

*Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association*



# NOTES

VOLUME 14    NOVEMBER 2003    NUMBER 1

# Rhode Island Jewish Historical NOTES

November, 2003  
Volume 14, Number 1



Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association  
130 Sessions Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02906-3444

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Printed in the U.S.A.

Published for the Association by RICHARD ALAN DOW / TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS, Laconia, NH

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

Front Cover  
*Sol Koffler, Providence, 1970.*

## Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

130 Sessions Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02906

E-mail: [rjhist@aol.com](mailto:rjhist@aol.com)

Web Site: <http://www.rijha.org>

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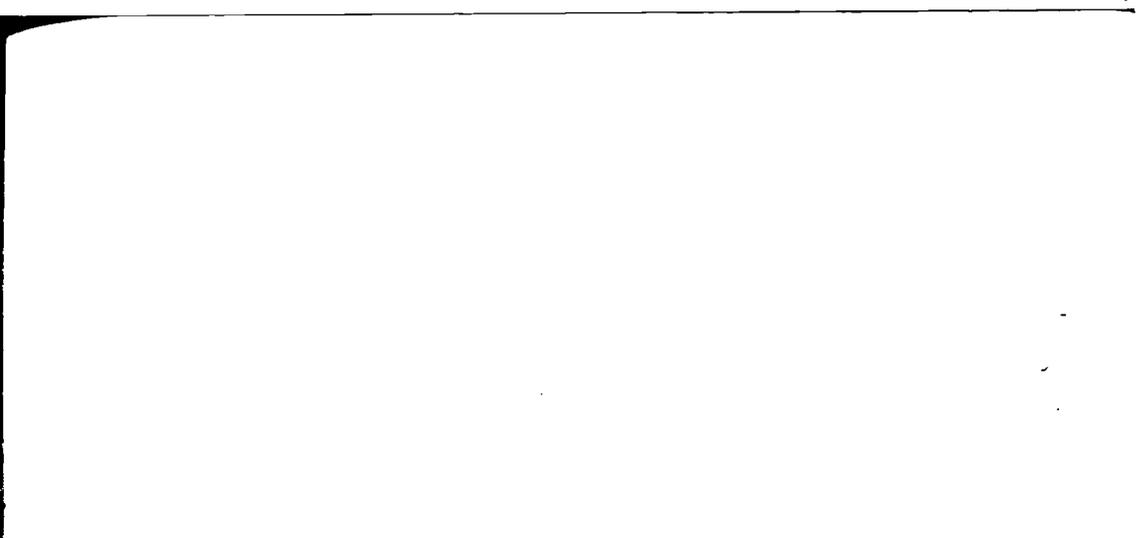
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## Notes from the Editor

This is my last issue as editor. After six interesting and satisfying years working with RIJHA authors and officers, I hand the baton over to the next runner. It has been a real mitzvah. Now my family and I have relocated to Amherst, Massachusetts, to begin a new chapter—never too old!

A new chapter begins for the RIJHA too: I foresee a brilliant future, after a half-century of notable accomplishment, for our organization in its new quarters. Those new quarters will, I predict, bring formidable challenges and make possible unforeseen achievements as the Association starts its next fifty years. The history of Jewish Rhode Island has already revealed a glorious vitality beginning with its colonial birth; may it continue to attest to the same diversity, confidence, and strength!

For the last time, I acknowledge the courtesy, good will, and practical help others have offered, especially Stan Abrams, George Goodwin, Anne Sherman, Edith Grant, Dick Dow, and the indefatigable (undefeatable) Aaron Cohen. I offer a special thanks to those authors who have contributed regularly to the *Notes*: without your research and writing, year in and year out, we would have no journal.

As editor, my primary goal has been to make these writers look good. I have tried to go beyond copy editing (grammar, spelling, and other mechanical details) to make each article as clear, well organized, and intriguing as its author intended. If our readers have felt (as I do) that it is the writers rather than the editor who deserve all the credit, then I have succeeded. I can only wish that the next editor enjoys the same cooperation and dedication while engaged in our common enterprise—constructing the historical record of Jewish life in Rhode Island.

Leonard Moss

## Notes from the President

In 2004 our Association will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. This splendid milestone will coincide with the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jewish arrival in North America and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Temple Beth-El, Providence's oldest synagogue.

In the fall of 2004, the Association will publish, in cooperation with University Press of New England and Brandeis University Press, *The Jews of Rhode Island*. This handsome, hardbound anthology will include sixteen outstanding articles previously published in our journal. Spanning the colonial era to recent decades, this volume will be the first comprehensive history of Rhode Island Jewry. It is intended for a broad readership, including Association members, students, teachers, scholars, genealogists, and history buffs. I am confident that the book will be a source of insight, pride, and joy for decades to come.

The historians represented in the anthology include many of our journal's most devoted authors such as Geraldine Foster, Dr. Seebert Goldowsky, and Eleanor Horvitz. There are essays by Brown professors and students, historians from several states, Jews and Gentiles alike. Rhode Island Jewish history is investigated from demographic, economic, educational, recreational, and religious perspectives. Still another perspective is autobiographical, with reminiscences by four Rhode Islanders (two of them beloved rabbis).

*The Jews of Rhode Island* will include two original introductory essays, a detailed timeline, an extensive bibliography, and an index. There will be nearly 100 photographs, a great many never before published. These photos were selected from more than 10,000 belonging to our Association, other Rhode Island cultural institutions, local families, and businesses. Many of our readers will recognize their families and local scenes that no longer exist.

Planning for the anthology began in the summer of 2002 with guidance by the Association's publications committee. Its chairman, Stanley Abrams, has actively and enthusiastically participated with me in the project's development. Dr. Phyllis Deutsch, executive editor of University Press of New England, has championed this book, as has Professor Jonathan Sarna of Brandeis University. *The Jews of Rhode Island* will appear in his distinguished series of more than twenty-five volumes on American Jewish history. Dr. Ellen Smith, a former curator of the American Jewish Historical

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Society, has also played a key advisory role.

Our anthology could not have been produced without the support of many friends and neighbors. The Association is grateful to the Dorot Foundation, the ADDD fund of the Rhode Island Foundation, and the endowment fund of Jewish Federation of Rhode Island for generous grants. Several of the Association's board members and other communal leaders have kindly made leadership gifts.

As readers will discover, *The Jews of Rhode Island* has not only been a scholarly endeavor but a labor of love. While paying tribute to all of the editors, writers, photographers, bibliographers, indexers, and proofreaders who have made the *Notes* significant, it sets a new standard for the next generation of historians. Thrilled and honored to be part of this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, I have every reason to believe that you will be too.

George M. Goodwin

## Three Soviet Jews in Rhode Island

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by Stephanie Miller

*In the 2001 issue of the Notes (Vol. 13, No. 3), Stephanie Miller recounted the story of the first Russian Jews to arrive in Rhode Island. Here she discusses more recent arrivals in Providence—their challenges, difficulties, and rewards—in the perspective of the earlier immigrants and their own lives in the Soviet Union. Both essays were taken from Ms. Miller's honors thesis for the Department of Slavic Studies at Brown University (2001). Many interviews for this thesis were conducted in Russian and translated into English by Ms. Miller. Her in-depth interviews complement and update the more general coverage undertaken by Brian Kempner in "Jewish Immigration into Providence" (Notes, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1983).*

*The author has participated in the Amitim Program in Kishinev, Russian Moldavia; volunteers in this American-Israeli project work with Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union, teaching Jewish traditions and the Hebrew language. Recently, she has worked as an education associate for the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous in New York City.*

Approximately ninety years separated the time when South Providence and the North End were inundated by Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire and the influx of over fifteen hundred Soviet Jewish immigrants, resettled by Ellen Steingold at Rhode Island's Chapter of Jewish Family and Children's Services. These two groups of immigrants, while sharing a common heritage, came from very different political and social situations. The Russian Empire Jews fled from shtetls and urban Jewish areas of Tsarist Russia on the cusp of a socialist revolution. Soviet Jews, on the other hand, left urban secular regions of a collapsing (or in some cases collapsed) communist society.

Although there were some points of similarity, Jewish lifestyles in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union were extremely different. Geographic placement appears to have had a tremendous effect on religious and cultural practice, in particular an individual's proximity to the Pale of Settlement. Because nearly all Jews in the Russian Empire lived in the Pale of Settlement, there existed strong religious, cultural, and communal ties among the population. Among Soviet Jews, however, there were more diverse expressions of Jewish life.

What happens to Jews in a nation such as the Soviet Union where individuals were not free to decide how to express their identity, where expressions of religious Jewishness were forbidden, and the State labeled Jews as an ethnic (i.e., not only religious) minority? Without the option of choice, expressions of Jewishness among Soviet Jews were less intense than among their Russian predecessors or their American counterparts. Many had never been in a synagogue, celebrated a holiday, or heard a word of Hebrew or Yiddish. Ethnic affiliation came to replace what had once been one of the most religious Jewish communities in the world. Soviet Jews considered themselves very strongly Jewish, but in cultural rather than religious terms.

Yet Russian Empire and Soviet Jews shared similar reasons behind their departures. Their emigration decisions were outgrowths of experiences in their native countries as Jews. Anti-Semitism, present during the Tsarist and Soviet regimes, on both state and local levels, prompted many Jews to leave. One early immigrant, Harry Krasnow, recalled that his family's decision to emigrate rested in part on the pogrom in his home city of Yelizavetgrad in 1881.<sup>1</sup> Mila Shrayer, almost one hundred years later, recounted the existence of a glass ceiling which prevented her from achieving professional status commensurate with her qualifications.<sup>2</sup> Fearful and offended by anti-Semitic actions, both Soviet and Russian Empire Jews chose to emigrate with the hopes of living freer Jewish lives.

Approximately two thousand Soviet Jews immigrated to Rhode Island from 1970 to 2000. Roughly six hundred came prior to 1981, and some fifteen hundred arrived since 1987.<sup>3</sup> Given the denial of freedom for self-expression and the segregation from Russian society, one may wonder why any Jews remained at all. But immigration is an incredibly difficult process. Many of those who remained did not want to make the adjustment to a new lifestyle, culture, and language. Others stayed on behalf of elderly relatives. Still others remained because of the very nature of Soviet Jewish policy—its haphazardness. Jewish policy was constantly in a state of flux, and seriously damaging legislation was often followed by that which extended Jews more cultural freedom and positively supported integration efforts. The situation often seemed on the cusp of improving, and many adopted a “wait and see” attitude.

However, there were many who found the government's erratic policies toward Jews, coupled with anti-Semitism, too much to endure, so they left.

But once through the difficulties of immigration, Soviet Jews faced a new challenge: adjustment to life in America. For many, this encompassed the overcoming of such obstacles as learning a new language and finding work. In Rhode Island, the Jewish community rose to assist its immigrants in settling into their new life. Jewish Family and Children's Services, along with the Jewish Community Center in Providence, welcomed new immigrants and organized language classes and cultural programs. Yet ultimately, the immigrants were left to build their own lives in America, a task that varied tremendously in difficulty. Shaped by a particular expression of their Jewishness in the Soviet Union, many chose to apply Jewish values to the assimilation process. This assimilation process provoked both spiritual and cultural rethinking as many struggled to reconcile their pre-immigration expressions of Jewishness with the religious and cultural freedoms of the United States. Soviet Jews would find that immigration resulted in modification of their cultural values and their conception of Jewishness.

Particular differences in this process of change are especially dependent on one's previous ties to a Jewish community, knowledge of English, and age at the time of immigration. This study will examine the varying experiences of three individuals—Yevgeniya Zarankina, Yevgeniya Naroditskaya, and Masha Aptekman, ages 71, 55, and 29 respectively. The acculturation and assimilation processes have proceeded at different paces and in different fashions for each of these three women; they have come to understand and express their Jewishness very differently, depending upon their age and past experiences.

### **1. Yevgeniya Zarankina**

Yevgeniya Zarankina immigrated to the United States in 1995 from Moscow. She is presently retired and lives with her husband in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. In Moscow, Zarankina worked as a librarian. Her experiences in the United States typify those of older immigrants, most of whom came to settle in this country at the request of their sons and daughters.

#### *The Role of Jewish Family and Children's Services*

Zarankina's initial experiences adjusting to life in America were independent of her age. Almost all immigrants began their new life with the aid of Jewish Family and Children's Services. This organization started its program serving Rhode Island's Soviet Jewish immigrants in the early 1970s. During the peak of Soviet/Russian immigration to Rhode Island in

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the early to mid-1990s, the program demanded the labor of a social worker, full-time interpreter, and additional assistant. The organization continues to work with new arrivals, although the demand for such services has significantly dwindled as immigration rates decline. Jewish Family and Children's Services was usually the first contact immigrants had with Americans. The social worker would meet arriving immigrants at the airport and bring them to their new apartment, rented for three to four months by the organization. Zarankina recounts her impressions with the organization:

When we arrived here Ellen met us and for the first month they paid for us. We rented an apartment, now we live in subsidized housing. And they helped with finances, especially with certain material things, with furniture. We felt the whole time that people were looking after us. For that reason I cannot even say one bad thing about them.<sup>4</sup>

Zarankina, like all of Rhode Island's immigrants, expresses extreme gratitude and satisfaction with the efforts of Jewish Family and Children's Services. Because the Russian immigrant community in Rhode Island was relatively small (when one compares it with larger areas such as Boston, New York, or Chicago), Jewish Family and Children's Services was able to allot more time, care, and money to its efforts. For example, all immigrant children who arrived in Rhode Island prior to high school age were enrolled in private Jewish day school (either Solomon Schechter or Hebrew Country Day School) at little or no cost to their families. Both schools had special programs for immigrant children, hiring people who taught English as a second language and other specialists to ease the children's transition to American life.

This contact with Jewish Family and Children's Services considerably affected Rhode Island's Soviet immigrants. First, it served to welcome the new immigrants into the Jewish community of Rhode Island. For many immigrants, this was the first time they felt themselves a part of a Jewish community, evoking a change in this component of their Jewishness. For others, it meant an introduction to a community that would replace the one they had left behind in Russia. This too altered their Jewishness as the Jewish community incorporated Russians and Americans alike.

Moreover, Jewish Family and Children's Services acted as a liaison between the immigrants and other centers for Jewish religion and traditions. Through these avenues, the immigrants began to rethink their Jewishness

along spiritual and cultural lines. For example, the placing of children in Jewish schools educated the immigrants' children on Judaism and Jewish culture, knowledge that, in turn, was transmitted to parents. Irina Dobrushkin, another immigrant, explains that this had considerable effect on her family's spiritual expression: "It was much easier for us [to practice Judaism] when my son was going to Schechter School," she recalls. "At least he brought a lot of things [home]." In addition, families with children in Jewish day schools were assigned a "foster" family who had a child in the same class. These "foster" families would share Jewish cultural practices with the immigrants, inviting them over for occasions such as Seders and Shabbat dinners.

*The Path to Assimilation:*

*Learning English and the Citizenship Examination*

Jewish Family and Children's Services provided direct financial assistance for the immigrants during the first three to four months of their stay in Rhode Island. Many immigrants, however, needed other forms of aid, including instruction in the English language. Courses at various levels were established at the Jewish Community Center to teach English to the immigrants. Older immigrants, in particular, encountered great difficulty learning English. Many of them attended (and continue to attend) practice courses for years.

Education was a Jewish value for the first wave of Russian immigrants, and Soviet Jews, too, possess this respect for learning. Zarankina's dedication to learning English reflects this pre-immigration expression of her Jewishness. She explains its difficulties:

The hardest thing of course is that we do not know the language. It is very hard. In college I did not study English and so I began to study it here at the very beginning, literally with the alphabet. English is very hard, especially because we are already elderly people. I am already in my fourth or fifth year of studying English. Today I study it all and I think I remember everything, and tomorrow you wake up as if all the words are new, as if I never heard them. Because there is no practice. It is very hard.

I tried with our neighbor—we have an American neighbor next to our apartment. I tried to converse with her. It's hard for her to listen to us because by the time we remember what word we need to say it's too late. She's an elderly woman—she gets tired. Therefore the only place where we practice is in class. And also to

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catch what people are saying, to understand what people are talking about is very hard. That is my biggest obstacle.

Zarankina's attempt to learn English exemplifies her application of a pre-immigration Jewish value to the assimilation process. However, for Zarankina this task is incredibly difficult, particularly given her age and lack of English language skills before departure. Many elderly immigrants share her difficulties and struggle to learn basic language constructions. Despite fervent studying, many face great difficulty interacting with Americans. Everyday tasks such as making doctors' appointments and doing grocery shopping are extremely trying. Many see little progress after all the time they devote to their education and assimilation.

This pressure to learn English is further compounded by the elder immigrants' need to pass the United States citizenship exam. In 1996, Bill Clinton signed into law new immigration and citizenship guidelines, drastically changing the qualifications for Russian immigrants. Prior to the reforms, Russian immigrants, as political refugees, were exempt from passing the citizenship examination in order to receive certain benefits. However, following the new modifications, welfare reform took away food stamps and medical benefits from legal permanent residents (the former status of Russian immigrants). Russian immigrants now have to pass the citizenship examination in order to preserve Medicaid benefits and receive social security insurance. This reform has disproportionately hurt the elderly as the exam requires the ability to read, write, speak, and understand English.

The Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island, in order to better assist Russian immigrants, has established courses for the citizenship exam. Zarankina and her husband, who now have lived five years in this country, are avidly studying for the exam. She explains its difficulties:

We have only one dream. You know, the hardest thing is of course to pass the exam for citizenship. It takes so much out on your health and nerves. Here is why. We go to class, we study, as if we know everything, but at our age it is already very hard. Those who already passed the exams come and talk to us, about how worried they were that some even had heart attacks. And we think that at this age, people who are already seventy years old cannot possibly learn English completely. At a basic level we can learn English, that is, understand something on an everyday level, and maybe respond somehow. But to express one's thoughts properly, the way we, for

example, would in Russian—that we will never be able to do.

Therefore, we even wrote a petition and sent it to Washington. It was organized in New York—there is an organization of Jews from the former Soviet Union there. They organized a petition requesting that older people be excused from the examination. We should, of course, take an oath that we will always be faithful to America and thankful for everything that she has done for us.

This description of the difficulties learning English and preparing for the citizenship exam reveals her identification as part of a larger Soviet Jewish-American community. She speaks of these problems as a collective struggle experienced by older Soviet immigrants. Such reflections indicate Zarankina's extension of her sense of Jewish community in Russia to Rhode Island, with the goal of assimilation. It is clear that she hopes through communal efforts the elderly immigrants will succeed in achieving citizenship, an expression of assimilation. Moreover, she even extends this community beyond the confines of her immediate contacts in Rhode Island as she discusses her participation in a petition signed by Soviet Jews nationwide. Zarankina's membership in a Jewish community was important to her in Russia and this value has persisted following her immigration to the United States.

*An Introduction to Jewish Religion and Culture in the United States*

Despite Zarankina's sense of membership in a Jewish immigrant community, she had little prior knowledge of religious and cultural practices. Instead, such concepts were introduced to her in the United States and precipitated great change in her post-immigration expression of Jewishness. Zarankina explains:

It goes without saying that I am Jewish. I felt so my whole life, besides that it was written in my passport. I even felt Jewish because anti-Semitism, of course, was horrible. But here I personally feel Jewish. I feel this way because I participate in the celebration of holidays. Now we have Russian television, WMB. Rabbi Margolis manages this television station, and he goes on the air in Russian, so that we will understand, and invites other rabbis. He also leads very interesting discussions about Jewish holidays and Jewish culture, about how we ought to celebrate them and other Jewish holidays.

It is all an introduction to our Jewishness because we never had any of that before. In fact, we only found out about it here. At home

no one ever spoke Yiddish, my parents didn't know that language because they already were raised in that Russia where the only language was Russian. Here we on the whole feel ourselves Jewish. Here it is not shameful to walk down the street wearing a kippa. It is not shameful how Jewish men walk in their hats and nobody is embarrassed.

But in Moscow, when we were there, if a Jew in that kind of clothing walked down the street he would have been pelted with rocks. I cannot even imagine. Maybe now something has changed there, we have already been living here five years. But when *we* lived in Moscow, we did not see that. It was impossible to feel that a Jewish family was walking, for example, to synagogue. At the central synagogue there was not even a place to park cars. Those who had cars had to put them somewhere and then walk many blocks. Because it was impossible for you to see Jews driving up and going and praying in the synagogue. All of that had to be done secretly, everyone was afraid.

Zarankina explains that she has learned a great deal about Jewish customs and religion following her immigration. She describes listening to rabbis and other spiritual advisors with keen interest. Such encounters have had tangible effects on Zarankina's Jewishness. Not only has she been made aware of religious and cultural practices, but also she has adopted them into her lifestyle. For example, she celebrates holidays. This type of interest, typical of older immigrants, seems to be a function of age. In general, many older individuals are not busy with work and are looking for something to give ritual and meaning to their lives. This is further accentuated in the case of older Soviet Jewish immigrants because they are likely to have had some limited contact with Jewish culture and religion in the Soviet Union. Many view life in the United States as a place to explore their Jewishness and learn more about the customs spoken of by their parents who were born before the revolution.

However, Zarankina's change in her Jewishness goes beyond an increase in religious and cultural practices. Life in America has changed her perception of both her personal Jewishness and that of the surrounding Jewish society. Her individual change encompasses a sense of pride and personal feeling about what it means to be Jewish. Zarankina explains that in Russia she felt Jewish because of external societal impositions (it was marked on her passport and she experienced anti-Semitism), whereas in the

United States her Jewish identity stems from the country's freedom of expression (her observing Orthodox Jews walking down the street in traditional dress and a television program about Jewish cultural and religious practices).

It is interesting that Zarankina comments on the Jewishness of American Jews through her observations of the Orthodox. She discusses their pride in physical expressions of their faith. Yet the Orthodox are a small percentage of the American Jewish population and have a specific and very visual manner of expressing their Jewishness, unduplicated in other types of American Jews. Perhaps influenced by the proximity of her home to an Orthodox community, Zarankina's observations about American Jewry seem a bit skewed.

*Reconciling Being Jewish and American*

Combined with Zarankina's exploration of her Jewishness is an exploration of things deemed American. Zarankina comments:

We go to synagogue at Temple Emanu-El and celebrate all the Jewish holidays there. By the way, we also celebrate them at home. We celebrate all the holidays now, even American ones. Right now we are preparing for Christmas. We aren't really such religious Jews, you know. Therefore now we are exploring our Jewishness, but all the same American holidays are very good and we happily celebrate them as well.

Zarankina's description of her celebration of Christmas seems at odds with her increased awareness and practice of Jewish culture and religion. However, she has, albeit inappropriately, labeled the holiday as American and therefore views its celebration as part of her assimilation into American society. While Zarankina seems to indicate some knowledge that the holiday runs counter to the tenets of Judaism, she does not view its celebration as a challenge to her Jewishness. Her Jewishness is therefore shaped not by religious adherence, but rather a cultural celebration of holidays and customs. This choice of a cultural expression of Jewishness marks Zarankina's triumph over the struggle to reconcile her pre-immigration conception of Jewishness with the many options available for Jewish expression in the United States.

In general, Zarankina is incredibly satisfied with life in the United States. Not only has immigration afforded her the opportunity to explore and freely express her Jewishness, but it has also permitted several possibilities

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that were linked to class and status in Russia. For example, Zarankina's husband underwent open-heart surgery in this country. She explained that, had they been in Russia, he would have died because they did not have enough money for such an operation. Zarankina sums up her reflections on life in America by saying, "I am honestly telling you that every time we all gather together at the table we say thank you, America, with tears in our eyes. Because here we really feel that we are people."

## 2. Yevgeniya Naroditskaya

While Zarankina's satisfaction typifies that of older immigrants, Yevgeniya Naroditskaya presents a different experience of life in the United States. Yevgeniya Naroditskaya was born in Moscow in 1945. She lived there until her immigration to Smithfield, Rhode Island, a year and a half ago. In Moscow, Naroditskaya worked first as a chemist and later in marketing. She explained that she came to the United States to escape anti-Semitic state policy in Russia and on behalf of her son, Victor. She currently works for a temporary agency.

### *The Difficulties of Finding Employment*

While Zarankina struggles to pass the citizenship exam, Naroditskaya faces a different challenge—obtaining satisfactory employment. However, the two women share the same Jewish appreciation of education. Naroditskaya links education with vocational success and a mechanism for escaping anti-Semitism. She explains that this Jewish value is based on experiences in the Soviet Union:

About my life in the former Soviet Union, or in Russia: there was and there is state anti-Semitism in Russia. And I felt that I was branded a Jew all the time. I knew that I must be better, more educated, more talented than Russians to reach my goals, to enter the Institute (college), to finish my dissertation work, and I so finished. I graduated from Moscow Institute of Petrochemical Industry in 1968. And I had post-graduate education in 1986. And I worked, and I had very interesting jobs all these years.<sup>6</sup>

Naroditskaya, like Zarankina, applied the same principles to her new life in the United States. However, she too is aware that her lack of fluent English has drastically impeded her assimilation:

My husband and I don't have fluent English. This is a big problem for us to find a job. No job, no money, no life in the United States. If you don't have fluent English, it's difficult to live here.

Now I'm an employee of a temporary agency. They give me jobs in different offices. I graduated from Rhode Island College outreach programs as insurance technician a half-year ago. And I thought that I would be able to find a permanent job now. I sent my resumes to eighty percent of the insurance agencies but nobody wanted to give me a job. As I understood it, because of English. This is an unpleasant situation for me because this is real life for me and for my husband. And so most, about ninety percent of people of our age group, feel themselves uncomfortable here, because they, like my husband and I, don't have work according to our qualifications.

Arriving with exaggerated expectations, Naroditskaya and the "ninety percent" of her immigrant acquaintances have faced much difficulty assimilating. She had hoped to use education as a tool for overcoming the obstacles of immigration in the same fashion as it had helped her to overcome anti-Semitism in Russia. However, what Naroditskaya did not realize is the extent to which it would be impossible for her to find comparable, and possibly even lower level work, without fluent language skills. She explains that she feels "uncomfortable" in the United States, in part because of the lack of prestige in her social position (relative to her level of education in Russia). For many Russian Empire immigrants, the value placed on getting education drove individuals to enroll in colleges and universities, in the process becoming more integrated into American society. Yet for Naroditskaya, her high level of education but lack of fluent English has had the opposite effect. Her expectation of vocational success, and her disappointment at not being able to achieve it, has led her to feel "uncomfortable" and ostracized from American society.

But it should be noted that Naroditskaya and her husband are not suffering from poverty. They have an apartment in a nice house even with modest employment, and their son attends Bryant College. Given these conditions, it would seem that the family is well on its way to assimilation into American life. However, the Jewish elevation of education and its accompanying promise of vocational success perhaps distorted Naroditskaya's perception of what life should be like upon immigration, thereby hampering her ability to feel at home in America.

#### *Membership in a Russian-Jewish-American Society*

While Naroditskaya feels uncomfortable in the United States because of her employment status, she is certainly not suffering from a lack of community. Like Zarankina, part of Naroditskaya's post-immigration ex-

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pression of her Jewishness is membership in the Rhode Island Jewish community. However, unlike Zarankina, Naroditskaya's involvement with the Jewish community is an entirely new experience. Naroditskaya had related her Jewishness in Russia and the Soviet Union to personal encounters with anti-Semitism. It can be inferred from her narrative that she had little contact with other Jews in Russia in a community context. For example, she recalls a communal encounter with anti-Semitism:

Ten years ago our house in the country was burnt because it was a house of Jews. And I decided to investigate this crime and I discovered that ten houses of Jews were burnt. And when I asked—we applied for the public prosecutor to punish, to find the criminals to punish them—we received the answer, "it's impossible." And I wrote a letter to the democratic magazine *Ogonyok*.<sup>7</sup>

That Naroditskaya found out only after her investigation that several other Jewish country houses were burned suggests that she had little contact with the Jews who lived near her. Moreover, the fact that she handled the incident alone indicates her lack of involvement in the Jewish community.

However, following Naroditskaya's immigration, she began to express her Jewishness not through encounters with anti-Semitism, but rather through involvement in the Rhode Island Russian Jewish community. She explains:

Boris Gorbachevsky and I decided to organize a bookstore where we could sell Russian books. I am not sure that there will be many customers. And sometimes I write articles in a newsletter [*Vestnik*], the Rhode Island Russian language newspaper. We and most of Russian populations are a part of the Jewish community. And I would like to organize more contacts with Jewish Americans, to do something. Right now, we have tried to organize meetings with Russian poets and writers and musicians.

Naroditskaya's current perception of her Jewishness has clearly changed from her pre-immigration estrangement from the Jewish community. Her participation and assistance in many of the Rhode Island Russian-Jewish community's events indicates this population's importance to her. Moreover, she explains her desire to integrate the Russian Jewish community into the American Jewish community and promote interaction and understanding between the two groups. She advocates creating more contact with Jewish Americans. Involvement in the Jewish community is therefore a path to assimilation for Naroditskaya; she views it as a mechanism for interacting

with Americans. While it might at first appear that Naroditskaya's involvement with the Russian Jewish community surfaced because it afforded her contact with other immigrants who shared language and cultural similarities, her inclusion of the American Jewish community suggests a sincere desire to explore her Jewishness. Involvement with the Jewish community in Rhode Island has, therefore, afforded Naroditskaya two opportunities: an exploration of community as part of one's Jewishness and assimilation.

*A Jewish Identity Without Religious and Cultural Practices*

While for both Zarankina and Naroditskaya immigration to the United States resulted in an expression of Jewishness associated with community membership, it had differing effects on their religious and cultural practices. Unlike Zarankina, Naroditskaya did not start to practice and study Jewish traditions following her arrival. Naroditskaya describes her Jewish identity as follows, "I feel myself as a Russian Jew. I am not Russian, I am not a Jew. I am a Russian Jew. And my culture is Russian culture entirely. Sometimes I read the Bible. It helps me to survive, but we don't practice Jewish tradition."

Immigration, therefore, did not affect all individuals' Jewishness in the same way. Naroditskaya, unlike Zarankina, is more specific about her Jewish identity, explaining that she is, "not a Jew" but rather "a Russian Jew." Zarankina draws little distinction between Jewish identity in Russia and America. She is "a Jew" and experiences a feeling of personal pride seeing American Orthodox Jews walk down the street as evidence of religious freedom. Moreover, Naroditskaya is distinguishable from Zarankina as she has little interest in Jewish religious or cultural life aside from her reading of the Bible and socializing with members of the community. While immigration provoked a rethinking of one's Jewishness for all immigrants, their final expressions were very different.

Perhaps Naroditskaya's lack of involvement in a Jewish community in Russia, and her childhood in a well-established atheistic society, turned Naroditskaya away from religious and cultural practices. This is not to say that Naroditskaya did not find a new way to express her Jewishness following immigration. While Zarankina found her niche in the study of Jewish cultural practices, Naroditskaya's interest lies in membership in a Jewish community. This community provides some solace to Naroditskaya who is unsatisfied with life in America and, "looks at [her] future in the United States without hope."

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Naroditskaya's experiences presented different challenges with assimilation and expressions of Jewishness than did Zarankina's. It is important to remember that she only came to Rhode Island a year and a half ago, and therefore her assimilation and exploration processes are far from complete. Moreover, her age at immigration brought distinct problems, not only with respect to finding work but also with involving oneself in Jewish religious and cultural practices. That lack of involvement may in part be the result of her childhood in the Soviet Union during the 1950s—a time when Stalin forbade all forms of Jewish religious and cultural expression and severely persecuted Jews.

### 3. Masha Aptekman

These experiences of Naroditskaya and Zarankina are further supplemented when one looks at those of a younger individual. Masha Aptekman came to the United States in her mid-twenties and presents yet another experience with assimilation and changing expressions of Jewishness. Masha Aptekman, age twenty-nine, came to the United States five years ago from Israel. She immigrated to Israel at age nineteen. Prior to living in Israel, Masha lived in Leningrad and then Moscow. She presently studies in a Ph.D. program in the Department of Slavic Languages at Brown University.

#### *Receiving an American Education and its Impact on Assimilation*

Like Naroditskaya and Zarankina, Masha's expression of her Jewishness in the Soviet Union was linked to the value of education. She emphasizes the quality of her childhood education in Moscow: "I studied at the Linguistics University, which was a very prestigious university. I studied there for a year. Before that, I also studied at a very good secondary school."<sup>8</sup> Masha maintained this desire for education following her emigration; in fact, it is the major reason she left Israel for the United States:

In reality, I wanted to get an American education. In Israel it is hard to find work. Therefore all the people who are involved in the humanities, literature, and history work as tour guides. I didn't want to work as a tour guide, I thought that I could do something more. I didn't want to go to America for America. I wanted to go to a good university.

Masha, like Naroditskaya, draws the link between a good education and quality employment. However, how this link impacted their assimilation process is quite different. For Masha, the desire for favorable employment motivated her to attend a university in the United States, a step that

accelerated her assimilation: "my first encounter with an American was Lynne deBenedette [Russian lecturer at Brown University] and at International House, I came to know Americans. Now I have many American friends, people who study Slavistics, people who work with Valery [her boyfriend] at the laboratory."

Unlike Naroditskaya, Masha does not consider herself apart from or uncomfortable in American society. The contacts she has made through Brown University have taught her much about American life and secured her friendships with Americans. Her narrative is particularly rich in American phrases and concepts. For example, she labels herself as being "politically correct" and a "feminist." Masha's American education, inspired by a pre-immigration Jewish desire to learn, has afforded her the opportunity to assimilate and feel comfortable in America. Her university placement actually speeds this assimilation process, as it demands encounters with various types of Americans and is a forum for discussing popular culture and debating public issues.

*Does Immigration to America Provide a Place for Free Jewish Life?*

One public issue Masha probably encountered on her college campus is the interaction between people with religious and racial differences. In the Soviet Union, Jews were subject to persecution as members of an ethnic minority, and denied the freedom to practice their religion and culture as they wished. For most Soviet Jewish immigrants, as evidenced in the narrative of Yevgeniya Zarankina, life in the United States has meant the opportunity to freely express and explore one's Jewishness. However, for Masha, life in America is not equated with the opportunity for such religious freedom. Her conclusions stem from her experiences in Israel and have caused a rethinking of her pre-immigration Jewishness:

I came from Israel where everyone was Jewish and there was no Jewish question. It's really strange that in America I am again in contact with the Jewish question because many of my friends are Russian, and some of them are big anti-Semites. But through all this, they are my friends and it is a little strange because I also socialize with Jewish immigrants. On the other hand though, I socialize with [native] Russian students who do not know that I am Jewish. And one [Russian] girl not long ago said, "In Boston it's really hard to socialize. There are only Jews there." That kind of talk I wouldn't expect in America. Therefore it is a bit strange.

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You know, to many people life in America is a kind of free Jewish life. For me it is not like that because I lived in Israel. In Israel I was more Jewish than in America. America, to me, is somewhere between Israel and Russia. However, I can celebrate holidays here. I celebrate all the holidays and I am making an effort to be more Jewish.

Masha's account provides important insight into ethnic relations in the United States, Israel, and Russia and the effect life in each of these countries has had on her Jewishness. She indicates that anti-Semitism exists both in the United States and in Russia, although in different forms. Masha explains that despite the anti-Semitic encounters she has had in the United States, she can celebrate holidays here and choose to be more or less Jewish. In the Soviet Union, she implies, she was subject to both vocal anti-Semitism and restrictions on Jewish expression. And in Israel, Masha explains that she experienced a free Jewish life without anti-Semitism or religious and cultural guidelines.

