



# RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

VOLUME 7

NOVEMBER, 1976

NUMBER 2

**FRONT COVER**

Scene Lower Chalkstone Avenue—circa 1903. (Unidentified).  
For more on the North End, see Page 300.

# RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2

NOVEMBER, 1976



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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

OLD BOTTLES, RAGS, JUNK! .....	189
by <i>Eleanor F. Horvitz</i>	
NEWPORT'S JEWS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION .....	258
by <i>Andrea Finkelstein Losben, B.A., M.A.</i>	
THE EDUCATION OF AN IMMIGRANT .....	277
by <i>Beryl Segal</i>	
SAMUEL STARR, M.D. 1884-1950 .....	294
by <i>Benton H. Rosen</i>	
LOOKING BACK . . . ..	297
by <i>Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel</i>	
A VISIT TO PRESIDENT FORD AT THE WHITE HOUSE .....	302
by <i>Rabbi Theodore Lewis</i>	
A MATTER OF A DATE .....	305
by <i>Rabbi Theodore Lewis</i>	
BICENTENNIAL OF AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL .....	307
REMARKS BY NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER .....	308
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE .....	312
ADDRESS BEFORE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE .....	314
by <i>Colonel Milton E. Mitler, USAF (Ret.)</i>	
REMARKS OF GOVERNOR PHILIP W. NOEL DURING BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION .....	318
by <i>Philip W. Noel</i>	
BICENTENNIAL ADDRESS OF ATTORNEY GENERAL AT TOURO SYNAGOGUE .....	320
by <i>The Honorable Edward H. Levi</i>	
STRANGER THAN STRANGE WIVES .....	325
by <i>Natalie R. Seigle</i>	
TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION .....	327
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES .....	329
by <i>Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D.</i>	
NECROLOGY .....	332



OLD BOTTLES, RAGS, JUNK!  
THE STORY OF THE JEWS OF SOUTH PROVIDENCE

by ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

The cry of the junk peddler echoed through the streets of South Providence. The junk peddler, a recent immigrant, a "Greenie", was instructed by his already established *landsman*\* in the art of collecting old bottles, rags, and junk. He was told to canvass the neighborhood and to collect his harvest in a pack, which weighed heavily on his back. At the end of the day he returned to Ash Street, where merchants such as Abraham Bazar and Abraham Zellermyer purchased his load.

I opened a junk shop, and when I saw the people sweating from carrying rags and bottles on their shoulders, it reminded me of the time I used to carry a hundred pounds of weight on my back in the army; so I had a carpenter build them pushcarts.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

I can still see the immigrants who had come off the trains—all seemed to have large families—loaded onto carriages driven by horses, complete with their pillows, trunks, other housewares, coming up Gay Street toward Willard Avenue. Somebody would be waiting for them and be responsible for them.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

In those days it was not uncommon to come upon a "greenhorn" walking in the middle of Willard Avenue with a satchel in one hand, a piece of paper in the other, trying to read the address of a relative or a friend with whom he hoped to stay.<sup>3</sup>

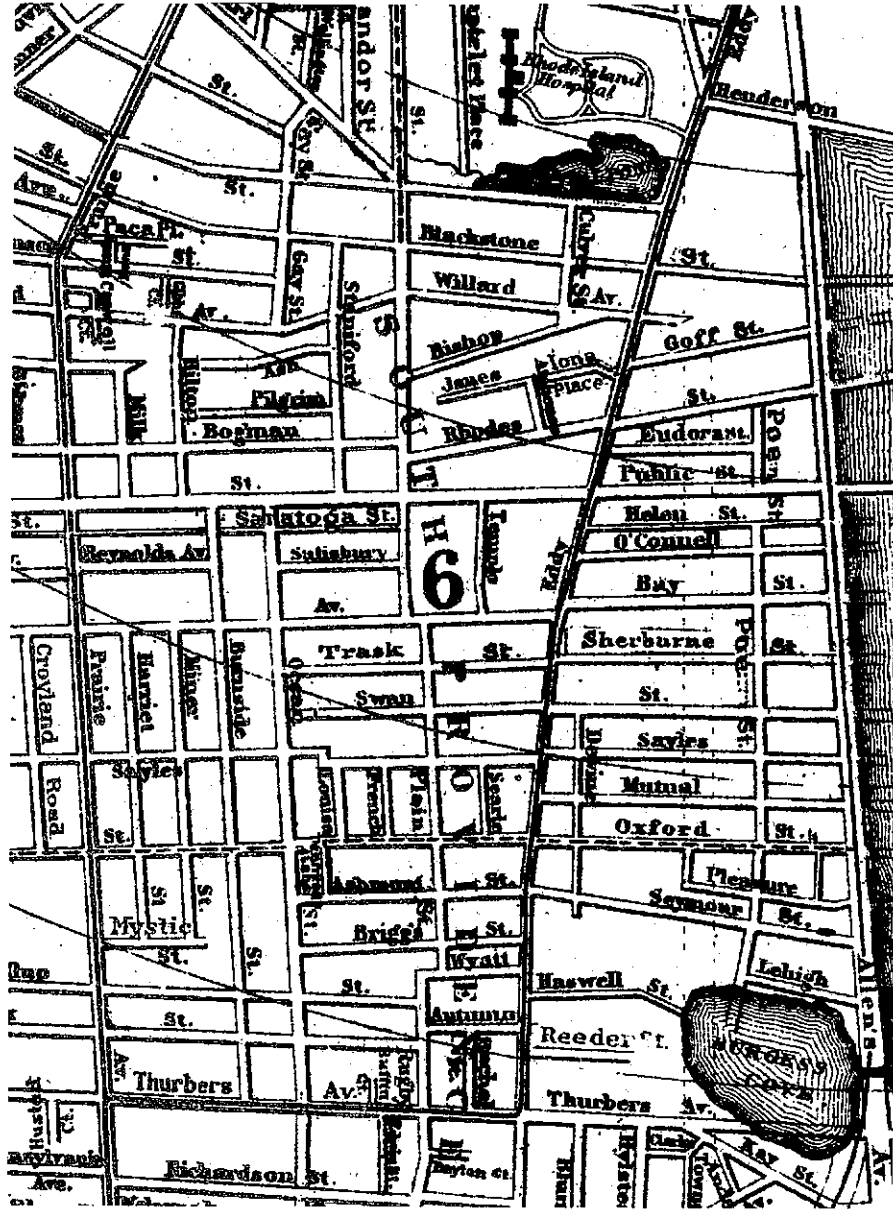
Who were these Jews who became junk peddlers, who opened small grocery and variety stores, who were employed by the jewelry and silver manufacturers in the vicinity of South Providence? Where did they come from and why did they leave?

The families of the majority of those interviewed had emigrated from Russia. Several families came from Austria and Galicia (province of the Austro-Hungarian empire bordering on Poland and Russia), while a smaller number had left homes in Poland, Roumania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Joseph Jagolinzer's family took a circuitous route—Russia to Argentina in South America, to Canada, to Boston, and finally to South Providence, where they settled in 1896.

Some of the men met their wives in this country and married here. Others, already married, came to America and South Providence alone to make a living and establish themselves. Eventually their wives and children were sent steamship tickets to join their husbands.

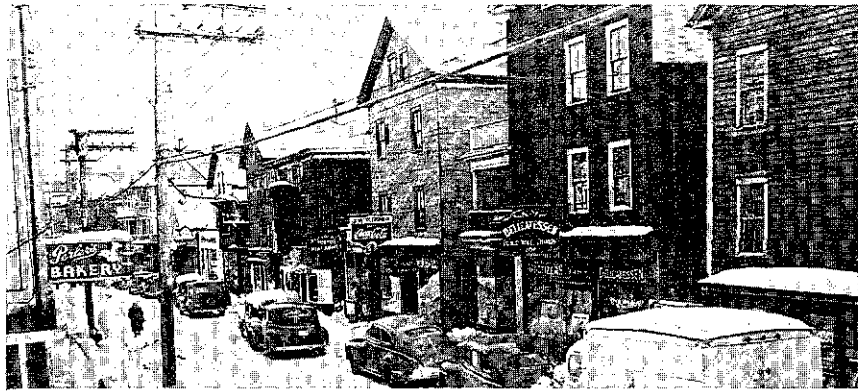
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\*Compatriot. Commonly someone from the same *Shtetl* (village) or area. (Yiddish)

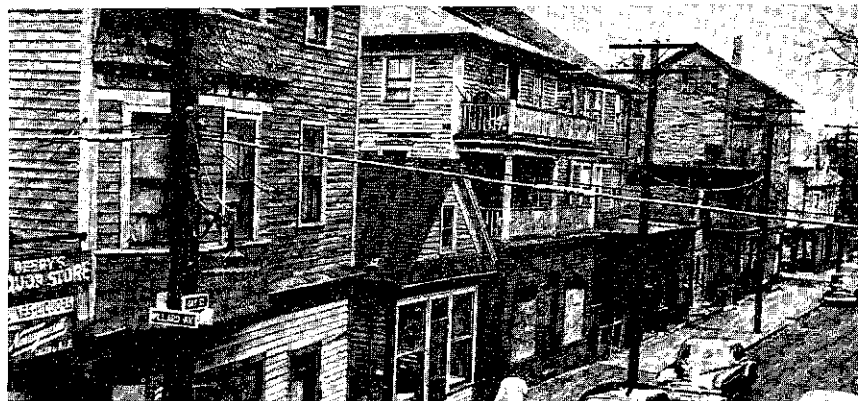


MAP OF SOUTH PROVIDENCE—1908





Willard Avenue, looking east, circa 1947. Appearing in the photo are Perler's Bakery on the left (No. 207) and on the opposite side of the street from right to left Louis Bezviner, grocer (No. 214); N. Y. Delicatessen and Public Model Creamery (No. 208); Jewett's Creamery (No. 204); Bazarsky's Meat Market (No. 202); Snell's Bakery (No. 200); Harry's Fruit Market (No. 196); Spiegel's Meat and Poultry (No. 190); Keller's Meat Market (No. 184½); and Samuel Bernstein Meats (No. 182). Courtesy of The Providence Public Library.



Gay Street between Willard Avenue and Robinson Street prior to slum clearance for redevelopment. It was the site for the proposed South Providence Elementary School (now the Edmund W. Flynn School). The story appeared in *The Evening Bulletin* of November 21, 1952. The store at the far left (83 Gay Street, corner of Willard Avenue) had been for many years the site of Diwinsky's delicatessen store (Jacob Diwinsky circa 1914 and Louis Diwinsky circa 1920). Before that it had been occupied by Morris Golemba's grocery store (circa 1908, see text). In the adjoining small building is L. Berman's Meat and Poultry Market. Courtesy of *The Providence Journal*.



Krasnow family, taken in Elisavethgrad, Russia, circa 1896. Left to right (rear): Jacob Krasnow, head of the family; Fannie Krasnow; one of the grandmothers; Ettie Krasnow; Miriam Krasnow with baby Celia. Seated David and Harry Krasnow.

My father's and mother's house used to be Ellis Island. Everybody who was a *landsman*, when they had to come from Europe, my mother used to go out and collect goods for them. She used to sew sheets, get aprons, get all ready for them. They used to land where? The Zellermayers. In the four rooms with the four daughters. The men used to come first and then, when the wife was supposed to come, my mother used to see that they had an apartment, to see that they had it furnished with what they needed to set up housekeeping.<sup>†</sup>

The reasons for leaving Eastern Europe were in most cases similar—to escape the compulsory military training which was imposed upon the males of the family, to escape the antisemitic persecution of the monarchies, to improve the economic lot of the family. To a few there may have been the illusion that the United States offered one the chance of becoming a millionaire or the fantasy that the streets were paved with gold (the *goldena medina*)\*. But an opportunity to better oneself in the United States, that was the common dream.

An example of the life of one family which migrated from Russia to South Providence (settling on Willard Avenue) in 1905 is recreated in interviews with four members of the Krasnow family. Of the four interviewed, three are still living, while one who was originally interviewed in 1959 has died.

I remember the town of Elisavethgrad where I was born. Each city had its own *duma* (parliament). There was a Jewish school for which we had to pay. I went to different schools for about seven years. I was taught Russian, arithmetic, etc. I later went to a government school supported by Jews. You were expected to pay unless you were very poor, and Jewish organizations aided the school around 8 AM and stay until 2 PM. We were lucky if building had five or six rooms with an office. We would get to school around 8 AM. and stay until 2 PM. We were lucky if we had food from home to eat for lunch. Most of the poor had only bread, while the well-off had eggs, bread, and salami. The very rich could also afford candy at the store. Most of those from the Russian neighborhood did not go to school. They disliked the Jews and tried to persecute us, throwing stones at us. I remember one Jewish boy who was beaten up. We had to go around several blocks to get away. We used to go to the market about ten blocks away. We would get drunks to carry our orders

\**Medina* is Hebrew for "country" or "land."

home for a few pennies. When I was about to graduate, my father wanted me to go to college, although only a very small percentage of Jews ever went to college. Jews could become doctors. To become a lawyer we would have had to change our religion. Jews were permitted only in Southern Russia, unless they were an important businessman or merchant. We had to have permission to live in the big cities.

