ George Popkin, "Archibald Silvermans Mark 60th Wedding Anniversary," *Providence Evening Bulletin*, Dec. 5, 1960.
- ⁷ Ida Silverman, "I remember, I remember," handwritten note in scrapbook No. 7 (1930s/1940s).
- ⁸ Marilyn Giese, "It's Wonderful to be Active," *Providence Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 31, 1957.
- ⁹ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI, p. 398. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1916.
- ¹⁰ "Rev. A. T. Brooks," *Providence Journal*, Jan. 1, 1927, p. 15.
- ¹¹ Ida Silverman, "Letter to the Editor," *Providence Evening Bulletin*, Jan. 3, 1927, p. 10.
- ¹² Chaim Weizmann, telegram dated Jan. 9, 1927, in Ida Silverman scrapbook, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Archives.
- ¹³ Ida Silverman, copy of letter sent to Leslie Hore-Belisha dated Aug. 12, 1945, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Archives.
- ¹⁴ "Leslie Hore-Belisha," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Jerusalem: Kater, 1972, pp. 974-975.
- ¹⁵ Taped interview by Florence Markoff, 1972.
- ¹⁶ Morris, "Ida Silverman"; and Elfenbein, "Mrs. Silverman Gives Dad Full Credit."
- ¹⁷ Elfenbein, "Mrs. Silverman Gives Dad Full Credit."
- ¹⁸ Taped interview by Florence Markoff, 1972.
- ¹⁹ Rhode Island Death Register (Rhode Island Dept. of Health), 1899, p. 782.
- ²⁰ Invitation to wedding of Ida (Camelhor) and Archibald Silverman. Original in Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Archives.
- ²¹ Rhode Island Marriage Index, 1890-1900: Bride Index, 1900, p. 534.
- ²² Irma Silverman (no relation to Archibald Silverman), telephone conversation, Feb. 9, 1999.
- ²³ Popkin, "Archibald Silvermans Mark 60th Wedding Anniversary."

“In the Sufferer, Let Me See Only the Human”: A Brief Look at Some Jewish and non-Jewish Medical Oaths

by Stanley M. Aronson, MD, and Betty E. Aronson, MD

Dr. Stanley Aronson, the founding Dean of the Brown University School of Medicine and co-founder of Hospice Care of Rhode Island, now serves as consultant for the overseas programs of the Rockefeller Foundation. He also writes a weekly column for The Providence Journal. His wife Betty, Professor of Pediatrics at Brown University, is the founder of Virology Laboratories in Rhode Island. This medical team has been married for fifty-seven years. Here they offer the third in our series of articles by Rhode Islanders taking a broad view of Jewish history.

Oaths come in various sizes, purposes and degrees of piety. They may serve as validating instruments when entering a profession, an elected office, military service, even marriage; or as loyalty pledges to some institution, religious or secular. Some oaths may even be structured as personal prayers.

There is a material difference between an oath and an ordinary promise. An oath is formulaic, is pronounced in the presence of others, frequently identifies God as the principal witness, and regularly stipulates certain punishments if the oath is not fulfilled or is subsequently broken. Oaths are characteristically employed in the rites of initiation for those entering regulated professions, organizations, guilds or religious orders.

The contractual character of an oath, with its chilling Faustian undercurrent, is undeniable: if the person uttering the oath complies with its provisions then something good will be bestowed upon him; but if he fails to comply then an awesome fate awaits him. Swearing [or affirming] is the formal, validating act of accepting the oath. It is the symbolic equivalent of signing one's name to a contract. In modern times the swearing component of the oath is accomplished by placing one's hand upon the scriptural text of one's faith [*tactis sacrosanctis Evangeliiis*]. This is customarily accompanied by the raising of one's other hand while uttering the oath. "For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear ..." [Deut. 32:40]

In ancient days when medicine had few curative tools beyond common sense, a few herbs, and perhaps the persuasiveness of magic, almost everyone practiced some medicine. Gradually, as certain learned interventions were shown to have some curative merit, the more educated in the community, usually the priests and priestesses, fulfilled the role of part-time physician. And so, before medicine separated itself from the priesthood and before a guild of physicians was finally formed, oaths for the practice of medicine had not been really needed; an empiric, primitive medicine was being practiced informally either by the elders or by the priests and priestesses already ordained in their temple-based profession. But eventually a medically-oriented priestly cult matured into a secular guild concerned only with preservation of health. The cult inevitably developed its own identity through the act of proclaiming special entrance requirements and training curriculums. And some sort of solemn initiating oath then insured that the new novice-students would adhere to the moral and procedural tenets of the healing profession.

One of the first medical oaths known to historians is a 5th Century BCE document from the eastern Mediterranean Dodecanese islands. This famous oath is ascribed to one man, Hippocrates, but was more likely written and amended by many. In its present form, it represents the oath subscribed to by most European and American physicians upon graduation from medical school. But there are also other oaths, a few over one thousand years old, some of which were taken by prior generations of Jewish physicians. These include the oath said to be written by Asaph ha-Rophe [possibly in the 6th Century CE], the prayer of Moses Maimonides [12th Century CE] and the declaration of Jacob Zahalon [17th Century CE]. And finally, for comparison, there is the Oath of the Physician adopted by Brown University School of Medicine in 1975.

Some of these oaths, particularly the one said to be written by Maimonides, are called prayers. A prayer, of course, is not exactly an oath. An oath says: I promise to do something; and in striving to fulfill this promise I shall hold myself accountable, my actions to be monitored by a higher authority. A prayer, in general, is a more humble supplication. It calls upon the higher authority to undertake a specified action. Sometimes the object of the prayer is morally defensible, sometimes not; the act of praying does not, by itself, sanctify the wish. The prayers of Maimonides and Zahalon, however, go beyond mere goal-oriented supplications. Each in its own way beseeches the

Creator to empower the supplicant to be of greater help in aiding the disabled, the distressed and the disenfranchised of the world.

The Greek physicians, members of a majority population, could confidently invest their energies in defining and protecting their guild; and their oath emerges as an assertive declaration. The oaths [or prayers] of the Jewish physicians, on the other hand, reflect the endangered character of their professional status. Their prayers had little of the self-assured, regulatory nature of the Hippocratic Oath; rather these prayers seem to be the pleas of a marginalized group asking for help from a higher authority since neither help nor guarantees of security were forthcoming from the governing authorities of their day.

A brief comparison of these various oaths may then be of some value in reconstructing the evolving moral basis of medicine during the last three millennia; and it may allow the reader to identify those ethical precepts which Jewish physicians, in different centuries, considered to be fundamental to the ethical practice of medicine.

The Hippocratic Oath

The origins and authorship of this oath are unknown although it is conventionally ascribed to Hippocrates of the island of Cos and is said to have been composed in the 5th Century BCE. The present version of the Oath may be as originally written; but more likely it represents countless amendments and revisions over the centuries. Many questions inevitably arise: who subscribed to such an Oath? All medical practitioners or only members of the Asclepiad Guild? How binding were its stipulations? What was the nature of the indenture? Who enforced the Oath? Did the surgeons [referred to in the Oath as craftsmen] have a separate guild? And to what degree was the Oath instrumental in influencing the various oaths taken, centuries hence, by Jewish physicians?

Oath of Hippocrates

I swear by Apollo, physician, by Asclepius, by Health, by Panacea and by all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will carry out, according to my ability and judgment, this oath and this indenture. To hold my teacher in this art equal to my own parents; to make him partner in my livelihood; when he is in need of money to share mine with him; to consider his family as my own brothers, and to teach them this art, if they want to learn it, without fee or indenture; to impart precept, oral instruc-

tion and all other instruction to my own sons, the sons of my teacher and to indentured pupils who have taken the physician's oath, but to nobody else. I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrongdoing. Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course. Similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause abortion. But I will keep pure and holy both my life and my art. I will not use the knife not even, verily, on sufferers from stone, but I will give place to such as are craftsmen therein. Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick, and I will abstain from all intentional wrong-doing and harm, especially from abusing the bodies of man or woman, bond or free. And whatsoever I shall see or hear in the course of my profession, as well as outside my profession in my intercourse with men, if it be what should not be published abroad, I will never divulge, holding such things to be holy secrets. Now if I carry out this oath, and break it not, may I gain forever reputation among all men for my life and for my art; but if I transgress it and forswear myself, may the opposite befall me.

Comment: This Oath, with modifications to suit individual campuses, has become the standard initiating pledge for Western medicine. It is an uncluttered, unemotional statement with many unambiguous assertions, such as respect for the medical faculty, the primacy of patient care and the need for confidentiality, features that have become the bedrock of current medical ethics. The Oath begins with the customary bow to those deities concerned with health and disease, leaving out none; but then it proceeds to treat the practice of medicine as a very earthbound enterprise. It states what must be done, what is forbidden, and who should support whom.

It should be pointed out that inducing abortion as well as practicing some forms of surgery were both legitimate and widespread in the orbit of Greek civilization. The Oath merely enjoins the physician from engaging in either activity, leaving such functions to others.

The Oath of Asaph

Little is known about Asaph ben Berakyahu [also known as Asaph ha-Rophe or Asaph Judaeus] except that he was a Jewish physician born in Mesopotamia probably in the 5th Century CE. He authored a general text in medicine, *Sefer Refuot*, some 396 pages long, which ends with a covenantal oath to be sworn to by his pupils. The text, copies of which are stored in

various European and Israeli libraries, relies heavily upon the prior works of Hippocrates, Galen and Dioscorides. The treatise contains an extensive section on the therapeutic uses of various herbs, an exposition on fever and its varieties, a summation of commonly encountered diseases and many of Asaph's clinical aphorisms. The manuscripts of Asaph were among those listed as required reading in medical education documents from Narbonne, France [8th Century CE] and Egypt [10th Century CE.] What follows is a somewhat abbreviated form of the Oath of Asaph:

The Oath of Asaph

And this is the covenant that Asaph, son of Berakhyahu, and Johanan, son of Zabda, entered into with their disciples and enjoined them saying:

Take heed that you kill not any man with a root decoction; do not prepare any potion that might cause a woman who has conceived in adultery to miscarry; and do not lust after beautiful women to commit adultery with them; and do not divulge a man's secret that he has confided unto you; and do not be bribed to do injury and harm and do not harden your heart against the poor and the needy; rather have compassion upon them and heal them. Do not speak of good as evil nor of evil as good. Do not follow in the ways of the sorcerer to enchant by witchcraft and magic to part a man from his beloved or a woman from the husband of her youth. Do not covet any bride or assist in sexual misdemeanors. Do not make use of idol worship to heal thereby nor trust in its healing powers but despise, detest and hate all its worshippers and those that trust in it and cause others to believe in it for it is all worthless and of no avail. They rely upon demons and hosts which do not exist and inasmuch as they cannot help their lifeless bodies, how can they save the living? And now, trust in the Lord your God, the God of truth, the living God, for he puts to death and brings to life. He smites and heals. He bestows understanding to man and teaches him to serve.