These three varying experiences have affected Masha's Jewishness. In the Soviet Union, it was shaped, like that of Zarankina and Naroditskaya, by encounters with anti-Semitism and did not include the practice of religion and culture. However, in Israel it was molded by both the practice of religion and culture and a sense of ethnic freedom outside the influence of anti-Semitism. And in America, her Jewishness encompasses both components, from its pre-immigration expression in the Soviet Union to its expression in Israel: she defines her Jewish identification through encounters with anti-Semitism and through cultural and religious practices. Masha's observation is especially interesting as she brings with her a unique set of experiences prior to her arrival in the United States. Having experienced life only in Russia and America, most Soviet immigrants, unlike Masha, fail to notice that there are limits to their religious and cultural freedom in the United States.

#### *The Effect of Membership in a Majority Versus a Minority*

Masha explains that being in Israel afforded her the opportunity to live a free Jewish life. Such an experience stems from membership in a majority: the greater part of Israel's citizens are, like Masha, Jewish. However, Jewish life in the United States for Masha, again, meant membership in an ethnic minority, although this time with religious and cultural freedom. She explains that in Russia she was afraid of her Jewish ethnicity and juxtaposes

these fears with her security in the United States: "there [in Russia] the hardest thing was to be sure of yourself. I was always afraid in Russia. I was afraid because I am Jewish. In America I became very sure of myself."

It is interesting that Masha attributes her rise in self-confidence to life in America and not Israel. The comment seems particularly odd when one considers that Masha claims to have felt more Jewish in Israel. However, it can be inferred that while Israel afforded Masha more opportunities to practice and explore her Jewishness, America evoked her sense of Jewish pride. This stems partially from Masha's own comment that "there was no Jewish question [in Israel]." Living in a country where she was surrounded by Jews, Masha felt herself part of a homogenous majority. Her pride in being Jewish surfaced only in America where she could identify with an ethnic minority and yet still choose how to express her religious and cultural preferences.

Moreover, while it is clear that Masha learned much of what she knows about Jewish ritual and religion in Israel, she defines her Jewishness by American standards. In commenting on her religious practices she states, "I light candles every Shabbat. I celebrate Rosh Hashanah, I celebrate Hanukkah. You know, I am not Reform. I am not Hassidic. I am probably Conservative." In Israel it is not necessary to define one's Jewish status as most of the country's subjects are members of a Jewish majority. However, in America a Jew is a member of a minority group and affiliation with this group demands a sharper definition of one's beliefs and practices. Therefore, Masha's labeling herself as Conservative is predicated on American definitions. Life in a Jewish minority in America has not only shaped how Masha expresses her Jewishness (her increased sense of pride), but also how she perceives her Jewishness as evidenced by labeling her religious practices.

In addition, Masha defines her Jewish identity through life in America and Russia, not in Israel:

If someone were to ask me what I consider myself, I would say an Americanized Russian Jew. Jewishness is my religion and in some sense my culture, but culture as a part of religion. My secular culture is Russian culture. Yet American as well because I really love jazz, and I really love American literature.

Such a definition of her Jewish identity would not have surfaced had Masha remained living in Israel. As a member of a Jewish minority in the

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United States, Masha feels the need to specify her Jewishness according to American definitions. In Israel, where most are Jewish, such a distinction would not have been necessary. In fact, Masha's self-classification as an "Americanized Russian Jew" is an extremely assimilated definition of her identity. It reflects her awareness of the three nations she has lived in and the importance of each culture to her character. This self-definition marks a departure not only from Israeli conceptions of Jewishness, but to some extent Russian ones as well. Labels such as "Russian Jewish" become more prevalent after immigration to the United States, when immigrants encounter the varying self-definitions of this ethnic minority.

Masha presents an interesting case study, given her experiences in three very different Jewish settings. Her definitions of her Jewish life in the United States distinguish her from other immigrants. Another factor, her young age, has allowed for a speedier assimilation process. When taken with Zarankina and Naroditskaya, the three women present a wide range of experiences in assimilating Jewish culture and religion. It is important to remember that for all these women the assimilation and exploration process is not, and may never be, complete. Further encounters with Americans, non-Jews and Jews alike, will provoke changes in their place in American society and in their Jewishness.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Quoted in Eleanor Horvitz, "Old Bottles, Rags, Junk!" The Story of the Jews of South Providence," *RIJHA Notes*, Vol 7, No. 2 (1976), pp. 193-95. See also an interview with Rose Krasnow, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Archives, 16 July 1976.
- <sup>2</sup> Mila Shroyer, interview with the author, 15 Nov. 2000.
- <sup>3</sup> Ellen Steingold (former social worker, Jewish Family Services), interview with the author, 29 Nov. 2000.
- <sup>4</sup> Yevgeniya Zarankina, interview, 19 Dec. 2000—all subsequent quotations translated from the Russian by the author.
- <sup>5</sup> Irina Dobrushkin, interview, 27 Jan. 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> Yevgeniya Naroditskaya, interview in English with some grammar corrections by the editor, 3 Feb. 2001.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ogonyok* was known for its liberal editorial policies during the late Soviet period and has continued that policy following the collapse of the USSR.
- <sup>8</sup> Masha Aptekman, interview, 16 Nov. 2000—all subsequent quotations translated from the Russian by the author.

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## **Jewish High School Teachers in Providence, 1917-1940**

*by Geraldine Foster*

*Another recurring theme in the Notes has revolved around education—Jewish students and teachers persevering despite religious and social restrictions placed on them both in Europe and America. This issue of the Notes represents that subject with articles on Jewish high school teachers in Providence, Jewish fraternity members at Brown University, and Jewish students at Wheaton College.*

*Jerry Foster has contributed many articles and interviews to this journal, which could not continue without the dedication of authors like her. Her survey of high school teachers follows last year's piece on elementary school teachers.*

In preparing the first part of this study, which appeared in the last issue of RIJHA Notes (Vol.13, No.4), the authors were fortunate to be able to interview seven women who taught in the Providence elementary system prior to 1940. This essay deals with the secondary schools and presents a less unified view: we were able to speak with only three teachers who had entered the Providence school system prior to 1940, and they began their careers at the end of our time frame. For those who entered the school system earlier, we have had to rely on materials found in the archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and the memories of former students and relatives.

Of the Jewish high school teachers appointed during this period, more than half were graduates of Brown University and Pembroke College. Other colleges represented included Providence College, Rhode Island State College (now University of Rhode Island), Emerson, and Boston University. Not all these graduates had aspired to be teachers. Even before the onset of The Great Depression, dreams of becoming a doctor or engineer, or pursuing a career in the theatre or art, had to be put aside for lack of finances. Teaching in a high school was a favored and honored alternative. For the women, teaching was one of the few available and satisfying career paths they could follow.

One high school teacher and almost all the junior high school teachers had graduated from Rhode Island College of Education (now Rhode Island

College). Although the college was known primarily for its elementary education program, those indicating a preference for secondary schools spent half their senior year at a junior high school working with a critic teacher to gain competence in one subject area. After graduation, they had to give a year of service, called City Training, to gain accreditation, according to Sylvia Kniznik (Fain), R.I.C.E. Class of 1939. She recalled spending one of those semesters at Roger Williams Junior High School.

Louis Yosinoff, R.I.C.E. 1940, spoke of his year of city training at Samuel Bridgham and Esek Hopkins Junior High Schools. He had already passed his student teaching semester at George J. West Junior High School under the aegis of Miss Rosanne Flanagan in the Mathematics Department. Unlike those opting for elementary education, he stated, they received no compensation for that year. For him it meant finding a part-time job in order to have a means of support. Dorris Marcus (Mendelson) graduated from Pembroke College in 1936 with a major in Latin and German, and received her Master's of Education in Latin three years later. She did her practice teaching at Classical High School (for one year, she thought) under the guidance of Mrs. Emily Piche. She did not recall any other required training. According to information supplied by Dr. Marlene Lopes, archivist at RIC, from a dissertation by Dr. Thomas Lavery, it was not until September of 1942 that, at the request of the junior high school administrators, R.I.C.E. instituted a program specifically devoted to secondary education.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The Early Teachers (1917-1930)**

To begin with the first reference to a Jewish high school teacher in Providence, the name of Etta B. Weinstein appears in the minutes of the Providence School Committee appointments in 1917 for assignment in September of that year. There is no mention of the school to which she was assigned or her subject. A careful search of high school yearbooks by Anne Sherman, office manager of RIJHA, yielded no mention of Etta B. Weinstein. However, the faculty list in the 1918 yearbook of Providence Technical High School had the name of Etta B. Winston among the ten teachers of art and drawing in the school. It was not unusual for the name Weinstein to be Anglicized to Winston (four instances are known to the author). We thus may assume that the art teacher at "Tech" was Miss Weinstein. Other than his name, no information was available for Gaston Weinstein, who apparently was the first Jewish man appointed to a teaching position in Providence secondary schools.

Rose Presel had no intention of becoming a school teacher when she graduated from Pembroke College in 1918. At the age of ten, she and her sister Charlotte, age eight, made their debut as concert pianists in Froebel Hall in Providence. Known later as the Preselle Sisters, they received excellent notices for their recitals in Rhode Island and throughout New England. Even with their busy concert schedules and practice, Rose Presel still was able to study for a Master's degree in modern foreign languages. In her autobiographical sketch entitled "Musical Memories," she wrote, "I was asked to replace temporarily the teacher of French and German at Hope High School who had resigned."<sup>2</sup> The year was 1921. "Although I had never planned to enter the teaching profession," she recalled, "I found that I liked teaching young people, and I remained at Hope for many, many years, becoming head of the Foreign Language Department for twenty years until retirement." Miss Presel stated that she liked to incorporate music and literature in her foreign language classes to teach her students something of the culture of the country. Jerome Spunt recalled sitting in his French class in 1942 and hearing Miss Presel's students lustily singing German songs.

Combining her teaching and musical career was not easy. "People often asked how I could travel extensively to give concerts when I was a high school teacher. I remember taking the 3 p.m. train to New York, changing my teaching clothes for an evening gown, playing a concert, taking the midnight train back to Providence, and getting up early the next morning to go to my classes at Hope." Herbert Brown recalled sitting in Miss Presel's German class. "When you think of a stern teacher," he said, "she was stern. She was Germanic. In her class you had to toe the line. She was tough, very demanding, but a very good teacher."

Miss Presel retired from teaching in 1963.<sup>3</sup>

Dora Sherman had no doubts about her future vocation. Under her photo in the 1918 yearbook of Providence Technical High School there is a note that her ambition was to become a school teacher. Unable to accept a scholarship to Pratt Institute, she applied to Pembroke College and enrolled there. However, after one year she transferred to R.I.C.E. because she would not have been qualified to teach immediately upon graduating from Pembroke. Her family responsibilities did not permit that course of action.

After graduation in 1923, Miss Sherman received an appointment to the Guittierez Elementary School in Bristol, R.I. It was a long commute from South Providence where she lived. Her brother Bernie (Dr. Bernard Sherman),

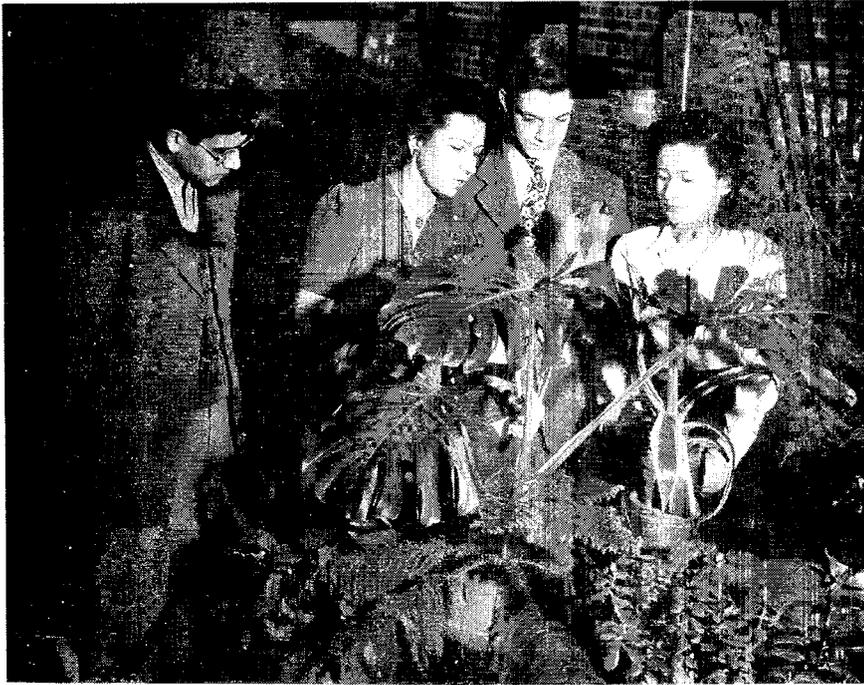
as her niece Grace Kennison Alpert recalls, taught her to drive an old Model T Ford she purchased. It had no heater and some of the floor boards were missing, but it brought her safely to and from school. At first she traveled alone, but as she became more acquainted with the others on the faculty, she found passengers to share the ride. She formed friendships with her colleagues there that extended through the years and through the generations, Mrs. Alpert stated.

After seven years of commuting and some additional science courses, Miss Sherman applied for and received an appointment to George West Middle School in Providence. Her experience and her studies allowed her to make the transition without having to take additional City Training as had those just graduating from R.I.C.E.<sup>4</sup> She became a teacher of general science. A letter in the possession of Mrs. Alpert, written by a former student many years after being in Miss Sherman's class, attests to her popularity among her students and her creativity in making her subject of more than passing interest.

When a vacancy occurred in the science department of Mount Pleasant High School, Miss Sherman successfully applied for it. She had qualified as an instructor in biology as a result of additional science courses she had taken as well as receiving her Master's degree, all accomplished while teaching full time. In addition to her classes, she served as advisor to the horticulture club.<sup>5</sup> Miss Sherman later transferred to Hope High School. There she found an unused, abandoned greenhouse, annexed to the school building. With the help of her students, the greenhouse was cleaned and made usable again. New benches were built and plants purchased for the conservatory. In this way she instituted a horticulture club, always one of her favored projects.<sup>6</sup>

"When you passed her classroom," Mrs. Alpert said, "you would hear the students singing or reciting poetry"—not a usual practice for a biology class. These were songs or poems she had composed as memory aids for her students. She made up games and played practical jokes with a skeleton she kept in her closet; these were all her teaching tools. She was, however, a strict disciplinarian, Mrs. Alpert continued. "She knew how to keep order when she wanted it." Miss Sherman retired after thirty-six years of teaching.

Bella Rubinstein began teaching science in 1925, at Providence Technical High School, three years after the appointment of her sister Molly to the same faculty.<sup>7</sup> The two women, daughters of Rabbi Israel Rubinstein, graduated from Pembroke in 1923.<sup>8</sup> Molly's marriage ended her career as a



*Dora Sherman (second from left), Mt. Pleasant High School, Providence, 1937.*

public school teacher in Providence. Bella Rubinstein retired in 1971.

Marion Brooks (Strauss) graduated from Pembroke College in 1923 and received an appointment to the English faculty of Hope High School in 1927.<sup>9</sup> In addition to teaching English literature, she became the assistant to Florence Slack, the head of the dramatics department. Theater held a special place in Mrs. Strauss's heart, and in later years she became known for the excellence of the senior play she staged at Hope twice a year, later annually, and for the many pageants and plays she produced for Temple Beth-El and other community venues.<sup>10</sup>

Herbert Brown was a member of her English class in 1935. "Her English classes were primarily about literature, not writing. She would read a paragraph and ask the students what they got from the passage. What did the author mean, what was he trying to say? She always tried to make them think about the meaning but also about the emotion."<sup>11</sup> However, it was as the drama teacher that he remembered her most vividly. Mr. Brown also spoke

of one of Miss Brooks's projects—to bring plays to those at the state prison at Howard. "One of the students, Florence Shapiro Markoff, and I were picked, and we went off to the prison under the aegis of Marion Brooks. It was very interesting to get into that environment and meet the people there. We were not afraid."

"It was my goal in life to have the lead in the senior play," Mr. Brown remembers, "and I tried out against a fellow by the name of Syd Ely. I remember his name after sixty-five or seventy years. I wanted that part so badly, and I did not get it. The play was 'Penrod and Sam.' She (Miss Brooks) knew I wanted that part, the bad boy, more than anything. It was going to be the beginning of my stage career. She talked to me later and said to me 'I have to tell you, you were wonderful, but he was better. I like you very much, but I had to give it to him.' At that point I did not like her, but later I got to think about what she said, and what she said was the truth. She could tell the truth very kindly.

"When I realized I wasn't as good," Mr. Brown continued, "I could live with myself a little better, and I changed my career. Never got to Broadway. But she really motivated the actors and brought out the best in them. Be a little angrier. Be a little kinder. Whatever the part demanded. And the students loved her."

Anne Hanson Sherman, who remembered Mrs. Strauss later in her career, concurred with Mr. Brown's opinion. "I met Mrs. Strauss when I became involved with our senior play. I worked on offstage activities so I was not involved in tryouts or acting. After January, no one had study hall. We had passes to her office, a very busy place between planning for the play and the yearbook. She was always moving, never walked, always ran. She never had time for lunch."

Mrs. Sherman stated that Mrs. Strauss's home was a magnet for her students. She took a personal interest in her students, their conversation, their problems. "Every night twenty or thirty students gathered in her small living room, and everyone seemed to fit," Mrs. Sherman stated. "It was the place to be. My mother would say 'Are you sure she wants you there? She has you kids all day in school.' But we knew that she loved young people and certainly had as much energy as they did. And her students loved her back."

Shortly after the production of "Penrod and Sam," Marion Brooks left the Providence school system to marry Walter Strauss. A year after his death in 1954, Mrs. Strauss returned to Hope High and became head of the drama

department in 1958, where she remained until her retirement in 1980.<sup>12</sup> In addition to her Bachelor's and Master's degrees, Mrs. Strauss was awarded an honorary degree from Emerson College in Boston.

Grace Shein (Preisser) was a classmate of the Rubenstein sisters and Marion Brooks Strauss.<sup>13</sup> Like her classmates, she also earned a Master's degree. In 1963 she earned a second Master's, this one in linguistics. Originally appointed to Providence Technical High School, then Central High School where she taught English and psychology, she later transferred to Classical High School. Mrs. Preisser was the first Rhode Island high school teacher appointed to the national board that drafted the SAT examinations. From 1937-1946 she served as a reader for the College Entrance Examination Board.<sup>14</sup>

Mrs. Preisser took a leave of absence in 1942. According to a newspaper account, she moved to New York, attended Columbia University and was associated with the Carnegie Foundation.<sup>15</sup> After her marriage in 1947, Mrs. Preisser taught at Bryant College and at R.I.C.E., where she was a professor of English for eighteen years.

Leo Weiss joined the science faculty of Hope High School in 1927 as a teacher of biology. He had graduated the year before from Rhode Island State College with a degree in biological sciences.<sup>16</sup> In 1934 he received an M.A.T. from Brown University. However, it is as a guidance counselor that he is remembered best. He entered that field in its inaugural years in the Providence system, in the mid 1930s.<sup>17</sup>

He was a Sunday School teacher at Temple Beth-El when Zelda Banks Feldman, then nine years old, first met him. "I met him again when I transferred from Central to Hope in January of 1940," she stated. "He was very nice. He would invite many of his students to his home after school for popcorn and conversation. He used to make the popcorn in the fireplace in his home." In addition to counseling students, guidance counselors also taught civics classes. Although it added to their duties, it allowed them to meet the young people in classroom setting and perhaps get to know them better.

"My father was known for his sense of humor and his bantering with his students," Dr. Hilton Weiss stated. When asked if Leo Weiss ever considered going into administration, Dr. Weiss said that although he very much wanted to do so, the opportunity did not come his way. "He was disappointed but not bitter. He liked teaching and he enjoyed being with his students."

Mr. Weiss also served as director of Camp JORI for twenty years. He did not want to retire from teaching, his son said, so after he retired from the Providence system, he began a second career as a guidance counselor at Park View Middle School in Cranston. He retired in 1971.<sup>18</sup>

### 1930-1940

In the previous article on elementary school teachers, mention was made of teachers who took positions as gym instructors in the later years of the Great Depression. Jobs were scarce, and by entering the Providence system in that way, they could later apply for a transfer to a classroom, should an opening present itself. Elsie Tatz (Strauss) and Stanley Corb were two exceptions. Mrs. Strauss remained a gym teacher in the elementary schools; Mr. Corb began at Candace St. School and transferred to Nathaniel Greene Jr. High School.

Dr. Charles Bernstein remembered Mr. Corb from his grammar school days. "It would have been about 1927 when we had him at Candace St. School. He was a powerfully-built man, not big but strong and tough. Nobody could fool around with him. He could pick up a kid by his ears, not hit him or anything, just scare him. He used to take us out in front of the school, and we would race in the street. Fifty yards and see how long it would take. I remember I did it in sixty seconds."

Physical education was not a subject that evoked much enthusiasm, at least among the women interviewed. Martha Colitz began her career as an itinerant, Stella Glassman recalled. She did not have a regular school assignment when she entered the system in 1930. Two women remembered her as their high school gym teacher. "I had Miss Colitz as a gym teacher at Central. Phys Ed was not my favorite subject. There was nothing interesting about it because I did not participate in sports," Zelda Banks Feldman stated. "Miss Colitz was very strict. Her class had a definite routine—the ropes, the horse, the mats. It did not appeal to me."

Frances Borod Cohen agreed that Miss Colitz was very strict and not very understanding about some excuses. Mrs. Cohen remembered vividly having to take a shower after gym class. There were little cubicles for one's clothes outside an individual shower. In the center of the room, surrounded by these little boxes, was a place for the teacher to stand and supervise. "Miss Colitz stood on a table so she could see if we were really taking a shower. She knew exactly who was goofing off, and she made you take one. We were just kids, but she made us feel that we were really athletic."

“Edward Charron was my gym teacher at Nathan Bishop Jr. High School in 1940,” Warren Foster said. Mr. Charron began his teaching duties at Samuel Bridgham Junior High School and later transferred. “He was a nonsense kind of person. You did what he said or you suffered the consequences. He was also a very powerful person, physically strong as well as in personality. We had different activities. Rope climbing was the one I liked best. Sometimes I got as high as two feet off the floor! His reaction to my klutziness was a disgusted look.” Mrs. Charron was also a gym teacher in another school system. Summers they operated a day camp where they were known as Uncle Ed and Aunt Gertrude.

In addition to their teaching duties, three men were remembered as being coaches. Harold Stanzler taught in the science department of Central High School and later, with a Master’s degree in educational psychology from Rhode Island State College, became a guidance counselor. He also coached the tennis team, according to his brother, Milton Stanzler.<sup>19</sup>

Joseph Shein gained renown on the playing fields of Brown University—in football, to be exact. At Hope High School he coached football and basketball, and taught history. Herbert Brown was one of the students in his history classes. “He was very affable, a good teacher, not overly strict but demanding that you do the work. It was a class you could go to and not have any qualms about as you did with other teachers. He talked about history but also the history of sports and how sports formed character and the value of sports. He also mentioned that how you conducted yourself in sports would carry into the classroom. If you conducted yourself in a true sportsman-like manner, you would have that same manner in class and in the world. He spoke of important sports figures within an historical period. I found his classes very interesting. His relaxed manner also kept the students relaxed. He was firm without being overbearing.”

Irving Katznelson (he later shortened his name to Nelson) participated in a number of sports in high school and at Providence College. Dr. Charles Bernstein recalled Mr. Nelson’s early career as a newsboy. “He was a newsboy at the same time I was. He was older than I was. He had a stand in front of the old Journal Building (on upper Fountain St.). There was a Liggett’s drug store downstairs. He and his brother shared the stand. Irving went to Commercial High. He was an All-State football player. After high school he got a football scholarship to Providence College. He majored in math. He used to coach a group of us on Sunday morning—an all-Jewish

football team, the Orioles. I played with the Orioles until I was eighteen, and I figured it was enough.”

Edward Feldman took solid geometry with Mr. Nelson at Central High School. “I behaved myself in school and and I never fooled around or joked in class. At most, if I sat way back, I would whisper something to someone sitting next to me—I don’t know why. They were all good students in that class because you had to take solid geometry if you wanted to go to college. It was required. I felt at ease in that class with him, and I would give an aside or joke about something. He ignored it for a while, but when he had had enough, he stopped it. After that I minded my p’s and q’s.

“He was a very good teacher and a very strict teacher, and because he was a coach, he dealt with football players and knew how to handle boys. He was well respected and had a good sense of humor.

“Mr. Nelson was not very tall, but stocky. I went out for the fencing team in high school. We were practicing in the gym when he came though. He saw us and immediately had to try it. He went at it with me. He did not know how, but went ahead—smash, bang. He was enjoying it. I did not want to tell him that there was finesse involved. He just had to try fencing because he was that kind of a guy.”

According to an article in the *Providence Journal*, Mr. Nelson coached hockey, wrestling and fencing as well as football, and became a guidance counselor. He began his teaching career at Hope St. Annex, transferred to Central and then to Mount Pleasant High School. He retired in 1974.<sup>20</sup>

Lillian Kelman (Potter Goldstein) was not a physical education teacher. She taught at Central High School after her graduation from Pembroke College in 1933.<sup>21</sup> She later received a Master’s degree from Brown in 1936. Her subjects were English and biology. However, she always stressed the importance of exercise. Jeanette Edelston Bernstein used to walk home with her after school: “I was a student at Central. I knew her because she was a friend of my cousin Muriel Smira. I was in her biology class. She was young and enthusiastic and a very good teacher. The students really responded to her. I thought I would not have to work very hard in her class and still get a passing grade because I knew the teacher. I passed but I was not too interested in the subject. She did try hard to stimulate my interest.

“She walked to school every day and I would meet her after school on the return home. She lived with her parents on Ontario Street. In those days

unmarried children customarily lived with their parents. She walked very fast. I remember she always said how important it was to exercise. It was a long time before I thought of the importance of exercise. And I did not consider walking a form of exercise. It was how we got to where we wanted to go. Wherever we wanted to go we walked. It was part of life," Mrs. Bernstein said.

Mrs. Goldstein also taught at Mount Pleasant High School and later, after her marriage, at Lincoln School. In 1969 she was honored by the Bausch and Lomb Corporation as the Outstanding Biology Teacher of the Year.

### **The Student Teachers**

As noted previously, the three teachers we were able to interview began their teaching careers near the end of our time frame, as student teachers. All three reported encountering difficulties finding a full-time position. All three resolved their situation in differing ways.

Dorris Marcus (Mendelson) stated, "I devoted forty-five years to school teaching, twenty-five of which were at Classical High School, teaching Latin and German. My career began in 1937 with student-teaching German



*Dorris Marcus Mendelsohn,  
Classical High School,  
Providence, 1950s.*

for a year at Classical with Mrs. Emelie Piche. We did not get paid for that whole year." Mrs. Mendelson graduated from Pembroke College in 1936, winning a prize in German and final honors in Latin upon graduation, and three years later received her Master's degree in Latin and education from Brown University.

"I applied to the Providence school system right after my graduation and practice teaching, but there were no openings in Latin. I preferred teaching Latin. I had to substitute for many years before there was an opening for a Latin teacher. When I was a substitute, I had to teach any subject that was needed."

It was not until 1950 that Mrs. Mendelson was able to secure a full-time position. It was, as she said, a very long wait. During that period, in addition to substitute work, sometimes long-term, more often day-to-day, she did home teaching for students unable to attend school because of illness, and taught summer and evening classes at Central High School. At Central she taught business subjects. All her students were adults. She was also an English teacher for three years at Providence Hebrew Day School.

Almost in despair at not finding an opening in her field, she decided to try for an elementary school position. She had wanted to teach from the time she was in high school. Since she liked being with children, this seemed another way to enter her profession even though it was not in her chosen field. In 1949 she began practice teaching at Oxford Street Elementary School under the guidance of Miss Murry. "Sixth grade was a whole new experience," she stated. It was so different. I had to teach geography, spelling—all subjects."

Mrs. Mendelson stated that her students came from poor homes. She had friends from more affluent sections of Providence who gave away practically new, barely worn children's clothes. She knew that her students could use them. Fearful of making the children uncomfortable, she consulted with Miss Murry before attempting to collect and distribute the clothing. She was told "Dorris, they love you so much that knowing the clothes come from you, they will be delighted." She brought the clothes to school and distributed them.

In 1950 she finally received an appointment as a Latin Teacher at Nathan Bishop Junior High School. Her elementary students wrote a letter to the superintendent of schools, Dr. James Hanley, asking that he not take Miss Marcus away from them. She remained at Bishop for ten years until her

appointment to Classical High School, where she taught Latin and then German and also Spanish for twenty-five years. To this day, several of her students can still sing "Three Blind Mice" in Latin.

Sylvia Kniznick (Fain) graduated from Rhode Island College of Education in 1939. After her year of practice teaching she endeavored to find a position in the Providence school system but was unsuccessful. What was offered were days as a substitute. On one occasion, Mrs. Fain recalled, she walked into a classroom at Central and was greeted by wolf whistles. What these rather boisterous young men did not know that this young, petite, very attractive young woman could, with a stern look and a firm, no-nonsense tone to her voice, bring order to the most unruly of classes. She put them in their place and proceeded to teach the planned lesson.

When Mrs. Fain could not find an opening in any of the several fields in which she was qualified, she became a social worker for the State of Rhode Island, rising to the position of senior worker. In 1957, after securing a Master's degree that qualified her to teach in the ungraded rooms, Mrs. Fain taught first at Roger Williams Junior High School and then at Nathan Bishop. She later became a guidance counselor at Bishop. It was with great sadness that she recalled one of a series of counseling sessions she had with a student, a very troubled young man. He finally asked "Why are you bothering?" She answered "Because I care."

Louis Yosinoff graduated from Rhode Island College of Education in 1940. After his year of city training he was unable to find an opening in the Providence school system in his chosen field of mathematics. As a result he was forced to find other employment. "I needed work," Mr. Yosinoff stated, "so I worked in retail until I went into the service in 1943."

It was not until 1951 that Mr. Yosinoff received an appointment in the Providence system. He taught math at a number of junior high schools, including Bridgham, Stuart, and Bishop. "In those days," he said, "the students were tracked. You were usually assigned one of the top classes, one of the slower, and the rest average. You also had one free period. I started out at \$3400 a year." Since it was insufficient to support a family, he supplemented his salary by working in retail, teaching Sunday school, and reading the Torah at the High Holy Days.

After qualifying as a guidance counselor, Mr. Yosinoff transferred from Bishop to Roger Williams, Stuart, and then to Central High School. He particularly enjoyed Central and with regret retired in 1984.

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During the period 1930-1940, the number of Jewish teachers in the Providence school system more than doubled, with the majority being assigned to the junior high schools. Among those assigned to the high schools were William Stepak, Benjamin Clamon, Sarah Baker and Matthew Millman. Mr. Stepak, a 1931 graduate in engineering at Brown University, also earned a Master's degree in education and was elected to Sigma Xi, an honorary society for mathematicians and scientists. He began his teaching career at Hope High School in the mathematics department, then transferred to Classical High School where he served as chairman of the mathematics department. He retired in 1973.<sup>22</sup>

Sarah Baker, a graduate of Emerson College, earned two Master's degrees, one in education and one in library science. After retiring from Classical High School in 1972, she became a volunteer teacher at Hamilton House, a senior center. She taught courses in Shakespeare and drama.

Benjamin Clamon graduated from Brown University in 1930 with a degree in German. He was assigned to Classical High School after a short stint at Technical High School and earning a Masters Degree.<sup>23</sup> Judith Webber Meiselman remembered him as a "no-nonsense teacher" who taught them German songs and whose comment, when someone forgot homework, was a rather sarcastic "*Es tut mir sehr leide*" (It hurts me very much). Norton Salk wrote "I remember one day all the students were in the room before he got there. We were whispering about the news that his brother Gerald had just been killed in action (in World War II). I guess we learned that from the morning paper. Then Mr. Clamon came in and the room was silent. We all stared at him sympathetically. He was quiet and sad-eyed. Then he started class. I was amazed at his composure. The class was extremely respectful that day." Matthew Millman is remembered by Judith Foster as one of those teachers who encouraged students to think independently. His subject was English literature. "We were doing poetry in class. We had to bring in a poem, read it in front of the class, and then we would discuss it, its meaning or message. The other students brought in poems by recognized, mainstream authors. I chose "Kaddish" by Allen Ginsberg. Although the poem was not one Mr. Millman would have chosen for the class, he did not interfere, but listened with a wry smile on his face. The class hated the poem, and the discussion grew quite heated in the interplay of ideas and attitudes. He did not interfere except to quiet the level of the voices of dissent. He liked his students and could appreciate their childish humor. There was one exam we took where I wrote the answers in very tiny

handwriting. I had to search the paper later for my mark. He had written '100%' in tiny, tiny letters."

### **The Administrators**

Three men among the Jewish teachers "went up the ladder" from teacher to guidance counselor, vice-principal, principal, and in one case to acting superintendent. They were the pathfinders in a very real sense, the first to enter the ranks of administrators. All three deserve a more detailed study of their careers, of their many achievements and the vicissitudes they faced, quite beyond the scope of this survey. In the meanwhile, we offer this glimpse.

It was parents visiting day at Camp Yawgoog (the Boy Scout Camp). For the program of the day, the scouts participated in a number of contests, including one for first aid and treatment of injuries. Of the fifteen contestants entered, Max Flaxman amassed the greatest number of points. He wrote of this episode in his memoirs, "Later at the campfire meeting of scouts and parents, the Chief of Scouts, J. Harold Williams, recognized my prowess by asking me to stand and calling me 'Dr. Flaxman.' There was great applause. In a flash my future changed. No more Annapolis! No more Navy! This was now the future. Dr. Flaxman, the scientist, the healer, the discoverer of cures." While he did not realize that ambition, "nevertheless science became the field of study and ultimately my field of instruction. Isn't it phenomenal that one remark, one sentence should change my whole life?"(24) This insight informed his approach to teaching and motivating his students.

Max Flaxman graduated from Brown in 1934. Dorothy Flaxman Kupitz thought that he was originally a premed student, but family finances did not permit him to fulfill that ambition. At first he found employment in a whiskey bottling plant but could see no future there. While at Brown he had been a laboratory assistant and had done some teaching. He enjoyed the teaching role and decided to make that his career. An appointment to a school system meant security and that was very important to him at that time in the Great Depression. In order to get his teaching certificate, he had to take a semester of courses in methodology and schoolkeeping at Rhode Island College of Education and then do practice teaching for the second semester.

Of his experience as a student teacher, Mr. Flaxman wrote, "The second term when I was a student teacher was a memorable one. It was the key to whatever success I had as a public school teacher. I was most fortunate to be assigned to a gifted and dynamic supervising teacher." He was Catherine

Casserly's first student teacher.