Around the beginning of 1900 there was a movement throughout Russia to dispose of the Czarist government. Jews were blamed for the troubles. At one point the Cossacks were sent against a demonstration of workers. They wanted to turn the people against the Jews instead of the Czar. Young Jews organized groups as protection against the attackers. They armed themselves with whips and knives. People began to demonstrate against the Czar. It was in October of 1905. It lasted for a few days. A pogrom began. Hoodlums broke the windows, and beat up or killed a few Jews, if they found them. The self-protection groups opposed them. If the Russian hoodlums could not do sufficient damage, the Cossacks were brought in. This thwarted any possible revolution.

I remember so well what I was doing the day the pogrom started. I had gone to the hospital with a sore foot, but was told the doctor was not in because of the trouble. I had gone with my sister Fannie. On the way home our father met us and said that the massacre had started, and we should run home. The doctor I was supposed to see was killed in it. We climbed into the attic, which connected our store to the house, where we hid. (Fannie Krasnow remembers lying in the attic with her younger sister to escape being seen by the Russians, whom her father called "rapers"). The hoodlums broke into Ruth's (his future wife) father's store. One well-dressed man yelled, "Kill the Jews! Jews are worth killing!" They broke up everything. The Cossacks finally came, and broke up the gang of hoodlums. In our particular section they didn't kill Jews at that time, just plundered the stores. The younger Jews tried to fight back, especially in big cities like Odessa, and quite a few Jews were lost. The Jews only had clubs to defend themselves, whereas the Cossacks and soldiers on horseback, who had guns, killed them.

Toward the end of that year our family decided to leave Russia. We had an uncle who lived in Providence and whom my father had helped get established by sending him money from time to time. My father had had property which had to be left in the

hands of neighbors for rent collecting, but eventually the banks reclaimed the property. The plans for departure were that my brother David and I, who were both in our teens, would travel to the border. Agents along the way were ready to receive bribes. The soldiers or guards were to get money for each person. We first went by train, took three days, and even encountered a train strike. At some stations Jews were attacked and beaten. We had to travel through this route and via bribes since we were boys and eligible for the military. We could not obtain passports. My sister Fannie left earlier with her married sister and her husband and two children. They obtained passports as did my parents and youngest sister.<sup>5-8</sup> Eventually all of the family got together on Willard Avenue and started their new life in South Providence.

What was this area known as South Providence, which these Eastern European families chose for their home in the new land? A street map of the area for the year 1909 was used as a guide to present a geographical picture. Willard Avenue was used as the focal point, since it was either on this street or in its immediate vicinity that the majority of Jewish-owned businesses were located. The street numbers on Willard Avenue commenced at Eddy Street and ended at Broad Street with No. 368. A house directory for the same year, 1909, listed no Jewish-sounding names below No. 132, at which address lived Marcus Fried, a machinist. At 134 Willard Avenue lived the following tenants: David Korn, a coal dealer; Jacob Tennenbaum, a clerk; and Carl Fischman, a jeweler. Within those relatively few blocks—Willard Avenue and the streets which either crossed it, or were adjacent to it—160 Jewish-owned businesses or Jewish residents are listed. This contrasts with the situation in 1878, when the Providence City Directory lists no Jewish families on Willard Avenue. Mrs. Sadie Jacobs believed her family, the Abraham Jacobs, to be the first Jewish family on Willard Avenue. She reported that they moved into that area in 1882. Since their names are not in the City Directory of that year, there is no printed documentation to confirm this. The City Directory of 1892 lists an Ezra Silverman, jeweler, as residing at 221 Willard Avenue. But two years later, in 1894, 19 Jewish-sounding names are on record: Herman Marks, proprietor of a liquor business at 52 Willard Avenue; Simon Silbergras, a jeweler at 141; Jonas Baruch, a grocer at 193; Marcus Helman, a peddler; Jacob Weintraub, peddler; Joseph Muscovitz, shoemaker; Abraham Richardson, peddler; Herman Wechsler, peddler; and Harry Zuger, peddler (all living at 195); Abram Jacob, a jeweler at 197; Nuchyn Horwitz, jeweler, and Samuel Horwitz, peddler,

living at 223; Samuel Gordon, jeweler, at 224; Aaron Abisch, peddler; Abraham Granowsky, Louis Granowsky, both jewelers; and Miss M. D. Granowsky, dressmaker (all at 243); Joseph Brophy, butcher at 244; and Lizzie Rosen, a widow at 245. By 1895 the City Directory listed 27 Jewish-sounding names, and there was a sizeable increase in the number of Jewish families with each succeeding year.

On Robinson Street, a short street which ran between Taylor Street and Gay Street, the same house directory of 1909 enumerated 172 occupants, with only one vacancy. Of this number 102 had Jewish-sounding names; the following occupations were listed: 9 grocers, 14 jewelers, 8 tailors, 17 peddlers, 4 shoemakers; two each in dry goods, plumbing, and carpentry; and one listing each for variety store owner, laundryman, harnessmaker, soapmaker, fish dealer, teacher, and junk dealer. Among those with Irish-sounding names many were employed as machinists, painters, electricians, drivers, masons, gardeners, and laborers, occupations not commonly listed for the Jewish immigrants in this neighborhood. Other streets which were primarily associated with the South Providence Jews, their businesses, the various shops where they purchased their food, the schools their children attended, their synagogues, and the halls which accommodated their weddings, dances, and meetings were the following:

Intersecting Willard Avenue were Taylor Street, Prairie Avenue, Hilton Street, Staniford Street, and Plain Street. Other streets in the area adjacent to Willard Avenue, which figured prominently in the life of the South Providence Jews, were Robinson Street, Paca Place, Ash Street, Chester Avenue, Gay Street, Dudley Street, and Blackstone Street. As a family became more affluent, it might move to a street in a higher rent district such as Somerset Street, Public Street, or Reynolds Avenue. Most of the other streets in the South Providence neighborhood were considered to be *goyish*\*. Only an occasional Jewish family lived on these streets. It was known for many years that the crossing of Willard Avenue and Plain Street was the dividing line between the quarters occupied by Irish and Jewish families, with that part of Willard Avenue extending eastward toward Eddy Street being the Jewish section.

The neighborhood in those days presented a very poor appearance. The main business street, Willard Avenue, had no sidewalks, and in the rainy seasons people had to jump over muddy puddles to get across from one side of the street to the other.

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\*Gentile. (Yiddish)

In wintertime the snow would be piled up in the middle of the street, and people would slide up and down snowy mounds.<sup>9</sup>

Other streets in the area which were often mentioned in interviews, but which were outside of the Willard Avenue section, were Winter Street and Warner's Lane (later a Chinese neighborhood). Several new immigrants first lived there before moving to the South Providence area. Maurice Robinson was born there, as was Mrs. Charles Brown (née Fannie Grant), daughter of the Louis Grants. Mrs. Joseph Webber (Sarah Olch) as a small child lived next door to the Grants on Winter Street.

#### THEY ESTABLISH A HOME

Because so much has been written about the Jewish immigrant who went from Ellis Island and settled in a New York ghetto, there is a tendency to think of this early period in South Providence Jewish history as being one in which the area was overcrowded, undesirable, and having a slum character. Interviews with those who lived there dispel this image. Taking into consideration the limitations so far as electricity and other modern niceties are concerned, the housing on the whole presented a picture of comfortable living. The order in which families arrived in the area and the amount of income they could earn would determine the type of housing and furnishings. In the vicinity of Willard Avenue the houses were not single family cottages, but rather tenements or flats. Generally a house was built to contain four or six tenements, consisting of from three to six rooms each.

I went into some very poor Jewish homes. They would have little furniture, using orange crates for chairs.<sup>10</sup>

This would be an example of a very poor family. Sadie Jacobs gives a different picture in describing her family's home:

People would congregate at our house before daily services. It was because we had a big seven room house, whereas so many had only three rooms. We owned the house at 205 Willard Avenue. It was a large six tenement house, and my family occupied the middle floor. They had broken through so that they actually used two apartments. For those days we had lots of land.

The houses in which they grew up were described by some of those who were interviewed. The Zellermayer family had gas lights, and their bathroom had a tub. They lived at the corner of Gay Street and Willard Avenue in four rooms in a new house, which had been built



Abraham Bazar in Austrian Army uniform before his arrival in 1893. Courtesy Maurice Bazar.



by Abraham Bazar. Ethel Scoliard remembers that her mother (née Sarah Rosen) spoke of her own family's owning property on Willard Avenue consisting of three houses and a store. When Sarah Rosen first married Frank Scoliard they lived in a rented house, but then Scoliard built a house at 221 Plain Street (corner of Plain and Willard Avenue). It was the first house in the neighborhood to have electricity. Scoliard's plumbing shop (Guarantee Plumbing & Heating Co.) adjoined the property at 219 Plain Street. Frank Scoliard had lived at 30 Robinson Street, and his plumbing business at that time was called the Providence Plumbing Company at 351 Point Street.

Doctor Ilie Berger's dental office and home were at one point early in his career located at the same address, 164 Prairie Avenue. It was not uncommon to have a place of business as part of the house in which the family lived. An example was the millinery establishment of Mary Grant (Mrs. Louis Grant) at 176 Prairie Avenue located in the front part of the family's residence.

Many tenements contained no bathing facilities. Public bath buildings were erected by the City of Providence, which owned and operated them.

An hour or two before twilight, if you lived in the neighborhood of Gay Street, you saw many of the women who had hurried that morning to Willard Avenue (for their shopping) rushing along with white towels under their arms. From Plain Street they came, and Prairie Avenue and Robinson, Dudley and Blackstone Streets, from all the neighborhood homes to the little red brick building on Gay Street. It was a Public Bath House, and Friday was the busiest day. There were two entrances, one for men and one for women. And each side was subdivided, the front half for children and the back half for adults. Privacy was undreamed of, and doors unknown either on the dressing stalls or the showers across from them. The housewives came and found themselves a dressing stall and unrolled their towels. Inside would be a comb, a facecloth, and a piece of soap. Sometimes they carried a change of underwear. You could tell the housewives who mopped their floors from those who scrubbed, for the scrubbers would have darkened, reddened knees and streaks of dirt on their legs. The women undressed wearily, removing their mended, soiled underthings with tired aching arms, but hurrying, naked, they walked across the wet tile floor to the showers, adjusted the water to as hot as they could stand it, and stepped into the needle-like

downpour. Soon the weariness was washed away, and you heard them talk with their neighbors. Clouds of steam rose and the walls perspired, and voices of the women blended and vied with the beat of the water against the slate sides of the shower and the tile floors. Thin women with droopy breasts dried themselves vigorously until their bodies were red, and fat women with wobbling thighs paddled to the shower and back to their stalls, dripping wet. And above it all, one sometimes could hear the strong rich baritone of a male voice from the other side where a father cleaned himself for the Sabbath and sang happily in the shower.<sup>11</sup>

Between visits to the public baths, one would heat water on top of the coal stove and pour kettles of this hot water into a large portable tub for bathing. Even those families with indoor plumbing and tubs had to heat the water to mix with the cold water from the faucet. Hot water plumbing was to come later.

It is difficult now to imagine the large number of persons in one family who shared the three or four rooms of a tenement, and in many cases boarders and relatives increased the number. The privacy of a separate room for each member of a family was unimagined.

We lived in a five room flat—two bedrooms, one bath, little furnishings—six children, parents, and yet on the Holidays, when my uncle and his family with three children would visit in order to be able to walk to *Shul*\* (they lived in Cranston), we would double up, and they stayed with us. Later we moved to Dudley Street, where we had gas mantles for lighting, and the house had a coal stove. There was one toilet per floor. I remember taking a bath with the Kestenman brothers downstairs, for they didn't want to waste the water. Eventually we had a telephone installed on Dudley Street. Our neighbors looked at it in wonder. Everybody in the neighborhood used to come to our house to use the telephone. My older sisters had it installed.<sup>12</sup>

\* \* \*

There were at least four to a bedroom, ten in our house. In addition there were always one or two strangers in the house who had just come to the country, and you had to take them in.<sup>13</sup>

\* \* \*

We took a house of three rooms, a living room, bedroom, and kitchen. Ettie slept in the bedroom with her kids. My father and

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\*Synagogue. (Yiddish)

mater slept in the living room, and my brothers, Dave and Harry, slept on a couch. I slept in the kitchen. It was very cold in the living-room where my parents slept. Finally I had a bedroom (we moved about five times in two years), but a cousin came and again I had to sleep in the kitchen. Whoever had to get up early woke me up when they would eat breakfast. I remember we first had kerosene lamps for lighting and then used gas and finally electricity. The tub in which we bathed was kept in the kitchen, and water for it was heated on the stove.<sup>14</sup>

David Korn, from whom the families in the neighborhood bought their coal and oil to heat the stoves which provided cooking heat, hot water, and heat for warmth, lived with his family in a rented tenement on Willard Avenue. The Korn family first had gas for their lighting, and then electricity. A little later, as he became more affluent, David Korn built two houses at 205 Dudley Street, one house in front of the other. One house contained six-room tenements on three floors and the other four-room tenements on three floors.<sup>15</sup>

The ice wagon was a familiar sight on Willard Avenue and neighboring streets. There were no icehouses in the immediate neighborhood. The ice was harvested from outlying ponds during the winter and stored in icehouses, where it was packed in sawdust to protect it. The iceman loaded his wagon at the icehouse for delivery in the neighborhoods.

Joseph Jagolinzer described the interesting procedure of lighting gas mantles:

They would first be lit and the smoke would go up from them. After they got started, there would be the first flash of light. It was then usable as a light. Since everybody lived in a tenement house, any noise from upstairs could distort and break up these delicate mantles, and only carbon would then be left. One would have to start all over again to light them.