The Lord is with you when you are with Him and if you keep his covenant and walk in His statutes and cleave unto them you shall be as saints in the eyes of all flesh.

Further admonitions are found in an appendix to the Oath. Do not mix poisons nor disclose their constitution. Do not cause the shedding of blood by essaying any dangerous experiment in the exercise of medical skill; do not cause a sickness in any man; do not hasten to maim and do not cut the flesh of man by any iron instrument.

Comment: There is little doubt that the Hippocratic Oath, written about one thousand years before the Oath of Asaph, deeply influenced the contents of this fifth Century CE document. This is particularly evident in issues such as prohibiting physicians from inducing abortion, intentionally poisoning patients [whether or not it is called euthanasia], the inflexible need for confidentiality and the avoidance of surgery. The statement “do not prepare any potion that might cause a woman who has conceived in adultery to miscarry” is curious since it can be misconstrued as indicating that inducing abortion is quite permissible except when the pregnancy was the result of an adulterous union. More likely, the avoidance of any form of abortion [by physicians, at least] was so widely known that it therefore went unstated in the oath.

Asaph’s Oath offers some new elements: the perniciousness of magic, sorcery and idol worship in the practice of medicine; a more explicit condemnation of sexual abuse by the practicing physician; and disapproval of experimentation on humans, in the guise of conventional therapy.

The Hippocratic Oath carries a clearly worded *quid pro quo* clause [If I carry out this oath, may I gain for ever reputation. But if I transgress it, may the opposite befall me.] This is only hinted at in the Oath of Asaph nor is it incorporated in any of the other oaths or prayers considered below. It may be presumed, then, that only the Hippocratic Oath was employed by professional groups larger than a handful of faithful apprentices.

The clearest distinction between the Hippocratic and Asaphean Oaths is the obvious piety which permeates much of the latter. The Hippocratic physician had made his ritual obeisances to his gods and then was on his own. And if his therapy turned out to be successful it enhanced his own reputation. Asaph, on the other hand, states that all things are from God [“He puts to death and brings to life.”] and the physician is merely his anointed surrogate. Asaph’s prayer, at first glance, seems profoundly humble. But it may also be interpreted as the physician avoiding his personal responsibility for any adverse clinical outcome, blaming it then on some preordained scenario mandated by a higher authority.

The Prayer of Moses Maimonides

Maimonides [Moses ben Maimon] was born in Cordova in 1135, descending from a family of eminent scholars and physicians. When he was a youth of thirteen, Cordova was captured by the Almohades and the family fled first to Morocco and, years later, to Egypt. The details of Maimonides’

education are not known but his reputation as a skilled medical practitioner spread widely and eventually he was appointed as physician to the court of Saladin. His writings, medical, philosophical, rabbinical, were extensive.

The provenance and authorship of this touching prayer is in doubt. There are scholars who declare that the oath [or prayer] of Maimonides was, in fact, written by a prominent 18th Century Berlin physician. But so many elements of the prayer can be found in his abundant writings that historians continue to ascribe the prayer to Maimonides. What follows is a translation of those segments which pertain to the practices of medicine.

Daily Prayer of a Physician

Almighty God, Thou hast created the human body with infinite wisdom. Ten thousand times ten thousand organs hast Thou combined in it that they act unceasingly and harmoniously to preserve the whole in all its beauty—the body which is the envelope of the immortal soul. They are ever acting in perfect order, agreement and accord. Yet when the frailty of the matter or the unbridling of passions deranges this order or interrupts this accord, then forces clash and the body crumbles into the primal dust from which it came. Thou sendest to man diseases as beneficent messengers to foretell approaching danger and to warn him to avert it.

Inspire me with love for my art and for Thy creatures. Do not allow thirst for profit, ambition for renown and admiration, to interfere with my profession, for these are the enemies of truth and of love for mankind and they can lead astray in the great task of attending to the welfare of Thy creatures. Preserve the strength of my body and of my soul that they ever be ready cheerfully to help and support rich and poor, good and bad, enemy as well as friend. In the sufferer let me see only the human being. Illumine my mind that it recognize what presents itself and that it may comprehend what is absent or hidden. Let it not fail to see what is visible, but do not permit it to arrogate to itself the power to see what cannot be seen, for delicate and indefinite are the bounds of the great art of caring for the lives and health of Thy creatures. Let me never be absent-minded. May no strange thoughts divert my attention at the bedside of the sick, or disturb my mind in its silent labors, for great and sacred are the thoughtful deliberations required to preserve the lives and health of Thy creatures.

Grant that my patients have confidence in me and my art and follow my directions and counsel. Remove from their midst all

charlatans and the whole host of officious relatives and know-all nurses, cruel people who arrogantly frustrate the wisest purposes of our art and often lead Thy creatures to their death.

Should those who are wiser than I wish to improve and instruct me, let my soul gratefully follow their guidance; for vast is the extent of our art. Should conceited fools, however, censure me, then let love for my profession steel me against them, so that I remain steadfast without regard for age, for reputation, or for honor, because surrender would bring to Thy creatures sickness and death.

Imbue my soul with gentleness and calmness when older colleagues, proud of their age, wish to displace me or to scorn me or disdainfully to teach me. May even this be of advantage to me, for they know many things of which I am ignorant, but let not their arrogance give me pain. For they are old and old age is not master of the passions. I also hope to attain old age upon this earth, before Thee, Almighty God.

Let me be content in everything except in the great science of my profession. Never allow the thought to arise in me that I have attained to sufficient knowledge, but vouchsafe to me the strength, the leisure and ambition ever to extend my knowledge, For art is great, but the mind of mind is ever expanding.

Almighty God! Thou hast chosen me in Thy mercy to watch over life and death of thy creatures. I now apply myself to my profession. Support me in this great task so that it may benefit mankind, for without Thy help not even the least thing will succeed.

Comment: While there are hints of intensely human frustration, anger, fatigue, fear of aging and even petty asides in this prayer, it remains nonetheless a deeply moving, humane statement, at times more a lamentation than an oath. It is an imperfect plea attesting more to the 12th Century physician's appreciation of his inadequacies than his skills. And in this sense the Prayer of Maimonides reflects the grim realities of medieval medicine when the physician could do little more than commend his patient to the mercies of God with the poignant afterthought that the physician, some day, might become more competent.

The prayer of Maimonides lacks the refined, orderly instructional character of the Hippocratic Oath. This prayer, though, provides us with a window into the inner struggles of a learned, striving, intensely passionate practitioner who is rarely satisfied with his medical skills.

The prayer presents little in the way of a conventional oath; but its poetry, earnestness and compassion are undeniable. The admirable Hippocratic Oath, in comparison, now seems drained of human passion. The prayer of Maimonides, with some modifications, is currently used by a few medical schools as replacement for the Hippocratic Oath.

The Prayer of Zahalon

Jacob Zahalon, rabbi, physician and philosopher of Rome, was born in 1630. He achieved fame as an outstanding physician when the great plague revisited Rome in 1656. Zahalon was a prolific writer of both medical and religious tracts. His respected medical text, *Ozarha-Hqyyim* was published in 1683 and widely consulted. Zahalon died in 1693. His apprenticed medical students were enjoined to participate in the daily prayer which is summarized below.

The Physician's Prayer

Lord of the Universe! Thou alone hast made the Heavens and the Heavens of Heavens and all their hosts, the earth and all that is upon it, the seas and all that is within them. Thou givest life to all and sustenance to all. Thou hast formed man from the dust of the earth.

Thou dost punish him with afflictions and ailments. He is chastened also with pain on his bed and all his bones grow stiff. But Thou are the merciful and healer, as it is written: "I have wounded and I heal." [Deut. 32:39.]

I am minded to busy myself with the practice of medicine in Thy Holy Name and through Thy assistance. For Thou art the physician not I. I am but as the clay in the potter's hand. Since the practice of medicine is fraught with perils, and as I am a man of folly and of no understanding, fearing lest I grope at noonday as the blind grope in the dark, therefore do I cling to the fringes of Thy kindness and do follow Thee.

Bestow upon me knowledge and insight and to cause the eyes of my understanding to shine so that I may discern and diagnose the ailments of the body. If there come to me any patient whose allotted time is about to end may it be Thy will that I cause not the hastening of his death.

Make me wiser than my enemies so that I become a model to them. Let not my colleagues err and me rejoice.

My God, deliver me from the hand of the wicked, from the palm of the perverter and oppressor and place me not in his hand lest he entice me to practice wantonness to administer a poison or drug to injure some man or pregnant woman.

I pray that I may know the peculiar curative powers which thou has placed in herbs and minerals, in seeds and flowers, in roots and leaves, in wood and fruit, in wines and oils, in waters and in other liquids, in living organisms — and through them I shall tell of Thy might to all generations.

Do not destroy hope from out of my heart; do not incline me to evil; do not hide Thyself from my supplications; be gracious unto me and hearken unto my prayer and I must give thanks for everything and sing Hallelujahs and praise Thy name.

Comment: Some seemingly regressive elements appear in the Zahalon prayer. There are hints, for example, that the author believes that the ultimate cause of disease is located, not in earthly factors, but in the expression of divine displeasure over social transgressions. Much of the Hippocratic writings, in contrast, had sought to bring disease to the secular arena removed from a cosmology which saw illness solely as specifically directed punishments by a higher authority.

Zahalon was a deeply humble man who had insight into the enormity of his medical ignorance. As a physician of the 17th Century his body of medical knowledge was substantially greater than that possessed by the physicians of the 12th Century when Maimonides lived, and certainly more than the physicians of the Hippocratic era. Yet Zahalon's sense of professional abasement is substantially greater. His prayer is a pious statement, a plea for insight that might be expected of a man who served simultaneously as rabbi and as physician for an endangered community.