Mr. Flaxman stated that he was assigned one class to teach, then two, then three out of the class load of six. After a period of supervision he was given full charge of his classes. Toward the end of the term, he wrote, the science teacher next door asked if he would teach his afternoon classes. He would receive \$2 per class. The teacher was also employed at a local race track and had to leave school at noon in order to arrive at the track in time. With the permission of the principal and the supervision of Miss Casserly, Mr. Flaxman earned "about \$25 for five weeks" but could never understand how the teacher could make such an arrangement to leave for another job.

Mr. Flaxman's first appointment was to Esek Hopkins, then a transfer to Classical to teach chemistry and mathematics, a stint as a guidance counselor and assistant principal at Classical, then principal at Hope High School and finally at Nathanael Greene Middle School. He retired in 1979 and earned a superintendent's license.<sup>25</sup> He continued his teaching career in private schools in Providence.

Max Millman was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Brown University in 1932. He also received a Master's degree in education from the same university.<sup>26</sup> His first teaching appointment was to Roger Williams Junior High School, where he taught French, according to his sister, Esther Millman Rothberg. Frances Berger was a student in one of his classes. "He was a doll. He was wonderful. I fell in love with him. He was dedicated to getting his students to learn. He never had any problems with discipline. The deportment in his class was excellent. He was strict but no one resented him."

In describing the class routine, Mrs. Berger continued: "We did a great deal of oral work. Mr. Millman called on a student, and we would stand in the aisle next to our desk and recite. He concentrated on the spoken word so that we would really be able to speak French and to know the grammar and such. I'm afraid I had a poor tongue for languages. He would correct my mistakes in pronunciation and ask me to repeat the word. I would repeat it with the same mistakes. He was very patient."

When asked if her father had always aspired to a career in education, Roberta Millman Shine replied that he actually wanted to become a physician. She stated that he had applied to two medical schools but was rejected. Since he had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Brown, had high



*Mr. Max Flaxman interrogates David Brodsky, Hope High School, Providence, 1959.*



*Science Department, Central High School, Providence, 1938.*

*Front row, left to right: Mr. H.C. Stanzler, Mr. W. Schuster, Miss M.B. Leonard, Mr. E.C. Brown, Head of Department; Miss L. Kelman, Mr. E.M. Lovell, Mr. Hill.*

*Second row: Mr. P.W. Tucker, Mr. W.J. Ritzau, Mr. I.R. Clarke, Mr. G.R. Dolloff, Mr. W.T. Wyman.*

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grades and was a serious student, he always suspected discrimination as the reason for his not being accepted.

Mrs. Shine continued that when he realized he could not continue in medicine, he chose education. "His choice" she said, "might have had something to do with his religious upbringing. He was brought up an Orthodox Jew, where emphasis was placed on education and on family. For my father, family always came first, with education a close second. He was a very serious person. And like many Jews he felt that education was the ticket to a better life.

"I was thinking this morning (June 6, 2002)," Mrs. Shine continued, "what would have been the worst thing my sister and I might have done. I decided it would have been not to go to college. As long as I could remember education was always non-compromising."

Mr. Millman brought that non-compromising attitude toward education, his work ethic, and high principles as he became successively a guidance counselor, then vice-principal of Roger Williams Junior High School, principal of Oliver Hazard Perry and Nathan Bishop Junior High Schools, and finally Mount Pleasant High School. He retired in 1977.<sup>27</sup>

What began as a normal day of classes at Classical High School almost became anything but ordinary one day in 1943. As this writer and a friend were walking to class, my companion suddenly stopped, clutched my arm, and pointed to a crowd of students following in the wake of a handsome young man in the uniform of a naval officer. "Mr. Kramer!" she exclaimed. Appalled at my ignorance (who is Mr. Kramer?), she just shrugged and joined the ranks of his admirers, all of whom were marked late to class that day.

Louis Kramer had joined the faculty of Classical High School shortly after his graduation from Rhode Island State College in 1932. His field was chemistry. He also earned a Master's degree from Rhode Island College of Education and later did graduate work at Brown and Harvard Universities. At the time of the aforementioned incident, he was on leave and returned to Classical High school in 1945.<sup>28</sup>

Frances Goldin Miller was a student in Mr. Kramer's chemistry class. "He was very good-looking and all the teenage girls had a crush on him. I wanted to be a nurse, so I had to have chemistry. He was an excellent teacher. He treated all his students with great respect. You could come after school

for extra help or tutoring. He was very caring. He wanted everyone to do well. I enjoyed his class.”

“Mr. Kramer failed me,” Bella Kroll Dubinsky said. “He had very high standards. If you did not measure up, he failed you. He was a very bright young man.”

Dr. Banice Webber did not have Mr. Kramer for chemistry. However, he was a laboratory assistant during his senior year at Classical High School. It meant that during his lunch hour he set up the experiments for Mr. Kramer. His recollections, he said, were all positive. Mr. Kramer was known as a fair but hard marker. Although not in one of his classes, Dr. Webber stated that Mr. Kramer was his guidance counselor. “At Classical you met your counselor once or twice a year. He gave you booklets on careers which you took home to read. The counselors were meant more to help those with academic problems.”

After his service in the navy, Mr. Kramer returned to Classical, ultimately to become principal of Mount Pleasant High School and acting superintendent of Providence Schools, 1969-1972.(29) He was known for being an innovator and initiator of new programs.

In conclusion, there were many reasons that the men and women surveyed in this article became teachers. There were those for whom standing in front of a class full of students was the fulfillment of their dream. For others it may have been a second choice, their original goal frustrated by lack of finances or by a need for security or by discrimination. However, whether first or second choice, for those who remained with teaching, it became more than a career. They made it a profession, a calling, in which they invested their time, their energies, and their desire to bring knowledge to young minds.



#### **Interviews, Letters, and Telephone Conversations**

Warren Foster	April 8, 2002
Herbert Brown	April 10,2002
Dr. Charles Bernstein	April 22, 2002
Jeanette Edelston Bernstein	April 22, 2002
Zelda Banks Feldman	April 23, 2002
Edward Feldman	April 23, 2002
Dr. Hilton Weiss	May 21, 2002
Grace Kennison Alpert	May 21, 2002
Sylvia Kniznick Fain	May 24, 2002 (with Eleanor Horvitz)

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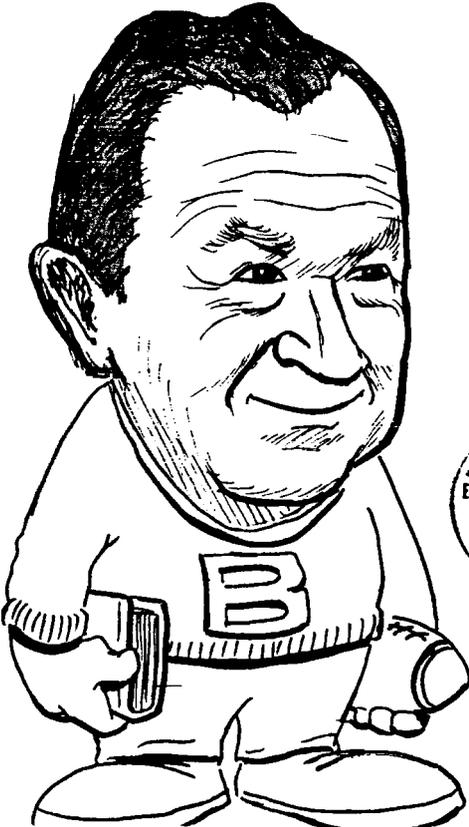
Frances Goldin Miller	May 31, 2002
Roberta Millman Shine	June 6, 2002 (with Eleanor Horvitz)
Esther Millman Rothberg	June 19, 2002
Stella Glassman	June 19, 2002
Judith Webber Meiselman	May 5, 2003
Dr. Banice Webber	May 5, 2003
Bella Dubinsky	May 8 & May 13, 2003
Josephine Berger	May 5 & May 13, 2003
Dorris Marcus Mendelson	May 9 & May 28, 2003
Frances Borod Cohen	May 9, 2003
Norton Salk	May 23 & May 24, 2003
Milton Stanzler	June 4, 2003
Dorothy Kupitz Flaxman	July 3, 2003
Dr. Marlene Lopes	July 17, 2003
Jerome Spunt	July 20, 2003
Louis Yosinoff	July 22, 2003
Judith Foster	August 1, 2003
Anne Hanson Sherman	August 13, 2003

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Marlene Lopes, who found the answer to my query on when Rhode Island College of Education began awarding degrees in secondary education. Through her persistence and meticulous research she found the answer in the doctoral dissertation by Thomas Francis Lavery for the University of Connecticut, 1973. Entitled *Factors Related to the Development of Curricula for the Preparation of Secondary School Teachers at Rhode Island College 1952-1972*, the study included an interview in November of 1972 with Dr. Fred J. Donovan, Chairman of the Faculty Committee at the time of a curriculum revision in 1942. Dr. Donovan stated that "to meet the desire of Junior High School administrators to have teachers in secondary schools certified in more than one subject," as of September of 1942 two tiers were instituted—elementary and secondary. In the latter, teachers would opt for courses and practice teaching leading to certification in math and science or English and social studies. Dr. Lavery was the professor at Rhode Island College responsible for the Urban Program.
- <sup>2</sup> Rose Presel, "Musical Memories," *RIJHA Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1988), pp. 141-145.
- <sup>3</sup> Hope High School Yearbooks, 1963, 1964.
- <sup>4</sup> From the interview with Grace Kennison Alpert.
- <sup>5</sup> *Providence Journal*, January 4, 1993.
- <sup>6</sup> From the interview with Grace Kennison Alpert.
- <sup>7</sup> Karen M. Lamoree, "Why Not A Jewish Girl?": The Jewish Experience at Pembroke College in Brown University," *RIJHA Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1988), p. 140.
- <sup>8</sup> *Providence Journal*, May 7, 1990.
- <sup>9</sup> Lamoree, p. 140.
- <sup>10</sup> *Rhode Island Herald*, May 6, 1966.
- <sup>11</sup> From the interview with Herbert Brown.
- <sup>12</sup> *Providence Journal*, November 26, 2000.
- <sup>13</sup> Lamoree, p. 140.

- 14 From information supplied by Grace Shein Preisser in the Brown University Archives.
  - 15 Ibid.
  - 16 From information supplied by Leo Weiss in *Historic Catalog of Brown University 1950*.
  - 17 From the interview with Dr. Hilton Weiss.
  - 18 *Providence Journal*, August 7, 1979.
  - 19 From the interview with Milton Stanzler.
  - 20 *Providence Journal*, April 17, 1990.
  - 21 *Providence Journal*, January 29, 2001.
  - 22 *Providence Journal*, October 20, 1987.
  - 23 From information supplied by Benjamin Clamon in the Brown University Archives.
  - 24 From an unpublished memoir by Max Flaxman, courtesy of Dorothy Flaxman Kupitz.
  - 25 From the interview with Dorothy Flaxman Kupitz.
  - 26 *Providence Journal*, May 23, 1985.
  - 27 Ibid.
  - 28 Classical High School Yearbooks, 1945, 1946.
  - 29 *Providence Journal*, March 16, 1993.
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RE-ELECT REP. SHERWIN J.  
**KAPSTEIN**  
 DEMOCRAT, DISTRICT 3 (BROWN UNIV. AREA)



Representative Sherwin J. Kapstein (Dem.-Dist.3), Brown '39, is one of Rhode Island's leading advocates of federal (Pell Grants) and state aid to higher education. He is a strong supporter of a bilateral nuclear weapons freeze, civil rights, the Equal Rights Amendment, and a clean environment. He was the General Assembly's leading opponent of raising Rhode Island's drinking age to 21.

For information on where to vote or more information about the Kapstein campaign, call 861-2950.

*National Student Action & Labor Day*  
**Education Cuts Never Heal**  
*Local Student Day*

Women were not born Democrats, Republicans, or yesterday.

Gladys C. Kapstein, Pembroke '40  
 Campaign Manager  
 David L. De Luca, Brown '85  
 Brown Coordinator

*Election Poster for Sherwin Kapstein, 1957.*

## An Interview with Sherwin J. Kapstein

by Geraldine Foster

*For over sixty years Sherwin J. Kapstein has been an ardent advocate for public education in Rhode Island. As teacher in the Warwick School System, as charter member and president of the Providence Education Council, as member of the Mayor's Survey Commission of the Providence Public Schools (consultant on Educational Policy and Political Action), member of the Providence School Committee, director of the Rhode Island Education Association/NEA, and member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives for District 3, public education has been his priority and the subject of numerous articles and speeches through the years.*

*Mr. Kapstein was elected to the Providence School Committee for three terms, 1953-1966. He was the third member of the Jewish community to serve; Abe V. Flink was appointed in 1921 for a two-year term, and Marion L. Misch won her first term in the first election under the reorganization of the school committee (the Strayer Act) in 1926, and was reelected to a second term. Rabbi William G. Braude ran unsuccessfully in 1943.*

*Among the many policy changes Mr. Kapstein advocated as member of the Providence School Committee were open meetings, equitable promotion plans based on merit, not favoritism, and reexamination of teacher recruitment programs with the view of granting tenure to married women.*

*The following is based on a conversation between Mr. Kapstein and myself on June 21, 2002.—GF*

**Geraldine Foster:** Why did you decide to run for the school committee?

**Sherwin J. Kapstein:** After World War II military service, among the many things I was interested in—along with my lovely wife Gladys and our growing family—were schools. The Providence School Committee, I learned, would hold closed meetings for one, two, or three hours. They would begin at 8 p.m. and go to one, two, or three hours and would not let the public in, would not let reporters in, would not let anybody in. What they would do—they would clean up all their business, everything that they wanted to approve or disapprove they decided in the closed session. Not everything, but most everything, and then they would come out in the open and pass all the things they had agreed to (in closed session) in one or two minutes, or fifteen or twenty minutes, or half an hour at the most, depending

on their agenda.

**GF:** It was an open session where they would do the actual voting on items they had agreed upon before?

**SJK:** That's right. And this piqued my interest. I was just out of the Navy and knew that with young children growing up, in addition to their religious education, their public education was very important. I thought I would like to find out more about the people who made the decisions. I would read in the paper about closed sessions of the school committee. Gladys became interested in meetings in the Jewish community; she went to those meetings and I went to the school committee meetings.

**GF:** What did you find?

**SJK:** I found that I would have to run for office and be a member of the school committee to find out what was going on. I used to go to the meetings at 8 p.m., but they were closed, and I would wait with the *Providence Journal* reporters. They came fortified with books. I think they read more books during that period of time than they had read almost any place else. But then I said to myself, "What am I doing here? I'll just call the secretary of the school committee and ask her if the meetings were open yet." We lived rather close to where the meetings were held.

**GF:** Where were they held?

**SJK:** They were held at the administration building for many years, across the street from Classical High School. That building burned down. I don't think I had anything to do with that because I didn't think the meetings were that hot. Many years later, when I was on the committee, they warmed up considerably. We had a great superintendent of schools, James L. Hanley, Jim Hanley, a wonderful, kind, gentle, very knowledgeable man. He was recognized nationally as an educator.

I went to so many meetings at the point they were open to the public, after I made the arrangement with the secretary. I got to know the committee members, not socially or personally, but by sight. Most of the time I would go in, mind my own business and leave soon afterwards. They were not long meetings, as I said.

One day, after going through this procedure for several years, I walked into one meeting. I was little bit late. The door was open, and as I walked across the room, the chairman who was reading something, a report, in a monotone, said in the same monotone, "Mr. Kapstein, you are late!" And he

kept on reading.

**GF:** At the open part of the meeting, were you allowed to comment or raise an objection to any part of the report?

**SJK:** No. You could write a letter (to the school committee) but not comment. People were not allowed to open their mouths.

**GF:** You just sat there and listened?

**SJK:** That's right. So I decided to run for office. Before that, while still on the outside, not part of the school committee, I did write many letters to the editor. The *Providence Journal* was interested in having meetings open, and I always said that education is a very public matter.

The school committee was setting up a survey, a study of the school system, and the mayor appointed a commission, the Providence Schools Survey Commission. Judge O'Connell (Jeremiah J. O'Connell), I think he was Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, was chairman. I guess because of my letter writing I was selected to be a member of the commission by the mayor (Walter Reynolds). There were eleven members of the commission, all selected by the mayor.

**GF:** When did this commission meet and for how long?

**SJK:** 1951-1952, a year and a half of study, and in one of the reports the members of the commission recommended, on the advice of the professional firm that came in to do the research, that Classical High School should be closed. I opposed that recommendation vehemently.

**GF:** Before you became a member of the school committee or even started going to the meetings, did you have any thoughts or ideas about the work of the school committee and what they should be doing?

**SJK:** My idea was that they should open their meetings. There were organizations like the League of Women Voters that were active in the political life of the city, and the Providence Education Council also, who supported my idea. I helped organize the Council after I got out of the Navy. They (the members of the Council) were a small group of very bright people. They all wrote letters to the *Providence Journal* about the closed meetings. [GF: Lillian Kelman Potter was a very active member of the Council; she was also the author of many of the letters to the editor.] The *Journal* wrote editorials about the need for open meetings. I wrote a few op-ed articles. On December 1, 1953, the *Journal* ran a piece on my election in 1953 after my

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defeat in 1947.

**GF:** I was not aware that you had run in a previous election.

**SJK:** There were about seven people running (in our district) in 1947, and in order to get the number down to two you would stand in the (district) caucus and the two candidates selected would run for election in November. I got more votes in the caucus than the other six put together. But I lost the election by 140 votes, and that was Gladys' (Mrs. Sherwin Kapstein's) first election. She was my campaign manager.

The next election there were three or four people who filed. Again I got more votes in the caucus than all of them combined. Gladys was my campaign manager again. I won that election (1953) and served until 1966. It was a six-year term until 1963 when it became three years. I represented Fox Point/East Side, District A. But I viewed service on the school committee as representing the public, the whole city, not just one district. That is important to emphasize.

**GF:** Wasn't this the attitude of all the members, that they represented all the people of Providence? Or were you unique in espousing that idea?

**SJK:** I was unique. There were seven members. Each had his own little domain to be in charge of, like what name to put on a new school in their district. The *Journal* each year would complain about the lack of candidates for school committee because, ordinarily, until I showed up on the scene, very few people ran against incumbents. They were elected because nobody opposed them.

**GF:** You mentioned a caucus. How did you get to be considered by the caucus?

**SJK:** You had to fill out nomination papers and the local political structure would process them and conduct an election within the district. As I said, the two highest would then proceed to the run-off election. Usually there was no opposition, and the incumbents would be automatically reelected. You got the same people filing and getting elected year after year until I got involved. Then you began to get (real) elections. There were very few contests for a school committee position except against me. Every time there was a candidate against me except 1963.

In 1963 the *Journal* had an editorial bemoaning public apathy and the fact there were no opposing candidates and school committee members were elected by default. I showed it to Gladys. She asked who wrote that

editorial. I told her to forget about it. Stay away. You will not get any satisfaction.

That night at dinner I asked about her day, and Gladys told me she had gone to the *Journal* and talked to the writer. She told them that her husband was not elected by default but by acclamation. He had had opposition in both previous elections and had campaigned hard for his win.

**GF:** I remember the boxes of campaign materials and the piles of letters and lists that used to be stacked on your dining room table and in the kitchen near the telephone. Gladys was very efficient, always did a great job.

What took place at the first meeting you attended?

**SJK:** First I and the other members-elect were administered the oath of office. Then we were ushered into a small room and handed slips of paper. We were to elect a chairman. So this was the first meeting. Gordon Mulvey was elected chairman in 1953 in the first open meeting. Rhode Island's Sunshine laws flowed from that beginning. This was the first crack in school committee governance and later in the state house. *[GF: According to a written account by Mr. Kapstein, he was determined to have this meeting and election be held in open session, a position he had argued for in his writings and in his campaign. He devised a strategy to withhold his vote on the chairmanship of the committee until the committee opened the session to the public. His vote was crucial as there was a 3-3 tie for the position. Finally the other members yielded and the meeting was reconvened in open session. Gordon Mulvey, the candidate supported by Mr. Kapstein, was elected chairman.]*<sup>1</sup>

**GF:** How would you sum up your philosophy as school committeeman?

**SJK:** The basic premise of my career was that the school committee meetings be open. That was the democratic way.

There were three caveats. First, the school committee would go into closed session when discussing personalities if the discussion might be detrimental disclosed in public. Second, when we were developing budgets. Third, which came along years later, when matters of collective bargaining were considered. Before 1966, if the school committee agreed to discuss an upcoming contract with the teachers union, they could do that in open or closed session, however they wanted. After 1966, with collective bargaining in place, there was a different structure, a legal structure. In the old way, the school committee did not have to accept anything.

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We also got a promotional plan in place for teachers wanting to become administrators after they took the proper courses and had the required experience. The plan was adopted in the '60s after a very difficult battle. (The usual procedure was) to set up a screening committee made up of administrators. They would recommend three names to the superintendent. The superintendent would choose the most qualified to present to the school committee, and they would approve. It worked beautifully until guess who came along—Louis Kramer. I said what the hell is going on here. The superintendent (James Hanley) presented his name but the school committee did not accept it. This one guy is better qualified than all the rest but he's not accepted. For a month after that all hell broke loose. Hanley threatened to resign. The chairman at that time, Raymond Fricker, was the obstruction. Kramer finally ended up at Mount Pleasant, but he should have been at Classical.

*GF: In 1998, Brown University celebrated 100 years of teacher education. Mr. Kapstein was the recipient of an award "For Distinguished Contributions to Education."*



#### Note

<sup>1</sup> Gordon Mulvey defeated Rabbi William G. Braude in the 1943 election for school committee. In retrospect, speaking of his defeat, Rabbi Braude expressed no regrets. He wrote that Mr. Mulvey "was to become an invaluable member of the school committee, in time to serve with distinction as its chairman. *RIJHA Notes*, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 433.

## The Okinawa Typhoon

by Lt. Cmdr. Banice Feinberg, USNR

*Rhode Island authors have frequently described their wartime experiences—another recurring subject in the Notes. Here to continue that tradition is a vivid account, sent to the author's wife, of a terrible storm in Okinawa shortly after the end of World War II.*

*The author is the late Banice Feinberg, former Chief of Pediatrics at the Rhode Island Hospital. Among other offices, Dr. Feinberg served terms as president of the Children's Heart Association, national chairman of the Committee on School Health and Health Careers (American Heart Association), president of the New England Pediatric Society, and state chairman, American Academy of Pediatrics. He received many honors and awards, including a Recognition Day Proclamation by Governor Edward D. DiPrete in 1985.*

*In the war he served in the Pacific Theater as a Lieutenant Commander USNR. Dr. Feinberg died in 1993 at the age of 92.*

I was Officer of the Day at S. A. Hospital #6, between Kokina and Gushikawa on Okinawa, Sunday, October 7<sup>th</sup>. The day seemed mild and sunny. At 1 p.m., a report came in that a typhoon was moving in our direction from the Southwest, near Formosa [Taiwan], and was about 400 to 500 miles away. It was reported at about 40 knots and moving at the rate of about 10 to 12 knots and coming in our direction. It seemed to be taking the same course as the previous destructive typhoon on September 15 and 16, which destroyed some of our buildings but did not seriously cripple us. In that storm, 50 to 60 lives were lost, 3 ships sunk, and about 15 or 20 damaged.

We were ordered into condition 3 and to be prepared. That night, Sunday night, aside from some rain and wind, the report of the storm was that it was moving west and would probably bypass us to the Southwest. I was up every hour, checking on the course of the storm. Monday at 10 a.m., I was relieved as O.D. and reported to the Captain that Naval Operating Base reported that the storm had passed us by. The air was quite windy but not unpleasant.

That evening, after a busy day making up for the previous day off the ward, I thought I'd sit at the movies. It was just below our tent. In the meantime, I had noticed a shift in the wind to the east earlier in the day. After watching "Barbary Coast" for fifteen minutes, the rain came furiously. I

went in, but most of the others remained. The air became cool. Twenty minutes later, the movies stopped and the announcement came. "Condition 1!" this was a surprise. This means the storm is within 40 to 50 miles away and coming right at us.

The storm was expected to hit us between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. at 100 miles an hour. The air suddenly became ominously still. Two of us, Dr. Watkins and I, of Fleet Hospital 107 but loaned to S.A.H. #6, put on some rain gear and slid and trudged through the mud to our wards. Condition 1 means "all hands to their stations."

At this point, it would be wise to describe our hospital. There are two of them, S.A.H. #3 and #6, built close together. I shall stick to #6. It consists principally only of tents, 50 feet long and 16 feet wide, with wooden floors and sides. The sides are built up about three feet, and from there to the top is screening, and the whole thing is covered with heavy canvas tarpaulin secured to the ground by heavy lines, about 50 on each side, tied to stakes dug 6 feet in the ground. There were 6 such medical wards, 6 surgical wards, 1 nose and throat and 2 N.P. wards. There was a small size Quonset hut as a surgery and another one as an X-ray department. Each ward had about 7 or 8 cots on a side, thus holding 14 or 16 men. In our hospital we had 200 patients, 15 officers and about 100 corpsmen and another 100 other enlisted men as maintenance, stewards, electricians, etc. In addition to the above, we had 9 tents 16 x 16 for sick officers, and a small wooden prefabricated Butler Hut as administration office. In addition, there were long wooden buildings for galleys, ship's store, recreation and a chapel. . . . The personnel—officers and staff—all lived sprawled around in 16 x 16 tents.

On Monday night, October 8, at 9 p.m., we went down to our wards. It was now raining furiously, but not too blowy. In the meantime, all supports had been reinforced, all the sides were fastened down "securely." It was then decided, in view of the expected blow at 3 to 6 a.m., to evacuate our patients at once. By midnight, we got them all out. Some were put into the galleys, many into the laundries, and the surgical patients into the surgical and X-Ray Quonsets, in other words wherever there was a cement deck (floor). The wind was brisk at this time, no rain, and it hardly seemed that we would get anything bad.

At 3 a.m. the word came to expect the peak at 9 a.m. and for us to get back to our quarters and get a little rest. By this time, it began to rain again. I finally got up through the mud to the tent at 3:45 a.m., but did not undress; instead,



*Dr. Banice Feinberg (left) and  
Dr. Eli Rubens, Guam, 1944.*

I just flopped on my cot. At 5:30 a.m., the wind was up again about 40 to 50 miles per hour. We got up, washed up a bit and felt that if the storm didn't get much worse, this would be a cinch. By 9 a.m. the wind was up to 60 miles an hour, and the peak due at 12 noon. We all felt grateful that apparently this was going to be much milder than the typhoon of September 15 and 16, which hit its peak at night.

There was no rain at this time, so Commander Lorenz and I sat in the medication tent, a small 6 x 6 tent, and played gin. By 12 noon, the wind began to be alarming. Several small tents had already gone down. The generators were stopped, the electricity went off, the wind had now reached 75 miles per hour and getting worse by the minute. Only after difficulty in walking against the wind could we make the chow hall. There all they had was coffee and K rations. The galleys were partly down, and the electricity cut off, but we filled up on coffee.

By the time we got out, the storm was in its fury. It was going about 100 miles per hour, and the forecast was 150 miles at 6 p.m. In the meantime, rain started coming with it. It came down, stinging and cold. There was no place to go for shelter. My patients occupied every available spot in one laundry. The other laundry started to go, its roof went off. I had five patients in the

small wooden building used for administrative purposes. Dr. Lorenz and I went there, and I tried to fix up my patients there, as they were the sickest.

At about 1:30, we got word that the patient's galley was going. We dashed out and tried to secure the roof as it was blowing off. Then we thought of our ambulances. Fortunately, there were 18 ambulances around. We started packing the patients from the galley into the ambulances, crowding them, 6 per ambulance. We got them out, and in 10 or 15 minutes, the roof just blew away.

In the meantime, other buildings began to go. The ambulances soon were full. Then the post office started to crack. It also had in it the telephone switchboard with many wires coming out of it to the telephone pole. Immediately, the electrical crew dashed out fighting to stand and cut the wires before the crash pulled down the telephone pole on other tents. By this time, it seemed impossible to walk against the gale. You were actually pushed back and off the road.

Then the next cry was, "The chapel is going!" Again we dashed there. It was already down, and we pulled out Chaplain Pitts with a broken nose and broken face. We got him into one of the temporary wards. By this time, as we looked up the hill, we saw our boys struggling to nail down the tarpaulin, which was being tugged at plenty by the wind.

Dr. Lorenz and I then started up the hill to give them a hand. Here we were helped by the wind. It virtually blew us up the hill and actually beyond, and we had all we could do to get near it. And strange as it seems, *on the way up the hill the water from the rain was not moving!* Actually, the rainwater was being *blown up* the hill. When we got to the tent, despite rain gear, we were soaked through and through and our field shoes heavy with mud. After resting up a bit (sitting behind a water tank that was very heavy), we tried to hold the tarp while the gang tried to secure it with boards and nails. But it was as though an infant tried to lift a house. The wind just tossed us on our backs and faces into the mud and ripped the tarpaulin out of our grasps and just broke the beams loose.

Then Bob Day, our supply officer, a lawyer from out West, took some lines and got up the hillside. Our tent (50 feet long, wooden-framed), was up against an earth abutment, and we tried to hurl it across so that we could secure the top long enough to get at it with something stronger. And there was Captain Mosser wrapped around a tree and tying a line as an anchor. Then all at once came another gust of wind, a smashing and crashing, and

the whole structure just picked itself up and crashed down in smithereens, 6 feet away. Most of us were in its path. But the cracking gave us just enough warning and we were on the downhill side. I don't think any group of men moved faster than we did. We just scrambled. As I, together with one or two others who landed on a side of the hill, looked around, we expected to see some of us less fortunate. Then one after another, heads began popping up until we were all accounted for and safe. I think we then laughed! Then we all hugged the ground against sort of an embankment on the hillside. Though the rain just pelted down and blew, we at least felt secure, as the wind blew away from us now, and all the debris would not fly at us.

When we all got together, I looked at Dr. Berkow and said, "Sam, lie down. You're almost cyanotic (blue)." I thought he was going to collapse. Then Harry Dawson said, "Banice, you're almost bluish yourself." Well, I really was exhausted and panting. After a little rest, I then picked up a bed roll from all the debris and a helmet. There were plenty of these everywhere. The bed roll we (3 of us) wrapped around our backs and just sat in the storm. There was no place to go, anyway. All of this was about 3:30 p.m.

After about an hour of this, Dr. Lorenz and I decided to hazard our way down to the temporary shelters of the patients. After all, each man had to be with his ward and patients. Going down the hill wasn't bad, as the wind was against us, and sort of braced up in the heavy mud. But on level ground was another problem. I don't know what the speed of the wind was at this time, but it was almost impossible to move against it. Only by grabbing on to standing buildings and getting in a few feet between gusts and resting every few feet did we finally manage to get to the administration building.

I gave each of my patients a sedative, then we sat down on boxes and just waited. Practically all buildings around were down. Dr. Watkins was in the laundry. Here the heavy laundry machinery kept the building down. But even so, beams were breaking and the corpsmen were out repairing and securing constantly.

At about 5 p.m. the gale howled so furiously that I started taking the portable typewriters down from the desks and putting them on the floor. Capt. Adamkievicz, the commanding officer, who was also there, together with about seven or eight men of the office force, asked me why. I said I was afraid we might see things flying soon. He thought it was a good idea, but also thought this building was safe as long as the big O.D. tent next to us was still standing and acting as a protection to this smaller building.

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By 6 p.m. the fury of the storm was terrific. By 6:15 it was so terrific that I began to check up on my helmet again. I saw to it that it was firm. I had already taken my glasses off and put them in a case. In those few minutes I saw home—you, the children and just, well, this time I wasn't afraid. In the first typhoon I was—but I just don't know what to say—this time I was anxious, I think. I was fatalistic.

Just then, the most awful eerie, terrific noise took place, and with it, crash, crack and smash, and our building was down on us. The roof was just picked right up and the walls, fortunately plywood, folded down. Outside of a few objects glancing off my helmet, I felt untouched. In fact, except for minor bruises and cuts, no one was injured. By now it was dark. The patients we immediately wrapped in blankets and herded them outside. I soon corralled an ambulance and found that it was full to the top with nine patients and two corpsmen.

After a few minutes, I somehow managed to creep to another one and got that one open. It had only six patients. So we got three of our patients in there. One disappeared (he was later found in another building). Then I went out trying to find any others outside. I ran into Dr. Lorenz. So we both climbed into it, thus making fourteen persons—almost unbelievable, several of the patients being stretcher cases. We then drove down next to the X-ray and surgical buildings that were still standing, although terribly altered. "Sitting" in the front seat, exposed to the wind and rain and cold were four of us, just shivering, and here we spent the night. My teeth chattered; I ached and was soaked, every inch of me, as were my three companions. The two young corpsmen, with the freshness of youth, slept in snatches in one another's arms. At about 12 midnight, when the storm was at its very worst, one of the patients almost went berserk. He shouted and screamed: he wanted to go home; he didn't want to die, etc. I had a package of morphine syrettes in my pocket. One of these, plus reassurance, finally quieted him down.

By 3 a.m. it was evident that the wind was easing up. When we got out to walk around, as we did often, it was necessary to keep the circulation active, despite the storm, and it became easier going. Then there was a call for more ambulance space, for accidents on the compound. We then walked up the hill again and found our gang huddled up in the galley taking turns staying in the little movie, which surprisingly enough stood up. It accommodated about five men together, so every hour they'd change. Thus, in the

open, we spent the rest of the night.

By 6 a.m. dawn began to appear, with a definite lessening of the wind. About 7:30 a.m. we went down, got a package of K rations, the first food or drink in 20 hours, and looked around. The wreckage was fearful. Every officer's tent was down. Part of two galleys with the heavy equipment was standing. The O.D.'s tent and a few scattered ones were also standing. Gear, mattresses, blankets, cots etc., were strewn around everywhere. By now the wind was strong but no longer dangerous and the rain sporadic.

Then came the job of finding our patients. Soon we got the word "The storm is returning and is due sometime tonight." Whether it was a new one, or the old one doubling back, we didn't know. Immediately there was the job of finding places for the ambulance patients. We then were told by Captain White of decommissioned Fleet Hospital 106 that his three Quonset warehouses, which had withstood the storm well, were at our disposal. They were full of cases of hospital gear.

Nobody seemed to know what to do about it, so I got busy. I got all the ambulatory patients together. We filled a couple of ambulances with every cot we could find. We then moved around cases and cases. Captain White put all of his mattresses and blankets at our disposal. We ran cots in every aisle, end to end, side to side, on cases, in different layers. We had men way up in the air like cliff dwellers. Every available space was occupied, and thus we got 165 people (patients and corpsmen), who were without shelter, taken care of.

We then put in a supply of K rations for four meals, brought over a water tank to which we added additional chlorine, built sanitation trenches near us, put up planks in the mud around the Quonsets (they were in old rice paddies), and thus we were ready. We got all the patients out of the laundry, which needed just one more push to collapse. All day the wind rose again in intensity. By night time, the rain and wind were quite marked again, but nothing like the intensity of the night before. In fact, except for the rain coming through holes in the roof all over the place, everything was pretty secure, and the storm was insignificant.

About midnight, too, as on the night before, another one of the boys cracked up. Only he became belligerent. We worked with him for three hours, holding him down, giving him large doses of sedatives, two doses of morphine, and finally we had to restrain him. By this time, I was sore in every

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bone. My fatigue and discomfort were great; every inch of me was mud and wet. I was sure I was getting something. We found a sterno heater, boiled some water, and added Nescafe. And was that wonderful, even without sugar or evaporated milk.