The Housing conditions were well summarized in the following comments:

From my time there were no slum areas for the Jews in South Providence. They lived in tenement houses containing up to six tenements, and their standard of living, considering, was fairly good. Most families had a four-room flat and private bath. If money was needed, they would take in a roomer and boarder. Each family had its own little place. I cannot remember any sub-

standard housing. In fact, there was constant building with many new buildings for that time. <sup>16</sup>

\* \* \*

My grandfather was in the real estate business, and himself had several pieces of property on Prairie Avenue, Somerset Street, and Dudley Street. At no time could you consider them substandard property.<sup>17</sup>

#### THEY EARN A LIVING

Peddling was a common means of earning a living. Other options were open to the newcomer, although these would be limited by his deficient English. It was expected that the children, regardless of age, would help out by bringing in whatever pennies they could earn to augment the family income.

Joseph Jagolinzer, who was three years old when his family settled in South Providence in 1896, recalled the jobs he held as he was growing up:

We were seven children, five boys and two girls. From the time we boys were seven years old we were selling newspapers in downtown Providence. At eight or nine we were shining shoes and bringing back pennies. As newsboys we had several newspapers to sell—the *Boston American*, the *Providence News*, the *Providence Journal*. On a big day we could make 10 cents. The girls did not work outside the home, as they had to help our mother.

When I was fourteen years old I had a job at Mr. Golembo's grocery store. His store was located at the corner of Gay Street and Willard Avenue (83 Gay Street), which was the focal point of everything that happened in South Providence. My family bought all our groceries at Golembo's getting as much as my pay, so I never saw that pay. My father would go to the store on Sunday mornings and get an accounting of what had been purchased during the week, and if they overdrew what my salary was supposed to be (\$4 per week), he'd have to pay the difference. On that very corner on Sundays, when Golembo's would close, my brothers and I would bring out our shoeshine stand in front of the store and give shines for 5 cents. The Silverman brothers came down every Sunday for their shines—but they paid 10 cents for a shine plus a nickle tip! From this job at Golembo's I went on to work for the Providence Public Market in downtown Providence and eventually matriculated at the Rhode Island School of Design.

A similar story is related by Benjamin Brier, who arrived with his family just before the turn of the century. His was a large family—eleven in all, which included half-brothers and half-sisters. His father could not find work and spent his time in the Synagogue. As Sarah Brier commented about her husband's father, "That was his vocation and avocation". As Brier recalls it:

We all went to work very early, selling newspapers at the age of eight on. It was pretty much the case with everyone we knew. I worked also as an errand boy and floor sweeper in jewelry shops, where I began to learn the fundamentals of manufacturing. With my brothers, Harry and Charlie, we started in the jewelry business with a few in help, and then it grew. My sister had married a man from Boston who was in the wholesale jewelry business, and he gave us our start. In those days many of the immigrants who worked in the jewelry business brought home work from the factories, which was done as homework by those not able to leave the home.

Jack Leichter also sold newspapers as a young boy and worked after school in stores, but some children had "built-in" jobs in their fathers' businesses. Nat Fishman, who was one of eight children, helped out in his father's butcher shop. Lewis Korn not only helped out in his father's hay and grain business, but remained to carry on the business when it also included the sale of coal and oil.

When we came to South Providence (she was nineteen years old) I went right to work. My younger sister, Celia, went to school. I used to work ten hours a day for Silverman Brothers for \$3 a week. I started at 7:00 A.M. I remember the Silvermans. They had a sister. She used to pick me up. I got up so early in the morning. I wasn't used to it. In Russia I had just gone to school. My father didn't like my working. He said in Jewish, "*Feigele, arbeitig!*"\* It is a shame for a young girl to work. My uncle (Samuel Borod, who had been in Rhode Island for many years previous to the Krasnow arrival) said, "You know who doesn't work in America—the sick ones." I didn't mind. I worked. I had a long walk from my home on Willard Avenue to the shop. If I was late, they took off 10 cents from my pay. Eventually I did piece work on jewelry and made up to \$12 a week. We would get through earlier on Saturdays—4 P.M.<sup>18</sup>

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\*A little bird (i.e. a dear little girl) working! (Yiddish)

The two brothers, Harry and David Krasnow, also found work. Harry was employed at Ostby & Barton at 188 Richmand Street, which was reputed at that time to be the biggest ring factory in the country. He made as much as \$5 per week. David Krasnow learned engraving at Theodore W. Foster & Brother Company, manufacturing jewelers at 100 Richmond Street. Here he made baby spoons. Later he left this job to go into the jewelry display business.

The parents turned to a variety of businesses. Operating grocery and variety stores appeared to be the commonest means of earning a livelihood. Often the husband peddled fruits and vegetables "on the road", while his wife tended the store. In many cases a man worked in a jewelry factory and advanced to the job of foreman or supervisor.

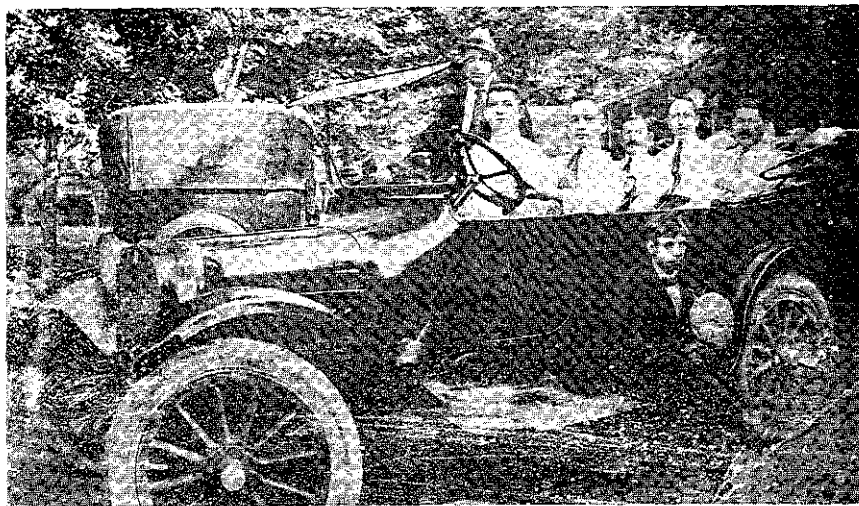
Among those interviewed the following occupations were represented: Beryl Gordon, house painter for David Kelman and A. L. Botvin; Wolf Semonoff, tailor; William Bloom, cabinet maker first for Shepard's department store and later in his own shop on Dudley Street; Louis Grant, who worked in the jewelry business and designed snake rings and bracelets; Abraham Allen, cabinetmaker; Nathan Horowitz, real estate dealer; Jacob Krasnow, proprietor of a grocery store, peddler, and buyer and seller of houses in South Providence; Fishel Jagolinzer, blacksmith; Simon Leichter, owner of a dry goods store; Doctor Ilie Berger, dentist; and Frank Scoliard, plumber. Other trades listed in the city directories at the beginning of the century were butcher, fish market proprietor, bottler of seltzer water, cigar manufacturer, tinsmith, paperhanger, and hardware dealer.

A few of the mothers of those interviewed also had their own businesses. Mary Grant (Mrs. Louis Grant) opened a millinery shop on Prairie Avenue, and Mrs. Wolf Semonoff ran a dry goods store in her living room. Mrs. Benjamin Kane worked as a pharmacist in her husband's drug store.

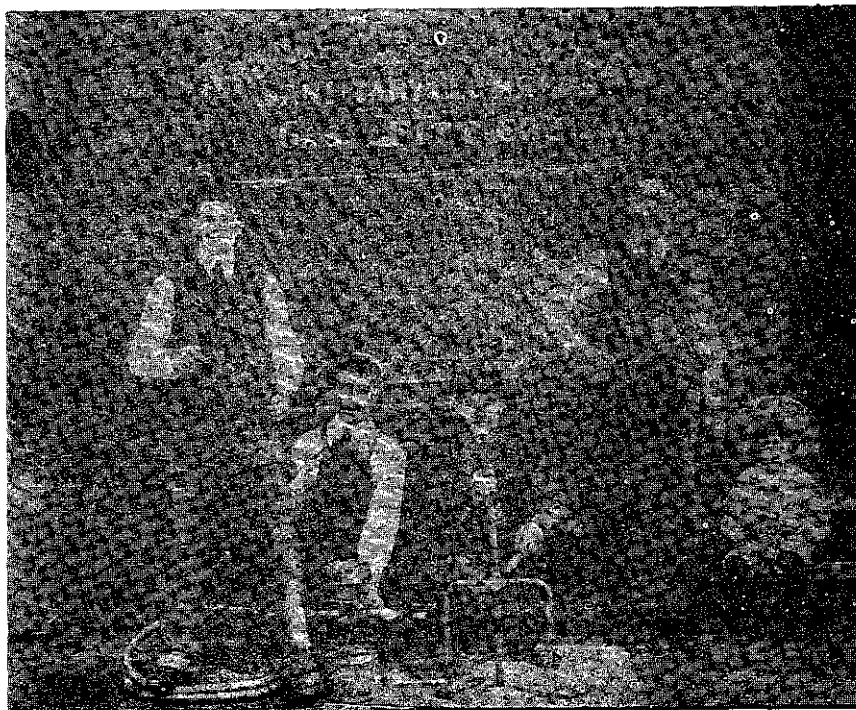
The Robinson family lived at the corner of Eddy Street and Willard Avenue. Two sons, Charles and Maurice, were among the first Jewish lawyers in Providence. There were some half dozen Jewish lawyers, including J. Jerome Hahn and Harry and Frank Bellin. Benjamin Brier remarked about lawyers Robinson, "Needless to say, they had a Jewish clientele—all poor people".

#### IT WAS NOT ALL WORK

Sundays were for drives in the country, for picnics—a release from the pressures of earning a living during the week.



Outing at Duby's Grove in Warwick, Rhode Island, circa 1915. Left to right: a Mr. Lerner; a Mr. Goldenberg; Abe Mayberg, the driver; Jacob Kaufman. Others not identified. Courtesy Ethel Scoliard.



Providence Plumbing Co., circa 1904. Located at 351 Point Street. Left to right: Rotman Brothers (Abe and Maurice); unidentified; Frank Scoliard; his son, Elisha Scoliard. Courtesy Ethel Scoliard.

Came Sunday, who could afford to go out anyplace? Berman, the butcher, had a horse and buggy and would pile in the family and go to Roger Williams Park. If the horse was in good trim, they might go as far as Toby's Farm or Palace Gardens (in Warwick). That is where the picnic was held. Palace Gardens had more pines and a baseball field. Most people did not have a buggy, so they went with a man named Ehrenkrantz, a mover, who had a long moving van (horse-drawn) with seats on both sides. He would load up the van with a couple of barrels of beer. Everyone would take their own food. On Sunday mornings around 10 o'clock off they would go to Palace Gardens to spend the day! Whole families. That was fun! It was really something to see on Sunday morning. The few Jewish families who did own horses and buggies would hitch up and go off for the day.<sup>19</sup>

\* \* \*

Picnics every Sunday. Ehrenkrantz and Gray had these huge strong furniture vans, and Sundays they converted them into a kind of bus by putting seats in them. For 25 cents you could ride to Palace Gardens for a picnic. They would be sponsored by Gemilath Chesed,\* and organizations like that. It was a big day. It would clean out the area in South Providence—mothers, fathers, kids. Palace Gardens would be in the area of what is now Governor Francis Farms area near Conimicut.<sup>20</sup>

\* \* \*

It was in Ehrenkrantz's moving van that people would pile in on Sundays and go to Palace Gardens and Duby's Grove. There is a story that my father (Frank Scoliard) used his plumber's torch to roast the frankfurts.<sup>21</sup>

\* \* \*

Father had a horse and buggy—a real "surrey with the fringe on the top". He had them housed elsewhere, and every Sunday Mr. Steiner used to get his horse ready, hitch it up, and bring it to our home. That buggy just shone! And we four girls would wait, all starched up, wearing crinoline under our dresses, and holding our baskets of lunch. My father would never go any distance unless there were other buggies going along. We would go to Rocky Point with the group of three or four other buggies, all lined up in a procession. Pa was really never sure of himself in driving. He had no mechanical ability. In Austria he had worked

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\*The South Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association.



in a store, and never knew how to use his hands. We also went to the Niantic Avenue picnic grounds. We used to have fun.<sup>22</sup>

\* \* \*

I remember the picnics in the summertime. One such picnic is particularly remembered because of the large number of people and the wonderful atmosphere which prevailed. It was held on Turoff's Farm. The day was sunny, and the people who gathered there were in a festive mood. It seemed as if half of the town were there on the farm. The picnic was converted into a grand mass meeting, with speeches and singing. The sun poured down her warmth on the people who stood and listened intently, and down on the trees of the farm. It was a picnic never to be forgotten.<sup>23</sup>

\* \* \*

Every Sunday we would go out picnicking. The Rhode Island Working Men's Association\* or some other organization would hire a big moving van, which was parked on the corner of Gay Street and Willard Avenue on Sundays. We would go to Palace Gardens. Out would come the barrels of beer, and everyone would pack a lunch. Our family also had a horse and carriage, a surrey, which we would take to Roger Williams Park for picnics. I would follow along on a pony I had. In winter we'd hitch a sleigh to the horses and one to the pony.<sup>24</sup>

Nat Fishman in recalling these events wondered how his father managed in his buggy (driven by a horse called Charlie). "Where did he put the eight kids?" he asked, and then answered "Perhaps there were four kids in four laps."