The professional status of Jewish physicians in 17th Century Italy was at best perilous. And a deep sense of insecurity permeates this prayer of Zahalon. Indeed, whatever good the physician may render is ascribed solely to the guiding hand of the Lord. Other than a condemnation of frank poisoning, it contains few prohibitions such as those identified in the oaths of Hippocrates and Asaph.

It is an intensely personal outcry and there is little to suggest that it was a formal oath for more than a handful of apprentices. For the Asclepian physicians of ancient Greece, the enemy was disease. For the handful of

Jewish physicians in 17th Century Rome, however, the enemy was three-fold: first, recurrent epidemic diseases such as plague, not known in pre-Hellenic times; second, as with all physicians, ignorance, the enormity of how little was known and how much was beyond their understanding; and third, as members of a minority population, a burden of discriminatory regulations severely restricting their medical practices.

The Brown University School of Medicine Oath

The medical school at Brown University graduated its first class of physicians in June of 1975. In preparation for the inaugural graduation ceremonies, a committee of medical students, faculty and administrators was convened to review the 5th Century BCE Hippocratic Oath and to determine whether its provisions were still appropriate for physicians in the 20th Century. After months of deliberation, including a review of other oaths, a newly devised oath was finally written. It is a very simple declaration shorn of embellishing adjectives. It has been subscribed to and taken by each succeeding class of Brown University medical students.

Brown University Oath of the Physician

Now being admitted to the high calling of the physician, I solemnly pledge to dedicate my life to the care of the sick, the promotion of health and the service of humanity.

In the spirit of those who have inspired and taught me, I will seek constantly to grow in knowledge, understanding and skill and will work with my colleagues to promote all that is worthy in the ancient and honorable profession of medicine.

The health and dignity of my patient will ever be my first concern. I will hold in confidence all that my patient relates to me. I will not permit consideration of race, gender, sexual preference, religion, nationality or social standing to come between me and my duty to anyone in need of my services. This pledge I make freely and upon my honor.

Comment: When the Brown University committee recommended this physician's oath for its newly graduated physicians, many community objections were raised. How dare this school allow the Hippocratic Oath, sacred to generations of physicians, be negligently superseded by an untried oath probably assembled in haste? To this the medical students countered: we respect the historic role of the Hippocratic Oath and have retained many of its immortal provisions. But we prefer an oath sensitive to those contem-

porary problems which we will encounter when we enter the practice of medicine. For example, we will not tolerate any bias which may intervene between us and the needs of our patients. Nor will we tolerate barriers between those qualified, of any gender or ethnic group, from entering the study of medicine. Given the hallowed, historic status of the Hippocratic Oath, why did the Brown University School of Medicine elect to displace it with an oath of its own? Specifically, what elements within the Hippocratic Oath did they find to be unacceptable? Three major objections to the Hippocratic Oath were singled out. First, that the Oath confines the study and practice of medicine solely to males; and further, it would appear, only to the sons of certified physicians. Second, that the Oath declares abortion, for any reason, to be forbidden. And third, that surgery is regarded as a lesser trade and not to be practiced by the physician.

In their deliberations leading up to a final oath of three brief paragraphs, the 1974 committee [under the direction of the eminent historian and morphologist Professor G. E. Erikson] were guided spiritually more by the Maimonides prayer than the Hippocratic Oath. They identified the statement "And in the sufferer let me see only the human" as the emotional embodiment of their newly devised oath.

Some have claimed that the Brown Oath denies the role of Almighty God and refrains from even mentioning a higher authority in any of its three paragraphs. But those who have written this oath — and those who attempt to live by it — reply that "the health and dignity of my patient" stands as a supremely spiritual commandment to invest one's energies in the service of others. Because in the end, they claim, it remains the performance in behalf of others rather than the stated intent or wish that should be judged. Oaths, said Butler, are but words, and words but wind.



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We Settled in the Suburbs: Founding Four Synagogues

by Geraldine Foster and Eleanor Horvitz

Ms. Foster is a past president of the RIJHA; Ms. Horvitz is Librarian-Archivist. This team has worked together tirelessly through the years to gather information from little-known sources and to interview people whose experiences might otherwise have gone without the recognition they deserve. Here they collaborate once again, this time to trace the establishment of four suburban temples after World War II.

In the middle of the twentieth century there occurred a rather unusual phenomenon: the founding of new synagogues in the suburban areas of Rhode Island. A study of the origins of four of these synagogues reveals many similarities, especially the primary role played by veterans. Conspicuous among the names of the founders of these synagogues are World War II veterans and their families. Their postwar needs for inexpensive housing and schools for their children contributed to a widespread move to the suburbs, which then led to a further need to organize congregations and Jewish centers in those suburbs. In Rhode Island housing was often scarce and often expensive. Marriage and the arrival of offspring among the returning servicemen built up a pressure to find affordable accommodations, and schooling, both public and religious, now became an important consideration. The new centers and synagogues were built in response to those needs.

In the post-war period there were many synagogues in the established Jewish neighborhoods; for example, for those who lived in the North End of Providence, there were both large and small Orthodox synagogues. Temple Emanu-El on Morris Avenue was the choice of Conservative families who lived on the East Side of Providence. Broad Street was the home of the Reform Temple Beth-El. Temple Beth Israel and other Orthodox synagogues were also in existence. However, Temples Beth-El and Emanu-El attracted a more affluent congregation, not always affordable to a young Jewish husband recently released from the service, and faced with making a living in a new job. Small, more affordable synagogues in other Jewish areas, such as in South Providence, were located in crowded neighborhoods.

There was, therefore, a movement to the suburban areas where young

families were gradually finding cheaper, roomier housing. One group founded the Cranston Jewish Community Club, whose name changed four times until its present one of Temple Torat Yisrael. Another move resulted in the establishment of Temple Sinai and Temple Beth Am in the Cranston-Warwick area, and drew families from East Greenwich and North Kingston as well as from Cranston and Warwick. And a Jewish center, the Eastward/Barrington Center, was established east of the Seekonk River. This study will consider the formative years of these four suburban temples in the decades following the Second World War, and their progress toward becoming "full-service" organizations.

The Cranston Jewish Community Club

According to "How We Began: Cranston Jewish Center, a Brief History of Temple Torat Yisrael," in a Temple publication entitled *After Forty Wonderful Years*,¹ thirty-five families organized the Cranston Jewish Community Club in 1942. The purpose was primarily social, to bring together the few Jewish families living in Cranston. "My husband (Dr. Daniel Kouffman) used to call every Jewish family who moved to Cranston to invite them to join," Zelda Kouffman told us. Dr. Kouffman served as president of the Cranston Chamber of Commerce at that time. The group met at the Dugout, the function room of Lindy's Diner on Reservoir Avenue in Cranston. Lindy's, a popular eatery, was owned by Albert Cohen, a founding member of the club.

Just three years after its founding, the membership had grown to 125 families. When Lindy's Dugout could no longer contain the burgeoning numbers, meetings were shifted to the American Legion Hall in Cranston. "The meetings were always very lively," Mrs. Kouffman said. "People were talking constantly. We had very strong interchanges." Harold Tregar agreed. "We ran everything like open forum meetings Everyone had an opinion and expressed it."

"We moved to Cranston in 1946," Mr. Tregar said. "Cranston was a sort of hinterland then. I was just out of the army, with a wife and a new baby, and we were looking for a place to live. We couldn't afford a house on the East Side (of Providence). Eunice's (Mrs. Tregar's) uncle Al Cohen suggested that we move to this area."

At first Mr. and Mrs. Tregar were not interested "in the Jewish factor." They felt comfortable in the new neighborhood and liked the interaction

with their neighbors. Their daughter Betsy had a playmate who lived across the street. Frequently Betsy would accompany her friend and the friend's father when they went to pick up an older sister attending church school. But when Mr. and Mrs. Tregar heard Betsy singing a Christian children's song taught her by her friends, they realized they had a problem. "We had to do something to counteract this," Mr. Tregar said. What to do? There was no Shul, no kosher butcher. They had heard about the Cranston Jewish Community Club and decided to join. There they met other young couples who shared similar concerns. They needed a school for their children as well as a religious and social center for themselves.

As the organization grew, so did the dream of organizing a Temple and finding a place to house their center and school. "Once we began thinking seriously about a building, we had to face one challenge after another," Mr. Tregar stated. However, first the members voted to change the name of their organization to Cranston Jewish Center. It sounded more substantial.

There had always been four officers and a loosely affiliated membership, Mr. Tregar added. Now the group had to establish a dues structure, write a set of by-laws, and elect a board of directors — all this while debates still raged regarding what kind of a facility their new building would be. Would it be a community center, synagogue, religious school, or a combination of all three? Which would predominate and what would be their affiliation — Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform? Mr. Tregar related that the intensity of those endless meetings was like nothing he had ever experienced.

Serious fund raising began in 1948. When Mr. Tregar suggested that as a starting project the group raffle a car, he was immediately appointed chair with Herbert Woolf as co-chair. The raffle netted about \$2,000. Without any advance notice, an appeal for funds was made at Kol Nidre services. It brought pledges totaling \$20,000. Making appeals at the High Holy Days was not unprecedented; because of the timing, those making a pledge felt a special obligation to fulfill their promise even though it was not recorded at that time.

Now they faced the problem of where to locate, since Cranston encompassed a very large area, and the Jewish population was widely dispersed. Should they purchase an old building and remodel it or build a new one? When a parcel of land on Park Avenue became available, "we decided to bite the bullet and bought it." The year was 1951.

Sidney Markoff, a member, designed an all-purpose building with classrooms in the basement and a small kitchen. It needed a \$60,000 mortgage to bring the plans to fruition.

With a loosely organized group of 200 possessing few assets, how would they persuade a bank to loan them the money? Using a bit of ingenuity, Mr. Tregar persuaded one hundred members to sign the mortgage application. It is doubtful that the signers understood that any one of them could have been held responsible for the whole amount, should there be a default. The bank officials were impressed with the number of guarantors and granted the mortgage. Mr. Tregar also pointed out with pride that "we did all our own fund raising. We did it all ourselves."

The next year, 1952, the building was completed in time for the High Holy Days. A student rabbi from the Jewish Theological Seminary was brought in, and a part-time cantor, Samuel Berditch, hired. "The Taj Mahal never looked more magnificent than that simple building with the name Cranston Jewish Center across the front. The atmosphere at that Rosh Hashanah service was truly holy," Mr. Tregar recalled.