By about 3 a.m. things quieted down and thus for the first time did I lie down on a cot: clothes, mud and all. However, sleep was almost impossible. I believe I was just too tired and sore. However, I must have gotten in some catnaps, and shortly after 6 a.m. was up in time to see the beginning of a beautiful day. The sun was out and was it glorious. The storm was over. We just felt wonderful. About an hour later, an ambulance came over with fresh hot coffee. The first thing the commissary steward did was to get apparatus together to make coffee for everyone. That was the biggest morale booster imaginable. The hard cookies, with a bar of chocolate, the can of ground pork and egg white, the crackers, the little package of three cigarettes and the matches and six pieces of toilet paper that make up the B (breakfast package) of K ration were like a gift from the gods.

By this time the planes were coming! We started to evacuate our sickest patients to Guam and send those near recovery back to duty. The first day we got rid of 41 patients. Thus we began to ease our burden. Immediately, workers started on putting temporary hospital tents together. The doctors and corpsmen just shifted for themselves. Most of them slept wherever patients slept. No one had a place to go. As soon as a tent went up, men tripled and quadrupled together.

There were no complaints. Everyone just accepted the situation and in no time we were taking patients again. At the height of things on the second day, just after getting into the warehouse, we got a group of food poisoning patients from a nearby activity. These boys were desperately ill. We had to fill them up with plasma in muddy conditions. The corpsmen worked like Trojans.

Then—and this is Thursday, now—another anticlimax! We got word “Get ready for 500 casualties. An ammunition dump exploded.” We learned that all the S.A.H. hospital suffered as we did, and hence we’d expect about 150 patients. Immediately, we went to work again. The well patients gave up their blankets. We manufactured places on the floors, etc. and we were ready. Then came our first good break. We got in only about 10 patients. One died on admission. There were only about 30 or 40 casualties, instead of the expected larger number.

Then I went up the hill to see what I could reclaim. Sure enough, my Valpack was intact and in good shape, and the most precious of my possessions, your picture with my darling children were dry and unaffected. Of course, my camera was ruined. All my gear scattered everywhere and full of mud. I spent a few hours hanging clothes. The air was warm and breezy and wonderful drying weather. I dried out a blanket and a mattress, brought them down to my warehouse and tried to go to sleep at 9 p.m. This was the first time my clothes were dry, having dried in the sun. After trying to sleep a couple of hours and not being able to, I was sore in every muscle. I took a Nembutal and codeine and then slept for nine hours and woke really refreshed.

From then on, it's been living in the warehouse, and until we can get some sheets and some underclothes, we will just have to continue sleeping in our clothes. But it's reconstruction now!

As to facts of the storm, as we know them now:

1) Of our own group Dr. Rudo was picked up at the height of the storm (he weighs about 135 lbs.) and hurled about four feet in the air, and landed in the mud, causing a mangling of his hand, which is coming along fine. Dr. Lorenz has a chip fracture in his hand, and a bad leg bruise causing a limp. Everyone has cuts, bruises and bumps. Dr. Young had a broken ankle and was evacuated to Guam, and the Chaplain was evacuated because of a broken nose and broken cheekbone.

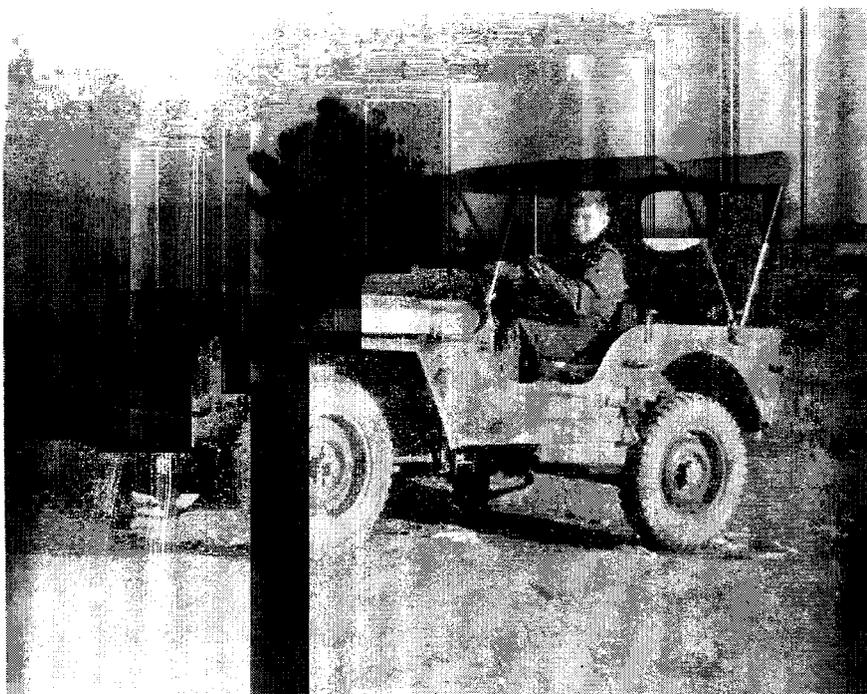
2) One enlisted man died of a fractured skull.

3) Many minor accidents.

4) 130 ships were beached, and many bodies washed ashore. About 100 dead and missing on naval shore bases.

The velocity of the wind was the greatest known to any of the living residents of this region and was computed at being between 150 and 220 miles per hour. Most of the Japanese houses, which were merely small, low stone buildings, no more than 5 or 6 feet high covered with thatch and in groves of trees, were untouched. In general, this is not white man's country, and the sooner we get out of it, the better. Apparently, the authorities are beginning to feel the same way about it now. Okinawa will probably be long remembered by Americans as one of the ugliest phases of an uglier war!





*Norton Salk, Livorno, Italy, November 1946.*

## An Underground Way Station

by Norton Salk

*Here is another illustration of the impact of war on Jewish civilians and soldiers. This letter (originally published on 14 May 1947 in the Beth-El Bulletin, Providence, and recently edited by the author) was sent home by a Jewish sergeant writing about a Seder held by the U.S. Army near Livorno, Italy, after the Second World War. Livorno, he comments in a recent letter (July 27, 2003), "had a very old, large, and important Jewish community. ... When we left the Seder, as I was walking back to the truck, I was met by two men, one a short heavy-set guy, the other a tall smiling redhead. The short guy said he was from Brooklyn and that the tall guy was a Sabra, a native Jew of Palestine. They were active in getting refugees to Palestine through the British blockade. He asked if I would join them when I got discharged. All of this was new stuff to me, what had happened to the Jews of Europe, and I didn't realize the importance of what was going on around me. That experience has always stayed with me and become another 'what if.' I have been a Zionist since then and have been to Israel about fifteen times, six with the Volunteers for Israel working at army bases, four times at archaeological digs and the rest traveling and visiting friends." Mr. Salk's recollection of this memorable experience recalls another unusual military Seder, reported by Barry M. Sax, "Rabbi Bohnen and the Rainbow Haggadah," published in the Notes two years ago (Vol. 13, No. 3, 2001).*

*Norton Salk was born in Providence, graduated from Classical High School in 1945, and attended Brown University until his army service with the Corps of Engineers. After his discharge he completed his studies in architecture and engineering, helped to design test facilities for rockets in a project headed by the German scientist Werner Von Braun, and then worked as a draftsman for Ira Rakatansky in the Arcade Building, Providence. Later he became well known as an architect in Rhode Island and elsewhere.*

Last night was one which I shall remember for a long time to come. The Jewish chaplain's assistant arranged for us to hold a Seder with the members of a Jewish "underground" station which is about eight miles south of here on a bluff overlooking the Mediterranean .... There were maybe twenty-five young men there when we arrived. Most of them were fellows in their early

teens. These boys looked almost all alike. They had round faces, were well-built, had close haircuts (but with long curls, one on each side of the head, according to Jewish custom). They all wore caps and wool suits. We joined in with the group and in about twenty minutes the services were ended and we sat down at tables arranged banquet style, with paper plates and Haggadahs on the table. We went through the usual Pesach Seder, which was conducted half in Yiddish and half in Hebrew.

The wine we had was named Margulis, and was bottled in Philadelphia; the matzoh was good old Manischewitz. These things were supplied by the Chaplain's Section here at headquarters in Livorno. We had the usual ceremonial dishes, matzoh, wine, parsley, hard-boiled eggs, etc. Then we had chicken soup (not as good as grandma's and too fatty) and roast meat and stewed apples, which wasn't bad at all, especially since I didn't expect that we would eat a meal there.

After the service we sang songs and talked, ... When talking to these young fellows (many spoke Yiddish or broken English), I noticed that almost all of them had silver teeth. I don't know whether their teeth were kicked out or it was just bad nutrition that caused it. One little fellow, about ten years old, told how he saw his parents machine-gunned. Another boy had a dent across his forehead where he had been hit with a pipe. He also showed me a serial number on his arm which had been tattooed there at a concentration camp.

The fellows at this camp were mostly Polish or Hungarian. They all lost everything and nearly everybody during the pogroms, war, etc. One man I spoke to had been in the Polish Army as an officer for two years during the war, during which time his parents and wife were killed. He managed to get his three-year-old son into Norway. When Poland was overrun, he fought with the partisans. After the war, his son came back to Poland and was killed by the Germans. This was *after* the war, mind you. They all had similar stories to tell. But none of them seemed to feel sorry for themselves. They all had a common purpose—to get to Palestine—and this seemed to hold them together.

The Camp is in an Italian villa, and is not a bad place at all. In fact, their quarters are better than we have back in our own camp. The place is supported by funds from the Joint Distribution Committee (now, I believe, incorporated in the United Jewish Appeal). Well, we talked until 12:15 and then we headed back. Believe me, it was quite an experience, and any time

you think you have it bad, just think of these thousands of young orphans of war, struggling and waiting in the hope of getting to Palestine. It's really pitiful when you realize that those at this camp were some of the very fortunate. If there is anything that would make you an ardent Zionist, it is a visit to such a camp. These youngsters, though they seem well fed and healthy, do not look like any other kids I have seen. They actually look as though they have suffered tremendously. They laugh and seem happy but their eyes tell a different story.



## American Tourister Luggage

by Sol Koffler

*What makes success? Answers to that difficult question are often provided by those who have done well in their field. Here is a success story by the late Sol Koffler, founder and president of American Tourister, a Providence company that became one of the world's largest manufacturers of luggage, now a division of Samsonite. Mr. Koffler's account of how he developed the company, originally delivered in an unpublished interview in 1961, was passed on to the Notes by Richard Bornstein, a son-in-law of Mr. Koffler.*

*Mr. Koffler came to the United States from Poland in 1920 at age 13. Before his business career he fought fifteen professional boxing matches. He lived in Providence until he retired in the early 1980s; by then he had donated buildings to Brown University, Providence College, Bryant College, Miriam Hospital, Providence Hebrew Day School, and the Rhode Island Jewish Home for the Aged, in addition to many other philanthropic contributions. He received an honorary doctorate of science degree in business administration from several colleges and was a member of the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame. He died in 1993 at age 86.*

I started in Providence. We started manufacturing back in 1933, right in the heart of the Depression. In fact, the banks closed up on us after we were in business about four months or so. I started this business by myself. I took my brother in about 1942 as a partner; we became a corporation in 1946. My brother was in the junk business and I worked for him when I got out of school—in fact I worked for him after school. Then I went into pocketbooks, which is an allied line to luggage—ladies' handbags. At the time I was too young to do any manufacturing; I was only about eighteen years old. I was a salesman then. Later I became a salesman selling luggage.

I quit that after awhile because I met my future wife, and she just wouldn't stand for my being on the road. So I went back to work in the handbag business, but found the work kind of slack and my job just didn't seem to be as steady as I wanted it. I was married when I was twenty-four and that's when I found the job wasn't good enough—wasn't steady enough—to keep me happy and I decided that I must go into business for myself. I felt that was the ultimate thing and that I should start *now* while I

could afford it. I felt that as I'd get older and have a family I would not be able to afford it, so I decided to go into the luggage business, in which I had the most experience, and that's how the thing got going.

I rented what would have been an average-sized grocery store, right on the ground floor. Actually, to be exact, it had been used as a funeral parlor many years back, but the rent was very little, which was important; I think our first rent was about ten dollars a month. That was the deciding factor as to the place. We started making a very inexpensive piece of luggage. It was a very inexpensive piece of fabric over wood. It wasn't really a fabric, it was a combination of fiberboard over a wooden shell which was combined with cardboard. In those days that piece of luggage retailed for a dollar.

We graduated after about a year to a two-dollar item, and within a year after that, another two-dollar item. What made it more expensive was construction, better hardware, better locks, better linings, better coverings. The originals were lined with paper, whereas when we got up to the two-dollar ones they were lined with rayon. After that we decided that the place to go was the medium-price line. In those days it would have been about \$10 retail for the average piece of luggage. We made this change. One of the things that we knew that we had to do, of course, was to make a piece of luggage that had definite markings so that you could tell what it was, that at all times it was a little superior to what you could buy from the average manufacturer.

I always did my own designing at that time, and throughout most of the first years. Both my designing and choice of materials were such that I always pioneered quite a bit in the making of a piece of luggage. For instance, we were the first to use such things as vinyls rather than heavier materials as coverings. We used vinyls for bindings in the days when they first came out, and a lot of pioneering had to be done in order to use it. A lot of manufacturers used just the normal leather bindings. The reason we went into this was because vinyl was a much superior article for travel. You see, leather is a fine item, but when it is used—especially today in the airlines—it just won't take the abuse. Leather will not stand up anywhere as well as a vinyl-covered piece of luggage, especially today since they've made such tremendous improvements.

Styling has been one of our chief assets. We pioneered a lot of things in the luggage business, such as the little zipper snap-in pouch. I invented it when we took our baby to the beach and my wife took along a damp

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washcloth which penetrated everything in the bag she was using. The next thing that we did was to start using a plywood frame, which was lighter than the wood frame it replaced, much lighter and much stronger. It was just one piece of wood—plywood—instead of maybe fifteen or eighteen individual pieces of wood glued together. That's when we were quite fortunate, because we were the only ones to do this until after the war. After the war a lot of other manufacturers picked up the same idea and went into the same type of construction.

Another thing: we made distinctive models by changing the sizes of our cases. Where the average case would have been twenty-one inches by seven-and-a-half by thirteen, we restyled the look of the case by making it tapered at one end. Making the case six inches deep instead of seven inches, we lengthened it to sixteen inches in height instead of thirteen, giving us the same capacity but making it a much sleeker-looking case. All the sizes, naturally, were in proportion. By that time, however, there were other manufacturers who came in. But we always had novel coverings, novel bindings, novel linings. Our cases were lined a little better at all times than the average case. We gave a lot of detail, a lot of care, to the inside of a piece of luggage.

We were now in a plant of over 100,000 square feet, all our own. We'd moved several times before then. Our first move was in 1934, our second move to larger quarters was in 1936. Now we made a third move in 1942 and expanded our facilities several times in the same building, which was not owned by us. We moved into 100,000 square feet of room in 1945. The next step in getting more room was in 1952 when we got ready for this new molded luggage.

At first I did the selling myself, and I got some help from my brother. We did only a certain amount of traveling; we were sort of local, anyway. We didn't go beyond New York. It wasn't until after the war that we really put on a full sales force. We started on national distribution in 1945, and that was when we started with this new line—we called it the Hi-Taper.

At that time we had our own salesmen in the eastern part of the country and slowly got into the midwest. We didn't get into the west coast until the early '60s. We had quite a considerable acceptance. We started national advertising back in 1946 and we were the first to introduce a full-color line; by that I mean we brought in greys, reds, and blue cases, and we matched the binding and the lining. We called it our Colorguard line. It's a registered

name of ours. Colorguard (solid colors with matching linings) came in 1947 and Hi-Taper in 1948.

From Hi-Taper we went into the molded case. We started developing it actually in 1949. The push that I had for that was the desire for something different, something lightweight and new in styling. We started off by molding plywood into a shape, found that we couldn't do it in any quantity, and I went in search of a case that could be produced by molding the shells out of some kind of a plastic. Then I had a meeting with the molders who were molding our product, found that they had the means of giving me exactly what I wanted with a patented item that these people had. They could give me a shell that was made out of a material that actually could be bounced around and was stronger than steel. The product was such that it really started giving me a lot of ideas. You could do anything with it, it had tremendous strength, and it was very light.

It was developed way back in a very primitive way for—well, let's go back a bit. It was an outgrowth of cones. They were making fiber radio cones for speakers. This fiberboard was developed afterwards for the army. They are still doing some work of that type. During the war it was developed for packaging ammunition, for making these cone missile covers, and then a development which immediately brought them into this fiberglass combination of fibers and fiberglass was the development of a rocket for Uncle Sam, the U.S. Army. Vinyls were part of it. Vinyl, and later they went into the fiberglass and other fibers as well as bonding material, that bound the stuff together. They've got quite a few patents—I'm not technically acquainted with everything that goes into the case. The thing that I'm most interested in is what it does for us.

We adopted it for luggage and it has done a tremendous job. The letters we've got are tremendous testimonials of the people of what this piece of luggage has done. The greatest feature is that it's light and strong. As I said before, it's actually lighter than a piece of cloth of equal strength. If you took the same weight of steel and this material we use, you'd puncture or bend the steel much easier than the fiber. The amount of unsolicited—actually unsolicited—letters that we get here telling how this thing is standing up is very exciting. We feel it is truly the best-suited item to make a piece of luggage out of. But I don't know that we want to call it fiber. It's a fiberglass-reinforced shell.

Another thing that made this case possible was the development of this

closure—this stainless steel closure. In our regular luggage we didn't use a closure—we just used part of the shell—part of the wooden box. We had locks but we didn't have a closure; we just fitted it over, one over the other one. The closure is simply that part that holds the case, that closes it up and locks it together—closes it and makes it tight, dustproof. It actually finishes off the case and adds tremendously to its strength.

And we decided to make it out of stainless steel because we felt we could save a lot of weight, and if it is out in bad weather, stainless steel holds up best. It doesn't warp and it gives it a certain amount of strength which we feel is necessary in a piece of luggage. There were no closures on the old wooden-type case; one side of the case just overlapped the other.

The lock is patented; I own a patent on it. We decided that all locks that are used on luggage had one fault, and all of them still have it, with the exception of this lock: they depend upon a spring. You would squeeze a button and the lock would jump open. And if the spring failed, the lock failed. Most of the time they didn't wear out—they just failed. If a case is overpacked with a spring lock it makes it very hard to open.

So we decided to develop a lock that had no spring and worked on a cam-action principle, pulling the case in, being manually operated, rather than by a spring. We just had no failure on it, and if the locking mechanism fails, the lock still will hold the case closed. The lock does not depend upon the mechanism of the key to keep it closed. It will hold the case securely and can be traveled with without any chance of it opening up by accident.

There were other things on the case that were revolutionary. In 1955, we changed the original models and put a special beading on it that protects the stitching we do on the case. Of course, the last thing we have given it in the last couple years is the handle—the cushioned handle. About the same time we developed this new lock we developed the handle, which we feel is a great boon to anyone carrying the piece of luggage.

Even the ruffle in the pockets is our styling. I saw a pair of ladies' panties that had a ruffle going all the way around and instead of just having a piece of rubber in them, I saw these pleats—I saw the way it was shirred, and how each piece stood up. Very hard to show you without seeing it, because you just shirr it. I made a special piece of equipment to do it, and we adopted it into luggage. We were the first to adopt a pleat at the bottom of each pocket—a small pleat with every stitch—whereas with the average piece of

luggage, all the luggage made up to 1935-36, each pleat was made about an inch apart. These things didn't make the luggage any better but the shirr added to the looks of the inside of the case, and as years went along it was adopted by every luggage manufacturer in the country. We were the first ones.

Another thing—we are meticulous in quality control. We scrub the cases, checking and re-checking, and inspecting and re-inspecting. I think that our case goes through more inspections than any other piece of luggage made today. We feel that is one of the reasons that we produce a finished item that is clean. It does not scratch very easily but you can still make a mark on it of some kind, or sometimes, of course, one of the workmen will misplace a rivet or something will go wrong. A stain on a lining or a glue spot cannot possibly be removed on the inside; we either reline the case or it becomes a second if we cannot reline it, cannot fix it.

In fact, our inspection department is about a fifth of the plant. We do have a department that takes care of a repair completely as soon as it comes in. Everything can be broken; I don't care if it's a battleship. Some people will spill something in the lining of the case and want it relined; we have found some failures in our old handles and in our older locks—that used to be an item that was quite vulnerable.

Our new materials and the new locks and of course the new coverings which we are using today are much tougher, and I think that these covering materials which we use on our luggage today are the toughest used in the industry. They take more abuse than anything we know. It's an exclusive item—it's only made by one plant and they sell it exclusively to us.

There's been an awful lot of development in the shell itself—it's a constant developing of a better shell. You can stand on it and it can be hit and I demonstrated that I can hit it as strongly as I want, but a pointed article will puncture it—something very sharp may go through it. Actually, the only failures we've got in our shell are so minute you could not name a percentage—it's impossible to do that. I don't think that in the last three years we've gotten back more than five cases.

So as far as developing our equipment, we do that out of necessity. It's one of those things that you either do yourself or have somebody try to do it for you. In some cases we have it done but a lot of times you just can't buy what you have in mind to be done and you have to develop it on your own,

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and I take a hand in most of it, I'll say that much. When I first started this business I did everything that there was to be done on a piece of luggage. I trained my own people, I had to go as far as to be my own electrician and wire my own plant. When I moved in 1936 into about 20,000 square feet, I found that we couldn't quite afford to buy the electrical manpower we needed, so with the help of one of our foremen, I just wired the plant, that's all.

Another example of getting things done on our own—we could have brought the Duette out years ago. We actually were being pushed to bring it out—a garment carrier rather than just a suitcase or a hanging case. But for quite a while we just decided that when we'd bring it out, it was going to be something extra, would give something extra. It's a good example of how we are innovators in our line. We've brought out this little Duette and given it an awful lot of features; we've made sure that it does its job, that it's better, that the case gives you the proper protection, that it hangs the clothes and protects them in a nicer and better way, that the case is lined, that you can really pack a lot of clothes into it if you're going to carry that large a case, and pack it with ease, pack it flat.

You can pack it flat and therefore you don't have to have a large closet. You can gather the clothes in the closet and get them ready and the case you can put down on the bed, on a table, or even on the floor; whereas with a hanging case you must have some kind of a place to hang it such as a large closet, and it is a very clumsy item to lift and hang up. Ours is more convenient to use—it can be used as a hanging case if you want to, but it also can be packed flat. Moving your clothes actually can become a job, or packing your clothes, when you're traveling. We've taken these things into consideration.

Above all, we felt that a soft piece of luggage does not protect the clothing. Therefore, this had to be semi-rigid. It's the only bag of its type that has three important features—easy packing, protection of your clothing, and it will not bulge like the average piece of soft, hanging type of bag, yet it will carry as much or more than any bag on the market today. And it never looks clumsy.

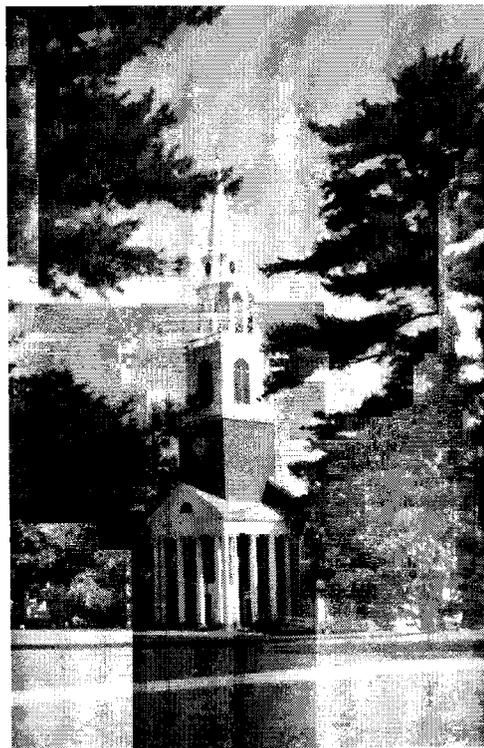
What I tried to say at the beginning is that we just don't make a piece of luggage—we give it a lot of thought. We actually delve into what the people want, what their problems have been with a piece of luggage when they travel, so that we can improve as much as possible to make it easier, to make it handier, to give them the type of protection that they need in the type of

travel that is being done today.

The identification tag was our own idea, and it started somewhere in the forties. A few other manufacturers do this, but we've had it now since about 1945. In fact, this tag—this shape—has become almost a trademark of ours. When I was playing around with it trying to make it look attractive. I just took a circle: it came about because we had some scraps. I think somebody wanted a tag and wrote us asking if we made them and sold them, or something like that, and that brought the idea about.

Our growth has been quite sensational, I think. The only other thing I can say is that in the last ten years [1951-61], we have gone up ten times the volume we had at the beginning of that period. I'd say it's about 800 per cent over ten years ago. Let us say if I did \$100 ten years ago, I did \$1,000 now. We've done well—we've done our share. I'm kind of thankful for what I've been able to do. We've grown quite rapidly into what we are today—the second largest luggage manufacturer in the country!





*Wheaton College:  
Right, Cole Memorial Chapel.  
Below, Mary Lyon Hall.*



**“May They Have Life and May They Have It  
Abundantly”:<sup>1</sup>  
Jews at Wheaton Seminary and Wheaton College**

*By Elizabeth Rachel Natenshon*

*Wheaton College, in nearby Norton, Massachusetts, has had many ties to Rhode Islanders through the years. Its professors and students have often been natives of or commuters from Providence and surrounding towns. For example, Dr. Hannah Goldberg, a member of Temple Beth-El in Providence, was Provost and Academic Vice President before her recent retirement, and Rabbi Jonathan Kraus, another resident of Providence, teaches in the Department of Religion. And the college has had numerous athletic, social, academic, and professional exchanges with Rhode Island Colleges. So Wheaton College may be considered part of the greater Providence area in spirit as well as geography.*

*Ms. Natenshon graduated from Wheaton College in 2002 and at present is working toward a Master's degree in the Judaic Studies Program at Brandeis University.*

In colonial times, when daughters and sons aspired to higher education the standards and subject matter differed greatly.<sup>2</sup> The focus for men was the traditional college curriculum, while women's education focused on artistic endeavors and social graces.<sup>3</sup> And class played a role in the higher education of women, both non-Jews and Jews alike. Only the middle classes or the rich could afford to take advantage of the relatively few opportunities for women to be formally educated. The wealthier Jewish families sought gentility for their daughters in addition to a fundamental understanding of Judaism. They grew up having a basic knowledge of languages, elementary math, and decorative arts—what any “proper” women should know.<sup>4</sup>

Eventually, institutions for the education of women began to change that bias. As Howard Fowle Durant, the founder of Wellesley, stated in 1875, “The higher education of women is one of the greatest battle cries of freedom.”<sup>5</sup> Seminaries such as Wellesley and Wheaton sought to provide young women of middle-class background with a level of education equivalent to that of the men's colleges. Subjects were still in good part limited to what was deemed suitable for women, but the seminaries liberalized conservative notions about the proper place of middle-class women in

education.<sup>6</sup> “The girl’s seminary, boarding school, and academy continued to be, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the most valid means of [women’s] education.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite progress in broadening the scope of higher education for females, however, prior to World War II quotas and economic problems limited Jewish women to a small minority. Men’s education, secular and Jewish, had continued to be a greater priority. From WW I to WW II, Protestant children of middle and upper class backgrounds found it relatively easy to get into good colleges and professional schools as long as they had the financial resources and minimum academic qualifications, but this was not so for Jews.<sup>8</sup>

Then, after the war, opportunities for Jews of upper and middle-class families increased dramatically; the G.I. Bill encouraged Jews and other minorities to go for more education. While some schools welcomed Jews, however, admission to small liberal arts New England colleges remained difficult.<sup>9</sup> The focus of this article is the history of Jews at Wheaton College in the broader context of several comparable colleges.

Wheaton College is a liberal arts college, founded by Judge Laban Wheaton at the urging of his daughter-in-law Eliza Baylies Wheaton as a living and loving memory of the Judge’s daughter, Elizabeth Wheaton Strong, who had recently died.<sup>10</sup> On April 22, 1835 the doors of Wheaton opened as a female seminary with fifty students and three teachers. The school, on a picture-postcard campus in Norton, Massachusetts, a small town thirty-five miles south of Boston and fifteen miles northeast of Providence, began as a female seminary, then became a women’s college.

Wheaton founders wished to play a role in the changing status of women in the 19th century with regard to education. To this end, they consulted Mary Lyon, a pioneer in higher education for women and a leader in the seminary movement.<sup>11</sup> In 1834, she was brought in as a consultant to the Wheaton family regarding the establishment of the school, which was to bear their name. She attempted to establish a curriculum that would be equal in quality and content to that of a men’s college. She brought in the first principal and the first teachers.<sup>12</sup> Miss Lyon left in 1837 to start Mount Holyoke, another small New England women’s seminary like Wheaton, with one of its purposes being to educate missionaries for foreign service.<sup>13</sup>

In the mid-1890s, Eliza Baylies Wheaton recognized that seminaries were on the wane, and colleges were the new trend. By 1899-1900, the

seminary enrollment tripled so in 1911 the trustees applied for a college charter. Wheaton became a college in 1912 under President Samuel Valentine Cole. A period of substantial change occurred after Wheaton Seminary became Wheaton College. Renovation of the campus began, signaling the advent of new buildings and expanded curriculum. Wheaton, like other women's colleges, flourished during the wars. With men entering the military, more money and resources were available for women's education. Those who would have gone to coeducational schools increasingly came to women's colleges because the faculty was mostly women and thus was not affected by the draft, nor did the curriculum suffer due to lack of male faculty. Then in 1987 the trustees recommended that the school accept men. A significant change occurred in 1988 when the all-female college began to accept male students. After much discussion by friends, parents and alumnae, the first coeducational class of 412 students was admitted.

Wheaton College was never a rigidly denominational school; the stance was not to reject applications on the basis of religion. Despite that fact, the outlook and philosophy was never truly ecumenical. A variety of Protestant denominations, including Trinitarianism and Congregationalism, had significant influence on seminary life in the 19th century. One of the requirements for a head of the school was a deep religious commitment, committed to the "concepts of Christian moral, spiritual, and educational training and leadership."

The board was somewhat distressed when members of the staff were not of a Congregational religious persuasion. The president of the board wrote of Miss Ellen Stanton, and another teacher, Eva Tappin:

In regard to Miss Stanton, I cannot think that she is at the position of Principal. . . . She fails especially in the religious interest for the piety of our pupils which I consider sine-qua-non in the head of the Seminary, and whatever interest she may feel, she has never been willing to lead the devotions, or conduct a prayer meeting. I could not vote for a Methodist or an Episcopalian. Ours is a Congregationalist school and patronized widely because it is. If we depart from it we lose our place in the ranks. There must be somewhere a Congregational Lady fitted to our needs. We cannot be so short of material as to hand our school over to other hands. For this very reason, I shall move to exchange Miss Tappin for someone in sympathy with our polity.<sup>14</sup>

The compromise of the board was to hire Ellen Stanton as principal (1880-

1897) but at a salary \$200 lower than her predecessor. Miss Tappin was forced to retire and someone else was brought in to recreate the kind of religious atmosphere that existed in the Metcalf Era but that had disappeared in the Haskell era.<sup>15</sup>

Religion was not in the regular curriculum; it was considered extracurricular, yet religiosity was not voluntary. Students of the college were required to attend church, and the fee for pews was part of the term charge. Regardless of the student's religion, she was required to spend a half-hour per day in personal religious and devotional prayer, a practice that continued until the early twentieth century. Bible classes were offered on Sundays, and no visitors or parents were allowed. If the student was not studying or praying, she needed permission to engage in other seemly activities such as taking a walk.

During the 1840s and the 1860s, the concern regarding the sanctification, or the second coming, reached epic proportions.<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Metcalf, president from 1850-1876, wrote "What I desire to see in the Seminary is aggressive Christian work, having definitely in view the salvation of souls." Mrs. Caroline Stickney Creevey, who was at Wheaton during the height of this concern described the experience:

The desire for sanctification shook our school to its center. For days teachers and pupils strove mightily for it. Classes were suspended and prayer meetings took their place. At all hours of the day supplication could be heard as a few gathered together in the small music and study rooms. We wept, we struggled. All faces were awe-struck. A solemn hush instead of the cheerful hum of the girl's voices was everywhere. As one and another emerged from this sorrowful state and announced with joy she had become sanctified, those who were still in darkness crowded around and asked how she had done it. ... Those to whom no light was vouchsafed were wholly miserable.<sup>17</sup>

Mount Holyoke had a similar revival in its second year after opening. At its opening, the school only had ten or twelve students who did not classify themselves as Christians. As was the case at Wheaton, the girls solemnly fasted and prayed. On a typical Saturday, the whole school gathered for a prayer meeting. After prayer the girls retired to their rooms for a half hour only to come back again to pray. "They went and returned again to plead once more for their companion out of Christ. The next day fifteen were rejoicing in hope. Gradually their number increased to thirty,

and at the end of the year only one remained without hope. Not long after, prayer for her was answered also."<sup>18</sup>

Later, in the 1920s, Wheaton College removed the requirement of Bible studies from the degree, and relaxed its attitudes toward dating, smoking, and the use of automobiles. This came as a contradiction to the philosophy of the college, an institution that had previously prohibited card playing and dancing, and had emphasized the teaching of its fundamental religious principles throughout its curriculum.<sup>19</sup>

Then in the 1930s, the school came under increasing pressure from students to do away with required attendance at weekend religious events. One such demand was to abolish required attendance at religious services on Sundays. President John Edger Park admitted that voluntary attendance at services would be clearly too low to warrant inviting guest preachers to speak on campus as they had every Sunday since the construction of the Cole Chapel in 1917. If required attendance were to be abolished, services would have to be given up altogether.

Aside from these internal pressures, the school dealt with external pressures from religious organizations seeking to create religious chapters on campus. President Park resisted the influence of these organizations, and refused to release lists of students belonging to the various faiths, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. He denied religious organizations permission to hold meetings or services that were open only to members of that sect. Organizations were welcome, as long as they included the whole community:

We feel that a great part of the fine atmosphere at the college is due to the fact that we do not allow this break up into sectarian groups. We hold the position that a Roman Catholic speaker or a Jewish speaker is welcome providing that everyone in the college is invited to the meeting. ... This position is, however, I know too liberal a one for certain denominational headquarters, and we have some very acid letters from quite a number of denominational secretaries about it. But I find that the liberal point of view has the backing of all who know the college well.<sup>20</sup>

Although considered liberal and ecumenical, this position inhibited the functioning of any religious group and limited the ability of its members to worship separately. The Religious Association at Wheaton was founded in 1912; this was a student-led organization overseen by the Dean of Students, a faculty member at large, and the chaplain. This group was mainly involved

in humanitarian projects such as volunteering at hospitals, institutions for the retarded, and other such places. Under the auspices of the RA, there were no formal sectarian religious groups; one commission of the umbrella group of the RA was the interfaith group. One of the three chairmen of the commission was Jewish. Her responsibility was programming worship, study, and social events for her constituency, with the assistance of the college chaplain.<sup>21</sup> Wellesley, as well, had an interfaith forum of Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, but it was not founded until the 1940s, well after Wheaton's.<sup>22</sup>

"There have always been a few Jews at Wheaton." So says Wheaton historian Paul Helmreich, but the first significant mention of Jews in the archives is not until 1917. Previously there is no evidence to support his statement, and because of the fiercely Christian atmosphere in Wheaton's early years, one might come to the opposite conclusion. It is possible that no Jews entered prior to that time, or that Jews who entered may have hidden their faith to get an education from the seminary. Helmreich does say that by the first decade of Wheaton College (post 1912), there were students representing varying religious backgrounds.