Another popular form of recreation was dancing. Irving Howe in his book, *World of our Fathers*, writes in some detail about the number of dance halls in the Jewish sector of New York. Here the immigrants had a chance to escape the problems and drudgery of their new existence in the United States.

"Jew night was Friday night at Rhodes. Families took their children with them while they danced." Lillian Berger Rubinstein recalled being taken to Rhodes as a child to watch her father, who enjoyed dancing.

I wanted to dance, and go to dances, but my father was against it. My mother was more liberal and gave me the money to go, although it was actually my own money for I had to turn over my pay envelope to my father.<sup>25</sup>

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\*Rhode Island Workingman Charity Association, chartered in 1909.



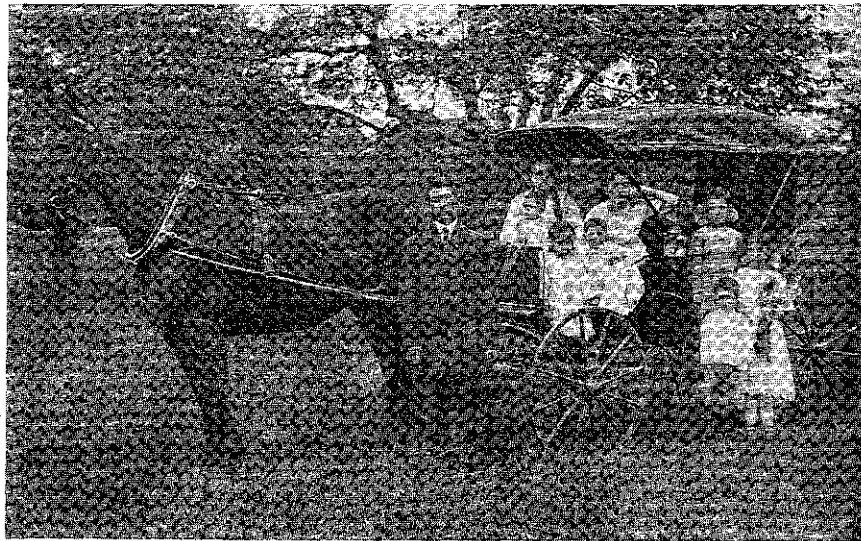
Sam Tatz's dancing class, circa 1902. Fannie Grant (Mrs. Charles C. Brown) is third from the left, top row. Courtesy Mrs. Charles C. Brown.



Abraham and Fannie Botvin and family, circa 1910. Courtesy Roberta Botvin Landman.



Abraham Botvin and son Max, circa 1910. He peddled fruits and vegetables in the summer and fish in the winter. Courtesy Roberta Botvin Landman.



Botvin family on an outing somewhere in Warwick, Rhode Island, circa 1910. Morris (standing) and Fannie Botvin (seated). Children, left to right: Morris Botvin, Sadie Botvin (Woolf), Bessie Botvin (Talan), Pauline Botvin (Mandell), Rose Botvin (Halpern), Max Botvin, and Celia Botvin (Paull). Courtesy Roberta Botvin Landman.

I was quite a dancer in my day. I would go to Rhodes on the Pawtuxet. You took a girl out, you took her to Rhodes and then you'd buy her an ice cream soda. You would have been a big sport. We would go to Rhodes on a trolley car. Friday night was a great night for Rhodes. We also used to have a lot of balls at Bazar's Hall sponsored by organizations to which I belonged, like Touro,\* the Young Men's Hebrew Association,\*\*, the Philomathians,† and the Endeavors.†† Those were the four young men's clubs.

The women had their own organizations.<sup>26</sup>

The Zellermayers' daughters recalled their parents' dancing, and they were fond of one particular dance which was always played just for them at any social they attended.

For younger people the big social life was at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet. We would take the Broad Street trolley there for the weekend dancing. It was the meeting place for girls and boys. Sometimes we would go dancing at Hunt's Mills (near Rumford in East Providence) and Vanity Fair, which was in Crescent Park.<sup>27‡</sup>

After making a number of weekend trips to Providence one weekend had particular significance. One evening my young lady invited me to a dance pavilion called Hunt's Mills. In addition to dancing, there were canoes and row boats for hire. While paddling my own canoe . . . my first proposal was accepted!<sup>28</sup>

#### SAMUEL TATZ

No anecdotes about dancing and the dances which were held in South Providence would be complete without reference to Samuel Tatz. He was the dancing teacher of South Providence. He held both adult and children's dancing classes. A description of this colorful man was given by various people who were interviewed. According to Maurice Bazar he was a thin, dapper man, quite a musician, and could lead an orchestra. The weddings were the highlight occasions, and Tatz's orchestra often played for the dancing.

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\*The Touro Cadets, chartered in 1897, and the Touro Guards of American Zionists, chartered in 1903, were related organizations. See *RIJHN* 2:99-103, No. 2, April 1952.

\*\*The Providence Young Men's Hebrew Association, chartered in 1912.

†Hebrew Philomathian Association, chartered in 1910.

††The Young Men's Endeavor Association, chartered in 1909.

‡Not quite correct. It was a former amusement area in East Providence, once located on the shore of the Providence River off Pawtucket Avenue on land now used as an oil company tank farm. It was destroyed by fire.

Mrs. Elsie Tatz Strauss reminisced about her uncle, Sam Tatz: "My father, Max Tatz, was a silversmith, and his brother Sam joined him after my father had been here for some time. (Max Tatz came to this country in the 1880s.) Sam played the violin and was a dancing instructor. During the day he held dancing classes for children, some of them co-ed. I played piano for his classes, but being young I wasn't too proficient. If he made enough money on the classes, I might get 50 cents for playing. Otherwise, I received nothing. My uncle had an unusually sensitive ear for music, and often I guess I played so that my left hand did not know what my right hand was doing, and I made errors. When he detected the errors, he would say, 'Stop the music!' In the children's classes he taught folk dancing, such as the Virginia Reel, as well as some ballroom dancing. I particularly recall the children (and I participated in this one) being dressed in sailors' uniforms and dancing the hornpipe."

Mrs. Strauss described her uncle in this way. "He had very tender feet and could not wear the hard leather of those days, so he had to buy ladies shoes made of kidskin. He had the heels cut down, but he was known as 'the man with the lady's shoes'. He was also called a Beau Brummel with a shock of dark curly hair. Since he couldn't make a living from his dancing classes, he tried other jobs. He didn't like the candy store, which he started, but he did earn extra money by collecting for various charitable organizations such as The Miriam Hospital. He was a familiar figure in both the North End and South Providence where the Jews lived, as he rode around on his motorcycle collecting the *pushkes*.\* He knew where every Jewish family lived in Providence. He was 'just lovable' and would take the children for rides on the extra seat of his motorcycle."

Sarah Olch Webber (Mrs. Joseph Webber) called Sam Tatz "the dancemaster with the cane", recalling how he pranced around. She never had lessons with him, but accompanied her cousin, Regina, when she attended the classes. Mrs. Webber said she would have loved to have been part of the group of children, but since her family permitted her to study piano, she had to be satisfied to be a spectator. She remembered how "my cousin Regina would come from Doyle Avenue on Saturday afternoons with her gorgeous doll, herself dressed in a taffeta coat and with feathers in her hat, and go to her dancing class carrying her dancing slippers in a bag."

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\*The little can or container kept in the home, often in the kitchen, in which money to be donated to charity was accumulated. (Yiddish)

First

Grand

# Concert and Ball

Given by the

**S. B. M. R. A.**



Colonial Hall, 728 Westminster St.

Wednesday Eve., October 28, 1908

May's

H. Beck & Co.



## Officers of Association

B. Gentile, Pres.      Sam Shalson, Vice-Pres.  
Sarah Goldberg, Rec. Sec.  
L. Shanbrun, Fin. Sec.  
I. Silverman, Treas.

## Committee of Arrangements

Joe Heller, Chairman.      Sarah Goldberg, Sec.  
I. Silverman, Treas.  
L. Shanbrun, B. Gentile, S. Shalson, Nellie Brady  
Rose Ostrow, Bella Heller, Golda Siegelman  
H. Landesberg

## Reception Committee

C. Silverman, Chairman,  
A. Silverman, J. Silverman, I. Silverman,  
J. Sandler, R. Quartrucey

## Floor Director

B. GENTILE

## Asst. Floor Director

L. SHANBRUN

## Chief of Aids

I. SILVERMAN

## Aids

S. Shalson, Nellie Brady, Rose Ostrow, Bella Heller  
Golda Siegelman, M. Gordon, H. Landesberg  
M. Davidson

**Compliments of Silverman Bros.**

150 Chestnut Street

Providence, R. I.



CHARLES SILVERMAN



ARCHIBALD SILVERMAN

# Program



In the Wildwood Where The Blue Bells Grew,  
Song, Miss Sarah Goldberg

Flying Jim's Last Leap, Recitation  
Miss Lillian Goldberg

The Ruby and the Soldier, Musical Act,  
Bailey Bros.

A Cursing Scene of Leah the Forsaken, Recitation  
Miss Laura Goldberg

Piano Solo Miss Bertha Goldberg

## Order of Dances

1. Waltz	Now is the time
2. Two Step	To enjoy our self
3. Schottische	Are you all happy
4. Lanciers	If not why not
5. Waltz	Be all happy
6. Schottische	With us
7. Two Step	S. B. M. R. A.
8. Lanciers	To our President
9. Waltz	To our Vice-President
10. Two Step	Our Secretary

## Intermission

11. Waltz	To our Treasurer
12. Two Step	To our Com. Chairman
13. Lanciers	To our Floor Director
14. Schottische	To our Committee
15. Two Step	Charles Silverman
16. Waltz	Arthur Silverman
17. Schottische	John Silverman
18. Lanciers	I. Silverman
19. Prize Waltz	To our Lady Friends
20. Schottische	To our Gentlemen Friends
21. Good Night Waltz	Don't forget our next



Jack Leichter described Sam Tatz as a fairly short man, who wore high heels and drove around on a motorcycle. "He and Sam Bander were the two orchestra leaders for the Jewish weddings and affairs. I remember we kids used to call his orchestra, 'Tatz's Licorice Orchestra.' Actually it was called, Tatz's Lyric Orchestra. The Tatz family all had been musical."

Another of Tatz's pupils was Fannie Grant Brown (Mrs. Charles Brown). Benjamin Brier described Sam Tatz as the "Arthur Fiedler of South Providence."

The big social events were the weddings, dances, and banquets sponsored by the multitude of organizations of South Providence.

Sidney Silverman (Charles Silverman's son) has among his papers a printed program for the first concert and ball given by the Silverman Brothers Mutual Relief Association. The affair was held on October 28, 1908 in Colonial Hall, located at 728 Westminster Street. Fay's orchestra provided the music. The program lists the following performances:

In the Wildwood Where The Blue Bells Grow,

Song by Miss Sarah Goldberg

Flying Jim's Last Leap,

Recitation by Miss Lillian Goldberg

The Ruby and the Soldier,

Musical Act by Baily Bros.

A Cursing Scene of Leah the Forsaken,

Recitation by Miss Laura Goldberg

Piano Solo

by Miss Bertha Goldberg.

The dances included a waltz, a two step, a schottische, and a lanciers. In addition there were a Prize Waltz and the Good Night Waltz.

#### BAZAR'S HALL

When South Providence started to grow, the people had to congregate somewhere; so my father built a wooden hall at 161 Willard Avenue. It was the center of all social activities—Jewish marriages, and balls at which Tatz and Bander would play. There were all kinds of gatherings for boys and girls. The hall was also used for meetings of organizations as well as for the many lectures, which were well attended. The hall was upstairs, and stores were downstairs. Maurice Robinson (the lawyer and later judge) had his first office in that building. My folks even had a jewelry

business in that hall, where we used to make those combs with celluloid. This building burned down in 1907, but my father put up another hall. The new one was of brick and was erected in 1908.

Friday night was movie night—10 cents admission. It was the neighborhood movie house and could hold one to two hundred people. We would put up chairs for the movies, and my sister played the piano for the silent movies. An operator would come in every Friday night to operate the movies. There was always a lot of noise from the movable chairs. Films like the Pearl White serials and "The Iron Claw" were shown. There was a detective, Jack Bafia, who used to be at the movies. He would walk around with a big stick to keep order. Eventually bowling alleys and pool tables replaced the movies in the hall.

Most of the weddings were in our hall; so I do not think too many went to the synagogue to get married. The wedding was held in the middle of the hall; then the *huppah*\* would be taken down, and the area left free for dancing. The food was on tables which were lined up on the sides.<sup>29</sup>

Harry Krasnow's recollection of Bazar's Hall related to his having attended meetings of the Literary and Dramatic Club there. The club was organized by an actor. Abraham Bazar recalls purchasing a bicycle from him, for which he paid \$3. He used it for a number of years, but eventually it was stolen. "That was common", he said, "they stole small things."

#### OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The boys of South Providence engaged in the usual sand-lot activities as they did in other neighborhoods. There was a vacant lot near the Chester Avenue School (the local public school). Jack Leichter remembers how they played ball on this lot and how they also roasted potatoes there. In the winter a favorite hill for sliding and tobogganing was the incline of Blackstone Street. They would start at the top of Blackstone Street near Prairie Avenue and slide all the way down to Plain Street. They were out every night that there was snow on the ground, reminisced Jack Leichter, who recalled that they did not have to fear automobile traffic in those days. Leichter also named such games as "hit the wicket", "peggy", "duck the duck" and, of course, baseball—all played in the street. Abraham Bloom, who said

\*Wedding canopy. (Hebrew)

he belonged to the Prairie Avenue Athletic Club, also recalls sliding in the ice and snow on the Blackstone Street hill, but added that the Rhode Island Hospital grounds were good for sliding too. Others spoke of skating at Roger Williams Park and bathing in the summer at Kirwin's Beach† Joseph Jagolinzer spoke about a pond: "Do you know that on Gay Street and Willard Avenue—about 200 feet on Gay Street toward Public Street—there was a lake (most unusual for South Providence!). We used to go on a raft on that lake. Later on it became a dump. All the waste from the City of Providence came to fill up that lake. Many a time a horse and wagon would go down in the lake while trying to back up."

At eight o'clock every night anyone who wanted a bit of excitement would go to the fire station, hear the bells ring, and watch the horses come out of their stalls and into their harnesses as daily training exercise. Jagolinzer recalled that "That was something to see".

Not so innocent, according to his description, were the events of the night before the 4th of July. "There was always a bonfire at the corner of Willard Avenue and Gay Streets the night before the 4th of July. The material for the bonfire began by fences being ripped. Nobody's fence was safe. A loose chair, anything that would burn were all for the fire. In my father's blacksmith shop there would be wheels—they would steal the wheels, the shafts, etc. They would heap it up. Once the bonfire got going the Fire Department would have to come around as the fire was so close to the buildings."

"I remember how we would get together and gab in the barber shop the way women do today in a hairdressing establishment, I guess," commented Nat Fishman.

It was apparent, however, that the so-called social life for the most part centered about the home.

Every Saturday my father would come home from services at the Willard Avenue *Shul* with company. There was always plenty of the homemade wine and liquor (which was made out of cherries), and homemade pickled cucumbers, tomatoes, sauerkraut, and watermelons, as well as homemade *challah*.\* They would sing and dance and have a merry time. While they were poor, they had a way of making life pleasant.<sup>30</sup>

\* \* \*

†Later Edgewood Beach, and now no longer in existence. It was located on the west side of Narragansett Bay just beyond the Providence city line.

\*A braided loaf of white bread, a delicacy for the Sabbath and holy days.

My mother always had her big family of brothers and sisters at our home. Neighbors also were just like family. I can still see a 4th of July backyard dinner with the long table and my mother's artistic decorations with flags on each side.<sup>31</sup>

\* \* \*

Everybody came to our house. They met to discuss. The *Gemilth Chessed*\*\* founders met in our house. On *Shabbos*† my father always dressed up and went to *Shul*. He would come back smelling of snuff (one could not smoke on *Shabbos*, and Pa was a great smoker). He always brought back people for *kiddush*.†† If there was a traveling Rabbi or anyone else he would have that person for dinner. Like most all good Jews, they fed all who came.<sup>32</sup>

#### THEY PRAY

For the first families which settled in the South Providence area there were no synagogues. Sadie Jacobs spoke of her family having to travel to What Cheer Hall on North Main Street for the high holidays. For the morning and evening *davening*‡ and for the sabbath, her father gathered a group at his house, that is, when a sufficient number of Jews could be found to form the congregation.‡‡ The Reform Jews had already established the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David and by 1890 had built their own structure on Friendship Street at Foster Street.<sup>33</sup> However, the Jacobs family and those who settled in the South Providence area from countries such as Roumania, Russia, Austria, and Poland were Orthodox and did not wish to worship with the Reform Jews, who were largely of German origin.

One of the first synagogues to be established in the area (1898) was located at 201 Willard Avenue and was known as the South Providence Hebrew Congregation, also known as the "big *Shul*", the Russian *Shul*", and "*die Rusishe Shul*". It was chartered on January 30, 1901.<sup>34</sup> Sadie Jacobs recalls, "That was the first real *shul* I remember in South Providence. My sister's wedding on September 16, 1902 was the first one held in that *shul*."

Those Jews who came from the same geographical area in Europe

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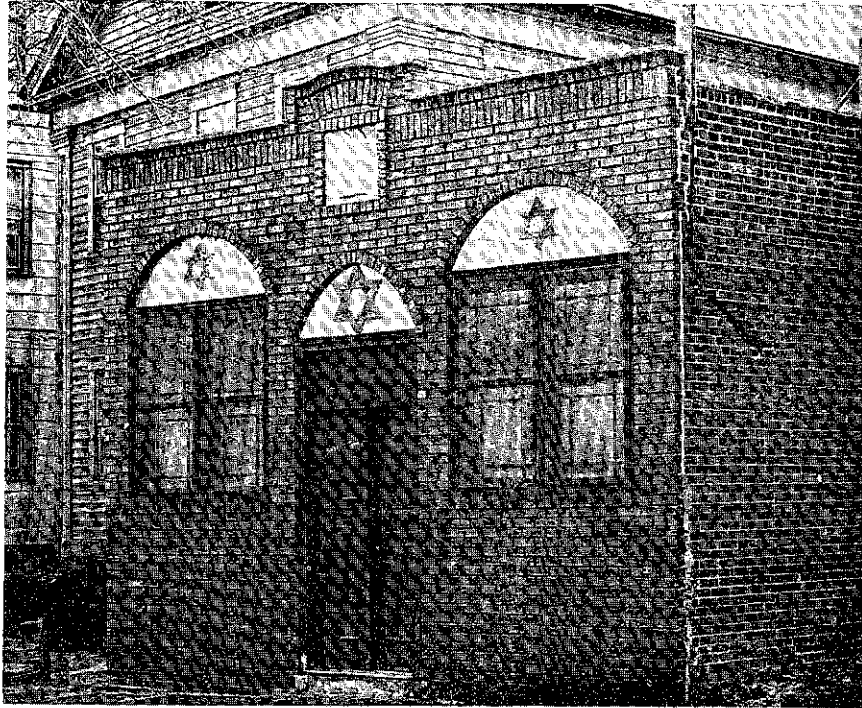
\*\*See footnote, P. 206.

†Sabbath. (Yiddish)

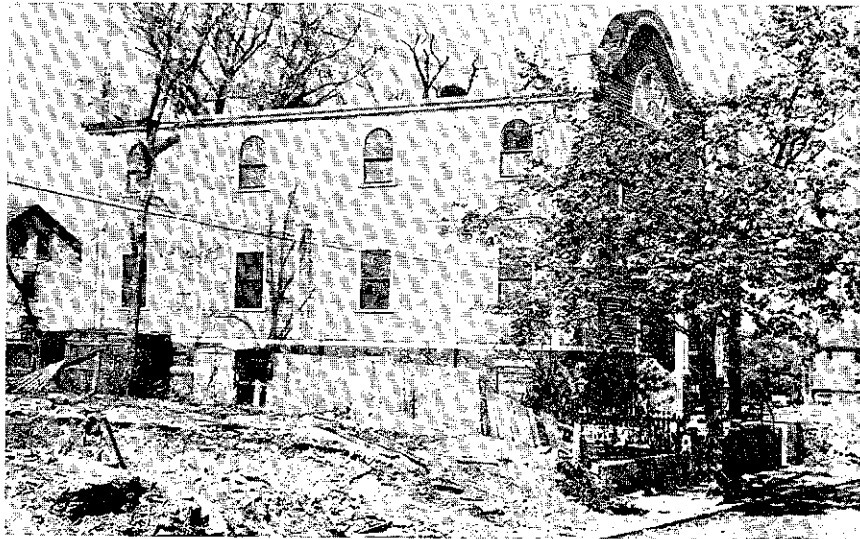
††The prayer and ceremony that sanctifies the Sabbath and the holy days. (Hebrew)

‡Praying, possibly derives from the French *l'office divin*. A traditional Jew *davens* three times a day. (Yiddish)

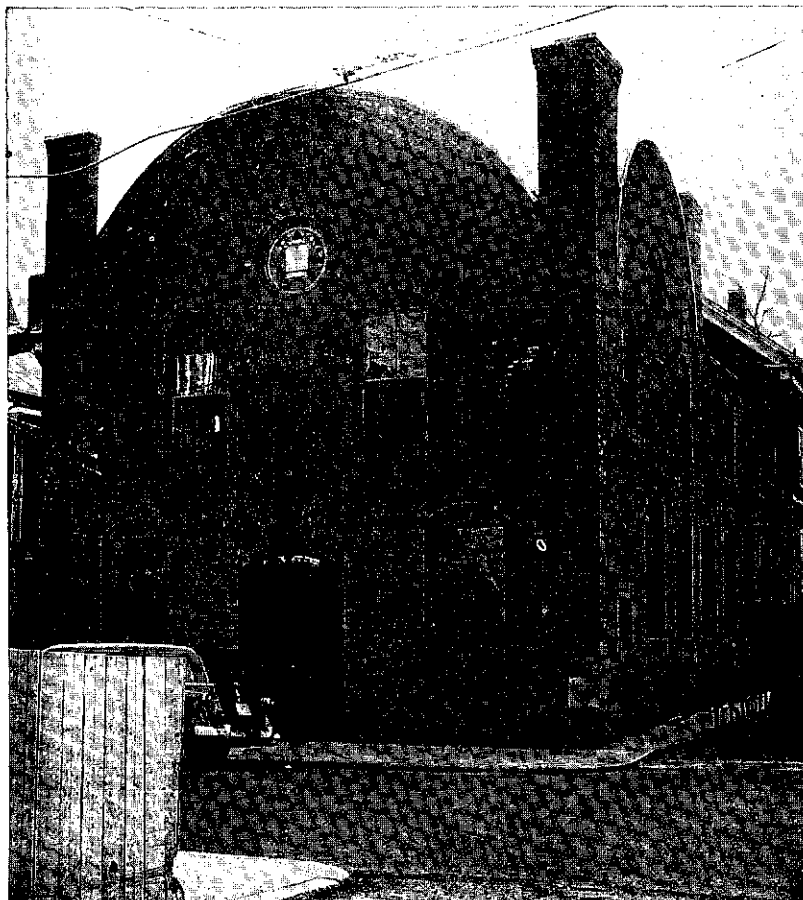
‡‡A *minyan* (Hebrew), or quorum of ten adult males.



Lenard Azedek Congregation (Linnath Hazedek) , Willard Avenue.  
Courtesy of *The Providence Journal*.



South Providence Hebrew Congregation. Also known as the  
Russian Shul (Synagogue). Located at 201 Willard Avenue.



Nachzekas Hadas Congregation. The Roumanian Shul (Synagogue), Wilard Avenue and Caswell Court. Courtesy of *The Providence Journal*.

tended to associate with one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the synagogues bore names of the countries of origin of the founding fathers. The Tifereth Israel (Glory of Israel),\* also called "The Roumanian Shul", was chartered in 1910. It was located at 225 Willard Avenue.<sup>35</sup>

The congregation, Machzeka Hadas (Supporters of Faith), with Herman Paster as its president, was incorporated on March 22, 1907.<sup>36</sup> The *Providence Journal* of August 12, 1907 described the festivities on the occasion of its opening:

Jews present scroll to Church. Elaborate ceremony at Synagogue of Congregation Machzeka Hadas. Elaborate street parade led by the Rabbi and Herman Paster, as marshall and members of the congregation marched through the streets reaching the synagogue about 8:30. The scroll was placed on a table in the centre and those present signed it.

The article further noted that remarks were made by "many prominent Hebrews" and that the streets were thronged with people during the parade. "There was a constant burning of Roman candles and enthusiasm ran riot. The Sunday School class children carried Japanese lanterns."

A small congregation the Lenard Azedek Congregation,\*\* was chartered on April 24, 1896. This group were locally called the Sabotniks, because of their strict observance of the Sabbath.<sup>37</sup>

The Chevrah Beth Yisroel Anshe Austria† built a synagogue on Robinson Street in 1906. The synagogue was chartered as the Congregation Bais Isruel Anshoy Hestrich,<sup>38</sup> and was commonly known as the "Robinson Street Shul". On July 28, 1908 the *Providence Journal* reported as follows:

Permit to build Synagogue. House of Israel to be erected on Robinson Street. A permit to build a synagogue on Robinson Street

\*Variously spelled Tifereth Israel, Teferath Israel, Tefferath Israel, Tefferas Israel, and Tiferes Yisroel, it was listed in the Providence City Directory from 1915 to 1922. Spiritual leader was Rabbi Max Cohen. It was not one of the four South Providence congregations which merged in 1954 to form Congregation Shaare Zedek. It is not to be confused with Tifereth Israel Anshoy Korney, which was chartered on June 6, 1900 (*RIJHN* 2:44, [No. 1] June 1956) and was located at 23 Shawmut Avenue in the North End for many years. Ed.

\*\*Also known as the Linas Hazedek Shul, more properly Linnath Hazedek (Hebrew), meaning "merciful care of the sick at night."

†Congregation House of Israel, men of Austria. (Hebrew) The name as it appears in the charter is a Yiddish corruption of the Hebrew.

was granted yesterday to Abraham Zellermyer and others. Page and Page are architects of the building and Frank McKendall is the contractor. It is to be 40 x 60 ft. of brick with granite trimming, with a slate roof and windows partly of leaded glass. Interior is to contain a basement and main audience room, with galleries extending around the sides and rear. In the basement there is to be a reading room, coat rooms, committee rooms and toilet facilities. The large auditorium room will be furnished in hard pine. The altar at one end of the room with a platform in the center will have a brass rail and be surmounted by a canopy. The ceilings will be tinted; the building will be steam heated and lighted by electricity.