The Warwick Jewish Community Association

"We were living on Northampton Street in Warwick," Sybil Moses Findel said, "and Izzy (Israel Moses) pointed out ten Jewish families living on our street alone." Israel Moses, the first Jewish lawyer in Warwick, felt that the time had come to found a Jewish facility. Rhoda Mossberg stated that her husband Jack (Jacob) agreed. She quoted him as saying "Warwick is a big city with a sizable Jewish population. It needs its own synagogue." Population figures supplied by Dr. Sidney Goldstein indicated that in 1951 there were 142 Jewish families, just under 500 people, living in Warwick with the numbers increasing annually.

By 1954, Mr. Moses had compiled a list of Jewish residents living in that city. He sent a letter inviting them to attend a meeting to be held April 29 in Hangar #1 in the State Airport at Hillsgrove (now T.F. Green Airport). The turnout was not large but those who came had the enthusiasm and the will to undertake establishing a Jewish facility. Within a year, the group had become an organized entity, the Warwick Jewish Community Association. Israel Moses, in recognition of his role as initiator of the project, was elected president. Dues were set at ten dollars.

Mrs. Mossberg spoke of the discussions that were held regarding the

goals of the organization. It echoed the deliberations of the other fledgling Jewish Community Associations. Should it be only social in nature with a school for the children or an affiliated synagogue? Her husband felt strongly that it should be above all else a temple. Mrs. Findel stated that it was Mr. Moses's dream that the facility be both a house of worship and a community center. Evidently, his vision prevailed over those who wanted a purely social group. Just two years minus two days after that first meeting, a charter was issued to Temple Beth Am-Warwick Jewish Community Association with sixty-seven people listed as signers of the document. It became, Mrs. Mossberg stated, the heart of the community, a social and religious focus.

As growth continued, the members realized that Beth Am needed a permanent home, a building of their own. Land was purchased on Gardiner Avenue by Bernard Silver in behalf of the congregation. In October of 1958 the Building Fund Drive, under the chairmanship of Haskell Wallick, began. It was decided that each member should pledge the equivalent of two weeks of income for four years to reach the goal of \$100,000. Another congregant who contributed his time and expertise to the construction of the building was Bernard Wiatrak, an engineer and the chair of the Building and Site Committee. He insisted that the building rest on secure foundations.

Ira Rakatansky drew the plans for the new Temple Beth Am, and Nils Johnson was the contractor chosen to build it. Everyone interviewed felt that special mention should be made of Mr. Johnson. It was a matter of great pride to him that he was building a synagogue. Mrs. Mossberg recalled that one day her husband, who went daily to the site, found Mr. Johnson putting heavy wooden doors on the classrooms in the building. Mr. Mossberg said that there must be some mistake as the congregation could not afford them. Mr. Johnson replied that a classroom needed such doors, and he donated them. "He gave the best of everything, including his efforts," Mrs. Mossberg stated.

On September 27, 1959, the ceremonial placement of the cornerstone was held. Dr. Sidney Goldstein served as chairman of the event. Mr. Johnson had promised that the building would be ready for the High Holy Days in 1959. "It was, so to speak, ready for the 1959 High Holy Days," Dr. Goldstein said, "except that the walls weren't completed. Half the building was encased in plastic." But they were in their own building.

Ben Feld recalled how everyone pitched in to help. The religious schoolrooms were ready for occupancy the following February. At two

A.M., in the early hours before that could happen, a dedicated group of volunteers were still unpacking and assembling classroom furniture as well as putting the finishing touches on the area. The official dedication of the Temple took place the weekend of March 18-20, 1960.

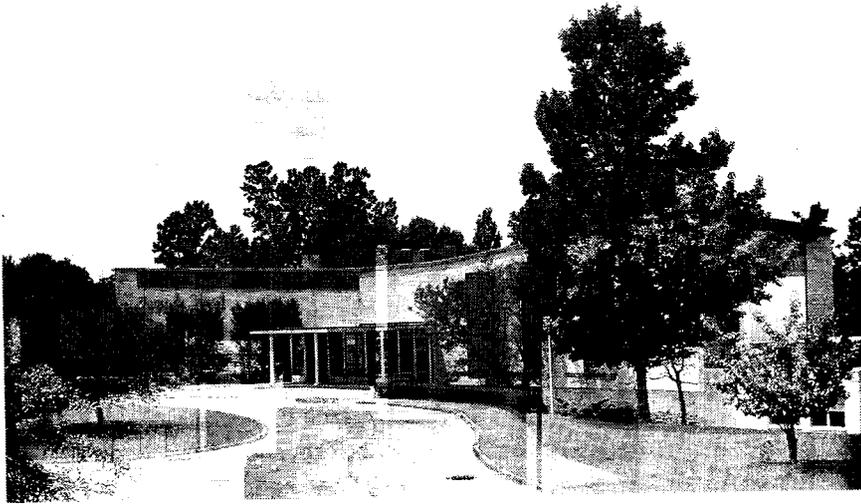
Temple Sinai Suburban Reform Temple

There was never a doubt in the minds of the founders of the Suburban Reform Temple as to their mission — to build a house of worship and a religious school. That it also became the social focus of their lives was an added bonus.

In 1957 (the exact day is unknown), Dr. Murray Miller received a phone call from his cousin Dr. Albert Goodman. Dr. Goodman and his family lived in Warwick, and the time had come for them to affiliate with a synagogue so that they could enroll their children in a religious school. To this end, Dr. Miller stated, his cousin interviewed the Rabbis of Temples Emanu-El, Beth Torah and Beth-El. When he decided that he preferred a Reform synagogue, he planned to join the only one in Rhode Island, Temple Beth-El. However, Rabbi Braude (spiritual leader of Temple Beth-El) encouraged him to try to establish a Reform house of worship in the Cranston-Warwick area, closer to home. And so the phone call to Dr. Miller: "Let's start a Temple," Dr. Goodman said. The two became three when Allen White joined them.

Where to begin? This question was answered for them by a kit published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the national offices of the Reform Movement. It spelled out the steps they had to take to initiate the project and organize a synagogue. When the three original families grew to ten, they met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. White to plan an open meeting. February 11, 1958 was the date selected, Nelson Aldrich Junior High School in Warwick, the location. Dr. Albert Goodman was elected president. Fifty-one families joined the new Suburban Reform Temple at the membership meeting two weeks later. Dues were set at fifteen dollars a year. At the same meeting on February 24, the name of Temple Sinai Suburban Reform Temple was approved by the membership. The name Sinai was his suggestion, Dr. Miller told us.

Two years later, an option was taken on land at Meshanticut Interchange after a successful fund drive. In October of 1960, the firm of Richmond and Goldberg was hired to draw up plans. Each member family was asked what should be included in the new building and which part should be fully finished first. The first choice was the Sanctuary.²



Temple Sinai, Cranston, Rhode Island.

Philip A Segal, Jr., who succeeded Dr. Goodman as president in 1960, spoke of the formative years. "There was so much work involved. Our phone was always ringing, even during the dinner hour. Barbara and I were always on the phone. Our whole life was centered around the Temple. Those first years the Temple became a large part of everyone's life." One of the problems faced, he continued, was the dues structure. After a student rabbi was hired, dues had to be increased to fifty dollars, prompting discussions concerning the amount of the increase. A proposed budget always brought intense scrutiny. To inject some humor into an otherwise humorless situation, Mr. Segal, who prepared the budgets at home, worked one up on a roll of shelf paper. At the meeting he unrolled it like a Torah scroll.

The official dedication of Temple Sinai Suburban Reform Temple took place on May 19, 1963, although the building had been in use since the previous September.

Eastward Jewish Center/Barrington Jewish Center

It all began with a long distance call from Janet Berry to Lotte Povar in 1953. Mrs. Povar was visiting her parents, who lived in Vineland, N.J. at the time. "We (the Povars) were living on Prospect Street in Seekonk, and the Berrys were neighbors. Janet said, "Let's start a club." And with Alma Alper, Janet's sister-in-law who lived in Rehoboth, they did.

From a handful of friends meeting in private homes, they expanded to thirty-four families in a very short time, necessitating rental of space in Grange Hall in East Providence. On April 8, 1954, the group voted to be known as Eastward Jewish Center.³ They chose the name because they all lived east of the Seekonk River — in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts — in towns with minimal Jewish populations.

A charter was issued to the Eastward Jewish Center on March 24, 1955, that stated as the purpose “to improve and coordinate the community life and welfare of the Jewish residents in suburban areas of Providence, R.I.” Incorporators were listed as follows: “Alma F. Alper of Rehoboth, Leonard Mandell and Bernice Dickens, both of Seekonk, all of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Donald L. Paster and Grace F. Schwartz, both of Riverside, East Providence, Ralph Povar of Rumford, and Lawrence R. Arnoff of Barrington, all the State of Rhode Island.”⁴ Dr. and Mrs. Morris Povar, Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Berry, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Slepko were listed among the charter members. Mrs. Povar recalled that Frank Slepko was an early, if not the first, president.

The membership wanted a Jewish affiliation but had no desire to found a Temple, Lotte Povar stated. “We were all trying to find our niche. None of us was that religious.” The social and cultural aspects of Jewish life interested them, and they sought to expose their children to Jewish cultural history and celebrations. The Eastward Center provided an answer. “So it became very important that we have a place — first socially, to be part of a group, and secondly (soon after) to have a Sunday School,” Mrs. Povar stated. “The Eastward Center was nothing but people,” Beverly Malin said. “It was an organization but had no real structure, but we all had a sense of community.” The meetings covered a variety of subjects, but “there was always a Jewish thread to them,” Mrs. Malin stated. Mr. and Mrs. Malin joined the Eastward Center in 1956.

A number of projects were undertaken by the membership to raise funds for a building. They included rummage sales, bridges, game nights, potluck suppers, dances and a raffle. As more and more young Jewish families moved into Barrington and in lesser degree other towns east of the Seekonk River, the point of view began to change. They wanted a religious center with educational and social facets and a weekly program for their children. Thus interest in maintaining Eastward Jewish Center as a purely social organization waned, as the constituency, mainly from Barrington, in-

creased. Eastward Jewish Center came to an end when the membership approved the constitution and by-laws of the Barrington Jewish Center, a Reform synagogue, November 1, 1963.