The most notable entry for the early record of Jews on campus concerns the decision of the economically influential Boston Filene family to become Wheaton benefactors. In 1918, the year of their daughter Catherine's commencement, the school's concern was to find a speaker who would not offend the family and risk the loss of their economic backing.<sup>23</sup> In a letter to her sister dated March 8, 1922, Helen Wieand Cole, wife of President Cole, spoke of Catherine Filene as a driving force in organizing the Vocational Guidance Conference with the means and influence to bring speakers to campus. To this day the Filene Center for Work and Learning is a vocational guidance center helping students find jobs and internships. Also during his administration, President Cole offered a midterm emergency substitute teaching position to Lillian Soskin-Rogers, a Russian Jew. After that year he offered her a position as department head. It had been acknowledged that Cole had some prejudices. "I was amazed," said his wife, "for I thought he would object to her race."<sup>24</sup>

One of the greatest challenges for Jews during the interwar years was the enforcement of the quota system. The "Jewish Problem" came to represent a growing concern, as increasing numbers of highly qualified Jewish applicants began applying to private colleges, especially in the Northeast.

Institutions worried about Jewish families chasing away gentile families, forcing them to seek their children's education elsewhere. None wanted the reputation of being a place where Jews were easily accepted, lest more Jewish students be encouraged to apply.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Jewish enrollment at Yale grew rapidly. There were three New Haven Jews in the class of 1911, a number which jumped to twenty-seven in the class of 1926. The number of Jews from Hartford, Connecticut rose from one to eight during the same period. In an effort to control the increasing flood of applications, Yale University adopted a "Limitation of Numbers," policy that effectively limited the number of Jewish students admitted. In 1923, publicizing the "Limitation of Numbers" policy and the housing crunch provided a chance to enforce a discriminatory policy without arousing public wrath. "Limitation of Numbers" provided a code word and a coverup for the anti-Jewish restrictions. In 1922, Alfred K. Merritt said "the chosen race in Yale had risen from 2% in 1901 to 7.5% in 1921."<sup>25</sup>

There were a number of other ways that various schools lowered their Jewish enrollment. Columbia College employed psychological testing; Harvard's dilemma was that the quota system had been leaked, and it was implied that they might have falsified admission tests and candidate characteristics. Princeton had two ways; one was to make the environment and surroundings uncomfortable for Jews to dissuade them from coming. The other technique was the use of personal interviews of "doubtful candidates" to exclude "undesirables."

Not only did Columbia, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Amherst, for example, aim to restrict access of Jewish students, but comparable woman's colleges harbored similar inclinations. Privately administrators referred to the "Jewish Problem," by which they meant the large number of qualified women applicants in this group. Each college's admission policy was made arbitrarily, based on the availability of the other applicants. In 1937 five eastern women's colleges exchanged information on their policies. Nevertheless, despite tacit or overt restrictions, the number of Jewish women rose at all types of colleges.<sup>26</sup>

Many private colleges like Wheaton began imposing restrictions on the number of Jews that could be accepted. According to enrollment statistics during the interwar years taken from the Wheaton Archives, the "Hebrews" were under great scrutiny. Their descriptions are more highly detailed than

other enrollment candidates. For instance, in any single year there is a page full of descriptions for "Hebrews" as against only a quarter page for non-Hebrew candidates.<sup>27</sup> Wheaton had highly descriptive, detailed interviews, particularly of Jewish candidates, which remain classified.<sup>28</sup> In the prewar years, most colleges referred to Jews as "Hebrews" in their vital documents: the quotas at Wheaton were intended to keep the number down to 10% or lower. Wheaton was no different from Yale, Harvard, or Princeton with respect to its policies on accepting Jews.

The first compilation of written data concerning the number of Jews at Wheaton showed up as early as 1929-1930, reporting that Jews made up 6% of the student body, with the figure rising in 1932 to 7.5% of the student class. During that year, the secretary of the Board of Trustees wrote to the president, "I am sorry we had to relax a bit this year, I should like to see the figures kept down to 6%."<sup>29</sup> On November 19, 1934 at the meeting of the Board of Trustees, President Park stated:

If we are to fill most of all of the vacancies by taking a much larger contingent of students of the *Jewish Race* than usual, I thought it was better that we should have some vacant rooms and lose a little income rather than let this situation get out of hand. The applications for next year show an even greater number of Jewish applicants. Our policy at this time is to try and keep the quota down below 10%. At the present time, of our 443 students this year, 39 are Jewish. In the freshman class of 127, 13 are Jewish.<sup>30</sup>

In 1936 the figure was up to 9.5%, thus the suggestion to accept only twelve of the sixty on the roll in order to bring the figure down to 8%. Barbara Ziegler, the secretary of the Board of Admissions, suggested the above figures; she had been warned by the director of the Woman's College Information Bureau in Chicago against "allowing Wheaton to become known in Chicago as a haven for Jewish students." The number of Jewish applicants decreased, and the school met the "non-discrimination" standard by adopting a policy of choosing representatives from the west and south instead of New York or Boston. The latter were seen as being less likely to adjust to life at Wheaton. Continuation of the careful tallies of Jews who applied and were accepted to the college occurred well into the early 1940s.<sup>31</sup>

In the minutes of a board meeting on November 11, 1942, a trustee was recorded as saying:

We accepted 13 Jewish students this year and only 9 last year,

but as pointed out, this difference may be due in part to the number of Jewish students in the upper classes. The number of Jewish applicants for admission in September, 1943 is greater than the number registered to date last year—13 against 9. The greater portion of Jewish candidates may be explained by the fact that they, as usual, have registered early, whereas registration of candidates in general this year is proceeding slowly.<sup>32</sup>

On most of the admission statistics, the issues of early application, and whether Wheaton was the first choice or not, were highlighted along with the descriptions of the students.

In the early forties students were not the only ones who found themselves on the wrong side of the quota system. The faculty, too, was monitored. When a Jewish professor was considered for hiring, it was made clear by the president of the Board of Trustees that Wheaton College already had the number of Jewish faculty it should have, namely, three. One of them, Dr. Erich Goldmeier Ph.D. and M.D. of Frankfurt, Germany, a refugee scholar, was appointed in psychology. The Associated Jewish Philanthropies in Boston, not the college, paid his salary.<sup>33</sup>

In the late 1940s, for the first time, there were no restrictions on the number of Jews accepted at Wheaton. In 1945, Wheaton received 500 applications and accepted 178 in order to fill a target class of 135-140. President Alexander Howard Meneely said that they did not take into account religious affiliation.<sup>34</sup> The first document that mentions Jews without mention of quotas, faculty primarily, can be found in the latter part of the 1940s. Much more recently in Wheaton's history there have been many faculty of Jewish faith, and some in higher positions. Jews have occupied positions of provost and interim president of the college.

The other change that affected Jewish life on campus, possibly as significantly as the quota system, was the gradual evolution of a Jewish student organization, which eventually produced what is currently a Hillel chapter on Wheaton's campus. The organization of the Jewish community on campus began with a letter sent to students who identified themselves on their college applications as Jewish, Protestant, or Roman Catholic, announcing the existence of the Religious Association. Significantly fewer Jews and Catholics identified themselves religiously than did Protestants.<sup>35</sup>

Data from the 1970s provides an example of how the students were differentiated. Statistics from these years showed not only the numbers of

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Jews who identified themselves, but also their preferences on a continuum from Reform to Orthodox. The data showed a predominance of Reform and Conservative Jews, which has also been confirmed in an interview with the former chaplain who served at Wheaton. Under President Cole, who served from 1897 to 1925, this differentiation between religions, let alone movements within the religions, would not have been possible.

The RA provided the introduction of religious programming to create a united voice on campus. One of the chaplains, who also served as a professor of religion and who left in 1977 to become archivist at the Boston Congregational Library, when asked about the position as chaplain, stated that he understood that President William Courtney Hamilton Prentice wanted him to "expedite a more open practice of Roman Catholic and Jewish observance than had been held by his predecessor."<sup>36</sup> Roman Catholics were offered Mass weekly for the first time, and rabbis held services in the Cole Chapel from time to time; occasionally, Reform rabbis also came to campus on Sunday mornings as guest speakers. The attempts of Reform and Conservative synagogues to extend hospitality to Jewish students during Jewish festivals proved successful.

Beginning in 1959, the Passover Seder became a popular event open to the entire campus. An article in the *Spring Alumnae Quarterly* of 1963, marking the fourth Seder in Wheaton history, described the Seders and the process leading up to the first. The idea of having a Seder had been inspired by a group of Jewish students. The admissions department and food services cooperated in putting together a nearly authentic Seder meal. People of all faiths were invited. Songbooks were available so guests could participate with their hosts. The attending rabbi explained the various customs and dishes.<sup>37</sup>

In a letter sent to the chaplain in 1964, suggestions were made to replace the unsystematic nature of religious traditional observance with an official religious-cultural program for Jewish students. It was suggested that there be a regular monthly program, possibly concerning a Jewish festival or holiday. Guest speakers would be invited to discuss Judaism and Jewish concerns. Activities would consist of traditional observances, meals, and ceremonies. The effort was to create a Jewish community where there had been none. Broad interests within Judaism would be represented so that students could continue to be surrounded by the heritage they might be missing due to living away from home.<sup>38</sup>

In 1967, the archive produced the first and possibly only notes about what an official Jewish student meeting under the RA was like, with about forty to forty-five students in attendance. Among the topics discussed were the year's proposed activities, including Chanukah and Passover observance and dinners, Shabbat services, transportation to various synagogues, various types of humanitarian projects, and a possible social event or mixer. Wheaton policy had specifically prohibited events limited to one creed or color and it was thought that this should not be changed. A sign-up sheet for events and activities was posted on a bulletin board where all students could readily find it.<sup>39</sup>

An important interfaith event was scheduled in 1974—the first building of a traditional Sukkah on campus. A rabbi from a synagogue in Newton was invited to come and show students how to build and decorate it. On October 5th in Boston that same year, there was a rally for Soviet Jewry, in which Wheaton students took part. The first meeting for organizing and programming Simchas Torah took place on October 7.<sup>40</sup> Sponsored by the RA, a Chanukah party took place on December 17; participants were to prepare latkes and have the traditional Chanukah festival and merriment with dreidels and menorahs. The invitation specified that each student attending could bring one non-Jewish friend, and a twenty-five-cent gift for the grab bag.<sup>41</sup>

In 1972, Brandeis University's Hillel invited Wheaton College's Jewish contingency to their school for a weekend event.<sup>42</sup> This was the first invitation of its kind to be received from a Jewish organization outside of Wheaton. Coordinating programming with other schools always proved problematic for Wheaton, because of its location in a small town outside the mainstream of public transportation.

Some watershed events occurred during the last two decades of the twentieth century. In 1981, Wheaton for the first time allowed *Ha-Yom*, a Jewish Prayer group for all of Southeastern Massachusetts, to use the Cole Chapel to conduct High Holiday services for the community at large. The entire Wheaton community was invited to attend, as it is today. *Ha-Yom* maintains an Eastern European traditional service, although combining ancient and contemporary customs. Men are asked to cover their heads, but both men and woman are allowed to wear prayer shawls.<sup>43</sup> The group provides its own Torah ark and scrolls, which it stores in Wheaton College's Madeleine Clark Wallace Library for use once a year on campus.

The first official Jewish Student Association meeting took place on September 21, 1989.<sup>44</sup> JSA became a separate official organization, apart from the RA. In 1990, the group organized events, which included speakers for Holocaust Remembrance Day, Shabbat dinners in the faculty dining room of Emerson Dining Hall, a Chanukah dinner and Passover dinner. The JSA's office was located in the Multicultural House on campus. On March 13, 1990, the JSA sponsored a Unity dinner in deference to the situation in the Persian Gulf during the war. The theme was "We Support the World," addressing important multi-cultural issues.<sup>45</sup>

The Jewish community at Wheaton, then, evolved from its beginnings as an interfaith commission under the auspices of the Religious Association, to a Jewish Student Association, and in 1999-2000, to a Hillel Society. This evolution resulted from the efforts of Jewish students to solidify their community within the larger Wheaton community. As a former student at Wheaton, class of 2002, and as part of the past leadership in the Hillel organization, I was pleased with Hillel's success relative to its size and youth, however limited it might have been; at the same time I as a Jewish student, along with a few others, strove without success to create a greater responsiveness and sense of community among Jews on campus.

Nevertheless, great progress had been made, and it was made in curricular matters also. In an important letter, dated 1972, the Department of Religion declared that Hebrew could be used to satisfy the college's language requirement. Professor Charles C. Forman, of the Religion Department taught some Hebrew classes and courses in Judaic Studies. Other courses were offered in world religions, and the Old Testament. Courses of interest to Jewish students would now supplement a curriculum which to that year had dealt primarily with the history of Christian churches.<sup>46</sup>

Wheaton eased its curriculum requirements sooner than did Wellesley and Mount Holyoke Colleges, which finally did so too. At Mount Holyoke, Mary Lyon had even in its early years pushed for Greek and Hebrew, as those languages would prove useful in reading the scriptures in their original languages.<sup>47</sup> In the early years at Wellesley, as with Mount Holyoke and Wheaton, New Testament Bible classes had been central to the core curriculum. Wellesley offered some courses in the Old Testament, in addition to courses in the history of churches, world religions, and New Testament; it also offered Hebrew as well, within the Bible studies department, beginning in 1886-1887. Starting in 1920, Wellesley interestingly

enough offered a course in "Development of Thought in Later Jewish Literature."<sup>48</sup>

Jewish students, of course, were still in a minority, never representing more than about 10% of the college community at Wheaton. The college's Christian origins and tradition remained clearly felt. The looming presence of the gracious Cole Chapel overlooking "the dimple" (a grassy commons) since 1917 created a strong Christian presence and influence on campus. A former chaplain stated that the chapel was built as a pan-Protestant exercise,<sup>49</sup> with its interior reflecting early Puritan simplicity and dignity. The exterior was Georgian, a style that typified Wheaton's architecture well into the 20th century. It was topped with a weathervane in the shape of a peacock as an early Christian symbol of immortality. Christian decorators often used the peacock to symbolize resurrection because of the feathers lost and renewed.<sup>50</sup>

Though a tiny minority from the earliest days of quotas and restrictions, Jewish students continued to persevere and prosper on the Wheaton College campus despite the domination of Protestant traditions. The attempt of Wheaton students to maintain their Jewish identity in an overwhelmingly non-Jewish environment adds another footnote to this theme so often repeated in our history.



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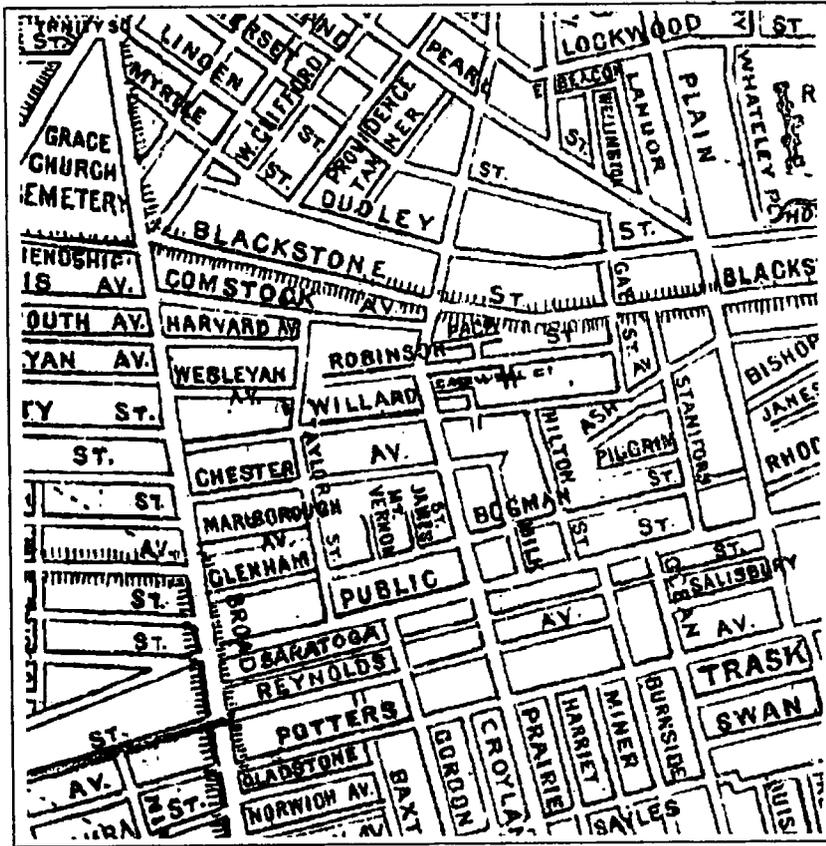
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- <sup>6</sup> Helmreich, 15.
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- <sup>10</sup> Helmreich, 24. Elizabeth (Eliza) Wheaton Strong died in March of 1834 at the age of 39.
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- <sup>13</sup> Farello, 117.
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- <sup>15</sup> Helmreich, 144. Mrs. Caroline Cutler Metcalf (Metcalf era, 1850-1876) followed by Ellen M. Haskell (Haskell Era, 1876-79).
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.
- <sup>17</sup> Helmreich, 145.
- <sup>18</sup> Sarah D. Stow, *Mount Holyoke 1837-1887: The First Half Century*. (Massachusetts: Mount Holyoke Seminary, 1887), 152.
- <sup>19</sup> Helmreich, 266.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> Personal e-mail from former Wheaton College Chaplain, November 13, 2002.
- <sup>22</sup> Glasscock, 225.
- <sup>23</sup> Helmreich, 301.

- 24 Ibid., 213.
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"New Map of the City of Providence, Compiled From the Latest Official Authorities."  
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*Map of South Providence, Willard Avenue area.*

## The South Providence Kosher Meat Boycott of 1910

by Kimberly Nusco

*Starting with Sephardic arrivals in Newport during the colonial era, Jewish history in Rhode Island has featured the problems and successes of immigrants. This issue of the Notes illustrates the point: Sol Koffler was the son of immigrants; Stephanie Miller interviews recent arrivals from Russia; and here Kimberly Nusco, in an essay that was awarded the 2003 Horvitz Prize for excellent student writing, reviews a conflict in the East European (largely Russian) community of South Providence in 1910.*

*Like the synagogue turmoil in 1902 Newport (Notes, Vol. 13, No. 4), this protest against certain practices of Kosher butchers reflected internal divisions among new residents of Rhode Island. Assimilation in the larger society and practical or economic necessities often contradicted Jewish tradition and law; the adjustments made by immigrants could be excruciating. Survival and success in our golden land have not always been easy, and Ms. Nusco recalls one incident in that difficult journey. Currently a resident of Providence, Kimberly Nusco received Master's degrees in history and library science from the University of Rhode Island.*

On Wednesday, June 22, 1910, a front-page story in the *Providence Daily Journal* gave unusually prominent press coverage to the Jewish community of South Providence. The headline, "Jews Put Ban on Kosher Meat ... Seven Hundred Housewives Declare That Jewish Markets of South Providence Are Handling Unclean and Infected Meat—Claim Also Made That Prices Are Too High," announced the beginning of a week-long "war" between the Jewish women of South Providence and their neighborhood kosher butchers. Beleaguered by the rising cost of kosher meat and incensed by the suspicion that meat from a cow infected with tuberculosis had been sold in one of the shops, the women of the Eastern European Jewish community of Providence's Fifth Ward took to the streets in an effort to force the butchers to address their concerns. Through mass meetings, picketing, and word of mouth, hundreds of Jewish housewives and their allies organized and enforced a boycott of the Willard Avenue butcher shops that highlighted a community debate over the cost and supervision of the neighborhood's kosher meat supply.

Unsafe food and oppressively high prices were national obsessions during the early part of the twentieth century, as the United States struggled to address the immense social and economic consequences of decades of unchecked urban growth and industrialization. Concerns about sanitation and the purity of food, fostered by such works as *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair's exposé of the Chicago meat packing industry, encouraged the passage of federal legislation like the Pure Food and Drug Act and Meat Inspection Act of 1906. Following on the heels of several nationwide anti-trust movements and food protests, the boycott of local kosher butchers by the Jewish women of South Providence echoed larger dramas involving corrupt food producers, greedy retailers, and a public prepared to engage in militant consumer action to regain a sense of security regarding its food supply.

Food is central to all communities, not only for survival, but as a conveyor of culture and communal identity. For the Orthodox Jewish community, food also carries substantial religious significance, as adherence to kosher dietary laws, or *kashrut*, is an essential component of religious observance. Access to kosher food was particularly important to Jewish immigrants weathering the profoundly dislocating experience of immigration to a new land. However, kosher observance also placed unique financial and social burdens upon Jewish families in the United States. In addition to the expense of maintaining separate dishware and cooking utensils, the supervision and processing required in the production of kosher food increased its cost. The limited number of kosher food suppliers in America also impacted the ability of many Jewish families to follow *kashrut*, as many cities outside of the eastern United States lacked qualified kosher manufacturers and butchers. While most immigrant Jews attempted to retain fundamental aspects of their religious identity that included keeping kosher, many found themselves examining the costs and benefits of *kashrut* in the context of life in a new country, where cultural trends and different economic structures complicated the adherence to Jewish food traditions.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty in establishing effective methods of kosher regulation in the United States and the complexities and corruption of the American meat industry contributed to the outbreak of several large and often violent kosher meat boycotts in various American cities throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, with the most turbulent protests occurring in New York

City. These boycotts were generally initiated and managed by Jewish women reacting to rising prices that hindered the fulfillment of their traditional obligations to feed and protect their families.<sup>2</sup>

In 1910, a series of violent kosher meat protests in New York swept through Harlem, the Bronx, the Lower East Side, and parts of Brooklyn. Picketers, generally women, attacked butchers and their customers, smashed shop windows, and doused meat with kerosene. News reports describe how a group of about three hundred women, led by a woman "almost six feet in height, determined of manner and speech, and clad in a dark dress, with a red cap," systematically shut down butcher shops in a section of the Lower East Side. A rabbi was badly beaten in Newark for attempting to disperse a crowd of protesters, and at one point a Williamsburg butcher and his wife chased boycotters out of their shop with horsewhips. The protests continued for two weeks, from the beginning of April until a "truce" was called for the Passover holiday.<sup>3</sup> One month later, Jewish housewives in Providence launched the boycott of their neighborhood kosher butchers, with similar protests occurring simultaneously in two other New England cities, Brockton and New Bedford, Massachusetts.<sup>4</sup>

The South Providence kosher meat boycott differed significantly from the New York protests in its lack of violence and its relatively swift resolution. It also did not follow the pattern of similar food protests within other Providence immigrant communities, such as the 1914 "Macaroni Riots" in the Italian-American community of Federal Hill.<sup>5</sup>

An examination of the South Providence boycott may help explain how particular immigrant groups differ in their methods of addressing internal tensions and external pressures. Differing in religion, language, and customs from their mostly Irish neighbors, and in cultural background and religious observance from the more established, mostly German Reform Jews of Providence's East Side, the Eastern European Orthodox Jews of South Providence put together unique communal structures, patterns of interaction, and systems of self-regulation. Points of conflict, such as the housewives' boycott of local kosher butchers, can illuminate these neighborhood systems during the community's struggle to preserve cultural traditions and religious values while adapting to a new and rapidly changing environment.

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### South Providence: History and Community Life

Massive emigration from Eastern Europe to the United States after 1880 gave rise to several distinctive Jewish communities in Providence. According to a 1978 Statewide Historical Preservation Report, a Jewish community started to form in South Providence in 1900, as Eastern European Jews began to move into the predominantly Irish neighborhood known as "Dogtown." The first Jewish families settled on Robinson, Gay, and Hilton Streets, and before long a thriving Jewish commercial district had developed on Willard Avenue. By 1909, the neighborhood had its own large synagogue, Temple Beth-El, as well as several Hebrew schools, a ritual bath house, and a local branch of the Workmen's Circle, the fraternal organization of the Socialist Party. The 1910 census recorded 1,396 residents of Russian origin in the Fifth Ward of Providence, which constituted the South Providence neighborhood. It is likely that the majority of these Russian immigrants were Orthodox Jews.<sup>6</sup>

Many of the characteristics of Jewish life in South Providence were detailed by sociologist Bessie Bloom in her 1911 survey of Providence's immigrant Jewish communities. Contrasting South Providence with the older and larger Eastern European Jewish community of the North End, Bloom asserts that the South Providence neighborhood presented "much better conditions," noting that "the houses have been built more recently, are larger, and are closer together" and pointing out the modern conveniences of the double- and triple-decker South Providence residences. "On the whole, the tenements here are lighted by gas, sometimes by electricity; and practically all have bath-rooms, including hot and cold water." Bloom also admits that in some areas of South Providence "the standard of living is somewhat lower and similar to that of the Shawmut Street district."<sup>7</sup>

These observations are supported by a description of the Russian Jewish community in South Providence appearing in a *Providence Sunday Journal* article in 1901. Contemplating the changes that the settlement of Jews brought to the underdeveloped areas of rough-and-tumble "Dogtown," the article observes that

The character of this Russian district is unlike that of its North End brother .... To begin with, most of the tenement houses are comparatively new, and the modern residence of this type, even that which is least costly to build, possesses ornamentation and a degree of sprightliness unknown to the tenement house erected a few years

since .... Even in the least thrifty appearing sections of the colony one will look in vain for scenes of squalor and extreme congestion of humanity.<sup>8</sup>

Bloom notes that household incomes in South Providence ranged between ten and fifteen dollars a week, with most families living on thirteen dollars a week. Between 60 and 66% of this household income was spent on food.<sup>9</sup> Other accounts of Jewish life in South Providence reflect the centrality of food to the community and depict the distinctive character of neighborhood food shopping. In her article about the history of South Providence, archivist Eleanor Horvitz includes a number of interviews that convey a vivid sense of shopping in Jewish markets during the early decades of the twentieth century. As one former resident noted:

My earliest memories are of Friday shopping trips on Willard Avenue, the Jewish marketplace. The street, from Prairie Avenue to Plain Street, bustled with activity from early morning. I remember the bearded, long-froked rabbinical butchers hustling to their chicken stores, the windows of fish stores full of glassy-eyed mackerel, perch, and whitefish glistening on their beds of ices, and the proprietor of the egg store separating the brown shell from the white shell eggs, which for some unaccountable reason were priced differently. Willard Avenue was a street of smells, many of them unpleasant, but on Friday the air was rich with the hot, delicious odor of freshly-baked bread, the *challah* which every housewife carried home.<sup>10</sup>

Kosher meat was a staple of Jewish food shopping, and the presence of the "long-froked rabbinical butchers" was an important neighborhood asset. Horvitz describes the evolution of kosher meat availability in Providence, noting the development of kosher butcher shops in the Willard Avenue shopping district:

The kosher butchers and poultry stores did a thriving business. One would pick a live chicken, and the *shohet* (ritual slaughterer) would kill it. There was Berman the butcher, whose wife delivered the meat orders on foot, Bloom the butcher, Spigel's Butcher Shop, Berlinsky's at 185 Willard Avenue, and Louis Fishman, located at 229 Willard Avenue. Yet there were earlier times when there were no kosher butchers in South Providence. Mrs. Abraham Zellermayer's daughters recall their mother's story of how Archibald Silverman drove her to the North End to buy chickens and meat before Willard Avenue had such stores.<sup>11</sup>

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While Horvitz does not specify a time period for this description, it is interesting to note that several of the butchers she mentions were among the six kosher butchers in the Willard Avenue area during the 1910 kosher meat conflict (see Table 1, on page 121). Horvitz's oral-history interviews provide vivid illustrations of the lives of kosher butchers and their positions within the Providence community during the early part of the twentieth century. Nathan Fishman, who assisted in his father's butcher shop, recalled working in the winter with no heat, "plucking chickens by the dozen—full of lice and blood—and my hands were swollen." Other residents remembered that butcher Benjamin Berman owned a horse and buggy and often took his family for Sunday drives through Roger Williams Park.<sup>12</sup> In an article about Jewish family businesses in Providence, Horvitz interviewed the son of Joseph Mittleman, a butcher who opened shop in the North End in 1909, who recalled the long days his father spent catering to customers: "It was not unusual for customers to call any time up to midnight for orders they wished delivered the next morning." He also pointed out his father's membership in Jewish charitable organizations, such as the Hebrew Free Loan Association.<sup>13</sup>

Such accounts suggest the ways in which the lives of ethnic retailers were interwoven with those of their neighbors. The butcher shops that came under attack from the housewives of South Providence were run by neighborhood families; the protesting housewives no doubt knew these families on a personal, day-to-day basis. As will be seen in the development and resolution of the 1910 kosher meat boycott, neighborhood relationships often played a significant role in the development and resolution of community conflict.

#### **The Boycott Against the Willard Avenue Butchers**

The decision to take action against the kosher butchers in South Providence was made on June 21, at a mass meeting in Bazar Hall, the neighborhood community center located, like most of the butcher shops, on Willard Avenue. Though it is unclear who organized the meeting, an article in the *Providence Daily Journal* the following day noted that the "hall was packed to the doors" with seven hundred housewives in attendance, and that the "declaration of war—or rather, the order to strike—was carried with a shout that could be heard several blocks away."<sup>14</sup>

This declaration included the vow that "no orthodox Jewish woman will buy an ounce of meat from a Jewish market, and the regular diet in Hebrew

families until further order will be fish, vegetables and cheese." The women urged one another to go without meat, rallying support with cries of "Boycott the butchers! ... Ask your friends to live on fish and vegetables!" The boycott strategy was unanimously approved by all present at the meeting, and a committee was appointed to oversee the organization of the strike. A second meeting took place later that night in the smaller rooms of the Workmen's Circle library, "where stirring addresses were delivered by some of those present."<sup>15</sup>

A delegation selected by the boycott committee issued the community's demands to the six kosher butchers in the neighborhood. These demands included "fresh and healthy meat, wrapped in clean paper and not in newspaper, as has been the custom in some of the shops, respectable treatment to the customers and a reduction in the price of all kinds of meat." Though three of the butchers agreed to consider the petition, three others "not only refused to receive the delegates but defied them." "In one case," the *Journal* reported, "the butcher's wife pitched into the delegate and hustled her out of the shop."<sup>16</sup>

This resistance on the part of the butchers strengthened the resolve of the boycotters, though the ensuing "war" against the South Providence shops seems to have proceeded in an extraordinarily orderly manner, especially in comparison to the violence that characterized kosher meat protests in other major American cities. Neighborhood women took up picket positions on Willard Avenue as early as 5:30 a.m. on June 22, entreating all who approached the shops not to buy meat and at times convincing customers to return meat already purchased. The *Evening Bulletin* noted that the "morning passed quietly, no attempts being made to disturb any of the shopkeepers." Police were called in toward the evening, as a crowd of "fully 500 'strike' sympathizers, pickets and curiosity seekers gathered along Willard Avenue, between Gay and Hilton streets" and it seemed that the three kosher shops in the vicinity might be "rushed." Despite these concerns, five policemen were able to clear the streets with relative ease, and "matters after a time took on their wonted aspect, although many of the 'strikers,' their pickets and sympathizers lingered in the vicinity."<sup>17</sup>

In fact, most of the vitriol in the conflict seems to have come from the butchers and their families. The *Journal* noted that the butchers heaped insults upon the strikers and recorded that one boycotter reported being "held up" and assaulted by the female family members of one of the

butchers. Another woman declared that a butcher had told her that the butchers planned to keep the meat "for a month if necessary," and force the community to buy it, no matter how decayed it was. In addition to these aggressive encounters, the butchers reportedly employed both trickery and trade solidarity to circumvent the boycott measures. During the first day of the boycott, reports were made that the butchers had gone from house to house delivering meat that in many instances had not been ordered. Members of the boycott committee went to these homes and urged the families to return the meat. In addition, the South Providence butchers sent representatives to shops in the North End to prevent the sale of meat to women participating in the boycott.<sup>18</sup>

Community solidarity, however, seems to have been largely on the side of the boycotters. In one interesting incident, two peddlers came into the neighborhood selling live chickens for twenty-two cents a pound. Though the butchers reportedly offered to purchase the fowls for considerably higher prices, the peddlers refused to sell to them, saying that they were "looking for the custom of the women and not the butchers, and that the latter could not have the chickens at any price." When the butchers forced the peddlers to move away from Willard Avenue, they went to nearby Staniford Street, where the striking women purchased all of the chickens and took them to the kosher slaughterer.<sup>19</sup>

According to the *Journal*, a meeting between the boycott committee and the butchers brought no agreement, aside from a concession from three butchers to comply with the requests for cleaner conditions (but not lower prices). Even so, a resolution was reached by the end of the week, the seeds of which could be found as early as the second day of the strike. On June 23, the *Journal* reported that "two residents of the district who have been in the [meat] business in times past but who are not now engaged in it, had agreed to open markets and sell meats at reasonable figures under clean conditions if guaranteed from 150 to 200 customers." On June 27, both the *Journal* and the *Evening Bulletin* ran stories proclaiming the "Kosher Butcher War Near End," reporting that "arrangements had been made with three Jewish butchers to open [new] kosher shops in the vicinity of Willard Avenue, and that as soon as the services of two more butchers were obtained the shops would be opened and meat could be obtained."<sup>20</sup>

The strike committee expressed certainty that the new shops would put the six offending butchers out of business, "since their patronage has fallen

off to almost nothing the past week." The new butchers agreed to sell locally slaughtered meat at eighteen cents a pound and meat from "the West" at fifteen cents a pound—a considerable reduction from the twenty-four cents per pound charged by the kosher butchers before the boycott. The new butchers also agreed to comply with the other requests of the protesters, including wrapping the meat in clean white paper, not newspaper, and treating their "women customers in a fair manner."<sup>21</sup>

After reporting on this proposed resolution to the conflict, the mainstream press apparently lost interest in the South Providence kosher meat conflict. The lack of further press coverage, as well as a dearth of primary sources for the South Providence Jewish community, complicates the determination of the actual outcomes and long-term effects of the boycott. A close analysis of the press coverage of the boycott, however, as well as tracing the neighborhood business and social developments through the few available resources for the time, provides insight into the sources and results of the conflict, revealing significant information about the social and political structures of the South Providence Jewish community. Most notably, the kosher meat boycott in South Providence provides an entry point into an examination of social and cultural patterns within the Providence Jewish community, particularly the roles of both women and Socialist activists.