Abraham Bloom had been told that the synagogue pews were built by his father, William Bloom. He believes they are now in use at the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island.

The daughters of Abraham Zellermyer (Mrs. Anna Field and Mrs. Florence Silverman) recalled how their father, together with Nathan Horowitz, Abraham Bazar, Max Ross, L. Morgenrott, and Simon Smira founded the Austrian synagogue at 53 Robinson Street. Zellermyer was the first president and remained president for many years. Before the synagogue was built the family had attended High Holiday services in Bazar's Hall.

Jack Leichter described Abraham Zellermyer in this way: "I remember him as a tall, thin, nice-looking man. You know, they would auction off the *aliyyah*.\* He was the auctioneer, and he would do it in schillings.\*\* That was outstanding to me as a kid listening to his voice booming out. It was a strictly Austrian synagogue, and they had a Litvak† for a Cantor—Feifdee Keller was his name. He was also a *shohet*,†† and a very nice man."

After twenty-five years of existence the Congregation presented Abraham Zellermyer with the following tribute:

Whereas, the Congregation Beth Israel Ansche Austria is now celebrating its 25th anniversary, and

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\*The privilege of being called to the dais of the synagogue to participate in the Reading of the Law (*Torah*). (Hebrew)

\*\*An Austrian currency unit.

†Lithuanian Jew.

††Ritual slaughterer.



Whereas, our worthy and esteemed founder and President, Mr. Abraham Zeller-mayer, has since the inception and founding of our Congregation labored unceasingly in its behalf, it is fitting that we record our appreciation of him; therefore, be it Resolved, that our beloved President and founder, Mr. Abraham Zeller-mayer by his continuous efforts and contribution of love, labor and monies to the cause of Orthodox Judaism in general and our Congregation in particular, places his name in such relation to the congregation that for all times its friends and grateful public will appreciate and remember. Providence, R. I. this 23rd of September, 1931.<sup>39</sup>

Leases were drawn up by attorney Maurice Robinson for persons desiring to buy seats in the Austrian Synagogue. Examples of these leases are preserved in the archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. The cost of two seats (a man's and lady's) came to a total of \$330, with a down payment of \$27 and \$1.50 payable each week. Once payment was completed, the seats belonged to the congregant without further payment as long as he observed the bylaws of the congregation. If the congregant died, he had the right to will his seats, or they could be disposed of by his executors.

Milton Horowitz, grandson of one of the founders, Nathan Horowitz, recalls attending synagogue as a small boy. He was able to recreate in his mind the order of the men as they sat in their assigned seats. The congregants sat facing these "pillars of the synagogue", who sat on either side of the *bimah*.<sup>\*</sup> Ira Rakatansky sat directly in front at a table, and on one side of him sat Abraham Bazar, one Goldenberg (believes he was a grocer), Solomon Resh, Nathan Horowitz, Smira, and Adolph Rotenberg. Opposite them sat Keller, Charles Silverman (of Silverman Brothers Manufacturing Jewelers), and three or four whom he could not remember, Reverend Teller (the *hazzan*\*\*), and the Rabbi when he was in their synagogue. They had one Rabbi for all of the synagogues. Otherwise the patriarchs took over. "Mr. Abraham Zeller-mayer", Milton Horowitz said, "as President he had his own special position in the synagogue. He was a very high moral man."

Temple Beth Israel, a conservative congregation established in 1921, borrowed one of the Torah scrolls from Ansche Austria for its first service.

<sup>\*</sup>Raised platform in the center of Orthodox synagogues, containing a reading desk. (Hebrew)

<sup>\*\*</sup>The cantor. (Hebrew)

Congregation Shaare Zedek was chartered on October 5, 1954. It purchased the Temple Beth El building on Broad Street from the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David. (Temple Beth El had moved to Orchard Avenue.) The new congregation resulted from the merger of the following South Providence synagogues: The Lenard Azedek Congregation, the South Providence Hebrew Congregation, the Machzekas Hadas Congregation, and the Congregation Bais Isruel Anshoy Hestreich.<sup>40</sup> The factors leading to merger were the decrease in Jewish population in the area and the razing of the synagogue buildings by the South Providence redevelopment project.

Sarah Webber has vivid memories of an Orthodox service to which she was taken by her grandfather when she was a very small child. It was a High Holiday service held in the upstairs rooms of the What Cheer Hall, the congregants having no synagogue. As Mrs. Webber recalled it:

My grandfather was one of the oldest present. There were great big tall candles, taller than I was, very large in circumference, and they would be stuck in sand. My grandfather would be the head reader at the lectern, and he would be wearing a white wool kittel\* that covered him from head to foot, and he would wear white wool stockings and no shoes. He would pick me up. I adored him, and to this day can picture the delight I had in his arms, and smell of camphor from his robes, which were taken out to be worn only for the High Holidays. The smell of camphor intermingled with the smell of spice and citron which the women carried, because they were fasting, and they kept it handy in case they might faint. The women were at the end of the room near the door at a long table. The kids were stuck in another room (they did not have baby sitters)—Sammy Silverman, the Winkler Brothers, my brothers, others, and myself would raise Cain. They had carpeting, and we would take long runs and slide so that clouds of dust would come up. We would come out of there black as coal. The mothers would often have cold chicken stashed away, which they would surreptitiously slip to their children, and they would have to eat it in that room with all the dust!

Mrs. Webber attended Sunday School at Temple Beth El, and recalls going to the classes, which were held in the Outlet Company hall,

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\*White robe worn by the cantor and certain congregants at High Holiday services. (Yiddish)

while the Temple was being constructed on Broad Street at the corner of Glenham Street.

Lester Bradner, in his chapter on "Religion" in Kirk's *A Modern City*,<sup>41</sup> discusses the Jews of Providence, their religion, and manner of worship as they appeared to him in 1909:

A growing factor in the religious life of Providence is the Jews . . . the development of Hebrew life in Providence is a comparatively recent feature, greatly accelerated in growth by the persecutions a few years past in Russia. . . . They are by nature a self-contained and orderly people. Their family morals are above the average. They make good citizens, even if not agreeable. The older generation, foreign born mostly, keep to themselves. . . . The question with them will ultimately be here, as in New York and elsewhere, whether they will hold to the faith of their fathers or become indifferent to any religious ties. At present the orthodox Jews far outnumber the "reform" element. There are at present four synagogues and four congregations, or "chevras" without a permanent edifice of their own, in addition to the one Reform House of Worship. But the children of Orthodox parents are often allowed to attend the Sunday school of the Reform congregation. . . . The three largest synagogues, in addition to their regular services, have religious schools for children and advanced classes for adults. The charitable work of the Jews among their own people is always notable. . . . Very few Jews here are inclined to consider a change of faith. They are naturally suspicious of attempts to proselyte. Attempts have been made, and probably will continue to be made on the part of the Christian churches in Providence to bring the gospel to the Hebrew. It is not likely, however, that they can meet with any great success. But whether Christianized or not, it is evident that the Hebrews are destined to play a large part in our civic life in the United States.<sup>41</sup>

The attitude of the parents of those interviewed toward Judaism and their observance of its precepts varied considerably. For example, the Bloom family recall that their mother was very religious. Since she was well versed in Hebrew, she would pray for the other women who would sit with her in the synagogue by following the Hebrew she read for them. The Gordon daughters (Hannah Gordon Baratz and Ruth Gordon) remember the women sitting in the back of the hall (before there was a balcony) separated by a curtain which divided the room. Since they could not see the men at the *bimah*, a man

would come back periodically to point out the place in the prayer service.\*

These Orthodox Jews who had a background of piety in Europe continued their religious customs and traditions in the South Providence synagogues. The women were more concerned with the keeping of kosher kitchens in their homes and the lighting of candles at the appropriate time, long the role of the female members of the household. Fannie Brown, who did not consider her mother to be especially observant or pious, recalled her mother, Mary Grant, *sklogn kapores*.\*\* (This rite is performed on the day before Yom Kippur. A fowl is waved over the head of a person, whose sins are symbolically transferred to the fowl, which is then sacrificed on his behalf.)

Benton Rosen in his paper on the founding of Temple Beth Israel<sup>42</sup> referred to the attitude of the children of these pious men:

Most of these children would dress in their Holy Day best, congregate all over Willard Avenue and refrain from entering any synagogues in the district . . . although they could read the prayers, they did not understand them.

There was other evidence that attendance in the synagogues was not a universal practice:

On Friday evening Willard Avenue was the haven for only the very pious, the stooped, bearded old men carrying their velvet covered prayer books as they hurried to *shul*. There were two synagogues on Willard Avenue, both little red buildings with stained glass windows and musty-smelling interiors. On Friday evenings only a handful of men came to the synagogue, and after they had recited their prayers and left for home for the Sabbath meal, Willard Avenue was a deserted street.<sup>43</sup>

On Staniford Street there was a *mikveh* (ritual bath). Among those interviewed, no one recalled anyone in his family having attended it as a ritual on Fridays. One person said that she reluctantly went to it before her wedding on her father's insistence.

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\*In the Orthodox synagogue the women congregants traditionally sit in a balcony, segregated from the men.

\*\*Yiddish. According to Rosten: "Rabbinical authorities in the middle ages opposed the practice, calling it pagan and foolish, but they were unsuccessful in their disapproval — for the frightened and the superstitious prevailed, as they, alas, so often do." Ed.

Reference to the *mikveh*\* is contained in Samuel Altman's<sup>44</sup> article:

Summertime brought many strange visitors to South Providence. These were the emissaries from *yeshivas*, famous seats of learning in Eastern Europe, or orphanages and charitable funds in Palestine. They were wandering men, distinguished by their European garb and appearance. Usually they were the guest of the Rabbi and were given seats of honor in the synagogues.

On Friday afternoon they would come out of the Staniford Street *mikveh*, water dripping from their long beards and side curls, clean and ready for the day of the Sabbath. They walked in their long black *kapotes*\*\* and wide hats keeping close to the walls of the houses so as not to rub elbows with passing women. People would stop to look at these visitors from another world, and they regarded them with respect.

Intermarriage was unusual among that generation of Jews. That is why Katie Goldstein of Staniford Street created much gossip when she married a fellow-worker, Vincent Sorrentino, who later became the prosperous owner of Uncas Manufacturing Company, a large jewelry manufacturer.

#### THEY ENCOUNTER ANTISEMITISM

How did the Jew who settled in the South Providence area get along with his Gentile neighbor? Did he encounter the antisemitism that was rampant in Eastern Europe during the late 19th century and early 20th century? Benjamin Brier made these observations about the rapport between the Jew and Gentile: "There was the Jewish and the Gentile sections of Willard Avenue with Plain Street the dividing line. My family did not have trouble with renting where they wanted, for they never tried to live beyond the Jewish neighborhood. Those boys who would torment the Jew with the beard did it out of ignorance. They didn't want to understand the Jew, who was alien to them, most of whom were American born. The conflicts were street fights, not real antisemitism. I grew up with non-Jews who have

\*Hebrew. Rosten describes the *mikveh* as "the bath, prescribed by ritual, which a Jewish bride took before her wedding, and which religious Jewish women took (a) at the end of their menstrual period, (b) after bearing a child." A community of Jews was obligated to have and maintain a community *mikveh*. Immersion by males is practiced only among some very Orthodox groups on stated occasions. In Eastern Europe the women's *mikveh* served also as a communal bathhouse for the menfolk. They would have taken their weekly pre-Sabbath ablutions there. Ed.

\*\**Kapota* is a long outer garment at one time generally worn in Eastern Europe. (Yiddish) It has survived as the distinctive garb of certain groups of extreme Orthodox and Hasidic Jews.

remained my good friends." Brier felt that there was discrimination preventing a young Jewish person from getting a good job. Open to him would be such jobs as foot-press operator in a jewelry shop, which was the lowest job in the trade, or work as a janitor or newsboy. As the Jewish people improved their status in the community and started hiring Gentiles, there was a turning point in the relationship.

Others referred to gang fights between the young Jews and Gentiles. Joseph Jagolinzer commented: "Crossing that line was the Irish section. Boys would come up to the Jewish section and fight. There were some real fights—great animosity was created between these kids. Some of the older ones wanted to take revenge. Some big men came up to take revenge for their children. We had our men too—the Winkler brothers, Dave Horowitz, who was very, very strong and could handle four or five at a time. We had other young men who could defend the neighborhood, if someone were looking for trouble." Jack Leichter's version about these conflicts was similar to Jagolinzer's: "We always had some Jewish hero, who would walk with us as a protector. The Winkler family lived on Blackstone Street. The oldest son was known as the toughest guy in South Providence. He was a street-car conductor. He would beat up anybody who had anything to say about the Jews. There was a family named Polafsky (also remembered by Max Millman), which lived on Bogman Street. Their oldest son was known as 'big Jew'. He was a toughie. He also spent his time beating up the Irish who abused the Jews. These men were our champions," Leichter also felt that this kind of antisemitism grew out of ignorance which was not ingrained, for he has continued his friendship with some of the Irish boys with whom he went to school.