There were approximately sixty-five Jewish families living in Barrington in 1963, almost two thirds of whom were members of the Temple. Dues were assessed at thirty dollars a family and an additional thirty dollars per family when children attended the religious school. In an interview printed in the *Rhode Island Herald*, January 24, 1964, Barnet Fain, president of the Center, stated that it would take four or five years (perhaps less) before it would "become economically feasible to build" or "be in a position to consider a building campaign." Finding a suitable piece of land would be a priority.⁵

Soon, however, it became apparent that the needs of the growing membership could no longer be met in rented space. When a property, including a house, on County Road became available, the congregation voted to purchase it. The purchase was completed in June of 1965. After important renovations, the house on County Road became Barrington Jewish Center in the fall of that year.

We Are a Congregation!

It is interesting to trace the different ways in which each of these four centers established its religious mission. Earnest debates had engaged the members both of the Cranston Jewish Center and the Warwick Jewish Community Association as to their mission. Once they decided to organize a temple as their primary focus, the question of affiliation arose — which stream of Judaism? Both opted for the Conservative Movement.

The Cranston Jewish Center held its first High Holy Day services in 1947 in Legion Hall. No one among those interviewed could remember who conducted the service but all echoed the same sentiment. "There were rifles on the wall and everything that was military." The site did not seem to be in keeping with the spirit of the season. However, it was the only available space large enough and central enough for the purpose. Albert Cohen donated prayer books, Carl Adler recalled. And Sarah Rosenthal, a noted musician, provided the music on a pump organ. "It was army surplus," Mr. Adler added.

The *Rhode Island Jewish Herald*, on September 30, 1949, contained an article telling of the presentation of two Torahs to the Cranston Jewish Community by Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Fried and William Sklut. The ceremony



Laying the cornerstone, Cranston Jewish Center, April 20, 1952.

took place on Rosh Hashanah evening in Legion Hall in Cranston. Molly Fried Sklut remembered the occasion very well. One Torah, the smaller one, had been housed on the second floor of the Sklut farmhouse in Cranston. The space was converted into a synagogue when the family bought the cottage in 1910.⁶ The small Jewish population of Cranston would meet there for religious services on the High Holy Days and other festivals. The other Torah owned originally by the Sklut family was used by the Olneyville Congregation in the various locations where they met.⁷ When it passed into the possession of the Fried family about 1936, it was kept in a special place in the dining room of their boarding house on Oak Street in Providence. No longer used to feed hungry tenants, the large room became the site for High Holy Days services for the seventeen or more Jewish families living in the Olneyville section of Providence.⁸

“The Kouffman family used to come to the services in our house on Oak Street,” Molly Sklut remembered. “They were a very large family with seven boys. We used to say that the Kouffmans were almost a minyan in

themselves." It was Dr. Daniel Kouffman who arranged the transfer of the Torahs to the Cranston Jewish Center. Morris Lenz, president of the Cranston group accepted the gift. Rabbi Saul Landau conducted services and a social hour after the presentation at which Mrs. Fried was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Israel Karten.

Shabbat services were not held until the completion of their building. For the first year and one half, Mr. Tregar said, "Members took turns leading the service. We had a part time cantor, Samuel Berditch, but then we knew we had to find a rabbi. We found one just out of the Seminary, Rabbi Julius Goldberg." Rabbi Goldberg remained with the Cranston Jewish Center for six years.

The year after their first meeting, the Warwick Jewish Community Association (Temple Beth Am) held its first High Holy Day Services at Hoxie Community Hall. In preparation, Samuel Stayman, Abraham Tobin, Abraham Aron, and Jack Mossberg built a portable Ark in Stayman's basement. It housed two Torahs lent by Congregation Shaare Tzedek in Providence. "The Ark and the Torahs would quite literally be carried to all services held before the completion of their building," Dr. Goldstein recalled. In 1957, the Congregation received a Torah of their own, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Blazar and Mr. and Mrs. Haskell Wallick. Through the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Silver, the Junior Congregation of the children in the religious school had their own Torah.

Mrs. Mossberg stated that "the people who wanted the synagogue worked very hard to establish it." On the day prior to the beginning of Rosh Hashanah, that first year, Sam Stayman came to the hall and washed the floors. It was, all those interviewed agreed, something that he would always do. Volunteers set up the chairs and distributed the prayer books.

In the three years before their building, the Congregation had the services of Irving Schmuger as Cantor and guest rabbis. Evelyn Block Goldstein, whose family joined the congregation in 1957 recalled that there was also a male choir with beautiful voices. One Rosh Hashanah stood out in Mrs. Findel's memory. The congregation had come together for High Holy Day worship held that year at the Lakewood Fire Station. In the mist of the prayers, the room suddenly went dark. It was a blackout. The firemen came to their rescue by beaming lights into the hall so that they could continue.



Children's Fashion Show, Fundraiser for Temple Beth Am, Warwick, Rhode Island, 1958.

Even before that first High Holy Days observance, the congregation had instituted regular Friday night services. They were led primarily by lay leaders. Later Rabbi Solomon took over the pulpit once a month until the appointment of Rabbi Pesach Sobel in 1959. A senior at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Sobel officiated every other week and on the holidays until his ordination, when he became the first Rabbi of Temple Beth Am. His was also the first marriage in the new building. Shabbat services were held in a number of locations. An Oneg Shabbat prepared by the women always followed the services. Dr. Goldstein did not remember specific locations but recalled, "I remember long walks on cold winter evenings but the services were warm and well attended."

Just one month after the initial open meeting, Temple Sinai, the Suburban Reform Congregation, held its first Shabbat service on March 7,

1958, in the Greenwood Community Hall. Temple Beth-El loaned a Torah and donated fifty copies of the Union Prayer Book. They also received fifty additional copies from the UAHC. Rabbi Daniel Davis of New York officiated; Victor Gerstenblatt was cantorial soloist. He was assisted by a choir of volunteers from the membership. Within the year, after having a series of visiting rabbis, the Congregation hired Rabbi Robert Schenkerman, who came each weekend for six months until the appointment of Rabbi Donald Heskins who remained with Temple Sinai until 1964.

It was Rabbi Schenkerman, according to Mrs. Grant's history, "A Remembrance of Things Past," who first mentioned the availability of a Torah liberated from Nazi-controlled Europe. The cost was \$300. Arnold Fellman and Oscar Davidson undertook the task of raising the needed funds. They decided that rather than trying to find an "angel" who would donate the scroll, they would ask twenty-eight members for a ten-dollar donation. It would thus allow a greater number of people to share in the mitzvah. Mr. Fellman designed the portable Ark that housed the scroll. Fashioned of wood with a star of David coming together on the closed doors, it was a work of art as well as of love.

Temple Beth-El also supplied the music for the choir, Elizabeth Berger recalled. An accomplished musician, Mrs. Berger became the accompanist for the choir after a phone call from Jordon Tanennbaum, a member. He told her about the choir, which Jan White served as director. Would Elizabeth be interested in accompanying them? She agreed and found it was a delight. "They all had wonderful voices and it was a pleasure to listen to them," she said, "and I enjoyed the camaraderie." Jean Fellman agreed: "I did not have a good voice, but no one minded. There was such a good feeling in the group, I enjoyed being part of it."

"We did a lot of 'schlepping,'" Shirley Halsband said. "Liz (Mrs. Berger) kept her keyboard in the trunk of her car, and she would bring it to the hall and assemble it. The prayer closet at the back of the room and had to be brought out each Friday. The Ark was stored in the basement, and had to be brought upstairs. The Torah was kept at the Fellman's so Arnie (Feldman) had to bring it each week and return it to his home"

The first High Holy Days services of the Barrington Jewish Center were held in September, 1963, in a room at the vestry of Barrington Congregational Church (the White Church). A visiting rabbi, Meyer Selekman, conducted the service. Temple Sinai loaned a Torah and the portable ark

designed by Arnold Fellman. The Center owned some prayer books, but members were encouraged to buy their own.

"For years, when holiday time came, we were the wandering Jews," Diana Warshaw said. It held true even after the congregation had purchased a building of their own. Mr. and Mrs. Allan Klepper moved to Barrington in 1965; what attracted them to Barrington was the presence of a Temple. The first service they attended took place in the basement of the White Church.

Because their new Center could not accommodate all the members and their families and possible guests at those seasons, High Holy Day services were held in different place in different times: The White Church, neighboring Red Church (St. John's Episcopal Church), Cedar Hall (a combination auditorium and basketball court) in the Baptist Church, Barrington College, and the United Brothers Synagogue in Bristol. Mr. Klepper said "There was an offer made to the members of the Barrington group from those in Bristol to use that synagogue all the time, but our whole idea was to have a Jewish presence in Barrington.

In 1963, the congregation began to hold monthly Shabbat services, meeting again at the White Church. Visiting rabbis officiated. The following year, a student rabbi, Elihu Burkow, spent weekends in Barrington. He conducted a monthly Shabbat service at the White Church, but in the intervening weeks in private homes.

The Congregation was able to procure its own Torah in 1967. It was a Torah with a history. It had come to England three years before, one of those gathered by the Nazis from synagogues in Bohemia and Moravia to be part of an exhibit of Jewish artifacts after the Jews became extinct. The Torah was given "on permanent loan" and a small contribution (sixteen dollars) was requested to help toward incurred expenses. Edith Fath brought the Torah from London. It rested securely belted on the seat next to her on the flight here.

Mr. and Mrs. Klepper became the house committee, which meant they came each week to take out the garbage, do some chores, until the congregation could afford janitorial help. Mr. Klepper oversaw the reconfiguration of the building to allow classroom space in the basement. At one point, there was a drop in membership, Mr. Klepper stated, "but the center survived because people wanted that Jewish presence in town."

And We Educate Our Children!

Jewish education of the children loomed large in the priorities of the several synagogues in the suburban areas. In fact, it was the reason a large number of people joined these associations. Very soon after organizing their Temple/Center, the members started a Sunday school, which broadened into a three-day-per-week program that included after-school weekday sessions.

In the minds of all was a desire to introduce their children to their Jewish heritage, its traditions, culture, and history. However, they would not be sending their children to a school with an established curriculum. They were building something new and it would reflect their views. Although they might look for guidance elsewhere, in local or national sources, the parents and the school committees wanted to put their impress on the programs and the philosophy. The intense discussions that took place regarding the direction their Center would take resonated in the decisions concerning the school.

Cranston Jewish Center founded its Sunday school in 1948. Benjamin Clamon, a teacher at Classical High School, was the principal. Warwick Jewish Center-Temple Beth Am held its classes in the John Brown Francis Elementary School in Governor Francis Farms. The school opened in 1954 with Rabbi Bodek, of Hebrew Day School, as principal. Temple Sinai found space in the Garden City Elementary School.