According to the newspaper accounts, the primary motivation for the action against the kosher butchers of South Providence was the high cost of kosher meat. The *Journal* noted that speakers at the first mass organizational meeting asserted that the price of kosher meat had tripled over the past three or four years, increasing from eight to twenty-four cents a pound. Both the butchers and the rabbi responsible for supervising the quality of kosher meat in Providence asserted that this increase in price reflected general trends in the cost of meat across the country, a position supported by massive meat protests that swept the nation some months earlier. Rabbi Israel S. Rubinstein, the leader of several Orthodox Jewish congregations in Providence, held jurisdiction over the city's nine *shohatim* and seventeen kosher butcher shops.<sup>22</sup> In an interview with the *Evening Bulletin*, Rabbi Rubinstein admitted that "the prices are without question high, but the general increase among Gentiles as well as Jews is explanation enough for this." Rabbi Rubinstein also stated that the Jewish community was accustomed to paying higher prices for kosher meat, asserting that "this is one place where a Jew's

religion costs him considerably, but the rule is iron-clad and no one would think of breaking it."<sup>23</sup>

But while exorbitant prices may have been the most obvious motivation for community protest, another issue seems to have provided the flashpoint for the South Providence boycott. At the first organizational meeting at Bazar Hall, speakers asserted that one of the Willard Avenue butchers had been selling meat from a cow that was infected with tuberculosis. The *Journal* reported that the butcher had purchased a "broken-down, tuberculous cow" which he cut up and sold to his customers at twenty-four cents a pound. When the farmer tried to collect payment for the cow, the butcher refused to pay, on the grounds that the animal had been diseased. The conflict went to civil court, and though the case was eventually settled in favor of the butcher, public outrage at the suggestion of the butcher's guilt fanned the flames of protest.<sup>24</sup>

It would be difficult to construct a more inflammatory scenario for this particular time period and this specific community. Spreading rapidly through the densely populated tenement neighborhoods where many immigrants settled, tuberculosis presented one of the greatest public health problems of the early decades of the century, addressed by numerous charitable organizations and medical institutions developed to combat "the white plague." The very mention of tuberculosis had the potential to incite panic in the overcrowded triple-decker neighborhoods of South Providence. Anxiety about urban conditions and the "cleanliness" of all manner of foodstuffs permeated the public consciousness.

As well as igniting common concerns about disease and food quality, the sale of contaminated meat would have held particular significance for the primarily Orthodox Jewish community in South Providence. Kosher slaughtering practices, if properly enforced, should have made the sale of tainted meat impossible. As Jeremiah Berman describes in his exhaustive study of the topic, the laws of *shehitah* specifically require the *shohet* to inspect the lungs of a slaughtered mammal; even the slightest indication of disease would make the meat ritually unfit.<sup>25</sup> The sale of an animal with obvious lung disease in a kosher butcher shop would suggest either corruption or incompetence in the inspection process.

Both the neighborhood butchers and Rabbi Rubinstein made strong statements in the press rejecting allegations that infected meat had been sold in South Providence shops. The butchers blamed the criticism of the quality

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of the meat on a misunderstanding of kosher butchering practices. In one *Evening Bulletin* article, the butchers claimed that, according to kosher restrictions, "only certain parts of the cow can be sold to the faithful, and that these parts are not the best by any means." Therefore "the quality of the meat sold is the result rather of the restriction of their religion, rather than of any intention on their part to purchase the cheapest and poorest parts."<sup>26</sup>

This explanation contradicts Rabbi Rubinstein's statements in a later *Bulletin* article, asserting that kosher slaughtering practices actually ensure that Jews eat the highest quality of meat. Rubinstein upheld the benefits of kosher dietary regulations, stating that "we Jews attribute much of our longevity and our ability to withstand persecution to the care with which our food has been prepared throughout the ages." Like other Jewish religious officials and scientific experts during the Progressive Era, Rubinstein used evidence from modern studies and secular authorities to justify kosher practices; he asserted that "our belief that pain which is suffered by an animal makes it unfit for meat is supported by many scientists," and that the "inspection of meat by the Jews is so perfect that in 1900 the military department of the English Government advised that kosher meat be bought whenever possible." Rabbi Rubinstein defended the kosher inspection process in Providence by affirming the superiority of the traditional religious practices of *shehitah* while acknowledging the incorporation of modern methods of sanitation and inspection:

The whole Jewish system of slaughtering has been built up with these two objects in mind—to prevent the use of diseased meat, or meat of animals who have suffered. The origin of the system dates back for more than 3200 years, but the rules which applied in those early days do not apply to-day. As modern methods of inspection have been adopted, we have absorbed them, and to-day our methods are as modern and as rigid as any in the world.<sup>27</sup>

This combination of traditional and modern defenses of kosher slaughtering and inspection procedures failed to reassure the South Providence boycotters of the rigorousness of the kosher meat inspection in their neighborhood. One man involved in the boycott leveled several critiques of the rabbi's statements, citing recent incidents in other cities as proof of a crisis both in the quality of kosher meat and in Jewish leadership in general:

Rabbi Rubinstein admits that the same meat for which the Jews pay from 6 to 24 cents a pound can be bought in other shops at six cents a pound and asserts that the Jews get the healthier meat and

consequently are better off physically. The negative can be proven, insasmuch as 150 young Jewish men were recently rejected on account of physical deficiency when they tried to become teachers in New York city.<sup>28</sup>

Whether or not the quality of kosher meat had anything to do with New York's Jewish men being judged physically deficient, the protester's statements reveal a marked willingness to question the very basis of rabbinical authority in the inspection of kosher meat. The unnamed protester went on to turn Rabbi Rubinstein's assertion that the Willard Avenue protest was the result of "agitation, by persons who are not conversant with the Jewish laws in regard to slaughter houses," back upon the community's religious authority structure itself. Stating that "a man [the *shohet*] who has spent three years in learning how to kill an animal is not then fit to say whether the animal has tuberculosis or not, and that the representatives of the congregation know less about it," the protester asserted that religious training in ritual slaughtering techniques did not convey professional expertise in recognizing diseases.<sup>29</sup>

This critique not only questioned the qualifications of the religious authorities in the community, but also alleged that these authorities were lax in their duties. "The rabbi just puts his head inside the shop and doesn't even look inside the ice box. Then he says everything is all right and go ahead and sell the meat. The meat is supposed to be protected by the rabbi, but is it?" Most importantly, the protester accused the rabbi of protecting the interests of the *shohatim*, the butchers, and congregation representatives (the leaders of the community), at the expense of the rest of the Jewish community. His criticism ended with a call for popular action that linked the economic and health interests that formed the basis of the boycott: "I would suggest that the Jews of this city take the power from the ignorant *shoktim* and congregation representatives and place it in the hands of the Board of Health under a doctor's supervision. Then they will probably get their meat at seven cents a pound."<sup>30</sup>

Such criticism of community authorities was not new to Jewish social and political discourse; boycotts and other collective strategies historically had expressed tensions between the people and the authority structures of Eastern European shtetls. Kosher law and the supervision of meat formed a frequent point of contention—both between the community and the congregational authorities and among various rabbis vying for control and

influence. A few months before the Providence boycott, the *Jewish Advocate* ran an editorial deploring the “incessant kosher meat wars” plaguing the Boston area. In this context, the term referred not to conflicts between housewives and butchers, but to struggles among various rabbis over the control of the city’s kosher butcher shops. The *Advocate* implied that money, not religion, was at the heart of the matter, as rabbis competed for the right to collect inspection fees. The *Advocate* blamed the ongoing trouble on a lack of “efficiency” in Boston’s Jewish community, suggesting that “really organized communities” had resolved such conflicts by removing the control of the slaughter houses from religious authorities and limiting the rabbis’ role to the certification of the *shohatim*.<sup>31</sup>

Though the *Advocate* recommended transferring the supervision of kosher meat to secular authorities, the newspaper stopped short of calling for the involvement of institutions outside the Jewish community. It is remarkable, then, that one of the protesters in the South Providence boycott called for the Board of Health to take over the supervision of the kosher meat markets. Such a proposal suggests that some members of the South Providence Jewish community did not feel represented or protected by the local authorities and indicates a growing interest within the Jewish community in the new governmental institutions and processes for regulating areas of public health and economy. The effects of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act of 1906 were only starting to be felt in state and local government institutions. Rhode Island had just instituted a state Board of Food and Drug Inspectors in 1908.<sup>32</sup> Like Rabbi Rubinstein’s invocation of scientific evidence and modern techniques of meat inspection to defend the traditional system of kosher regulation, the statements of the protesters reveal how contemporary discourses on economics and public health influenced attitudes within the Orthodox Jewish community towards traditional practices and structures.

Underpinning the economic and public health concerns expressed by the South Providence boycotters was the critique of corrupt corporations and “trusts” that characterized much of Progressive Era reform rhetoric. The *Journal* attributed the birth of the boycott to the community’s resentment of perceived “exaction” from the South Providence butchers. Speakers at the Bazar Hall meeting complained that the kosher butchers were “banded in an association which controls all the prices, and which meets at 9 a.m. daily at the slaughter houses to discuss conditions and decide upon a price.” Such

allegations echoed nationwide concerns about price-fixing and the growth of monopolies controlling essential products that had provoked general meat boycotts and federal investigation into the Chicago-based beef trust several months earlier.<sup>33</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of this alleged league of kosher butchers in South Providence. A beneficial organization for Jewish butchers—the Providence Hebrew Butchers Association—had been chartered in 1909; however, the founding members did not include any of the South Providence butchers listed in the *Providence Business Directory*, and no records survive to show whether this association extended its interest beyond providing insurance and social benefits to its members.<sup>34</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the South Providence butchers were at least loosely associated with kosher butchers in other parts of the city, as all would have received their inventory from the four kosher slaughterhouses in Providence and all were under the supervision of Rabbi Rubinstein. This contact enabled the South Providence butchers to prevent the women boycotters from purchasing meat from butchers in the North End.

Whether or not the association of the kosher butchers constituted a local “meat trust,” it seems to have been interpreted as such by the South Providence protesters. This reflected a combination of public resentment of local congregational leaders, expressed in the protester’s comments above, with a nationwide suspicion of the meat industry as a vast conspiracy of corrupt corporate interests. A contemporaneous editorial in the *Jewish Advocate* entitled “Wine, Women, and Meat,” articulated these concerns, noting that, though many supposed that Jewish butchers were independent of the Chicago beef trust, “it is ordained by the sacred and inviolable law of rebate transactions that no man shall be able to send a cow, nor a sheep nor yet an ox, to any of his needy brethren, except as they be collected from him and for him by the economic concentration of trust operations.” Though the author gently mocked the kosher meat boycotts as the folly of “saucy women,” he reserved his rancor for the ability of the trusts to flaunt the “pliability of the law,” noting that “the public always gets it in the neck.”<sup>35</sup>

#### **“Primarily a woman’s strike”**

Though the South Providence kosher meat boycott incorporated issues of national interest, and though simultaneous kosher boycotts were taking place in both Brockton and New Bedford, Massachusetts, the action on Willard Avenue was still a very localized protest. As such, the characteris-

tics and relationships of the participants take on particular significance. An analysis of who was involved in the boycott can illuminate neighborhood interactions that may provide potential explanations for the causes and significance of the protest. Fortunately, several of the newspaper accounts include the names (or at least the married names) of many boycott participants and organizers, who can be traced through the city directories and census schedules to obtain addresses and occupations.

The entire drama of the boycott was confined to the space of a few city blocks—the section of Willard Avenue intersected by Hilton, Gay, and Staniford Streets. All but one of the kosher butcher shops in the neighborhood were located on Willard Avenue. Bazar Hall and the Workmen's Circle Library, which served as the rallying point and organizational headquarters for the protest, were also situated in the heart of the Willard Avenue commercial district. Most of the known boycott participants as well as the butchers lived within a few blocks of each other, some in the same buildings or only one or two doors away.

In such closely-knit immigrant neighborhoods, *landmanschaft* loyalty permeated day-to-day interactions, and problems arising from business or social transactions could be perceived as personal injuries and betrayals of the community. As Judith Smith points out in her study of immigrant families in Providence, “when ethnic retailers raised their prices, immigrants viewed such acts as an abandonment of the principles of community justice and particularly as a breach of reciprocity. An increase in the price of necessary commodities was an injury to a customer loyally patronizing a *paesano* or *landsman*.”<sup>36</sup>

In the production and consumption of kosher foods, these conceptions of reciprocity and community justice took on religious as well as communal significance. The Jews of South Providence had no choice but to patronize kosher butchers if they wished to adhere to the practices of their faith. Kosher butchers who made life difficult for their fellow Jews by charging higher prices or who jeopardized the religious practices of the community by selling *treyf* meat violated the principles of *tzedekah* (communal obligation) and *kashrut*. Women's neighborhood networks, formed through the everyday activities of supporting their families, could be mobilized to enforce religious communal values in the commercial life of the neighborhood.

The majority of the participants in the South Providence kosher meat

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boycott were married mothers who did not work (at least officially) outside their homes. The *Providence Daily Journal* called the boycott “primarily a woman’s strike,” and noted that the boycott committee and the picketers were comprised entirely of women. However, the newspaper also downplayed the women’s role in the boycott, emphasizing the male leadership of the organizational meetings. Indeed, much of the coverage of the strike reveals a rather condescending attitude toward the women participants, depicting them as so unruly and hysterical that the men presiding over the meetings could hardly conduct business. When the decision to launch the boycott was passed at the first Bazar Hall meeting, “Women cheered, shouted and cried until the chairman in despair of being heard—he was only a mere man—threw his gavel down in disgust and declared the meeting adjourned—not before he had appointed a committee to conduct the strike, however.”

This slightly amused, patronizing tone often characterized press coverage of female-dominated Progressive reform movements, defusing masculine anxiety about “disorderly women” through belittling humor. The description of the boycott meetings may also represent an intentional slight to Jewish masculinity, as several newspaper accounts repeatedly include vaguely sexualized references to the chairman wielding a “big gavel” in largely ineffectual attempts to control the community’s womenfolk. In a time when consumer activism was largely a female protest strategy and when Jews were often excluded from “manly” organizations such as labor unions, it is likely that the men involved in the boycott would be feminized by the mainstream press.<sup>37</sup>

But despite this condescending tone, the local newspaper accounts provide considerable evidence of impressive grassroots organizing undertaken by the Jewish women of South Providence. The women enforced community unity from the first meeting at Bazar Hall, deciding “that there could be no support of the strikers or of their friends until every person present at the meeting had pledged herself to purchase no meat until it had come down to prices which the people could afford.”<sup>38</sup> The boycott itself chiefly involved women picketers speaking with other women in the neighborhood, mostly without resorting to violence. The large size of the crowds attending the boycott seems to testify to the effectiveness of this networking strategy, with gatherings of up to 500 people recorded on the second day of the strike. And while the press focused on the activities and statements of male protesters, there are indications of women’s leadership

in the strike. Annie Weinbaum, the wife of a prominent seltzer manufacturer, is listed as the chair of one of the first boycott committees, and a "Mrs. Zalzman" was listed among those who delivered "fiery and excited" speeches at the last, "most largely attended" meeting of the boycott reported in the press.<sup>39</sup>

#### **"Socialists and boys"**

The *Evening Bulletin* noted that the butchers considered the boycott a "huge joke," quoting one butcher's description of the mass organizational meeting at Bazar Hall as being comprised of "nothing but Socialists and boys." This comment not only discounted the significance of the neighborhood women's participation, but also implied that the protest had an explicit political orientation. Though the press generally stopped short of describing the boycott as a Socialist action, the organizational centers of the protest strongly suggest Socialist involvement. The boycott organizers held their meetings in the library of the Willard Avenue branch of the Workmen's Circle, considered the "center for active Jews, including the radicals and socialists of the day." Described by historian Paul Buhle as the "unquestioned center of Jewish working-class life," the Workmen's Circle provided educational and cultural programs, served as a mutual benefit society, and presented a forum for community discussion on a wide range of political, economic, and social issues. It was the "gathering place to which every young man with progressive ideas belonged"<sup>40</sup> Hyman Haimsohn, a member of the boycott committee, had been a founding member of the local Circle in 1909.

Unfortunately, the records of the Providence branches of the Workmen's Circle have been lost, preventing a definitive count of Circle members participating in the 1910 kosher meat boycott. However, there are other traces of Socialist and labor activist involvement with the boycott. The first organizational meeting at Bazar Hall was chaired by Wolf Semonoff, a forty-six-year-old tailor. A number of men participating in the boycott were involved in the garment trade, one of the industries noted for early labor activism in Rhode Island. In his "introductory investigation" of Jewish involvement in the Rhode Island labor movement, Buhle notes that Jewish tailors became part of "the solid center of the Rhode Island Socialist Party."<sup>41</sup> Jake Pavlow, the founder of a Yiddish branch of the Socialist Party, lived in South Providence at the time, and it appears that his wife was a member of the boycott committee.<sup>42</sup> Though the scarcity of records prevents definitive

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analysis, it is possible that many of the women participants in the boycott were Socialists themselves. In his brief history of the development of socialism in Rhode Island, Robert Grieve mentions the activities of women in the party, though none of them were Jewish.<sup>43</sup>

Studies of Providence Jewish history have not provided much information about the level of Socialist organizations in local Jewish communities in the early twentieth century. Despite outside perceptions of immigrant neighborhoods as breeding grounds for Socialist revolutionaries, leftist movements within these communities seem fairly localized and neighborhood-oriented. In 1910, large, formalized Socialist organizations were only just beginning to devise strategies for organizing the increasingly foreign-born, non-English-speaking industrial working class. The need to directly address the needs of Jewish immigrants had been expressed by one of the attendees of a conference of New England Jewish Socialists held in Providence in 1903, who asserted, "we'd be more successful in our propaganda if we took some real interest in the problems of our fellow Jews and did so as socialists."<sup>44</sup> Local Socialists, such as those involved with the Workmen's Circle, may have been close enough to members of the community to align their political agenda with the practical, bread-and-butter needs of neighborhood housewives.

The relationship between local housewives and community activists may offer clues as to why the South Providence kosher meat boycott did not entirely follow the pattern of many other food protests. In contrast to kosher meat boycotts in other cities, the Willard Avenue action did not escalate into a riot. Even when Irish-American police officers were sent into the neighborhood, the strike remained relatively peaceful. Nor did the boycott spread to other Providence Jewish communities, despite commercial and social similarities to the North End Jewish neighborhood. Though collective measures were offered as solutions to the boycott—at one point, the committee discussed plans to open a cooperative kosher meat market—the resolution selected was decidedly capitalistic, promoting competition from new businesses to lower prices and increase the quality of service. Despite statements challenging religious and communal authorities and calling for governmental intervention in a traditionally Jewish-controlled issue, the supervision of kosher meat remained in the hands of the Jewish community.

In one view, these characteristics could suggest that the South Providence boycott had a less "radical" or less political orientation than other food

actions in similar immigrant communities. However, it may be more illuminating to consider what these outcomes reveal about the complex and often unique relationships that drive and shape any particular example of community action. Regardless of the level of participation by activists with specific political goals, the protest against the Willard Avenue butchers was based in the struggles of neighborhood women to solve immediate, practical problems in their community. In the debate over the cost and regulation of kosher meat, conceptions of community and religious reform vied with pragmatic assessments of economic relationships. The specific outcomes of the boycott reveal the degree to which this protest was grounded in the particular characteristics of the South Providence community and in accepted notions of neighborhood interaction.

In short, the kosher meat boycott was a localized protest. There is no indication that the boycott was linked to the New York boycott occurring earlier in the year or to kosher meat boycotts occurring simultaneously in nearby New Bedford or Brockton, though these actions may have provided inspiration for the chosen strategy. More curious, however, is the apparent lack of connection to other Jewish communities in Providence. While kosher meat protests in New York and Boston spread throughout the cities' Jewish neighborhoods, the action in Providence seemed confined to Willard Avenue. Indeed, the only recorded collaboration with the Jewish community of the North End occurred on the part of the boycotted butchers, who enjoined the North End shops from selling meat to the women of South Providence.

A number of factors contributed to the localized community concentration of the protest, many of which reflect the ideological and practical tensions noted above. If the boycott is to be considered a movement for political and community reform, the lack of participation by other communities may indicate a less organized Socialist or radical contingent in those neighborhoods. As little study has been made of Socialist organization or radicalism within the Providence Jewish community, it is difficult to ascertain if South Providence had a higher concentration of radicals in 1910. This might not seem likely, as the North End was a larger community, and had a greater influx of recently arrived immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe. However, the slightly higher economic status of South Providence Jews, noted in Bloom's study, may have contributed to the neighborhood's willingness to protest economic conditions that threatened their standard of

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living. As Dana Frank notes in her study of the 1917 cost of living protests in New York, the women who engaged in food activism were generally not the "poorest of the poor," but rather housewives of some means struggling to maintain a certain quality of life.<sup>45</sup> If the Willard Avenue boycott is seen as a practical means for combating an economic problem, the fact that it did not spread may suggest that Jewish women in the North End did not have similar problems with their butchers or had found different, community-specific means of dealing with them.

The localized nature of the South Providence boycott also may have contributed to the relatively nonviolent character of the protest. The close proximity of the butcher shops to the protesters' homes and the predominance of women and families in the demonstrations may have discouraged the outbreak of havoc and destruction (see the map on page 96 and Table 1). But these factors of gender and proximity do not necessarily preclude violent actions, as evidenced by the considerable damage inflicted upon neighborhood butchers and their customers by Jewish housewives and mothers in the New York and Boston meat riots. It is possible that the lack of mayhem in the South Providence protest reflected community characteristics—practical neighborhood relationships and orderly modes of behavior—that enabled the housewives and their allies to resolve the conflict with the kosher butchers without resorting to violence.

This ability to resolve conflicts peacefully contrasted sharply with similar incidents of immigrant food activism in Providence's other ethnic neighborhoods. The South Providence kosher meat boycott has been compared by several scholars to the violent "Macaroni Riots" that wreaked havoc in the Italian community of Federal Hill in 1914. Like the Jewish housewives' protest, the "Macaroni Riots" expressed community outrage against ethnic business owners who charged too much for the traditional foods needed by the fellow immigrants who patronized their stores. But while the South Providence kosher meat boycott followed a model of organized grassroots protest, the Federal Hill action was marked by spontaneous street action, several days of violence, and the destruction of the offending businesses. The violence of this uprising may have reflected the composition of the participants; as Evelyn Sterne points out, the "Macaroni Riots" contrasted with the kosher meat boycotts in that it was not a female-dominated protest, but drew in a mixed crowd of frustrated community members and activists.<sup>46</sup> But the differing levels of violence shown in these

two incidents may also reflect the different extent of militant organization in the two neighborhoods. While South Providence Socialists in 1910 did not yet have strong connections to militant organizations like the I.W.W., the traditions of labor radicalism within the Italian immigrant community in Providence have been well-documented by several historians. These connections to militant labor groups may have fanned the violence of the "Macaroni Riots," while the lack of militant influences may have resulted in the South Providence community's rejection of a more radical solution to the conflict over kosher meat.

The protesters' decision to dismiss the proposal of a cooperative kosher meat market reflected this potential lack of militancy, revealing a rejection of radical solutions to the economic problems of the community for more familiar systems of neighborhood commerce. Collective meat markets had been formed during the 1902 and 1917 food protests in New York and the Boston kosher meat boycott of 1912, and they became an important community strategy during the Depression of the 1930s. The Jewish community of Brockton, where a kosher meat boycott was in force at the same time as the Providence action, opted to establish a cooperative butcher shop.<sup>47</sup> Though the issue seems to have provoked significant debate among the Providence boycotters, the decision was made to encourage new butchers to open under the condition that they concede to the protesters' demands.

The choice of this solution reflects the boycotters' decision to maintain traditional patterns of community commerce rather than attempt a radical restructuring of the neighborhood's economic landscape. The new butchers were familiar to members of the community: as the *Journal* noted, some of them had previously been in the kosher meat business. The new shops encouraged by the strike committee would ostensibly operate under community control, as the butchers had been selected by the boycott committee, and had promised to meet the price and sanitation requirements laid out by the protesters. Plans were made for the creation of a standing committee to oversee the new shops and to ensure the new butchers' adherence to their agreement. Each of the community-approved shops would be given placards, "showing that the shop is a clean one and that the Jews need not be afraid to trade there."<sup>48</sup> Stepping back from promoting total communal control over the kosher meat supply by establishing cooperative kosher meat markets, the organizers of the boycott sought a less radical way that left

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neighborhood trade relations relatively intact while reforming the system seen as the source of the conflict.

It is interesting to note, however, that the actual results of this proposal do not bear out the committee's hopes that the boycotted butchers would be driven out of business by the community-approved shops. While the dearth of reliable municipal records for this time period creates difficulty in tracing the opening or closing of small local shops, a survey of the *Providence Business Directory* for the years 1909 to 1915 does not support the prediction that the new kosher butcher shops would force the boycotted butchers to close. Though four new "provisions dealers" did open in the neighborhood in 1911, the only butcher from the 1910 incident not to be listed in the directory was Louis Fishman, who apparently closed shop to work as a clerk for his brother Morris, also a butcher.

In fact, four of the butchers operating during the 1910 boycott were still in business by 1915. The only other significant change in the directory listings was that after 1910, Barnet (also called Benjamin) Berman's shop was listed under the name of his wife, Annie, who had once managed a grocery store in her own name. Berman appears to have been the butcher who had been involved in the case of the tubercular cow. Though the civil case brought by the farmer was decided in Berman's favor, it is possible that the negative publicity caused Berman to take on a lower profile in the family business. He is listed as a clerk in the city directory for 1911 and 1912, and as a butcher again in 1913 through 1915 (see Table 2 on page 122).

In addition to this contradiction of the boycott committee's intentions, it is difficult to ascertain whether the plans to institute a committee to oversee the butcher shops were successful. An official body for the supervision of *kashrut* was not instituted in Providence until 1920, with the establishment of the *Vaad Hakashruth*. With its fairly extensive membership, including Orthodox rabbis, *shohatim*, and delegates from every Orthodox synagogue in Providence, the *Vaad* board represented a significant change in the supervision of kosher meat in Providence. It is difficult to establish a clear connection between the development of the *Vaad* and the committee proposed by the leaders of the 1910 boycott, although a definite tie to the South Providence community is suggested by the presence of Abraham Bazar, a prominent South Providence businessman, in the *Vaad's* charter. There is also some indication that an earlier association was founded in 1916, "to aid and assist in the enforcement of the pure food laws, education,

charity, and benevolence” but again, little evidence exists to connect this organization with the kosher meat boycott.<sup>49</sup>

The perseverance of the boycotted butchers could suggest that pragmatic economic relationships may have outweighed political ideals or communal desires to “punish” transgressors. Patterns of behavior—where people are accustomed to shop, and knowledge of who offers the best deals—can be strong motivators, and once the public furor over tainted meat and high prices subsided, long-standing relationships may have reasserted themselves. Both the lack of militant violence and the capitalistic approach to the boycott solution may reflect the economic structure and the employment patterns of the Providence Jewish community. Unlike the large numbers of Jewish industrial workers in New York, the majority of Jews in Providence worked in small shops and family businesses. As Smith notes, 46% of Jewish immigrants in Providence worked as peddlers and shop assistants. By 1915, 30% of Jewish men were self-employed retailers.<sup>50</sup> These factors may have contributed to comfort with traditional retail relationships rather than an impulse for radical restructuring of the local economy.

The shops’ survival may also attest to the efficacy of economic competition; the boycotted butchers may have been forced to lower their prices and raise their standards to stay in business. As the existing sources do not reveal the costs of kosher meat in South Providence after the boycott, it is difficult to make definitive statements about these outcomes. However, in terms of community development, the near-doubling of the kosher meat markets in the neighborhood and the eventual expansion of the kosher inspection system suggest tangible benefits for the housewives who for a short time took to the streets to demand better conditions.

#### **Legacies of the Protest**

Scholars of women’s consumer protests assert that participation in collective actions like food boycotts politicized the housewives who took part. A sense of efficacy and communal solidarity developed during the boycotts made these women, their daughters, and granddaughters more likely to participate in other political and community actions. In the case of the South Providence kosher meat boycott, it is somewhat difficult to trace this female political legacy. As mentioned above, records for the Jewish community are scarce, especially for women’s activities. The few records that do exist indicate that, even before the boycott, a strong tradition of

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charity and community service had already accustomed Jewish immigrant women to organizational life. Several of the boycott participants were active in women's organizations before the protest. Bessie Semonoff, the wife of boycott officer Wolf Semonoff, was a founding member of the South Providence Ladies' Aid Association as well as a member of the Providence chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women. Other women who participated in the boycott—Annie Shore, Soffie Shaw, Katie Barash, and Mrs. Zalzman—are also listed among the Ladies' Aid Association members. The 1905-1906 yearbook of the Council of Jewish Women lists the names and addresses of several women from South Providence, though the only names mentioned in the boycott coverage are that of Mrs. Semonoff and, interestingly enough, Annie Berman, the wife of boycotted butcher Benjamin Berman and eventual proprietor of a market in her own right.<sup>51</sup>

The only sign of continued political involvement among the female boycott participants is that of Annie Weinbaum, the wife of seltzer manufacturer Barnet Weinbaum, who later ran (unsuccessfully) for school board office on the Socialist ticket.<sup>52</sup> While it is difficult to determine if the kosher meat boycott increased Jewish women's activism in Providence, these indications of an activist consciousness rooted in women's traditional community work present intriguing possibilities for further research.

The question of the boycott's lasting effect on community organizations also remains unanswered. As noted above, the South Providence boycott did not seem to give rise to any long-standing organizations, and the committee appointed to ensure that the butchers adhered to community standards would most likely have been closed to women, being concerned with religious matters. Even after the institution of the *Vaad*, the supervision of kosher food in Providence was not without controversy, as evidenced by a series of editorials in the *Providence Jewish Herald* in the 1950s.<sup>53</sup>

But even if the Willard Avenue protest was an isolated incident, it still offers significant insight into Jewish community interactions. In particular, it highlights the tensions created within the community as it grappled with many of the most important issues of the era—economic regulation, public health, the role of women, the potential corruption of community authorities, and changes in religious and cultural values. The resolution of the boycott, even with its apparent contradictions, reveals a complex reconciliation of political, social, commercial and religious interests in a community undergoing change. The debate over the supervision and cost of kosher meat

in South Providence incorporated a *shtetl*-oriented conception of the communal right to earn a living (though not from the blood of one's fellow Jews), Socialist visions of economic and social reform, and capitalist values of competition and self-help. Despite calls for outside intervention, control of the kosher meat supply remained within the Jewish community. The rabbi and the butchers were criticized, but no great upheaval took place. And though women played a prominent part in the boycott's critique of community authorities, they did so in defense of their place within the traditional conception of Jewish womanhood. While the South Providence kosher meat boycott bore some similarity to other incidents of immigrant women's food activism, it provides a fascinating example of a particular community struggling with both internal pressures and external influences, and finally constructing a framework of its own.



Table 1: South Providence Butchers and Selected Boycott Participants.

<b>Butchers</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Shop</b>
Abraham Berlinsky	81 Gay	185 Willard
Barnet Berman	209 Willard	209 Willard
Jacob Diwinsky	Hartford, Connecticut	161 Willard
(Jeanette and Louis Diwinsky, clerk and driver)	282 Blackstone	
Barnet Feldman	218 Willard	210 Willard
Louis Fishman	35 Hilton	229 Willard
Morris Fishman	44 Robinson	44 Robinson
Isaac Forman	210 Willard	184 Willard
Simon Friedman	168 Willard	219 Willard
<b>Boycott Participants (Sample)</b>	<b>Home</b>	
Mrs. Bertha Barasch	22 Robinson	
Anne Drankoff, widow	62 Gay	
Samuel H. Ernstof	34 Bogman	
Benjamin Fine, shirtmaker	7 Robinson	

Hyman Haimsohn, tailor	62 Gay
Solomon Mendelson, tailor	180 Willard
Aaron R. Rosenthal, peddler	66 Bogman
Wolf Semonoff, tailor	21 Robinson
Barnet Weinbaum, bottler	10 Paca Place

*Table 2: Jewish Provisions Dealers in South Providence, 1909-1915.*

**1909**

Berlinsky, Abraham .....	185 Willard
Berman, Barnet .....	209 Willard
Diwinsky, Jacob .....	161 Willard
Feldman, Barnet .....	210 Willard
Fishman, Morris .....	44 Robinson
Friedman, S. ....	196 Willard

**1910**

Berlinsky, Abraham .....	185 Willard
Berman, Barnet . ....	209 Willard
Diwinsky, Jacob .....	161 Willard
Feldman, Barnet .....	210 Willard
Fishman, Louis .....	229 Willard
Fishman, Morris .....	44 Robinson
Forman, Isaac .....	184 Willard
Friedman, Simon .....	196 Willard

**1911**

Berlinsky, Abraham .....	185 Willard
Berman, Annie .....	209 Willard
Diwinsky, Jacob .....	83 Gay
Feldman, Barnet .....	210 Willard
Fishman, Morris .....	44 Robinson
Forman, Isaac .....	182 Willard
Friedman, Simon .....	196 Willard

Goldsman, Barnet ..... 71 Gay  
Hoffman, Samuel ..... 174 Willard  
Ostrow, William ..... 35 Robinson

**1912**

Astrov, William (Ostrow) ..... 35 Robinson  
Berlinsky, Abraham ..... 185 Willard  
Berman, Annie ..... 209 Willard  
Feldman, Barnet ..... 210 Willard  
Fishman, Morris ..... 44 Robinson  
Forman, Isaac ..... 182 Willard  
Friedman, Simon ..... 219 Willard  
Goldsman, Barnet ..... 71 Gay  
Hoffman, Samuel ..... 174 Willard

**1913**

Berlinsky, Abraham ..... 185 Willard  
Berman, Annie ..... 209 Willard  
Bernstein, Samuel ..... 73 Gay  
Feldman, Barnet ..... 210 Willard  
Fishman, Morris ..... 44 Robinson  
Forman, Isaac ..... 182 Willard  
Rosen, Sam ..... 191 Willard

**1914**

Berlinsky, Abraham ..... 185 Willard  
Berman, Annie ..... 209 Willard  
Bernstein, Samuel ..... 204 Willard  
Borenstein, Simon ..... 204 Willard  
Feldman, Barnet ..... 210 Willard  
Fishman, Morris ..... 44 Robinson  
Forman, Isaac ..... 182 Willard  
Friedman, Simon ..... 148 Willard

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Goldsmán, Barnet .....	84 Gay
Rosen, Sam .....	130 Chester
<b>1915</b>	
Berlinsky, Abraham .....	185 Willard
Berman, Annie .....	209 Willard
Bernstein, Samuel .....	204 Willard
Borenstein, Simon .....	204 Willard
Feldman, Barnet .....	245 Willard
Fishman, Morris .....	44 Robinson
Goldsmán, Barnet .....	73 Gay
Rosen, Sam .....	130 Chester

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Several scholars have produced informative works on kashrut observance in the United States and the impact of kosher food production on the American Jewish community. See Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Hasia Diner, *Hungering For America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). Harold Gastwirt's *Fraud, Corruption, and Holiness: The Controversy Over the Supervision of the Jewish Dietary Practice in New York, 1881-1940* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974) provides interesting insight into controversies over the supervision of kosher meat within Jewish communities in early Eastern Europe as well as the establishment of regulatory institutions in the United States. The difficulty of establishing communal authority over kashrut is substantially discussed in Jeremiah J. Berman, *Shehitah: A Study in the Cultural and Social Life of the Jewish People* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1941). Berman notes that Providence cantor-shohet Rev. Moses Cohen was replaced in 1859 by Rev. D. Kantrowitz, and that from 1877 to 1880, the rabbi, shohet, and mohel of Providence was Rabbi Ziskind Finesilver, Berman's grandfather.
- <sup>2</sup> For an insightful description and analysis of Jewish women's food protests in New York City see Paula E. Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest: the New York City Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902," *American Jewish History* 70, no. 1 (September 1980), 93-94, and Dana Frank, "Housewives, Socialists, and the Politics of Food: the 1917 New York Cost-of-Living Protests," *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 255-285.
- <sup>3</sup> "Meat Shops Closed by Women Raiders," *New York Times*, 10 April 1910, p. 1; "Kosher Butchers Now Refuse to Buy," *New York Times*, 11 April 1910, p. 18; "Women Still Bait Butchers," *New York Times*, 12 April 1910, p. 3; "Jews Getting Ready for Passover," *New York Times*, 18 April 1910, p. 6
- <sup>4</sup> "Kosher Meat Strikes in Three New England Cities," *Boston Jewish Advocate*, 30 June 1910. Similar protests occurred in Boston in 1912—see Marlene Rockmore, "The Kosher Meat Riots: A Study in the Process of Adaptation among Jewish Immigrant Housewives to Urban America, 1902-1917," Master's thesis, University of Massachu-

setts at Boston, 1980.