Jack Leichter added: "The Irish boys would taunt the man with a beard, or if their fathers got drunk they might say 'Goddamn Jew', and the kids would take it up. The Irish might have been immigrants too, but they had a little more status. For one thing they never had beards, and they had no restrictions like not lighting stoves on Friday night and Saturday (the Sabbath). I remember that David Korn, who was very pious, would hire an Irishman to light his range (stove)" (at such times).

Ethel Scoliard had a clear recollection of these gang fights, since they took place in front of her home, which was located at the corner of Willard Avenue and Plain Street. The combatants stopped long enough for her to enter her house. She also considered these fights as personal rather than based on true antisemitism.

In the old days unpleasant incidents frequently occurred between the Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of South Providence. Young boys from Plain Street would descend on Willard Avenue and molest Jews on the street. These boys were mostly Irish, and their favorite sport was to crowd an elderly Jew off the sidewalk, pull at his beard, or sneak up from behind and knock down his hat. Often they would snatch food from the open stands in front of grocery stores, and annoy women and children.

Complaints to parents were of no avail. The police were helpless. They would attack and run before the police could come to the scene. The situation became unbearable. Then a group of young Jewish boys, led by Moshele Elman, decided to do something about it. They organized a protective group that would come armed with clubs and fists whenever the rowdies appeared. From then on the hoodlums did not get away unpunished. They met resistance every time they made an appearance in the Jewish neighborhood.

But it would be a mistake to think that all Gentiles in South Providence were hostile to the Jews. On the contrary, Jew and Gentile lived next to each other as good neighbors, worked together, and did business with one another.

On Robinson Street, just across from the *shul* (synagogue), lived 90-year-old McCormick. He would always stand in front of his house, watching the Sabbath worshippers come and go, wishing them a "good Shabbos" or "good Yomtov."<sup>45</sup>

From a novel<sup>46</sup> about South Providence written by a non-Jew there is further reference to the Jew-Gentile situation. "Joseph, because he was bigger and a year or so older, was the leader of the bunch and it was he who this morning led the boys against the Jew. It was Joseph, who, the day they dumped a bucket of manure they had scraped up from the street into Goldstein's tailor shop, was the last one to run." There follows a retailed description of how these boys, under Joseph's leadership, torment an old Jew who happens to walk by. When questioned later about the reason for their torment, the answer was "because he was just a Jew." The ringleader, Joseph, told the younger boy that "Jews will cheat you and they kidnap Catholic babies when there's no one looking and kill them right in their churches. Other similar lurid atrocities were enumerated. These reactions make more

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\*"Good Sabbath" or "Happy Holiday." (Yiddish)

comprehensible the references of those interviewed to ignorance as the basis for these street conflicts.

#### THEY PURSUE AN EDUCATION

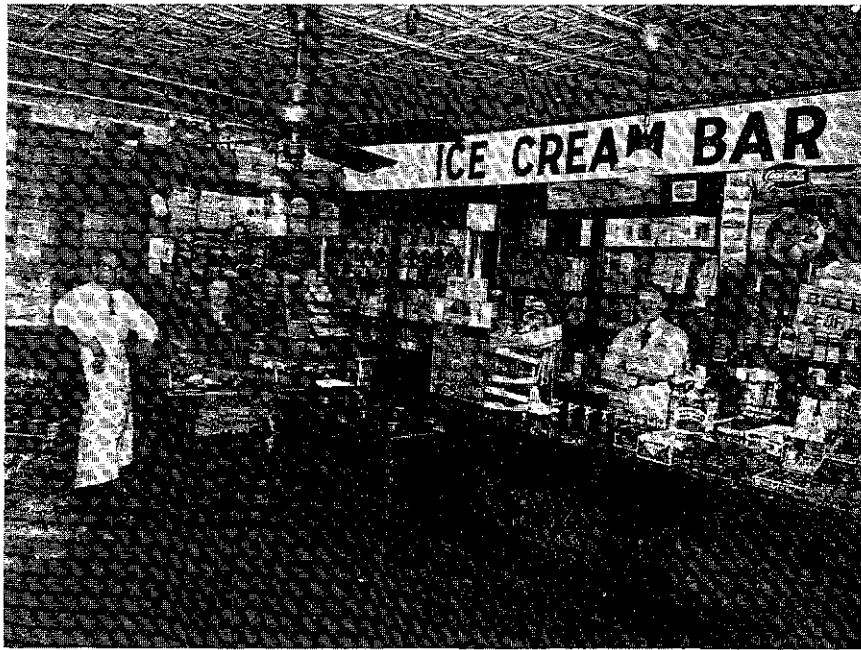
It was not an easy task for men and women who had uprooted themselves to settle in this new land to cope with a language which appeared to be so alien to those languages in which they might be proficient. Many were skilled in one or more languages, including Yiddish. Some attended the adult night classes, but many could not. Earning a living (meager for the most part), raising a large family, trying to deal with so many new situations, was a full-time and enervating experience. There was neither time nor energy to concentrate on learning to read and write English. It was much easier to read the *Tageblatt* or *Forward* which came from New York. According to Bessie Edith Bloom during the period of 1908-09 about 600 copies of the Jewish *Tageblatt* (Jewish Daily News) came into the city every day<sup>47</sup>. In addition there were the *Forward* and the *Wahrheit*, two liberal papers.

Those families subscribing to the *Forward* could read aloud and enjoy together the Bintel Brief ("bundle of letters") column in the same way a family might now enjoy a "soap opera" on radio or television.

Those parents who spoke Yiddish at home raised children who acquired this language in the normal intercourse of speaking it at home. With a child's facility for languages, he had no difficulty speaking English with his peers and reading and writing English in school.

There were several primary schools (grades K through 2) in the neighborhood of South Providence. Many of those whom I interviewed went to Willard Avenue School (as it was known), located just below Staniford Street. Others went to their Chester Avenue or Beacon Avenue Schools. For the upper (grammar) grades (3 through 8) children who lived on the lower part of Willard Avenue, attended the Point Street School, while those who lived on the upper portion of Willard Avenue were assigned to Peace Street School. It was the children who attended Point Street School, out of their immediate neighborhood, who encountered gang fights. In that period secondary education was available in English High School and Classical High School. Some children were fortunate enough to be able to go on to college. The Semonoff twins, Leon and Judah, and Maurice





Berman's Spa, located at the corner of Willard Avenue and Gay Street in 1935. Jack L. and Ruth (Mrs. Jack L.) Berman and Louis Berman operated the business from 1930 to 1937. It carried Jewish newspapers (held in pigeon holes for customers). People came from as far away as West Warwick and Apponaug for their copies of *Der Tag* and *The Forward*.

Bazar attended Brown University. Joseph Jagolinzer worked to earn his way through the Rhode Island School of Design.

To supplement their public school education many also attended the Chester Avenue Talmud Torah (Hebrew School). This school was chartered on February 18, 1911 as the South Providence Hebrew School by Charles Silverman, Samuel Borod, Harry Pepper, Louis M. Grant, Nathan Horowitz, Norbert Fleisig, Samuel Silverman, and Herman Paster, "for Hebrew Education and to keep children off the streets after regular school hours, and to give them additional educational facilities as well as recreation".<sup>48</sup>

For Fannie Krasnow Horvitz, who was in her late teens when she came to South Providence with her family, being able to read and write English was a very difficult task, since she had to work in a jewelry factory for long hours. But like other determined young adults she found her own method of mastering the language. She went to a library and took out books by authors with whom she had been familiar in Russia, such as Tolstoy. Knowing the plot, she taught herself gradually to read the English and finally to comprehend what she had read. This was in addition to attending night school and lectures which were given in Tremont Hall at 240 Willard Avenue and Bazar's Hall.

Mary Grant withdrew her daughter, Fannie, from English High School before she had finished so that she could complete the business course at Bryant and Stratton Business College. She said to her daughter, "Supposing you go to Pembroke, so what? A woman should be prepared as a man. If a husband needs help in business, it is good if his wife can help him, or if she is left a widow, or divorced, she can be prepared to make her own living." Fannie Grant Brown commented that very few Jewish girls went to Pembroke in those days. The education of her brother, Max, took a different direction. He appears to have been the only Jewish student listed in his Classical High School graduation class of 1908. He went on to Brown University, but did not finish. Max Grant had become such a successful businessman at an early age that he could not give his complete attention to his store\* and decided to devote himself to his business on a full-time basis.

Self-education for the immigrant often took the form of attending the lectures which Samuel Altman refers to in his article, "50 Years in

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\*Grant Supply Co., 204 Westminster Street.

South Providence". He writes: "Next to Bazar's Bank was a two-story building in need of repair. The walls were dark and needed a coat of paint. The ground floor was occupied by a store. The upper story was the 'Library'. You came up to the library by means of dark, rickety stairs. The room was fairly large, and it had wide windows on all sides. It was not really a library as we understand it today. It was rather a meeting and lecture hall where people gathered to read newspapers and magazines, and to discuss all kinds of social and political problems. It was considered the center for all radicals and Socialists of the day. Here was the home of the Workmen's Circle Branch 110 to which every young man of progressive ideas belonged. The meetings of the Workmen's Circle were always a great attraction, and the halls could not take in all who came. People stood by the walls and in the corridor. The members were imbued with a great ideal, and worked with zeal to bring culture and enlightenment to the immigrants. They were young and filled with great hopes for a bright future. They took their meetings and discussions seriously, whether it was a point of order or a matter of principle. Below, on the sidewalk in front of the library, the wives would wait with their little children or babies in carriages, for their husbands to go home with them together, at the end of the meeting. In this library, plans were made for lectures with eminent speakers. Here funds were collected to support newspapers and to help in the publication and the distribution of books, so as to enrich the homes of the newcomers."

Several clubs were formed for the mutual self-education of the members, such as The Hebrew Literary and Dramatic Club, the New Idea Social Club, the 20th Century Elite Club (social, benevolent and literary purpose), and many others.<sup>49</sup>

#### THEY RECEIVE MEDICAL ATTENTION

Home remedies and self-doctoring were mentioned when the subject of medical care was discussed in my interviews. Home deliveries by midwives or doctors were customary.

My mother was a midwife also, and she delivered I do not know how many children in Providence.<sup>50</sup>

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She was a "saintly woman" and catered to anybody, anytime, day or not. She delivered more babies than anyone in South Providence in those days. She was a remarkable woman. It was the customary thing to get Mrs. Jacobs. Who spent money to go



A meeting of the charter members of the Miriam Hospital Association in 1907 at the home of Mrs. Betty Woolf. Back row left to right, Mrs. Jack Shein, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Tatz, Mrs. Betty Woolf, Mrs. Theresa Feldman. Front row left to right, Mrs. Bleumer Lisker, Mrs. Mary D. Grant, Mrs. Amelia Dolberg, Mrs. Sarah Rotke, Mrs. Max Silverstein. Child, Mrs. Joseph Adelson. From *the Fiftieth Anniversary Issue, The Miriam Hospital, 1926-1976*.



Rhode Island Workmen Beneficial Association, circa 1910. Front row, left to right: Mrs. Simon Newman, Simon Newman, Mrs. Simon Wolk, Simon Wolk, Louis M. Grant, Mrs. Louis M. Grant. Second row: Mrs. Louis Shanbrum, Mrs. David Shanbrum, Mrs. David Troupiansky, David Troupiansky, Mrs. Abraham Zellermayer, Abraham Zellermayer. Third row: Mrs. Louis Bedrick, Louis Bedrick, Mrs. Samuel Bander, Samuel Bander, Mrs. David Robinson, David Robinson. Back row: Mrs. Frank Scoliard, Frank Scoliard, Mrs. Max Siegel, Max Siegel, Mrs. Bernard Nasberg, Bernard Nasberg.

to an Emergency Room of a hospital? Mrs. Jacobs never took any money. This was her way of life.<sup>51</sup>

Emergencies, however, were treated in the Accident Rooms of either St. Joseph's Hospital or the Rhode Island Hospital, which were the closest to the South Providence area.

Doctor Seebert J. Goldowsky in his paper, "Jews in Medicine in Rhode Island",<sup>52</sup> refers to doctors who took care of many of the South Providence residents. Among them were Doctors Louis J. Pobirs of 167 Prairie Avenue; Mark H. Plainfield, who practiced at 172 Prairie Avenue; Abraham P. Fishman, who was located in the North End; and Samuel Starr of 522 Broad Street, about whom Jack Leichter told the following story:

"Doctor Starr, who lived on Dudley Street, carried me after I was hit by an auto. He picked me up and carried me, not as a doctor, but as a parent".<sup>53</sup> Leichter also referred to Doctor Cohen, who lived and practiced on Prairie Avenue. He spoke of how he and Doctor Cohen, together with Doctor Harold Libby and Doctor Starr, would congregate in Kane's Drug Store.

Kane himself refers to this in a book he wrote titled, *As I Remember It*: "The Kane Drug Store was a favorite rendezvous for all the doctors. If anyone wanted to meet a friend, the byword was: 'meet you at Kane's'. We also became friends with many other doctors, of both Jewish and Gentile faiths, and it was my privilege to have them as friends for many years. I can still remember Dr. Libby, Dr. Cohen and Dr. Pobirs."

Although Benton Rosen has written about his father-in-law, Doctor Samuel Starr, in another section of this issue of the *Notes*,<sup>54</sup> it is appropriate to add here Benjamin Kane's evaluation of Doctor Starr: "I met him first when he was an interne at St. Joseph's Hospital. A gentleman of very fine character, and an excellent physician . . . . He was a brilliant diagnostician . . . ."