Barbara Segal, an educator whose family had long ties to Reform Judaism, served as the first principal. "Those were heady days," she told us. In speaking of her own experience, Mrs. Segal mirrored the experience of all those involved in the schools in the Cranston/Warwick area. "We had great meetings. We all took our work seriously. Someone had one philosophy and someone else had another. Some wanted more tradition. Others wanted less. We considered the books and read them all. We looked into the whole way we presented Sunday school to the kids." Philip Segal remembered arguments about making the books less dull. Mrs. Segal summed up the general experience of the founders of all four schools: "We had a very good religious school, and a good part of it was due to the parents. We had wonderful support from home."

Somewhat different from this experience was that of the Sunday school organizers east of the Seekonk River. The members of Eastward Jewish Center were interested neither in the traditional religious school nor in car-

pooling their children to a Providence facility, but still, Lotte Povar said, “we wanted the children to have an idea of who they are — their history and that sort of thing.” To achieve this the parents founded their own school. Marcia Mittleman, an elementary school teacher who had attended Boston Hebrew College, taught the classes. They met on Sunday mornings at Kent Heights School in East Providence. “I ran it like the little red schoolhouse,” she said “with several classes in one room.” With parental suggestions, she devised a curriculum.

As Eastward Jewish Center evolved into Barrington Jewish Center, the school began holding sessions on Saturday mornings at the Barrington Congregational Church (the White Church). Beverly Malin, Jean Fain, and Lois Grayboys took over the teaching duties in 1964. “Rabbi Burkow used to come every week. He established the lesson plans and set up the lesson for the coming week,” Beverly Malin said. “He would have a story from the Bible or a holiday, and it was our job to come up with an arts and crafts project that went with the story. Sometimes we dressed in costumes representing characters from the Bible. We had to be very creative.” Everything needed for the lesson was assembled in advance and brought in, as there were no storage facilities. “Every week I came with a basket of what I would need.” The school’s agenda also included a children’s service.

Women’s Work

The members of the suburban centers were mainly young couples, most with children. As was custom of the times, the men worked outside the home; the women were homemakers. Although men and women were both full members of their organizations, and came together for general meetings and celebrations as well as for Shabbat and holiday observance, there was a tacit (sometimes not-so-tacit) division of labor. The men dominated the administrative or executive branch; the women took care of clerical tasks and provided the refreshments for the Oneg Shabbat or post-meeting social hour.

The formation of the sisterhoods within the various organizations offered women an opportunity to make their personal contribution to the welfare of the Temple/Center. To their volunteer projects they devoted their time and energy, and demonstrated their exceptional organizational skills and creativity. Because they took pride in what they were doing and understood its importance to their community, they actively recruited others to join them. Most of their projects took place after the acquisition of a

permanent building for the congregation, but there was much accomplished even before they had a permanent home base.

The women members of the Cranston Jewish Center did not have a sisterhood for several years. That did not stop the women from finding their niche. When Zelda Kouffman came to Cranston in 1936, she was welcomed as a possible fourth for mahjong. Later she and several friends founded a private knitting society which merged with the Cranston Jewish Community Club. A lawyer by profession, she took an active role in any discussions of the future of the Center, and was known for speaking her mind on matters of principle. Because of her background, she wrote the constitution and by-laws of the Cranston Jewish Center Sisterhood.

The experience of Rosalind Herman and Evelyn Lerner was quite different. Both families belonged to the Cranston Jewish Center. Mrs. Herman related her first acquaintance with the Center: "I had only recently moved here from Boston. I had just about stepped into the doorway of Legion Hall at attend my first meeting when one of the women I knew came up to me and gave me a list of names to call." She was now a member of the telephone squad charged with the important task of calling prospective members to invite them to join as well as to remind members to attend meetings and other events.

"Before we had a building, we did not have the facilities to do things on a big scale," Mrs. Lerner said. "We took care of the refreshments. We did all the chores we would normally do if we were in our own building. Everyone helped."

"I was the queen of rummage sales," Mrs. Herman said. "We collected goods and I looked for an empty store, usually in Providence, that could be used for a sale." The owner donated the use of the premises for the time needed. "I remember dragging all that stuff to the store and setting up and pricing." There were many helping hands. At the end of the sale, just before closing, Mrs. Herman recalled, they would give out large bags to the customers. For one dollar they got as many items as they could stuff in the bag.

Evelyn Lerner, like Mrs. Herman a past president, looked back with pleasure at her experiences with the sisterhood. Soon after joining, the mother of a friend told her to become active, "get your feet wet." Later I told

my friend, "your mother said to get your feet wet. Well, I told her I'm drowning."

The Sisterhood of Temple Sinai was organized in 1958. Yvette Nathans served as first president. In speaking of the role of women, Mrs. Halsband said, "We brought in food for the Oneg Shabbat and the services. It was cooperative. Someone brought the milk. Someone brought the sugar or the tea. We brought in pastry and put it on platters." Mrs. Berger recalled standing in the small kitchen in Greenwood Hall, cutting store-bought brownies into thirds so that there would be enough to go around. "We all worked in the kitchen," Mrs. Halsband said. "I baked," Mrs. Miller added. And more than one woman recalled standing at the sink, the sleeves of her Shabbat dress pushed up to her elbows, washing the dishes. Before they left the rented space, they thoroughly swept the premises (with the help of their spouses) so as not to leave even one crumb for someone else to clean. This action was common to all the women's groups. Let no one make a derogatory comment about their housekeeping!

Fund-raising was also part of the agenda. It should be noted that the Temple Sinai Sisterhood undertook a five-year \$10,000 pledge to the Building Fund. Through their efforts, the promise was fulfilled in less than four years.

Bella Aron related that shortly after the first meeting of the Warwick Jewish Community Organization, her friend Lillian Wiatrak expressed the thought that the women should form an organization of their own. For that purpose, she invited a group of friends and acquaintances to establish the Women's Auxiliary of the Warwick Jewish Community Organization. It was later renamed the Sisterhood of Temple Beth Am.

The main concern of the women was the religious school which began as a Sunday School, but increased to a three-day-a-week program the following year. "I was very active," Mrs. Aron stated. "There were very active young women in the group. It was fun getting started — our camaraderie. We were working for a purpose to get the school and the Temple started and working well. We had children in the religious school, so that was our main interest." (Richard Aron was the first boy to become a bar mitzvah in the partially completed sanctuary of Temple Beth Am). The

Women's Auxiliary installed Lillian Wiatrak as the first president in November, 1954.

The Auxiliary undertook a vigorous program of social and fund-raising projects. Hope Greenfeld noted a catalog of activities — picnics and dances, cake sales and rummage sales, fashion shows and donor luncheons. "We raised large amounts of money for the school and for the Temple. We volunteered for holiday programs for the school children. And we brought people together," Mrs. Greenfeld stated. "It was hard work, but we had a goal." When the Congregation received the gift of a Torah, the Auxiliary underwrote the cost of the mantle.

Eastward Jewish Center was organized by women, and women played an important role in its continuity. Besides providing the refreshments for the meetings — special mention was made of Pearl Pulner and her sister Mildred Rosner — they took an active role in creating programs. Mrs. Malin stated that there were a number of social events such as dinner parties which the women planned. She and Muriel Fath produced playlets and skits, and also arranged book reviews "for a couple of years."

The Barrington Jewish Center Sisterhood was founded in 1964, a year after Eastward ceased to exist. Their first gift to the Center was \$225. However, with the acquisition of the building on County Road, their program of fund raising became much more ambitious, in particular the highly successful "Happenings."

Was All the Work Worth It?

In retrospect, were the goals of those who dreamed of founding their own temple realized? For possible answers members of the four temples were interviewed. Many had joined so that their children could have a religious education while others were also interested in their own religious participation. That a close friendship had evolved among the men and women might have come as a surprise to some members, who had hoped to make new friendships and create a lively social life, but were not sure it would happen.

Ada Tannenbaum Winston recalled, with a pleased look of remembrance on her face, how she and her husband attended services every Friday night at Temple Sinai, and that after the Oneg Shabbat they gathered at one of the member's homes where they talked until two A.M. She referred to the

friendships which she made at Sinai as lifelong. Shirley Halsband, another member of Sinai, spoke of the many similarities which the congregants shared. They were often in the same circumstances financially, with mortgages on their homes. They lived in surrounding suburban areas that would be convenient to reach for the children's schooling and temple activities. And Shirley added that they "grew like crazy, with great participation." To Sumner Halsband it meant coming from an Orthodox synagogue to Sinai where he could understand the services.

Harold Tregar spoke about the origins of the group that he joined, a community club made up of Jewish men and women who were in the same circumstances as he and his wife. In the early years (1948), when the Tregars joined the Jewish Community Club in Cranston, it was primarily their only social connection for there was no other Jewish gathering place, or source for Jewish children to meet each other.

There were a variety of social activities among the Cranston Jewish women in the early years. This prompted a comment by Zelda Kouffman: "At our meetings in 1942-43 there were just a handful of Jews. I remember it as a very special time in my life." And the efforts of these women produced, in addition to their work behind the scenes, a telephone squad and a cookbook.

These reminiscences are as varied as the group of men and women who made up each of the temples whose origin and growth we have described. Beverly Main of Eastwood Jewish Center, who taught the first grade students, remarked, "The kids enjoyed coming — it was small and cozy. We made things that were fun. We cooked things, we dressed in costumes representing characters out of the bible." And, she emphasized, the most important thing was that everyone had something to bring home. As Hope Greenfeld said, "Not only were we good friends, but also our children socialized, went out together as a group."

Mrs. Segal recalled one time complaining to Rabbi Braude of being exhausted by the amount of work involved in setting up the chairs and doing whatever else was needed for the service. He replied that they would never feel as good as they did in doing those necessary chores again. Mr. Segal added, "It was a marvelous experience. One of the prime experiences of my life. I've always looked back to it with happiness and gratitude."

And to those comments we add our own heartfelt "amen!"



Notes

- ¹ *After 40 Wonderful Years*, Temple Torat Yisrael Souvenir Journal, 1992, p. 6.
- ² Rabbi Jerome Gurland, "A Preliminary Statement of Temple Sinai's History," RIJHA Archives.
- ² *The Rhode Island Herald*, January 22, 1960.
- ³ *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1957, p. 117.
- ⁵ *The Rhode Island Herald*, January 24, 1964.
- ⁶ *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1990, p. 453.
- ⁷ *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1988, pp. 177-194.
- ⁸ *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1990, p. 454.