- <sup>5</sup> The Macaroni Riots have been discussed by several scholars of Providence history, including Joseph Sullivan, in *Marxists, Militants and Macaroni: The I.W.W. in Providence's Little Italy* (Kingston, RI: Rhode Island Labor History Society, 2000).
- <sup>6</sup> South Providence, Providence: Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-P-2, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, September 1978.
- <sup>7</sup> Bessie Edith Bloom, "Jewish Life in South Providence," Student paper written for Brown University in 1910. Published in *RIJHA Notes*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1970, 393.
- <sup>8</sup> "The Invasion of the Fifth Ward by Junkmen and Ragpickers," *The Providence Sunday Journal*, 24 August 1901, p. 17. This article records an interesting incident in which South Providence peddlers and their supporters organized a meeting and a petition against the ward alderman, John Nelson, who was accused of delaying the processing of peddling licenses and raising license fees.
- <sup>9</sup> Bloom, 391-393.
- <sup>10</sup> From an article entitled, "The Old Neighborhood," by Beatrice Levin in *The Providence Sunday Journal* 25 January 1948, quoted in Eleanor F. Horvitz, "Old Bottles, Rags, Junk! the Story of the Jews of South Providence," *RIJHA Notes* Vol. 7, No. 2, 1976, 248.
- <sup>11</sup> Horvitz, "Old Bottles," 247-48.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 248. (November 1994), 445.
- <sup>13</sup> Eleanor F. Horvitz, "Family Stores," *RIJHA Notes* Vol. 11, No. 4.
- <sup>14</sup> "Jewish Women Put Ban on Kosher Meat," *Providence Daily Journal*, 22 June 1910.
- <sup>15</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 22 June 1910.
- <sup>16</sup> "Jewish Women Here Picket Kosher Shops," *Providence Daily Journal*, 23 June 1910.
- <sup>17</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 23 June 1910. "Kosher Shop Pickets Still Stick to Jobs; Police Drive Crowd," *Evening Bulletin*, 24 June 1910.
- <sup>18</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 23 June 1910. "Kosher Butcher War Near End," *Providence Daily Journal*, 27 June 1910.
- <sup>19</sup> "Jewish Women Push Kosher Butcher War," *Providence Daily Journal*, 24 June 1910.
- <sup>20</sup> *Evening Bulletin*, 22 June 1910; *Providence Daily Journal*, 23, 27 June 1910.
- <sup>21</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 27 June 1910.
- <sup>22</sup> Molly Nyma Genensky, "Rabbi Israel Sesil Rubinstein," biography written by the rabbi's granddaughter, n.d., Papers of Rabbi Israel S. Rubinstein, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association Archives, Providence, Rhode Island.
- <sup>23</sup> *Evening Bulletin*, 24 June 1910.
- <sup>24</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 22 June 1910. *Harrington v. Bearman* (1910), RI Sixth District Court. Rhode Island State System, Sixth District Court Civil Docket, no. 17 April 1910. 55311.
- <sup>25</sup> Berman, 8.
- <sup>26</sup> *Evening Bulletin*, 22 June 1910.
- <sup>27</sup> "Pickets Employed by Jewish Women at Kosher Markets," *Evening Bulletin*, 23 June 1910.
- <sup>28</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 24 June 1910.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> "Kosher Meat War," *Boston Jewish Advocate*, 4 March 1910.
- <sup>32</sup> The Report of the Superintendent of Health for 1908 reported 564 inspection visits to

the forty-eight provisions dealers in the Fifth Ward for the year 1907, perhaps indicating an increase in municipal supervision of meat supplies.

- <sup>33</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 22 June 1910.
- <sup>34</sup> Edwin C. Brown, "Workmen's Circles and Jewish Labor Unions," *RIJHA Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1988), 161.
- <sup>35</sup> Ben Rabi, "Wine, Women, and Meat," *Jewish Advocate*, 28 January 1910.
- <sup>36</sup> Judith E. Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 156.
- <sup>37</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 22-24 June 1910.
- <sup>38</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 22 June 1910.
- <sup>39</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 22, 27 June 1910.
- <sup>40</sup> Brown, 159. Paul M. Buhle, "Jews in Rhode Island Labor: an Introductory Investigation," *RIJHA Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1988). 149. A thorough discussion of the Workmen's Circle and its role in developing a concept of secular, left-wing Judaism can be found in Judah Shapiro, *The Friendly Society: A History of the Workmen's Circle* (New York: Media Judaica, 1970).
- <sup>41</sup> Buhle, "Jews in Rhode Island Labor," 148-49.
- <sup>42</sup> Census data. The Thirteenth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1910. Information about Pavlow's involvement with the Socialist Party is from Horvitz, 258.
- <sup>43</sup> Robert Grieve, "Growth and Present Status of Socialism in Rhode Island," *Providence Sunday Journal*, 22 April 1906, p. 3.
- <sup>44</sup> Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, with assistance from Kenneth Libo (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), 288.
- <sup>45</sup> Frank, 263.
- <sup>46</sup> Evelyn Savidge Sterne. *Ballots and Bibles: Ethnic Politics and the Catholic Church in Providence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, forthcoming), Chapter 4.
- <sup>47</sup> *Jewish Advocate*, 1 July 1910.
- <sup>48</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 27 June 1910.
- <sup>49</sup> Beryl Segal, "Vaad Hakashruth of Providence, Rhode Island: Text of the Constitution and Bylaws with Annotations," *RIJHA Notes*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1973). 464.
- <sup>50</sup> Smith, 35-37.
- <sup>51</sup> Minute book, 1902-1906, South Providence Ladies' Aid Association, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. Yearbook, 1905-1906, Providence Council of Jewish Women, Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.
- <sup>52</sup> Interview with Joseph Sullivan, 17 April 2003.
- <sup>53</sup> *Providence Jewish Herald*, 30 May 1958, p. 9; 4 December 1959, p. 9; 18 December 1959, p. 9.

## The Brothers of Phi Epsilon Pi

by George Goodwin

*Historians sometimes act like detectives, piecing together fragmentary facts gathered from interviews and documents to form an intelligible picture. That picture may be incomplete when the records are incomplete, but it still can go a long way towards recreating a historical presence that would otherwise disappear. Dr. Goodwin, president of RIJHA, co-editor of the fiftieth anniversary anthology of the Association, and ace historical detective, has worked on many such puzzles, and here he concludes this issue's coverage of Jews in education by tracking down the membership of a short-lived Jewish fraternity at Brown University. Most of those members came from immigrant families, a fact that brings together once again the recurring themes of immigration and education. And many of the members became involved in the First World War, which also brings in the ever-present subject of wartime repercussions. One Phi Ep described here died in the army; his name is inscribed on Soldiers Gate on the Brown campus.*

Early in 2004, Brown University's Hillel Foundation dedicated a fabulous new home, the Glenn and Darcy Weiner Center. A cluster of historic and modern buildings, it provides 25,000 square feet for a vast array of religious, educational, and social activities. The new Weiner Center will surely attract many of Brown's 1,400 Jewish undergraduate and 300 graduate students. Jewish professors, a significant part of the Brown faculty, will also gather there. Who could have imagined, a century ago, such a bold and alluring Jewish presence atop College Hill? Hillel did not even acquire its first home, Rapaport House, until 1963.

After its founding as the College of Rhode Island in 1764, Brown had expanded only gradually. The original building in Providence, known since 1770 as the "College Edifice," did not become "University Hall" until 1822. The first Ph.D. was awarded in 1889, but a Graduate Department did not begin until 1903. The Women's College, known as Pembroke since 1928, was inaugurated in 1891.

Well into the twentieth century, Brown was still a diminutive institution, enrolling mostly Rhode Islanders. In 1914, for example, when the university celebrated its sesquicentennial, there were only 678 male undergraduates, 204 women undergraduates, and 102 graduate students. Of Brown's 7,749

alumni, 58% (or 4,510 men and women) were still living. As America's seventh oldest university, Brown surely enjoyed some comparison to Harvard and Yale,<sup>1</sup> but the term "Ivy League" was not used by sports enthusiasts until the 1930s, and the athletic conference was not formalized until 1945. Brown began to emerge as a national institution in 1937, when Henry Wriston assumed its presidency, but a more modern Brown did not evolve until after World War II.

What distinguished Brown from its New England neighbors and rivals was its Baptist patrimony. Until Wriston, all of Brown's presidents were Baptist ministers, as the charter required. Most were accomplished orators, who led the student body in daily prayers. Brown's Baptist heritage was reinforced by the fact that most of its presidents and many of its faculty were Brown graduates. Of course, many of the university's benefactors were Baptists, including its greatest, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Class of 1897. And the First Baptist Church in America has been used continually as the hallowed site of graduations.

Although Brown achieved cohesion in its high academic standards, therefore, it displayed shortcomings as a vehicle of religious, racial, and sexual integration. According to its charter, students of all denominations were welcome, but only Protestants could serve as trustees and faculty. Exceptions were made early in the twentieth century for rabbis of Congregation Israel and David (later known as Temple Beth-El), who occasionally taught Hebrew or Bible courses. The most important of these instructors was Henry Englander, who, having earned his doctorate at Brown in 1909, joined the faculty of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati a year later.<sup>2</sup> Not until the university's charter was amended in 1942 did the first Catholic and Jewish professors, Charles A. Lynch and Israel J. Kapstein, receive tenure.<sup>3</sup>

Brown was stratified in other ways too. Long before 1916, when the Bears battled the University of Washington in the Rose Bowl, athletics were extremely important. Those unable to play on varsity teams competed in freshmen or intramural leagues. Brown also had, besides its Christian Association, numerous clubs, including some for secondary school alumni. The Phillips Club included sons of Andover and Exeter, and others existed for Worcester Academy, Peddie in New Jersey, and Moses Brown. A public high school sending many graduates to Brown was Durfee in Fall River.

Judging from their portrayal in yearbooks, Brown's extracurricular life was dominated by gentile fraternities that dated from the 1830s. These

Greek-letter clans were followed by secret societies, which gradually disappeared (or were so secret as to become unrecognizable). By 1913, when Brown had twenty fraternities, it established an interfraternity council. Most fraternities owned and operated houses on College Hill. Members of national fraternities also participated in local social events.

Jewish participation in these groups was, of course, as sharply limited as was Jewish attendance at the University.

On the eve of World War I, Brown may have enrolled only a few dozen Jewish students. There is no precise way of knowing because, whether or not applicants were asked to identify their religion, the forms no longer exist, and freshmen registration forms asked nothing about religion. It is possible, however, to look for Jewish-sounding names on class rosters and to compile a list of individuals excluded from fraternities.

Jews were not the only students at Brown to be denied access to fraternities and other social organizations. Catholic students were also kept at a distance. In 1889, therefore, thirteen of Brown's fifteen Catholics formed Phi Kappa Sigma. This fraternity faded by 1929, ten years after the Dominican Fathers opened Providence College.<sup>4</sup> The scarcity of Catholics at Brown must have been quite obvious, given the fact that by 1905 Rhode Island became the first state with a Catholic majority.<sup>5</sup>

But perhaps the loneliest students atop College Hill were blacks. The first to graduate was Furman Page in 1877. Probably the best known was Fritz Pollard, who played running back on the 1916 Rose Bowl team. There were never many black students, so a black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, did not appear until 1921.

### **A Riddle**

America's Jewish historians are constantly searching for Jewish pioneers, be they Columbus' shipmates or the first merchants on Main Street. Accordingly, there have been numerous articles in the *Notes* regarding Brown's early Jewish benefactors, students, and professors.<sup>6</sup> In the 1981 issue of the journal, Eleanor F. Horvitz and Benton H. Rosen published a history of Brown's Jewish fraternities.<sup>7</sup> (The story of Alpha Epsilon Pi at the University of Rhode Island has not yet been told.) They traced the emergence and decline of the Menorah Society, Phi Epsilon Pi, Phi Lambda Phi, and Tower Club, leading up to the creation of Brown Hillel in 1947. Among several photos, Horvitz and Rosen published a group portrait, which they

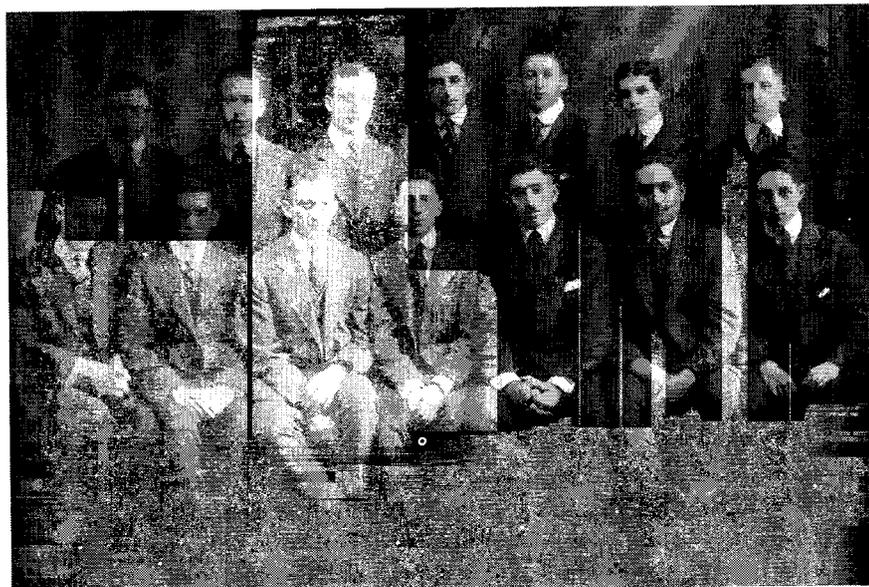
identified as the Menorah Society of 1916.

In the winter of 2003, while examining the Association's archives, I came across a second copy of the same photo, labeled "Phi Epsilon Pi, 1916-17." Many men were identified on the back of both photos, and it appeared that the handwriting on both photos was the same. Determined not only to clarify which group these photos portrayed, I wanted to properly identify all of the individuals, particularly three unknown men in the Phi Ep photo. In fact, I sought to look at Brown's first Jewish fraternity in a new light, made possible in 1981 by the reorganization of the Brown Archives in the Hay Library and the publication of Martha Mitchell's authoritative book, *Encyclopedia Brunoniana*, in 1993.<sup>8</sup> Ms. Mitchell, Brown's amazing and witty archivist, was available to guide my research.

I looked at Brown's first Jewish fraternity from a personal perspective. My maternal grandfather, George Washington Rosenthal, had discussed with me his experiences as an undergraduate at Cornell University, Class of 1913. My father, Eugene, a U.C.L.A. graduate of 1935, had planned on joining a fraternity but could not afford its dues. Yet one of my most cherished heirlooms is his Zeta Beta Tau pledge paddle, which was carved by his father, Isadore. In 1966, as a freshman at Lake Forest College, a Presbyterian-sponsored liberal arts school in Illinois, I was persuaded by a close friend to participate in fraternity rush. I was invited to pledge by Tau Kappa Epsilon, which though not a Jewish fraternity had far more Jews than any other frat. It also had three blacks in my pledge class, when most fraternities had none.

As a Master's degree student at Columbia University, I felt stranded living with other graduate students on the top floor of John Jay Hall. In 1971, when I went to Stanford to earn my doctorate, I could not find a place to live, so I became a social affiliate of Phi Delta Theta, where I happily resided for two-and-a-half years. I enjoyed the amenities and antics of fraternity life so much that one summer, when required to take courses, I resided in still another fraternity house, Theta Xi. As with Phi Delt, there were hardly any Jews. As one who has benefited from college fraternities, then, I look at the history of Brown's Jewish fraternities with some personal experience.

The photograph published in the 1981 issue of the *Notes* could not have been Brown's Menorah Society; I believe it showed rather the brothers of Phi Epsilon Pi. Though the Society was first mentioned in the Brown yearbook of 1915, the first photo did not appear until 1918 (it included only



*Phi Epsilon Pi Fraternity, Brown University, 1916. Front row, left to right: Daniel Robinson, Abraham J. Burt, Isaac Y. Olch, Herman M. Feinstein, Jacob Rosenberg, Maurice Adelman, Herman M. Davis. Back row, left to right: Maurice Bazar, Arthur J. Levy, Samuel I. Silverman, Charles Bolotow, George Lubinsky, Walter Adler, Joseph Cohen.*

the seven members of the executive committee rather than the entire membership of thirty-one). Some of the confusion over identifying the group photo seen in the *Notes* results from the fact that most members of Phi Epsilon Pi also belonged to the Menorah Society. Indeed, some individuals were officers of both national organizations. Unfortunately, the Brown chapter of Phi Ep left no records, and photos of it never appeared in Brown yearbooks.

Given the relative success of the Menorah Society, the question must be asked why Phi Epsilon Pi ever existed. There are several plausible explanations. First, the Menorah Society, which was founded at Harvard in 1906, was essentially a cultural group devoted to educational and literary endeavors but not offering religious services. Second, having been excluded from Brown's powerful fraternity system, Jewish students needed their own Greek-letter organization (which never, however, provided meals or housing). Third, like most fraternity men, the brothers of Phi Epsilon Pi probably

felt some sense of superiority over fellow members of the Menorah Society. Perhaps members of Phi Ep saw themselves as a Jewish elite, in some sense perpetuating differences between America's Sephardic, German, and Ashkenazic settlers. Yet, unlike Harvard or Yale, Brown had virtually no Jews from previous waves of immigration, so Phi Ep's sense of exclusivity seems today rather ludicrous.

Why the fraternity disappeared after 1919 is fairly clear. Phi Epsilon Pi was never sanctioned by Brown's administration. It probably enjoyed few charismatic leaders, and four of the six frat members in the Class of 1919 left Brown by 1918. The Menorah Society, on the other hand, continued to grow, reaching its apex in 1928 with forty-two members. The Brown Archives preserved the Society's ledger, a copy of which exists in our Association's archives. This ledger, whose entries begin in December, 1914 and conclude in 1930, shows a steadily expanding organization.

While illustrating social trends, Brown's Jewish (and gentile) fraternities also provide shadowy glimpses of individuals. Who in particular was drawn to Phi Epsilon Pi? What did each brother do after Brown? Who contributed to Jewish life? Beyond recollections by friends and family, who deserves to be remembered? Most of the fourteen brothers of Phi Ep, who belonged to the Classes of 1916 through 1919, departed this earth in the 1970s and '60s. Walter Adler, who passed away in 1991, was the only member I was able to meet. Consequently, most of my information is derived from the Brown archives, where a biographical file exists for every graduate and non-graduate. While some files have only snippets of information, others contain freshmen registration forms, questionnaires for alumni directories, newspaper clippings, letters, and obituaries. There are no records of financial gifts. University publications abound, but there are more dissertations about ancient Egypt than about Brown.

The best way to profile the brothers of Phi Epsilon Pi is to divide them into two groups: the ten who graduated and the four who did not. Within these groups, I will approach each fraternity member alphabetically within his class.

#### **Adelman**

Maurice Adelman, Class of 1916, was born in Providence on Christmas Day, 1895, the son of William and Bessy Greenberg Adelman. When he registered as a freshman, his family lived at 165 Camp Street, near the North End. According to an obituary in 1939, William had resided in Providence

for fifty years. He had operated clothing and dry goods stores in Olneyville and Pawtucket and had been a president of Providence's Hebrew Free Loan Association. His funeral was held at Temple Emanu-El.

Maurice "prepared" at Hope High School. In 1920, following his graduation from Brown, he earned a medical degree at Harvard. For a period during World War I, he served as a hospital apprentice in the naval reserve. After interning at Boston Children's Hospital, Maurice became an assistant superintendent at Infants' Hospital in Providence. Thereafter, he practiced pediatrics at 224 Thayer Street and, before his retirement in 1980, maintained an office in Narragansett. For thirty-five years he was also medical director of the Visiting Nurses Association. One classmate, perhaps envious, described him to a Brown development officer as "tremendously wealthy."

In 1929, Maurice married Eleanor Goldowsky, a native of Somerville, Massachusetts. She was, of course, the sister of Seebert J. Goldowsky, our Association's leader and longtime editor. Seebert (Brown Class of 1928), followed in Maurice's footsteps to Harvard Medical School and graduated in 1932. Seebert's younger sister, Beatrice, who never married, ran Maurice's office when it relocated to 209 Angell Street.

Maurice was not drawn to Jewish worship, but his youthful *davening* skills were evident decades later when he attended a memorial service for an infant patient. The pediatrician passed away in 1982 and was buried in the Beth-El cemetery. Both his son and daughter lived near New York City.

#### Burt

Born in Russia in 1893, Abraham Jacob Burt was an older member of the Class of 1916. His parents were Boris Raphael and Olga Yaroshevitch Burt, who, at the time of his freshman registration, resided at 35 Howell Street in the North End. Boris was a peddler. Abraham's training at Classical High School was pivotal, for in his senior year at Brown he won honors in Roman literature and history as well as a Francis Wayland scholarship. One of the most accomplished members of Phi Ep, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa his junior year.

As early as 1919, Abraham was living in New York City. In 1927 he earned a Master's at Columbia and began his teaching career. He taught at the Bronx High School of Science, Hamilton High School in Brooklyn, and at the Young Men's Hebrew Association in Manhattan. Following his

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retirement in 1956, Abraham lived in Woodstock, New York. Having relocated to Phoenix in 1958, he played the Earl of Worcester in a production of *Henry IV*; there's a program in his file.

Abraham moved to Palo Alto and died in Berkeley, California, in 1967. His survivors included his wife, Frances, and two sons.

### **Davis**

Herman Mantell Davis, also Brown 1916, was born in Providence in 1894. He was the son of John and Sima Zisman Davis and studied at Hope High School. At the time of his freshman registration, the family resided at 39 Quaid Street in the North End.

A talented student, Herman was presented with the Class of 1873 Prize and the Peace Society Prize upon his graduation. In 1916 he also earned a Master's degree in chemistry. In January, 1918 he enlisted in the army's chemical warfare service, where he conducted research on poison gases. In February, 1919, he was discharged as a sergeant. He became commander of Rhode Island's Jewish War Veterans and vice commander of the national organization.

Herman operated Providence Chemical Laboratories at 51 Empire Street before relocating to Boston's North Shore. He managed a chemical supply company in Lynn and then worked for the American Finish and Chemical Company, which served the shoe and leather industries.

While residing in Marblehead, Herman was active in numerous Jewish organizations. He was a member of the Masons' Mt. Sinai lodge and was president of the men's club at Temple Beth-El, both in Lynn. An avid golfer, he was president of Salem's Kernwood Country Club. He was among thirty-seven classmates who celebrated the 50th anniversary of their Brown graduation at Rhode Island Country Club. Herman was also active in the North Shore and Boston Brown Clubs.

Married to Fannie Paster in 1921, he had a daughter who died in infancy and a son who joined him in business. Herman passed away in 1990 at ninety-five years of age.

### **Feinstein**

The son of Jacob and Ida Sergy Feinstein, Herman M. Feinstein was born in Providence in 1894. While residing at 106 Olney Street, he attended Hope High School (when it stood on the east side of Hope Street). Following his graduation from Brown in 1916, he worked for his father, who sold

leather goods at 122 North Main Street. Herman tried numerous business ventures, including shoe machinery and vending machines. Beginning in 1945, he managed Pawtucket's Roger Williams Hotel for nearly a quarter-century. Thereafter he served as a real estate broker and factotum. In 1980 he reluctantly accepted retirement when nobody would hire him.

"Hy" Feinstein's claim to fame was his passion for Brown athletics. Growing up on Olney Street, he sneaked into Brown games at Andrews Field. Though never a competitor, he attended hundreds and hundreds of football and hockey games, both at home and away. "Hy" was rumored to have set a university record for attending such events.<sup>9</sup> In 1986 he received Brown's Loyalty Award.

Though not the last surviving member of his class, "Hy" was the only one healthy enough to attend its seventieth reunion. Eager to celebrate this milestone, he hosted a cocktail party at the Brown Refectory for seniors on the football and hockey teams and their parents. The printed invitation stated: "Not having any classmates available, you are invited to honor my Class of 1916 and share with me my 70th reunion."

In December, 1986, "Hy" sponsored the first annual meeting of the Scorpions Club. This was a luncheon for five of his contemporaries, including Walter Adler, Class of 1918; Spencer Koch, Class of 1922; and Leo Rosten, Class of 1922. Dare we call this a mini-fraternity?

A year later, when "Hy" reached ninety-three, the Lions Club of Pawtucket threw a party for its oldest member. He speculated that he could have been the oldest Lion in the country. A key to his longevity was giving up smoking thirty years earlier. He also explained that a gin at lunch and a bourbon at dinner did no harm.

"Hy" married Marion Colitz in 1927, and they had two sons. As a widower living at the Regency, he dated a much younger woman, Marian Tenenbaum (Pembroke 1933). "Hy" passed away in 1988 at nearly ninety-four years of age. One of his survivors was a nephew, Governor Bruce Sundlun.

### **Rosenberg**

The fifth member of the Class of 1916 who belonged to Phi Epsilon Pi was Jacob Rosenberg, who died when his adult life had barely begun. Born in Fall River in 1894, he was the son of Philip, a peddler, and Ida Sachs Rosenberg. While a student at Durfee High School, he participated in debate

and public speaking. At his Brown graduation he was presented with the Class of 1880 Prize for his essay on a question of importance to the university.

Jacob studied law at Georgetown University before entering the army at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, in November, 1917. In April he was promoted to sergeant; in May he was selected for officers training school at Camp Lee. In September, 1918, commissioned a second lieutenant, he returned to Fort Devens. He died there on September 21, a victim of pneumonia. That year Maurice C. Adelman wrote to President Faunce of Brown, pointing out that his classmate had been omitted from a Providence newspaper article about Brown graduates who lost their lives in the war.<sup>10</sup>

On April 6, 1921, on the fourth anniversary of America's entry into World War I, President Faunce dedicated Soldiers Gate at the east end of campus. He proclaimed: "These are our honored dead who cannot die." Jacob's name is surrounded by forty-one other Brown students and one professor who made the ultimate sacrifice. Twenty-eight soldiers died in France, two in England, and thirteen on American soil.

Jacob exemplified a Brown song, "I'm a Brown Man Born," popularized around 1903. Its first verse reads: "I'm a Brown man born, I'm a Brown man bred, And when I die, I'm a Brown man dead."

A second Jewish name is found on Soldiers Gate, which resembles a triumphal arch. This belonged to Abraham W. Sidkowsky, who entered Brown with the Class of 1916. He belonged to the Menorah Society but not Phi Ep. Born in Providence in 1894, he was the son of Israel Leib and Gussie Juren Sidkowsky and attended Classical High. He left Brown after his junior year to begin medical school at Georgetown. An x-ray specialist in the army medical corps, he was sent to France in February, 1918 with Evacuation Hospital 5. He was ill for only two days in December before his death from meningitis. His comrades reported that he was the only patient lost by the hospital. Abraham was given a Jewish burial in Rosendale, a village east of Dunkirk.

### **Olch**

Only one member of the Class of 1917 belonged to Phi Epsilon Pi. This was Isaac Yale Olch, often confused with his younger brother, Isaiah, who entered with the Class of 1920. A third Olch brother, Benedict, was in the Class of 1915, but a fourth brother, Jacob, did not attend Brown.

Born in Providence in 1896, Isaac was the son of Max and Dora Shore Olch. While studying at Classical High, he lived with his widowed mother at 306 Dudley Street in South Providence. At his Brown graduation Isaac was presented with the Society of Colonial Dames Prize for the best essay on colonial American history.

Benedict Olch attended Harvard Medical School, and Isaac chose Johns Hopkins. During the World War, he served as a hospital apprentice in the navy. Thereafter, Isaac lived in St. Louis, where he was a resident at the Barnes Hospital and an assistant professor of surgery at Washington University. Between 1933 and 1934 he was a research associate at the Radium Institute in Paris. By 1949 he was an assistant professor of surgery at the University of Southern California and conducted a private surgical practice in Los Angeles.

Isaac died in 1985. He was the only member of Phi Epsilon Pi known to have been divorced. His survivors included his second wife and two sons.

A few words should be said about Isaiah Olch, Isaac's brother, who entered Brown with the Class of 1920 but never joined Phi Ep. Having received an appointment from Senator Peter Gerry to the U.S. Naval Academy, "Cy" left Brown after his sophomore year. Following his graduation from Annapolis in 1922, he served four years on the *U.S.S. Pittsburgh*, the flagship of the European fleet. In 1929 "Cy" received a Master of Science degree in radio engineering from Yale, which enabled him to assume command of naval radio stations in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. He later commanded the *U.S.S. Stack*, which, during the early years of World War II, searched for enemy submarines near Argentina and Iceland.

A classmate from Annapolis who served with "Cy" under the commander-in-chief of the Atlantic fleet was Admiral Edward Durgin. In 1956, when Durgin was appointed a dean at Brown, "Cy" told university officials that his friend was "the finest gentleman who ever wore Navy blue." "Don't get into a game of checkers with him," he added, "he'll take you every time."

Perhaps the most remarkable story about Isaiah Olch was his marriage in 1924 to Princess Ileana Nicolaevna Shahavskaya-Shillenkoff, who, following her graduation from the Institute for the Daughters of Nobility, was presented to the Czar's court in St. Petersburg. The couple met in Istanbul and again in Nice, when she was stateless and he was an ensign on the *Pittsburgh*. She came to America in 1926, but the Olchs retired to the

Promenade des Anglais in Nice. After her death, "Cy" continued to live on the Riviera with his second wife, Marie. He retired from the navy as a captain in 1952, died in 1985, and was buried at sea.

### **Adler**

Given his deep attachment to Brown, including his lifelong tenure as secretary of the Class of 1918, Walter Adler must have had an extensive dossier in the university archives. But the surviving biographical file is skimpy. Fortunately, I obtained copious amounts of information when I interviewed him on two occasions in November, 1988.

Walter's maternal grandfather, David Pulver, emigrated from the outskirts of Vienna to Providence around 1895. Walter's father, Joseph, arrived two years later. Given his relatively affluent background, however, he could not bear to start anew as a peddler, so he returned home within three months. When his wife, Rose, saw his face from her kitchen window, she fainted. But Joseph was persuaded to return to Providence, and in 1899 his family arrived. Walter, the middle son, was about two-and-one-half years of age. Only he would receive a collegiate education.

David Pulver had opened a grocery store at 331 North Main Street, so Joseph did the same at 11 Olney Street. Rose was the bookkeeper. The family lived upstairs, and "Jim," a horse, was stabled out back. The Feiner, Feinstein, and Sundlun families were good customers and close friends. Philip Feiner entered Brown with the Class of 1915; "Hy" Feinstein, from the Class of 1916, became Walter's closest, lifelong "chum."

Beginning in 1910 "Wally" and several Jewish friends belonged to the Boy Scouts of Rhode Island, a forerunner of the national organization. He maintained a lifelong interest in scouting, ultimately achieving its highest honor, the Silver Beaver.

Throughout his youth, "Wally" stood at the head of his class, and not merely because of alphabetical order. Perhaps endowed with Rose's gifts, he excelled at Benefit Street Primary School and Doyle Avenue Grammar School as well as Hebrew school at Ahavath Sholom ("the Howell Street shul"), which he attended five afternoons a week and on Sunday mornings. Fluent in Yiddish, the prodigy wrote to relatives in the old country. Decades later Walter surprised Rabbi William Braude of Temple Beth-El by demonstrating that he could read a Yiddish newspaper when it was placed upside down.

Though Walter never thought of himself as poor, he discovered that many wealthy children from the East Side were his classmates at Hope High. From his senior class of about 125, only six matriculated at Brown. Walter was able to enroll by having won two scholarships: the second-place President's Premium in Latin and the Caesar Misch Premium in German.<sup>11</sup> Walter accurately recalled that tuition was about \$150 a year. (It reached \$175 his senior year.) He could never have afforded to live in a dormitory, where rooms rented from \$110 to \$375 per year. Unable to afford the cable-car's two-cent fare, he walked briskly to and from the family home on Olney Street. Keep in mind that Brown students were required to wear sport coats, ties, and vests. During his senior year he indulged the luxury of sharing a "day room," number 52 in University Hall.

Though he found time to play second base his freshman year, Walter labored incessantly. For example, on Thursday nights and Saturdays he worked in his parents' grocery. He worked as a tutor, a city poll tax collector, an examiner of deeds, and a furnace feeder in Brown dormitories. The last job was considered highly desirable because its weekly pay of \$5 would cover most meals. Perhaps one of Walter's easiest jobs was monitoring daily chapel attendance in Sayles Hall. Freshmen were allowed only twelve "cuts," but he tried to look the other way.

Walter thought that there were perhaps eight Jews in his class, five from Providence. Jews were allowed to miss classes during the High Holy Days without asking the dean's permission. If anti-Semitism existed, Walter chose not to complain about it. One incident did stand out in his memory, however. Freshmen, who were required to wear beanies, were permitted to walk only on the north side of College Street (below the new Hay Library donated by Andrew Carnegie). One student, "a radical from New York," failed to heed a warning. After the second violation, during the dead of winter, he was soaked under the pump behind Manning Hall. This boy, a Jew, immediately left Brown.

Walter remembered serving as president of Phi Epsilon Pi his senior year. Perhaps he never lost interest, for in 1925, on his way to Florida on business, he briefly stopped in Atlantic City to attend the fraternity's convention. Walter served simultaneously as president of the Menorah Society, which, he recalled, was "glad to have anybody." In 1917 he attended its convention in New York City. Its national president was none other than Louis I. Newman, Brown Class of 1913, whose family lived on

Henry Avenue in South Providence.<sup>12</sup>

Already a politician, Walter was also president of the Hill Club, a short-lived group of non-fraternity members. His profile in the 1918 Brown yearbook reads: "Walt is just about as important around this campus as they make 'em, and what's more he is ready to let you know all about it."

At graduation Walter won honors in Roman literature and history, romance languages and literatures, and social and political sciences. For twenty-five cents, he was able to purchase a second-hand Phi Beta Kappa key. He placed second in the Hicks Prize for Excellence in Debate (worth \$20), and he won the Lucius Lyon Premium in Latin (worth \$250). During my interview, he recited from memory some Latin verse. Walter recalled that fifteen minutes after receiving his Bachelor's degree, he received a Master's in Latin. The next day, he realized, was the first day in his life that he had nothing to do.