Sources

Seebert Goldowsky, *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership: The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El)*. Providence: Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David of Providence, 1989.

Edith Grant, *Silver Anniversary Yearbook, Temple Sinai: The First Twenty-five Years 5718-1958. A Remembrance of Things Past*.

Temple Habonim: Celebrating the Past, Building the Future. Thirtieth Anniversary 1963-1993.

Diana Glashow, *A History of Temple Habonim* (typescript).

Rollie Hostein, *A History of Temple Habonim* (typescript).

Lesley Mehlman, *Temple Habonim History — 20 Years* (typescript).

We are especially grateful for the recollections offered by many of the founders or early members of these temples.

Bibliographical Notes

by Lois Atwood

Recent acquisitions of the RIJHA library written by local authors or relevant to Rhode Island Jewish history.

America: History and Life, Annual Index with List of Periodicals, vol. 36, no. 5 (Santa Barbara and Oxford: ABC/CLIO, 1999), 591 pages.

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes, p. 584.

Catskill Culture: A Mountain Rat's Memories of the Great Jewish Resort Area, by Phil Brown (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 298 pages.

Phil Brown, professor of Sociology at Brown University, spoke at the November 1999 meeting of RIJHA.

Mirrors and Memories: Images of the Holocaust (catalogue of exhibition at Hunt-Cavanagh Gallery), by Alice Lok Cahana (Providence: Providence College, 2000, 69 pages.

The author is Rabbi Michael Cahana's mother. The catalogue and exhibit were sponsored in conjunction with the Rhode Island Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Portugal's Secret Jews: the End of an Era, by Eduardo Mayone Dias (Rumford, R.I.: Pergrinacas publications, 1999), 105 pages.

Preface by George Monteiro, Professor at Brown University.

Bibliography by David M. Gitlitz: "Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews" (Philadelphia, 1996).

The Rhode Island ACLU Story, by Milton Stanzler (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Professional Press, 1998), 182 pages.

Numerous local references.

Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the Caribbean and the Guianas: A Bibliography, compiled by Mordechai Arbell (New York: John Carter Brown Library and Interamericas, 1999), 160 pages.

Author was the fourth Touro National Heritage Trust Fellow administered by the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University in 1993.

A Travel Guide for the Wandering Jew, United States Edition, by Susan Lieberman (Northridge, CA: Lieberman Press, 2000, 294 pages.

Places of interest, kosher food, synagogues, hotels, Shabbat and holiday celebrations in Rhode Island, pages 22-24.

Visions of Reform: Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco, 1849-1999, by Fred Rosenbaum (Berkeley, CA: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2000), 534 pages.

Reverend Jacob Voorsanger, a rabbi at Temple Beth-El, chapter 3, pages 79-110.

Rabbi Louis I. Newman, a native Rhode islander, chapter 5, pages 137-158.

The Wealth of Nations: A People's History of Rhode Island, by Lisa Roseman Beade (Montgomery, Alabama: Community Communications, 1999), 232 pages.

Jewish references, pages 11, 27, 36-38, 56, 78-81, 88, 94, 96, 106, 134-135.



Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association
Annual Meeting
Sunday, April 30, 2000

The Forty-sixth annual meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was held on Sunday, April 30, 2000 at the Jewish Community Center, Providence, Rhode Island. Dr. George Goodwin, chairman of the day, opened the meeting at 1:35 p.m. His introductory remarks updated the progress of the Heritage Harbor Museum. He then presented Eugene Weinberg, president, who received approval for a motion to waive the minutes of the last meeting, following that with remarks as outgoing president.

The treasurer's report was given by Treasurer Jack Fradin.

Librarian/Archivist Eleanor Horvitz presented her report on the activities of the organization during the past year. She invited the audience to view the Arthur and Essie Einstein memorabilia displayed in the back of the room.

Stanley Abrams reported on the slate as prepared by the Nominating Committee. This was read, and there being no further nominations from the floor, was approved by the membership. Melvin Zurier served as Installation Officer.

Newly elected President Robert Berkelhammer outlined the challenges he saw for the future of the organization. He focused on improvement of access to our archival collection, our role as part of the Heritage Harbor Museum, and efforts to educate young Jews in continuing our commitment of Rhode Island Jewish history. He also discussed hiring a full time archivist in the future.

Mr. Berkelhammer presented the gift of a book to retiring President Eugene Weinberg. He announced that Phyllis Berry and Harold Gadon were his presidential appointees to the board.

Dr. George Goodwin introduced the guest speaker, Ellen Kushner, writer, producer, and award-winning host of a national weekly public radio show of music and ideas. She described growing up in an observant Jewish family in Cleveland, attributing to this background her spiritual connection with Judaism. This, in addition to her sense of history, is the essential ingredient to her successful tenure as creative guide of "Sound and Spirit." Ms. Kushner sees the common ground underlying our differences in our common humanity. She spoke of the evolvment of her participation in

Jewish renewal of spirituality using music on radio as a tool for remembering and honoring the past. Dealing with human struggles emanating from Bible stories have proved to be the most successful efforts for this program. The series deals weekly with topics illuminating people's lives and the human spirit.

"Sound and Spirit" airs on WGBH radio Boston on Sundays at 5:00 p.m., repeating the following week at 2:00 p.m.

Before Robert Berkelhammer adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m , he again reminded everyone to view the exhibit on Essie and Arthur Einstein in the back on the room.

Refreshments were served after the meeting. The reception chairlady was Anita Fine, with assistance from Phyllis Berry and Anne Sherman.

Respectfully submitted,

Lillian Schwartz

Necrology — RIJHA Members
December 1, 1999 — November 30, 2000

Beck, Edith, born in Warwick, a daughter of the late Samuel and Ann (Gee) Woodhead and wife of the late Dr. Irving A. Beck.

Mrs. Beck was a registered nurse. She received her nursing degree at Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York City. For many years she was a volunteer for Planned Parenthood.

She leaves three daughters: Louise Beck, Ruth Beck, and Barbara Beck. She was the mother of the late Stephen Beck.

Died in Belmont, MA, on October 24, 2000, at age 86.

Bigney, Paul Earl, born in Providence, a son of the late Benjamin and Etta (Slutsky) Bigney.

Mr. Bigney was an accountant for 48 years. He was a member of the Rhode Island Association of Public Accountants and the National Society of Public Accountants. He was a Navy veteran of World War II.

Mr. Bigney was a member of Temple Beth-El.

He leaves his wife, Marcia (Kuperschmid) Bigney, a daughter, Audrey Pabian, and a son, Michael Bigney.

Died in Providence on September 30, 2000, at age 73.

Blazer, Evelyn, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Louis and Rose (Silver) Kortick and wife of the late Milton Blazer.

Mrs. Blazer was a bookkeeper at B.B. Clothing for many years.

She was a member of Temple Emanu-El and program chairwoman of its Leisure Club, a life member of Hadassah, and former treasurer of the Jewish Home for the Aged Ladies Association.

She leaves a son, Dr. Andrew Blazer, and a daughter, Marcia Greenberg.

Died in Providence on February 2, 2000, at age 89.

Bojar, Beatrice T., born in New Haven, CT, a daughter of the late Joseph and Dora (Torg) Topp.

She was a graduate of Central Connecticut State Teachers College and was a teacher in the Providence school system for 28 years.

Mrs. Bojar was a member of Temple Beth-El and its sisterhood. She was past president of Providence Hadassah.

She leaves her husband, William Bojar, and two sons, David Bojar and Richard Bojar.

Died in Providence on August 27, 2000, at age 85.

Fishbein, Dr. Joseph J., born in Providence, a son of the late Morris I. and Helen (Bennett) Fishbein. He was a graduate of the Temple University Dental School in Philadelphia, and an Army Air Force veteran of World War II

Dr. Fishbein was past president of the Providence Hebrew Day School and was active on the boards of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Home for the Aged, and Congregation Beth Shalom. He was a member of the Palestine Temple of the Masonic Order and the Scottish Rite.

He leaves his wife, Selma (Gold) Fishbein, a son, Keith Fishbein, and three daughters: Shari Fishbein Mandel, Janni Fishbein-Slotkis, and Amy Fishbein Waisel.

Died in Providence on April 28, 2000, at age 76.

Goldberg, Jean, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Heskell and Hattie (Krasow) Hyman and the wife of the late Jesse Goldberg.

Mrs. Goldberg was a graduate of Classical High School and attended Boston University. She was a dedicated pianist throughout her life and enjoyed playing golf and painting. She spent most of her career as a dress buyer for Pinkerson and New York Lace Stores. Her career achievements are noted in the article "Women Ahead of Their Time" in the 1995 issue of the *Rhode Island Historical Notes*.

Mrs. Goldberg was a member of Temple Beth-El and Hadassah.

She is survived by a son, Lawrence Y. Goldberg.

Died in Providence on November 22, 2000, at age 93.

Hanzel, Florence G., born in Providence, daughter of the late Louis and Gertrude (Epstein) Goldstein and wife of the late Barney Coken.

Mrs. Hanzel worked for the Rhode Island Registry of Motor Vehicles and for the former Brodsky's Toy Store. She was a volunteer for Hasbro Children's Hospital.

She was a member of Temple Torat Yisrael, the Women's Association of the Jewish Home for the Aged, and past president of Hadassah.

Mrs. Hanzel leaves her husband, Dr. Harold Hanzel, a daughter, Loraine Schulman, a son, Gary Coken, and two stepsons: Dr. Melvin Hanzel and Dr. Jeffrey Hanzel.

Died in Providence on December 24, 1999, at age 79.

Kaplan, Mildred, born in Providence, daughter of the late Jack and Mitzi (Villar) Feiner.

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

She leaves a daughter, Patti Kaplan.

Died in New York on July 18, 2000.

Kasper, Bertha, born in Russia, a daughter of the late Rubin and Rose (Vediborsky) Bazarsky and wife of the late Samuel Kasper.

Mrs. Kasper was a bookkeeper for Cameo Jewelry and Roberto Manufacturing Co.

She was a member of Temple Emanu-El and its sisterhood, and a life member of Hadassah. She served as treasurer of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association from 1979 to 1984.

She leaves two sons: Bentzil Kasper and Hershel Kasper.