The Class of 1918 entered Brown with 196 students. About one-third graduated on time and others after the war. In the 1918 yearbook, sixty classmates were listed "in service." There were 161 underclassmen also in the military. Officers' training was not required, but it enrolled about 300 students. (One was an Adler cousin, Harold Pulver, who entered with the Class of 1921.) Walter took a course in military tactics and learned to march on Lincoln Field (on the lower campus behind Sayles Hall). He registered for the draft but hoped to find a place in officers candidate school. By the time he was called up the war had ended, so he served only a few months.

Throughout his life Walter was considered an affable and clever fellow—in today's parlance, a master "networker." In 1918, through George Heidt, a brilliant Brown classmate and president of the Christian Association, he obtained an accounting assistantship at Gorham Silver in East Providence. This was highly classified work related to weapons production. Having earned a \$250 bonus and having saved his Latin prize premium, Walter enrolled at Harvard Business School in 1919. By the following year, however, he entered Harvard Law School.

Walter's parents had encouraged him to become a physician, but Brown laboratory dissections made him nauseous. Based largely on his love of public speaking, Walter had decided his freshman year to become a lawyer. At Harvard Law he felt no tinge of anti-Semitism. Indeed, all of his roommates in Perkins Hall were Catholics.

After graduating from Harvard in 1923, Walter returned to Providence to hang up a shingle in the Hospital Trust Building, where he remained most of his career. Eager to be his own boss, he began to develop a general practice. He married Celia Ernstof, Pembroke 1925, whom he had met years earlier and then again at Temple Beth-El. Her father, Jacob, owned a chain of women's stores and was a successful real estate investor. Walter may have been the only Phi Ep brother to wed a Pembroke alumna.

In 1928, through contacts with a Brown and Harvard Law classmate, he was elected assistant city solicitor in charge of criminal prosecutions by the city council. While prosecuting bootleggers, he also devised the city's first parking regulations, which, hard to believe, became a national model. Three years later Walter soon resumed his private practice, sharing office space with two more Brown and Harvard Law classmates.

In March, 1942, despite having three young children, Walter reactivated his commission in the army reserves. Given his experience in business and law, Major Adler was sent to the University of Michigan to study the War Department's support of industry. Then, as a lieutenant colonel and dean, he headed the Army Industrial College in Washington, D.C. In 1988 he was still carrying his military identification card in his wallet.

After the war, Walter sought elective office, running unsuccessfully as a Republican for attorney general.<sup>13</sup> He considered himself a liberal, but explained that only "tough guys," like Irish and Italians, were Democrats. He wanted to be among the elite.

Walter returned to private practice and in 1960 somewhat reluctantly formed a partnership with two younger attorneys, Bernard Pollock and William Sheehan. This firm became the third largest in Rhode Island. Today it is the only business bearing a Phi Ep's name.

Endowed with enormous energy and enthusiasm, Walter Adler was active for decades in many Jewish and civic causes. He was president of Temple Beth-El, the Legal Aid Society of Rhode Island, Rhode Island Camps, and Big Brothers of Rhode Island. Needless to say, he served many years as a tophatted marshal at Brown commencements and was president of the Harvard Law School Association of Rhode Island. He was small only in physical stature.

#### **Silverman**

Samuel I. Silverman, Class of 1918, was born in Providence in 1896. He

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was the son of Pincus, a peddler, and Malka Ross Silverman. When he registered at Brown, the family resided at 12 Princeton Avenue in South Providence. He lived at 14 Princeton almost his entire life. A portrait in the 1918 yearbook noted: "He is a member of that select group who let their swimming tests go until the last of their senior year and have been splashing helplessly around the pool for two or three hours a day since mid-year." By 1928, having passed the Rhode Island bar, he practiced law in the Grosvenor and the Turk's Head Buildings. He never married. When Samuel passed away in 1977, donations were requested for the Jewish Home for the Aged.

#### **Bazar**

Born in Providence in 1896, Maurice Bazar, Class of 1919, was the son of Abraham, a junk dealer and ticket agent, and Fanny Heller Bazar. They resided at 24 Mt. Vernon Street in South Providence, and Maurice attended English High School, adjacent to Classical High. His portrait in the 1919 yearbook notes that he would appear to be "the class philosopher" and "could be seen at the John Hay any time of day or night." After graduation from Brown he went into his father's paper stock business, later known as A. Bazar & Son, in which he remained more than fifty years. Even after his move to Palm Beach around 1976, he continued to sell paper mill supplies on a part-time basis.

In 1925 he married Marjorie Silverstein of Charlotte, North Carolina. While living on the East Side, he was active in the Masons, Shriners, and Temple Beth-El. In the years before his death in 1988, at 92 years of age, Maurice lived in Charlotte, near his daughter's home. He was a member of Temple Israel there.

#### **Lubinsky**

Another member of Phi Epsilon Pi about whom very little is known is George Lubinsky, Class of 1919. A center fielder at Brown, he later played ball on an American Legion team and coached Pony League in Fall River. He earned a living as an automobile salesman. When George died in 1955, he left no survivors. Services were held at Fall River's Union Street shul.

#### **Bolotow**

Charles Bolotow was one of four members of Phi Ep, all entering with the Class of 1919, who did not graduate. Born in Providence in 1898, he was the son of Louis and Fannie Greenberg Bolotow and attended Central Falls High School. It is not known whether he left Brown in 1918 to serve in the

military, but by 1919 he was a part owner of Sterling Coal Company at 628 South Main. By 1923 he was working with his father in a dry goods store at 382 Wickenden Street. He was married around 1930 and later owned Star Restaurant Equipment at 222 North Main. By 1967 he had moved to Miami Beach and passed away in 1982.

Charles' response to an alumni questionnaire shows that he had four cousins at Brown. The oldest, Maurice Adleman, belonged to Phi Epsilon Pi. The others were Samuel Temkin, Class of 1919; Louis J. Bolotow, Class of 1920; and Jacob Temkin, Class of 1926.

### **Cohen**

Joseph Cohen, who was born in Fall River in 1894, was one of the few former members of Phi Epsilon Pi who listed his fraternity membership in alumni questionnaires. His parents were Louis and Fannie Solmer Cohen, and he attended Somerset High School. He left Brown after his sophomore year to enter the navy. Though not a graduate of the Naval Academy, he may have trained at Annapolis. After the war he returned to college, possibly Brown, but did not earn a degree.

As a boy Joseph had helped his father, a former butcher, gather junk with a pushcart. By 1930 he and his brothers, Lester and Robert, began General Scrap Iron and Metals Company in Providence and Fall River. Later known as Promet Corporation, Joseph was its president for more than forty years. From a small junkyard it became one of the largest exporters of steel on the East Coast. Particularly interested in the engineering problems of demolition, he became a creative wrecker, who developed various pieces of equipment. On one Sunday during World War II, Joseph sponsored a public collection of scrap metal. Hoping to obtain 1,500 tons, he collected ten times that amount.

A newspaper article in 1950 described Joseph as "a master of mountains of junk," who was never "elated" nor "depressed." In 1968 he was proud of the fact that Promet employed more than one-third of local longshoremen and that more than one-third of cargo shipped out of Providence came from his yards. At that time he swapped Promet's land at India Point for property at Fields Point so the city could build India Point Park. Joseph donated \$1,000 toward the fundraising campaign chaired by John Nicholas Brown. In 1969 Promet was sold to a Pittsburgh firm. The business established in 1974 on the Providence waterfront by Joseph's nephews, David and Joel

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Cohen, is also named Promet but services and repairs ships.

Joseph and his wife, Ethel, moved to Providence in 1934, following the birth of their son. The family belonged to Beth-El. When the Leonardo of junk died in 1980, he was buried besides his parents at Mt. Nebo Cemetery in Taunton.

### Levy

Arthur Joseph Levy, another member of Phi Epsilon Pi who entered Brown with the Class of 1919, was born in New York City in 1897. He was the son of Jules and Sophie Stern Levy and graduated from Pawtucket High School.

At Brown he competed on the track team and was a debater. At the end of his sophomore year, Arthur won the Class of 1880 Prize for an oral presentation on a question of importance to the university. He also won the Menorah Prize for the best essay on sources of Jewish immigration. Nevertheless, he left Brown to become a sports editor of the *Providence Tribune*, where he remained a year.

In 1920 Levy graduated from Boston University Law School. He returned to Providence, where he practiced law for fifty years. He began with Lyman & McDonnell, T. F. McDonnell being a Brown graduate of 1891. In 1928 Levy helped establish Atwood, Remington, Thomas & Levy, a partnership that lasted twenty years. Later, he belonged to prominent firms such as Levy, Carroll & Jacobs, and Levy, Goodman, Semonoff & Gorin. Between 1950 and 1951 Arthur was president of the Rhode Island Bar Association, the first Jew to hold that office.<sup>14</sup> During the following two years he was the founding editor of its monthly publication, *Rhode Island Bar Journal*.

In 1933 he and his bride, Harriet Dimond, cruised to Havana and Nassau. At one time the couple lived in Edgewood, where he was a member of its yacht club. They had no children.

Like Walter Adler, Arthur devoted enormous amounts of time and energy to philanthropic causes. From 1929 to 1939 he was the founding president of the Jewish Family and Welfare Service. He served on numerous other boards, such as Rhode Island Child Service, the Cranston Community Foundation, the Providence Central Relief Committee, the Providence Council of Social Agencies, the General Jewish Community, the Jewish Community Center, and the Miriam Hospital. He was a founder of the Rhode

Island Jewish Historical Association.

A member of Beth-El since the 1920s, Arthur was president of its men's club. More importantly, he chaired the Temple's building plans committee, which selected Percival Goodman to design the modern facility dedicated on Orchard Avenue in 1954. In 1946 the committee had met in Arthur's office to interview the great German-Jewish architect, Eric Mendelsohn, who was the most likely candidate.

In 1969 Arthur and eighteen Brown men gathered for their fiftieth class reunion. He was elected class secretary and died three years later.

### **Robinson**

Born in Providence in 1893, Daniel Robinson was the son of Jacob and Bertha Schwenberg Robinson, who lived at 78 Charles Street in the North End. He attended Technical High School. A year after entering Brown, he enlisted in the national guard but was not called up. After his sophomore year, Daniel re-enlisted and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the artillery. He was discharged again by the end of 1918; injured in the war, he became a member of the Disabled American Veterans.

Daniel held jobs as a draftsman, salesman, and credit manager. In 1922 he married Rena Ernstof, whom Walter Adler had dated and whose younger sister, Celia, he married. Daniel became president and treasurer of R. E. Robinson Company at 129 North Main Street, retiring in 1960. A resident of the East Side, he belonged to Temple Beth-El and was an arts enthusiast. When Daniel passed away in 1975, he was survived by his wife and son.

### **"A Brown Man Born"**

The information found in the Brown archives about the brothers of Phi Epsilon Pi is, at best, fragmentary. Sadly, for many men, it may be all that exists. Looking back over their lives, without being unduly judgmental, can we ask what they shared and what bound them together? Conversely, was membership in Phi Ep merely a happy but fleeting coincidence, which ultimately meant quite little? If fun and rewarding, the fraternity need not have served any larger purpose. Nonetheless, an examination of Phi Epsilon Pi highlights Jewish experiences at Brown, all of which later seemed precious.

If membership in Phi Ep was in some sense a random experience, so too was growing up in greater Providence or Fall River. Though immigrant parents could have settled in any number of places, Jews were drawn

primarily to urban centers. Beyond the City College of New York, perhaps the greatest opportunities for higher education existed in the Midwest and West with their abundance of landgrant institutions.

Within New England, Rhode Island was hardly exceptional for having a historic university. Yet it was located in the state's only metropolis, and Jewish neighborhoods were close by. Brown was also different because of its Baptist heritage, which seemed relatively tolerant. While many young Jewish men were bright and hard-working, it is difficult to imagine that they were recruited merely to satisfy an academic quota. Without scholarships, however, many brothers of Phi Ep would never have attended college. Their first fall days on College Hill must have been joyous. Dreams seemed real, horizons limitless.

The ten Phi Ep members who earned degrees accomplished something truly important. Having survived a demanding course of study, they became broadly educated. Indeed, they joined an intellectual elite. By bestowing prizes, Masters' degrees, and Phi Beta Kappa keys, Brown recognized these Jewish accomplishments. For the smartest or most driven men, Brown provided the steppingstones for advancement in medicine, law, and teaching. Yet did a Brown degree make Walter Adler more successful than Arthur Levy? I would say that their achievements were comparable.

It can be concluded that a Brown degree did not necessarily lead to professional success. Some Jewish graduates may not have risen much higher than their fathers. Indeed, many Phi Ep brothers went to work for their fathers. They struggled in small businesses and in fading industries, where a liberal education meant little to clients. Perhaps Phi Ep's most successful businessman was Joseph Cohen, who graduated from the school of risk-taking, good luck, and perseverance.

A majority of the Phi Ep brothers returned to or never left Rhode Island. They spent almost all their years within an area traversable by foot. In this sense they were loyal to their community, content with their lot, or perhaps fearful of the larger world.

The Phi Ep brothers do not seem to have been scarred by experiences of exclusion or anti-Semitism. Walter Adler and Arthur Levy, for example, seemed to thrive within and beyond a Jewish milieu. It also appears that while taking Jewish spouses, most members of Phi Ep moved beyond an Orthodox Jewish upbringing. Indeed, the Reform and Conservative move-

ments became means of social advancement.

How family oriented were the Phi Ep members? A few did not marry, and others did not have children; the brothers produced a remarkably small number of offspring. Only Walter Adler had three children, all daughters. The Phi Ep brothers sent four of their children, four of their grandchildren, and three nephews to their alma mater. Susan Adler Kaplan, Pembroke 1958, became a trustee.<sup>15</sup> No doubt legacies were granted some preference over other applicants. But admission became ever more competitive as the value of a Brown degree gained renown and luster.

It seems appropriate to conclude with the anthem, "I'm a Brown Man Born." Without a claim based on membership in the Baptist church or on their fathers' accomplishments, none of the brothers of Phi Epsilon Pi was a Brown man born. Unable to live on campus or join Christian fraternities, their experience was quite restricted. There can be no doubt, however, that most brothers of Phi Ep rejoiced in their Brown associations. They belonged to a university that was itself a fraternity. "Hy" Feinstein may be the best example, but surely many other brothers wore Brown hats, ties, and blazers whenever they watched Brown play football.

So many of the Phi Ep members were blessed with good health and long, productive lives. There were five nonagenarians: Walter Adler, Maurice Bazar, Herman Davis, Herman Feinstein, and Isaiah Olch. They lived freely and with dignity, as proud Americans. Many were willing and ready to serve in wartime, and some brothers were unable to graduate because of patriotic duty. One Phi Ep member has been enshrined by Brown—Jacob Rosenberg, Class of 1916. Perhaps it would be satisfying to know that he died in combat, but this was not his destiny. Though not a member of Phi Epsilon Phi nor a graduate of the Class of 1916, Jacob Sidkowsky is also remembered beneath Soldiers Gate. Not victims, but heroes, Rosenberg and Sidkowsky became "Brown men dead."

**Postscript**

*Here is the letter informing the father of Abraham Sidkowsky (name changed to Sydney) of the death of his son.*



*Abraham Sydney, Brown University, 1916.*

Evacuation Hospital No. 5  
Dunkirk, France, Dec. 19, 1918

Mr. Israel L. Sydney  
42 Orms Street  
Providence, RI

Dear Sir:

As you have probably been informed from Washington your son Abraham died this morning at this hospital of spinal meningitis after an illness of less than two days. Coming from Providence myself and having known and seen your son almost daily since the first of August last I know that you will be anxious to hear the details of his last sickness and death ... At first he seemed to be suffering from an acute and severe form of influenza but before morning symptoms appeared which rapidly developed into the most virulent form of spinal meningitis, and the following morning he died at 5:30. Everything possible was done for him and if he had been at home he could not have received any attention that was not given to him here. The virulence of the disease rendered him unconscious very early in its progress so that he was spared the suffering that often accompanies this illness.

He had developed into the man and soldier that ... you would have desired him to become. His record since being in the army is a succession of excellent marks. He may have written you that he was recommended for promotion to corporal just before the armistice was signed. . . .

The funeral was held this afternoon at 2:30 at Rosedale, a small village a few miles east of Dunkirk. With a platoon of the company standing at attention, the Jewish burial ceremony was read by a member of his faith. Then the impressive army burial ceremony was read followed by "Taps," with his detachment standing at attention with bared heads. His grave, with several other American graves, is located in the churchyard of a very old cathedral, and is marked by the double triangle to which is attached the regulation flag, wreath, and colors which he so faithfully and conscientiously served. . . .

I know how valuable your son had made himself by his quiet, unassuming manner, his devotion to duty and his ability to always do whatever he had to do in the best possible manner. He is one soldier who will be missed by all with whom he came in contact, whether it be officer or enlisted man.

When I return to Providence I will call upon you and will then be able to answer any questions that you may wish to ask.

Very truly yours,  
Remington P. Capwell  
Captain, M.C., U.S.A.



#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The best study of Jews at an Ivy League university is Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). See also Nitza Rosovsky's exhibition catalogue, *The Jewish Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986). Marianne R. Sanua's comprehensive study, *Going Greek: Jewish College Fraternities in the United States, 1895-1945*, was published by Wayne State University Press in 2003, but I have not yet been able to see a copy.
- <sup>2</sup> For Englander, see: Seebert J. Goldowsky, *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership: The Story of the Congregation of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El), Providence, Rhode Island* (Sons of Israel and David, 1989), 183-208.
- <sup>3</sup> For Kapstein, see: Jay Barry, *Gentlemen Under the Elms* (Brown Alumni Monthly, 1982), 95-109.
- <sup>4</sup> Founded in 1917, Providence College was ready to open its first building a year later. The opening was delayed until 1919, however, because many prospective students were serving in the military. See: Robert W. Hayman, *Catholicism in Rhode Island and the Diocese of Providence, 1886-1921*, Vol. II (Diocese of Providence, 1995), 579.
- <sup>5</sup> Religious preference was recorded in the state census of that year. See: John S. Gilkerson, Jr., *Middle-Class Providence, 1820-1940* (Princeton University Press, 1986), 7.
- <sup>6</sup> Some of the more important articles have been: Karen M. Lamoree's "'Why Not a Jewish Girl?': The Jewish Experience at Pembroke College in Brown University," *X* (1988), 122-40; Seebert J. Goldowsky's "First Jewish Students at Brown University,"

- XI (1993), 296-314; and Goldowsky's "The First Jewish Professor at Brown University," XI (1994), 508-10.
- <sup>7</sup> "The Jewish Fraternity and Brown University," RIJHA Notes, VIII (1981), 299-343.
- <sup>8</sup> Mitchell's *Encyclopedia* served as my primary reference tool. Her entry on Jews at Brown was reproduced in the *Notes*, XI (1993), 292-5. Another key reference was Barry, Jay and Martha Mitchell, *A Tale of Two Centuries: A Warm and Richly Illustrated History of Brown University, 1764-1985* (Brown Alumni Monthly, 1985).
- <sup>9</sup> Another legendary athletic fan was Joe "The Tailor" Levy, who between 1890 and 1903 never missed a home football or baseball game and often went on road trips. Professionally, he was known for buying second-hand clothing from Brown students. See: Barry and Mitchell, 122.
- <sup>10</sup> Adelman, Class of 1914, was of course the visionary of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association in 1951. His own military record was complicated. In May, 1917 he enlisted in officers candidate school in Plattsburgh, New York, but was discharged in July because of a physical disability. In August, 1917 he was drafted but then rejected because of his disability. Adelman was again drafted in January, 1918 and served briefly before his discharge.
- <sup>11</sup> For Misch, a highly successful merchant born in Germany, see Eleanor F. Horvitz, "Marion Misch: An Extraordinary Woman," RIJHA Notes, VIII (1980), 141-99.
- <sup>12</sup> Newman was ordained by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise in 1918 and received his doctorate from Columbia six years later. A national figure in the Reform movement, he served Congregation Rodeph Sholom in New York City for forty years. One of his books, *A Jewish University in America?*, published in 1922, established a philosophical basis for the creation of Brandeis University in 1948. Rabbi Newman received a Doctor of Divinity degree from Brown in 1942. See: "Louis I. Newman, Noted Rabbi, 78," *New York Times*, March 17, 1972.
- <sup>13</sup> In 1971 Richard J. Israel became the first Jew (also a Republican) elected attorney general.
- <sup>14</sup> Patrick T. Conley, *Liberty and Justice: A History of Law and Lawyers in Rhode Island, 1636-1998* (East Providence: Rhode Island Publications Society, 1998), 477-8.
- <sup>15</sup> Polly W. Kaufman, ed., *The Search for Equity: Women at Brown University, 1891-1991* (Brown University Press, 1991), 293.

## A Subject List of Articles in the RIJHA Notes, Volumes 1-13

by Anne Sherman

*Here is a helpful reference list of all articles published in the Notes to date, compiled by the energetic office manager of the Association. The general headings are arranged alphabetically; the titles, condensed to keywords, are arranged either chronologically or (when more appropriate) alphabetically.*

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**Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association**  
**49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**  
**Sunday, May 4, 2003**

President George M. Goodwin chaired the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, held at the Jewish Community Center, Providence at 2 p.m. More than 175 members and guests attended. A motion to waive the reading of minutes carried.

Dr. Goodwin reviewed many milestones of the past year. The most significant and bittersweet was Eleanor Horvitz's retirement, after thirty years, as the Association's librarian/archivist. The annual student research and writing competition has been named the Horvitz Prize in her honor. Prof. Leonard Moss was also commended for having completed five years as editor of the *Notes*.

Stanley Abrams, chairman of the publications committee, expressed his enthusiasm for the new issue of the *Notes*, which completes Volume 13. He also explained that after our printers rectify various production mistakes, fresh copies of the journal will be available at the Association's office.

Dr. Goodwin outlined the progress made on the Association's anthology, which will be published by University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press in the fall of 2004. Grants have been received from the Jewish Federation's Endowment Committee and the Rhode Island Foundation's ADDD Fund, but additional funds are needed. Dr. Goodwin also explained that planning had begun for celebrations in 2004 to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jewish arrival in North America.

Prof. James Reibman, chairman of the nominating committee, reported on the new slate of officers and board members. The nominations were unanimously accepted. As has been traditional, Melvin Zurier installed the new and returning broad members with wit and reverence. Dr. Goodwin announced his two presidential appointees: Prof. Paul Buhle of Brown and Prof. Michael Fink of RISD.

Dr. Goodwin introduced John Bush Jones who recently retired as an award-winning professor of theatre arts at Brandeis University. Jones delivered the 33<sup>rd</sup> David Charak Adelman Lecture on "Harburg, Hammerstein, and Harnick: Jewish Sensibility in the American Musical Theatre." Prof. Jones' highly engaging presentation, documenting a profound and pervasive Jewish sensibility, was based on his new book, *Our Musical, Ourselves*:

*A Social History of the American Musical Theatre*. He answered numerous questions and autographed copies of his book.

The membership enjoyed a reception hosted by Anita Fine, Lyn Stepak, Lillian Schwartz, and Anne Sherman. As is customary, Sam Stepak served as photographer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charlotte Penn, Secretary

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## Necrology — RIJHA Members October 16, 2002 — October 15, 2003

**Abrams, Joan**, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Joseph and Sarah (Weisman) Dressler, she had lived in Providence and on Block Island. Mrs. Abrams, her husband, Justin, and their children were involved in the renovation and operation of two hotels, The 1661 Inn and The Manisses on Block Island, as well as several restaurants. They were nationally recognized in *Gourmet Magazine* as having “helped pioneer the current Block Island renaissance.”

Mrs. Abrams was a past president of the Block Island Tourism Council and the South County Tourism Council, a member of the board of directors of the Independent Innkeepers Association and the RI Hospitality and Tourism Association. In 1996, Gov. Lincoln Almond presented her with the RI Tourism Award, and in 1998, the Hospitality Association honored her with its Hotelier of the Year Award. She and her husband were also honored with the Block Island Conservancy Award.

She was a vice president of Temple Beth-El Sisterhood and president of the RI Ostomy Association.

She is survived by her husband, Justin; a daughter, Rita Draper; and two sons, Mark Abrams and Rick Abrams.

Died in Providence on April 5, 2003.

**Alperin, Ruth I.**, wife of the late Max Alperin. Born in Russia, daughter of the late Harry and Eva (Rimel) Singer, she graduated from Salem State College and was a teacher in Massachusetts for several years.

Mrs. Alperin was a founder of the Ruth and Max Alperin-Schechter Day School, a member of Temple Emanu-El, a past president of the Women's Division of the Jewish Federation, a past president and life member of Hadassah, a member of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and a life member of the RI Jewish Historical Association.

With her husband Max, Ruth was very prominent in the Jewish community and a strong supporter of Israel.

She is survived by a daughter, Hope Hirsch; and two sons, Melvin Alperin and Barry J. Alperin.

Died in Providence on July 19, 2003.

**Bohnen, Eleanor**, wife of the late Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen. Born in Ellenville, NY, daughter of the late Myer and Dora (Boyarsky) Rosenthal, she had resided in Providence for 54 years. She was a graduate of Temple University.

Mrs. Bohnen was actively involved in Temple Emanu-El, where her late husband had served as Rabbi from 1948 to 1973. She spent much of her time caring for the elderly, the sick, and the lonely. She assisted the Russian immigrant population. She was kind and unselfish in helping other people in the community.

Her immediate survivors are a daughter, Judith Levitt; and a son, Michael Bohnen.

Died in Providence on November 6, 2002, at age 86.

**Bolusky, Mervin**, born in Fall River, MA, a son of Ida (Schwartz) and the late Samuel Bolousky. He attended Hamilton College, then served in the Air Force in World War II. Mr. Bolusky had worked in the textile industry for many years until retiring seventeen years ago.

He was active for over twenty-five years in the Boy Scouts of America, and was involved with the Jewish Senior Agency, Hebrew Free Loan, the Rhode Island and Washington Holocaust Museums, Providence Volunteers in Action, and the Jewish Federation.

Mr. Bolusky was a member of Temple Emanu-El, and with his wife was honored in 1981 as the Temple's "Man of Emanu-El." He was also honored by the Jewish Theological Seminary, Jewish Family Service, and the 2000 Community Service Award.

Besides his wife, Rosalind (Rubinstein) Bolusky, he is survived by a son, Eric Bolusky.

Died in Providence on December 9, 2002, at age 78.

**Braunstein, Harold**, husband of Bella (Halpert) Braunstein and the late Jeanette (Dressler) Braunstein. Born in St. Paul, MN, a son of the late Harry and Rebecca (Silberblatt) Braunstein.

He was an Army veteran in World War II, serving as lieutenant colonel, and received the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster. Mr. Braunstein was the owner and operator of the former Harold's Inc. He was a member and past treasurer of Temple Beth-El.

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Besides his wife he is survived by a son, Harvey; and a daughter, Susan B. Hedvat.

Died in Royal Palm Beach, FL, on November 9, 2002, at age 90.

**Cokin, Jacob**, husband of the late Sara (Diamond) Cokin. Born in Pawtucket, the son of the late Samuel and Annie (Korenbaum) Cokin. He was a graduate of the University of Rhode Island. He served in the Army as a physicist connected to the Manhattan Project in World War II.

Mr. Cokin was the owner of Ideal Floor Covering in Pawtucket, and had taught at Davies Vocational School in Lincoln for twelve years before retiring in 1975. He had been a member of Temple Beth-El and B'nai B'rith and a past treasurer of the Rhode Island Teachers Association.

He is survived by a son, David Cokin.

Died in Las Vegas, NV, on January 17, 2003, at age 90.

**Davis, Aaron**, husband of Muriel (Zelniker-Sutton) Davis and of the late Bertha (Jagolinzer) Davis. Born in New Bedford, MA, he was the son of the late Harry and Eva (Cohen) Davis, and had lived in Cranston since 1940. Mr. Davis was a founder of the former United Camera Inc., now UNICOM Technology Group, and had been working as an executive with that company.

Mr. Davis was a founder and member of Temple Torat Yisrael, where he was an honorary member of its Board of Trustees. He was a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Mason.

Besides his wife, he is survived by two sons, Mark Davis and Robert Davis; a daughter, Claire Yaffe; a stepson, Dr. Jeffrey Sutton; and a stepdaughter, Marcia Sutton.

Died in Cranston on August 10, 2003, at the age of 85.

**Feldman, Myrtle**, wife of the late Irving Feldman. Born in Central Falls, the daughter of the late Thomas Bennett and Rose (Levine) Lucksniansky. Mrs. Feldman was co-owner, with her husband, of the former Paramount Press Inc. in Lincoln for forty years.

She was a member of Temple Beth-El and its Sisterhood, Hadassah, and B'nai B'rith.

She is survived by a son, Carl Feldman.

Died in Providence on April 20, 2003, at age 94.

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**Gereboff, Caroline**, wife of the late Maurice Gereboff. Born in Poland, a daughter of the late Charles and Frances (Neff) Gordon, she had lived in Providence most of her life. Mrs. Gereboff had been a clerk in Providence District Court for more than twenty years, and a secretary at the Providence Hebrew Day School.

Mrs. Gereboff was a member of Temple Emanu-El. She was a member of Hadassah, past president of the Ladies' Association of the Providence Hebrew Day School, and secretary of the board of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

She is survived by two sons, Murray Gereboff and Joel Gereboff.

Died in Providence on May 27, 2003, at age 82.

**Gershman, Helen**, wife of the late Dr. Isadore Gershman. Born in Providence, the daughter of the late Hyman and Rebecca (Winkelman) Brosofsky.

Mrs. Gershman had assisted her husband, a pediatrician, in his medical practice for many years. She was a member of Temple Beth-El.

She is survived by a daughter, Sherry Stevens; and a son, James Gershman.

Died in Providence on July 17, 2003, at age 77.

**Josephson, Elaine**, born in Connecticut, she was the daughter of the late David and Minnie Fierberg. She was a 1946 graduate of the Beth Israel Hospital School of Nursing. She worked as a registered nurse for many years at the Miriam Hospital, and was a director of Quality Care Nursing Service, a home-care agency.

Mrs. Josephson was a member of the Women's Auxiliary of Miriam Hospital, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Committee, and Hadassah.

Besides her husband, Howard Josephson, she is survived by two daughters, Deborah Catone and Jody Josephson.

Died in Boca Raton, FL, on April 2, 2003, at age 77.

**Levin, Leonard M.**, born in Providence, a son of the late Benjamin and Flore (Schechtman) Levin, he had lived in that city before moving to Centerville, MA, and Naples, FL. He received his accounting and business degrees from Bryant College.

He was an Army Air Force veteran of World War II, and a member of the Jewish War Veterans. He was a Certified Public Accountant.

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Mr. Levin was a member of the American Institute of CPAs, the Florida Institute of CPAs, a member of Temple Emanu-El, and Anshei Chesed of Cape Cod. He had received a fifty-year presentation from the Grand Lodge of Masons in RI.

He leaves his wife, Eunice (Kaze) Levin, and two sons, Richard Levin and Robert Levin.

Died in Centerville, MA, on July 10, 2003.

**Miller, Jack**, husband of the late Dorothy (Waxman) Miller. Born in Norfolk, VA, a son of the late Charles and Anna (Litchman) Miller. He had grown up in Woonsocket, and had lived in Ohio and Providence before moving to Arizona. He was a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and received a master's degree in Social Work from Boston University.

He served as an Army medic during World War II.

Mr. Miller had been a social worker with child and family guidance centers, had been director of the Jones Home for Unwanted Children, and was executive director for the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Board in Lake County, OH.

He was a Life Member of the RI Jewish Historical Association.

He leaves two sons, Peter Miller and Lewis Miller.

Died in Tucson, AZ, on March 11, 2003.

**Rosen, Benton H.**, born in Providence, a son of the late Max and Ida (Glogos) Rosen. He had lived in Providence for many years before moving to Pawtucket, and maintained a summer residence on Mashpee Island, Cape Cod. He was a graduate of the University of Rhode Island. He served as a captain in the Army during World War II.

Mr. Rosen was president and owner of Franklin Supply Co. He was an author and lecturer on the Wedgwood Commemorative Way. He was a past president of the Wedgwood Society of Boston and past member of the board of governors of the Wedgwood International Seminar, a member of the board of trustees for the URI Foundation, and the recipient of the URI Alumni RAM Award. He was a member of Temple Beth-El, the China Students Club of Boston, the American Ceramics Circle, and was a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Mason. He was Past President and Life Member of the RI Jewish Historical Association.

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He is survived by his wife, Beverly (Starr) Rosen; and a daughter, Susan Hirsch. He was the father of the late John Starr Rosen.

Died in Pawtucket on July 19, 2003.

**Sauber, Robert**, born in Philadelphia, a son of the late Samuel and Mary (Mesirov) Sauber.

He graduated from Temple University. He was a World War II Army Air Force veteran

He had been a comptroller for the former Outlet Department Stores, a community activist, and a teacher. He taught as an adjunct professor at Rhode Island School of Design, Brown University, and the University of Rhode Island.

Mr. Sauber organized the first televised town meeting in Rhode Island on Cox Cable, worked on projects for the Opportunities Industrialization Center of RI, and was active in political affairs. He designed and organized a mobile cellular demonstration that toured the United States.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth (Butler) Sauber; a son, Richard Sauber; and a daughter, Amy Quinlan.

Died in Providence on December 21, 2002.

**Tregar, Eunice A.**, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Abraham and Fannie (Cohen) Jacobs. She had lived in Cranston for many years before returning to Providence. Mrs. Tregar had been a social worker for the State Department of Human Services.

She was a founding member of Temple Torat Yisrael and past president of its Sisterhood, a member of the Women's Division of the Jewish Federation, and the Women's Association of the former Jewish Home for the Aged.

She is survived by her husband, Harold; a son, Jack Tregar; and a daughter, Betsy Tregar.

Died in Providence on November 2, 2002

**Yarlas, Stephen**, born in Providence, a son of the late Lewis and Rose (Strauss) Yarlas. He had lived most of his life in Cranston. He graduated from the University of Rhode Island, Suffolk Law School, and Boston University Graduate School.

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Mr. Yaras was a Certified Public Accountant and a partner in the firm, Jarcho, Schwartz, Yaras & Santilli Ltd, which in 2000 became Yaras, Kaplan, Santilli and Moran. He was president and co-owner of the Torbol Group, Inc.

He was a member of the RI CPA Society, the American Institute of CPAs, the RI and MA Bar Associations, and the Hebrew Free Loan Association. He was on the boards of directors of the Jewish Federation, Jewish Senior Agency, the RI Jewish Historical Association, the Arthritis Association of RI, and the former Cranston Osteopathic Hospital; and was a past chair of the State of RI Israeli Bonds. He was a member of Temple Emanu-El and a past president of Temple Torat Yisrael; he was a Mason, and the treasurer of Ledgemont Country Club.

He is survived by his wife, Sharon (Weinberg) Yaras; and two daughters, Lisa Lehan and Robin Alperin.

Died in Providence on August 11, 2003.



## 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>
Dr. Isadore and Helen Gershman Memorial Fund	<i>RIJHA Notes Fund</i>

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Jeannette S. Nathans  
B. Ruby Winnerman

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*Abraham W. Winkleman and clerk, Oakland Beach, Warwick, 1925.*