Died in Fall River, MA, on July 16, 2000, at age 93.

Klemer, Bernard H. ("Bob"), born in Providence, a son of the late Oscar and Gertrude (Kofsky) Klemer.

Mr. Klemer was a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and did postgraduate work at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. He served in the Army during World War II. He was a retired electrical engineer and held a

patent in machinery design.

Mr. Klemer was a member of Temple Emanu-El and on the board of the Jewish Senior Agency. He was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

He leaves his wife, Estelle (Lieberman) Robinson Klemer, three daughters: Lorie Griffin, Carol Sacredote, and Lisa Schoeller, and a son, Harvey Klemer.

Died in Boston, MA, on October 4, 2000, at age 74.

Lichtman, Dr. Herbert C., born in Brooklyn, NY, a son of the late Dr. Isadore Gary and Ida (Bloom) Lichtman, and husband of the late Ruth (Barron) Lichtman. He had lived in New York before moving to Rhode Island in 1970.

Dr. Lichtman was a 1942 graduate of Brooklyn College, and of Long Island College of Medicine in 1945. He was a captain in the Army Medical Corp.

Dr. Lichtman was medical director of the blood bank, division of hematology/oncology at The Miriam Hospital and served as physician in chief of the department of medicine. He was the founder and medical director of the Memory and Cognitive Disorder Clinic. He was a professor at the Brown University Medical School. He received many professional awards during his lifetime.

Dr. Lichtman leaves his wife, Shirley (Norman) Lichtman, two sons, Dr. Jeff Lichtman and Dr. Andrew Lichtman, a daughter, Susan Lichtman, and a stepdaughter, Marjorie Gold.

Died in Providence on October 11, 2000, at age 79.

Markoff, Henry W., born in Carlstadt, NJ, son of the late Walter and Rebecca (Gelula) Markoff.

He was a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and did graduate work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In his profession as an architectural engineer, Mr. Markoff designed a number of local projects for Teknor-Apex, Carol Cable, Hasbro, and Benny's. He was also involved in the design of religious structures for Temple Beth Shalom, Temple Emanu-El, the Jewish Federation, and the

Alprin-Schechter School.

Mr. Markoff was a lifetime honorary board member of Temple Emanu-El.

He leaves his wife, Florence (Shapiro) Markoff, and three sons: Joseph Markoff, Ronald Markoff, and Gary Markoff.

Died in Providence on August 21, 2000.

Perceland, Natalie, Born in Providence, a daughter of the late Harry and Ida (Zurier) Fisher, wife of the late Abraham M. Percelay, and mother of the late Maureen Zusy.

Mrs. Percelay was a 1942 graduate of Pembroke College. She was the first curator of the Abraham and Natalie Percelay Museum in Temple Emanu-El. Both she and her husband received a national community service award from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Mrs. Percelay was an honorary member of the board of Temple Emanu-El, and past president of its sisterhood. She was past president of the women's division of the Jewish Federation and an honorary board member of the Alperin-Schechter Day School. She was life member of Hadassah, and active in the Miriam Hospital Women's Association and the former Jewish Home for the Aged. She was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

She leaves a sister, Zelda Gourse, and two grandchildren, Anne Ortiz and Jonathan Zusy.

Died in Providence on November 1, 2000, at age 96.

Rakatansky, Rachel, born in New York City, a daughter of the late Samuel and Ida Maron and wife of the late Dr. Nathan Rakatansky.

She was graduate of Hunter College and moved to Rhode Island in 1933.

Mrs. Rakatansky was a faculty member and researcher in the Botany Department of Brown University and a behavioral therapist at The Miriam Hospital. She was director of the Miriam Hospital Gift Shop, and under her direction, it became a major source of funds for the hospital.

She was a member of Temple Beth El, Hadassah and the Women's Association of The Miriam Hospital.

She leaves two daughters, Frances Sugar and Sylvia Forman, and a son,

Dr. Herbert Rakatansky.

Died in Providence on September 12, 2000, at age 89.

Sachs, Gilbert, born in New York City, son of the late Kolman and Bessie (Feinberg) Sachs.

He served with the Army in the Pacific during World War II.

Mr. Sachs worked in the jewelry industry for 68 years, first in sales for American Watch Distributors, and also for the Gruen Watch Company. In 1959 he moved to Rhode Island and became president of Deltah Inc.

He was a member of the 24 Karat Club, the Boston Jewelers Club, and the New York Jewelers Benevolent Association. He was a member of Temple Emanu-El.

He leaves his wife, Phyllis (Savlick) Sachs, a son, Coleman Ray Sachs, and a daughter, Betsy Block.

Died in Providence on August 28, 2000, at age 85.

Silverman, Harold, born in Providence, a son of the late Charles and Lena (Rosenblatt) Silverman.

During World War II, he was an ambulance driver for the American Red Cross in Europe.

A retired insurance sales representative, he was a graduate of the former Commercial High School. Mr. Silverman was a past president of the parents Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children.

He is survived by his wife, Margaret (Wilcox) Silverman, and a son, Charles Silverman.

Died in Providence on October 5, 2000, at age 90.

Silverman, Margaret, born on Staten Island, NY, daughter of the late Irving and Anne (Cotter) Wilcox and the wife of the late Harold Silverman.

Mrs. Silverman worked in the accounting department of Almac's supermarket until it closed. During World War II, she worked at Brown & Sharpe.

She leaves a son, Charles Silverman.

Died November 20, 2000, at age 76.

Stevens, Stanford S., born in Providence, a son of the late David and Annie (Cohen) Stevens.

Mr. Stevens attended Bryant College and was a 1941 graduate of Brown University. He served in the U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence Corps in India during World War II.

He was the proprietor of several small businesses and spent many years in the field of interior design. Mr. Stevens was a volunteer for the former Jewish Home for the Aged and was a recipient of the J.C. Penny Award for special service.

He leaves his wife, Muriel (Port) Stevens, a son, Peter Stevens, and a daughter, Ruth Stevens.

Died in Providence on May 24, 2000, at age 85.

☆

Errata

Volume 13, Number 1

“An Altruistic Jewish Family in Providence”

Page 71, line 36, “1909” should read “1907.”

Page 78, note 6, “her nephew” should read “her grandson.”

“Emperor Julian the Apostate and the ‘Community of the Jews’”

Page 132, line 9, “with fear” should read “without fear.”

Funds and Bequests of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

Funds

Arnold T. and Alice Axelrod Galkin	<i>General Fund</i>
Ira S. and Anna Galkin	<i>General Fund</i>
Seebert J. and Gertrude N. Goldowsky	<i>Research Scholarship Fund</i>
Benton H. and Beverly Rosen	<i>Book Fund</i>
Erwin E. and Pauline E. Strasmich	<i>General Fund</i>
Sylvia and Frederick Kenner	<i>General Fund</i>
Judith Weiss Cohen	<i>Memorial Fund</i>

Bequests

Jeannette S. Nathans
B. Ruby Winnerman

Life Members of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

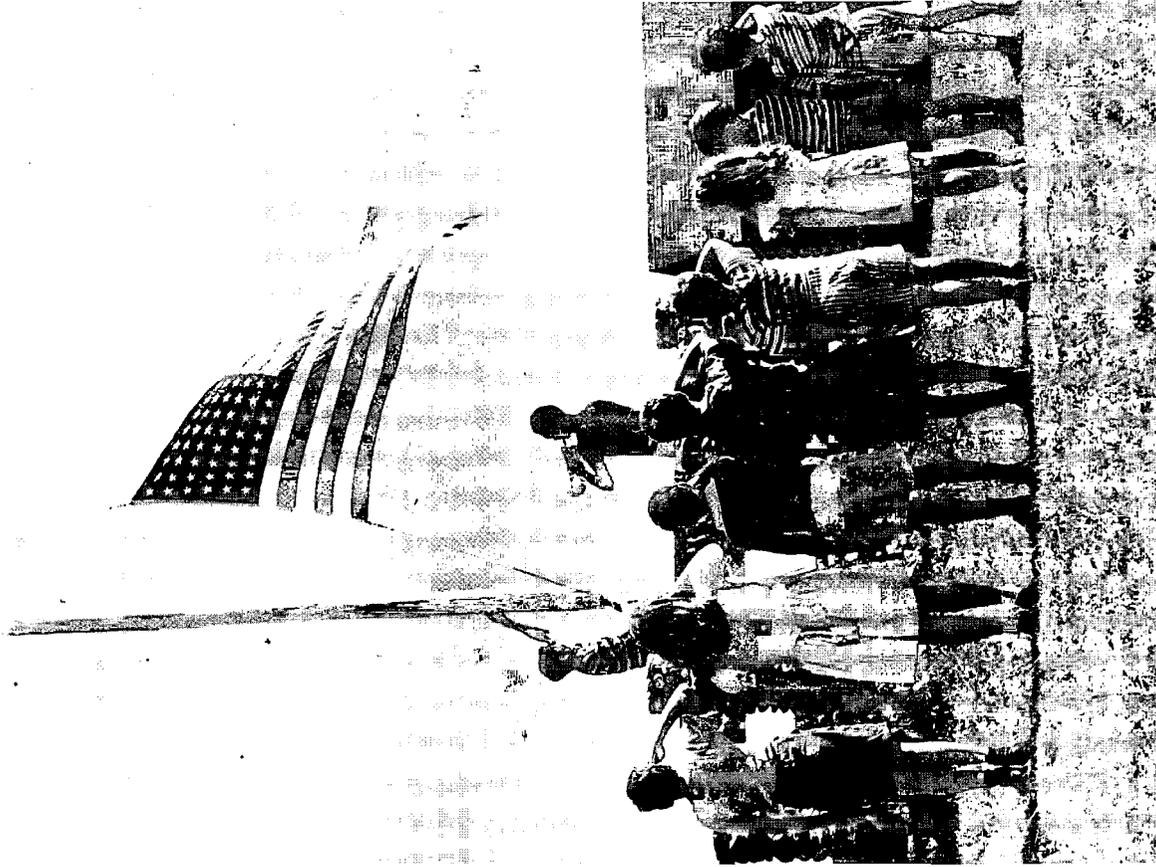
Mrs. Saul Abrams
Stanley and Sandra Abrams
Mr. and Mrs. Carl Adler
Irving H. and Eleanor Adler
Mrs. Max Alperin
Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Alperin
Banice C. and Beverly Bazar
Dr. Leonard and Shirley Bellin
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