Some families used the doctors who were connected with their lodges.

Dr. Fishman—Dr. Bennett (Dr. Joseph M. Bennett, who, according to the 1910 City Directory, had his office at 143 Broad Street)—he was a favorite among the Jewish people, and there was the number one surgeon—Dr. Munro\*. My father paid by the year for his medical care to the Lodge, but I do not think Dr. Bennett\*\* was on the list of doctors connected with the Lodge.<sup>55</sup>

\*Doctor Walter L. Munro, 62 North Main Street.

\*\*Doctor Joseph Bennett, 143 Broad Street.

Joseph Jagolinzer referred to Angell's Drug Store, which was owned by Louis D. Angell and was located on the corner of Prairie Avenue and Willard Avenue at 245 Prairie Avenue. Angell had a telephone which was used by the neighbors, home telephones being a rarity. Angell's Drug Store was listed in the 1910 City Directory, as were those owned by a David Ettleman at 244 Willard Avenue and Frank Markensohn at 183 Prairie Avenue. According to Jagolinzer<sup>56</sup> his family used a Doctor Deacon,\* about whom he remarked, "He took care of the entire community until Dr. Leo Cohen came along."

Benjamin Kane relates in his autobiography that he purchased a drug store from his brother-in-law, Frank Markensohn, about 1911. It was located on the corner of Prairie Avenue and Blackstone Street at 183 Prairie Avenue. When he first acquired the store it grossed about \$90 a week and netted him only \$15. After two or three years of fifteen hours of work a day, seven days a week, he increased his business to \$500—\$600 a week, but his health was jeopardized by the arduous hours. Kane also wrote with pride of his wife, Esther, who was the first woman to graduate from the Rhode Island College of Pharmacy, which schooling she had while continuing to work in the store and care for her family and home.

A well-known dentist, Doctor Ilie Berger, practiced in the South Providence area. His first office was in a building owned by Louis and Mary Grant at 164 Prairie Avenue. He later moved into his own building at 167 Prairie Avenue. He had a second office in downtown Providence at the corner of Dorrance and Weybosset Streets (at 76 Dorrance Street).

To care for the old and the infirm was to most Jews of South Providence a responsibility taken for granted. Their attitude emanated from their feeling of neighborliness, their Jewish consciousness and empathy for their fellow man. To bring food to a sick neighbor, to nurse him, was a part of one's daily life. There are many examples of women who, though faced with the many pressures of a full and busy life, helped the less fortunate.

I know there would not have been a Miriam Hospital if it was not for my mother. There was no one in the city that was interested in a Jewish hospital. She always had a charitable impulse in her. She would go to the St. Joseph's and Rhode Island Hospitals to interpret for the doctors and nurses (who were Gentile), who could not understand the Jewish patients who often spoke

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\*Doctor Charles F. Deacon, 480 Friendship Street.

mostly Yiddish. And these patients would not eat the food. She started cooking chickens in tremendous pans—this was done in her small area on a two-burner stove behind her millinery shop—and the woman whose day it was would go with the chickens to serve the Jewish patients. Miriam was the name of the Miriam Lodge. They got money to allow two Jewish patients in each hospital. The patient had to have my mother's signature, and were not questioned by hospital authorities.<sup>57</sup>

Goldowsky in his paper on "Jews in Medicine in Rhode Island"<sup>58</sup> has detailed the untiring efforts of women like Mary Grant, Lena Zisman, Jennie Cutler, Amelia Dolberg, Annie Adelman, Mary Kominisky, Clara Smira, and many others that led to the founding of The Miriam Hospital.

#### THEY FACE POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES

"My parents were too busy making a living". This response from some of the persons interviewed concerning their parents' or their own involvement in politics seemed to be consistent with the conclusions drawn by Irving Howe in his book, *World of Our Fathers*. He observed that party politics was a field which immigrant Jews were slow to enter. They had come from countries where they had had little or no part in politics. Some commented that most political activity took place in the synagogue.

The Jews of that generation were considered to be largely Democratic or Republican in their voting habits, depending on the point of view of the person who was interviewed. Few were active in party politics. Frank Scoliard was one of the few exceptions. He had been active as a Democrat in the old 11th Ward for many years and eventually served twelve years as City Councilman.

Politically minded? My father was somewhat. He had his opinions about elections. When offered to be taken to vote, he was very indignant, and said he would not be taken to vote. "Voting is my personal business, and I'll go vote as I please."<sup>59</sup>

It seemed to be a not uncommon practice in those days, according to some of those interviewed, for votes to be bought.

Some recall attending meetings at which two famous Jewish politicians spoke: Jacob A. Eaton and Harry Cutler. Harry Cutler, president of Cutler Jewelry Company, was Rhode Island State Representative from 1910 to 1913; Eaton had a long political career. "He was an able parliamentarian and, above all, possessed of an innate skill in poli-

tics . . . . He made no bones about the fact that he was a Jewish politician, and that he wanted to advance Jewish causes and help deserving Jews become established."<sup>60</sup> Although Jacob Eaton was a Republican representative for the North End of Providence from 1909, and member of the Republican 3rd Ward Committee as early as 1901, he kept close contact with the Jews of South Providence and extended his help and concern to its residents.

There was a fairly active branch of the Socialist party in South Providence.

The only branch of the Socialist Party in Rhode Island for Yiddish-speaking people was organized in South Providence by Joseph Shore and Jacob Pavlow. It was the purpose of the Socialist group to educate the Jewish workers and wage-earners in political and economic problems. For this they arranged frequent lectures and forums, both in Yiddish and in English. Under the auspices of the Socialist Party, Providence had the opportunity to hear such great names of those days as Abraham Kahn, B. Vladek, B. Feigenbaum, Myer London, S. Yanofsky, S. Zametkin—all giants of the American Socialist movement—editors of newspapers and union leaders.

They attracted enormous crowds. The hall in which all the lectures and forums were held was Bazar's Hall . . . which had a capacity of 1,000 people . . . . The big hall was always filled to capacity when a Socialist lecturer came to town. The thirst for knowledge and enlightenment was great among the early immigrants, and these lectures and forums were their college.<sup>61</sup>

Irving Howe in *World of Our Fathers* recalled that the Jewish socialists in the New England region had held a conference in Providence, Rhode Island in 1908.

Another aspect of the political scene concerned those interested in promoting Zionism. One of the outstanding leaders was Alter Boyman. He lived on Reynolds Avenue in South Providence during his entire lifetime. Jack Leichter observed that Boyman and others, such as Sonya Silverman and Jack Rabinowitz, spent all of their spare time throughout their lives working for this movement. But they were considered "poor relatives" by persons such as Hillel Silver, who shunted them to the background, for they had no money. All they could give to the movement was an ardent belief and their time.

Another outstanding leader was Doctor Ilie Berger, about whom it was said, "Zionism is a cause that was close to his heart very early



in life. He maintained a deep devotion to it forging ahead through the years to positions of leadership in the state and in the nation. He was the first president of the Rhode Island Zionist Region and held that office for ten years."<sup>62</sup>

#### THEY ARE THEIR BROTHERS' KEEPERS

There were no Social Security or Welfare programs when the first Jewish settlers established their homes and businesses in South Providence. In the beginning neighbor took care of neighbor. Soon a group of concerned men and women would get together to form an organization to meet the growing needs of the community. One such group was the South Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association.

The first meeting took place on March 5, 1906 at which Louis M. Grant was the chairman; Bernard Bander, recording secretary; Simon Sander, financial secretary; and Sigmund Rosen, treasurer. Others participating were: Abraham Bazar, Nathaniel Wiesel, Charles Silverman, Abraham Zellermyer, H. Bochkas, H. Zussman, S. Smira, Pincus Silverman, Samuel Silverman, Herman Paster, and M. Margolis. This organization was also known as the South Providence Gemilath Chesed Association (translated "deeds of loving kindness").<sup>63</sup>

Benton Rosen has written about this organization.<sup>64</sup> He quoted from the minutes of the first meeting of March 5, 1906, which were reproduced in the 25th Anniversary program of 1930. The meeting took place in Bazar's Hall, and the presiding officer was Simon Wolk. Names of those present and the offices they held were (with variations from those listed above): Abraham Zellermyer, Vice Chairman, and Milton Elman, financial secretary. The Board of Directors comprised Hyman Shindler, Simon Wolk, Charles Sigal, I. Urban, Nathan Wiesel, Aaron Weitman, Louis Goldenberg, Nathan Shapiro, Simon Greenblatt, I. Morgan Roth, Max Rose, and Harry Sussman.

Altman describes the location of the South Providence Free Loan Association and depicts a typical scene:

Near Willard Avenue and Gay Street was the first home of the South Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association. . . . The members of the board of the Free Loan, as well as those active in the foundation, were all recent immigrants who considered it a great *mitzvah*\* to help the newly-arrived Jews establish themselves in

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\*Meritorious act, a good work, a kind deed. (Hebrew)

some kind of a source of livelihood. They worked at it with heart and soul. Every evening the market peddlers would stop in front of the office with their pushcarts or horse and wagons to pay old debts and to make new loans, free of interest. A \$25.00 loan was a large sum. . . . More often it was only a ten or five dollar loan to buy goods for the next day's business.

He explains the source of the funds:

People in better circumstances paid annual dues of one dollar, half a dollar, and even a quarter. Collectors would go from house to house to collect the dues in installments. No donation was too small. . . . All the business of the office was done by volunteers.<sup>65</sup>

A personal experience with the South Providence Hebrew Loan was related by Joseph Jagolinzer. He considered the organization one of the most important and often a saving grace for poor families. "Here poor people could go to borrow, pay no interest and paying back as little as \$1 per week. Was that a busy place! Just like a bank. My father would go to Bazar's Hall, where they were located, to borrow \$50 every time, say if he needed equipment in the blacksmith shop, or if he needed money for something that would come up. The hard part was finding someone who would guarantee the loan, but eventually he would find someone who had enough faith in him to be a guarantor."

A listing of chartered organizations in the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*<sup>66</sup> includes many philanthropic groups in South Providence that were important in the life of its immigrant Jewish residents. Among them were the South Providence Thrift Association to aid widows and orphans of deceased members, chartered in 1898; the South Providence Enterprising Association to assist its sick members and encourage the same in business enterprises, chartered in 1899; the Independent Savings Association of South Providence formed for mutual aid, chartered in 1900; the Rhode Island Workmen Beneficial Association, chartered in 1904 by Jake Cohen, Louis M. Grant, Simon Wolk, Louis Urban, Barnet Bander, Bernard Hartman, Henry Bochay, Benjamin G. Cohen, and Barnet Rose; and the Rhode Island Workingman Charity Association to educate and help its members in need, chartered in 1909, whose organizers were Simon Wolk, Samuel Silverman, Samuel Newman, Frank Scoliard, Louis Urban, Abraham Bazar and Barnet Bander. Many names were connected with several organizations.

These are but samples of the many similar philanthropic organiza-

tions that were formed during this period. Some of the persons questioned spoke of their fathers' involvement in more than one philanthropic organization. For example, Abraham Zellermyer was an active member of the Vaad Hakashruth,\* Chesed Shel Emeth,\*\* the Rhode Island Jewish Fraternal Association, the Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association, and many others. Frank Scoliard was intimately associated with the Rhode Island Workingman Charity Association, the Rhode Island Jewish Fraternal Association, the South Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association, and the Chesed Shel Emeth. Louis M. Grant was very active in the South Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association and the Independent Order of Brith Sholom.† He was honored locally on June 3, 1912 for his elevation to the office of Third Deputy Grand Master of that organization and in June of 1914 he was elected to a fifth term as a member of the Supreme Body of Brith Sholom in New England.

#### THE WOMEN HAVE THEIR ROLE

Earlier in this account I referred to the charitable acts performed by the women of South Providence for their neighbors. The following are specific examples as related by some of those interviewed:

Outside of the shop she (Mrs. Brown's mother, Mary Grant) had two rows of chairs. Every morning people would wait until she opened the door. They weren't customers for hats, but wanted to talk to her. She would take them, one at a time, in the back of the store and listen to their problems such as a child on the way, a husband who had left. Whatever their troubles were, they came in to ask my mother's advice. She had a real office.<sup>67</sup>

Mary Grant was the founder and first president of the South Providence Ladies Aid Society. The record book containing the minutes of the Association to May 22, 1906, now in the collections of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association through the gift of Mrs. Brown, contains many interesting items:

The first meeting (February 13, 1902) was opened by Mrs. L. M. Grant at her residence at 257 Willard Avenue. 29 ladies were present and the following officers were appointed for the

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\*Committee on Dietary Laws. (Hebrew)

\*\*Burial Society (Deeds of mercy in truth). (Hebrew)

†Independent Order of Brith Sholom, a fraternal association, founded in 1905. There were 12 chapters in Rhode Island, of which 9 were located in Providence.

next term: Mrs. L. M. Grant, chairlady,\* Bessie Horwitz, vice chairlady, Mrs. Max Rosen, secretary and Julie Rosen, treasurer.

In the first year the treasury grew from its original 75 cents to the extent that frequent loans of \$2 were possible. Schemes for raising money, such as the holding of raffles, were often on the agenda. A committee was set up to determine "how it is possible to make some money to better our circumstances". The money was often raised to "assist a poor family which is in distress". Evidently some of their money-raising ventures must have been successful, for the balance in the treasury rose by \$89.76 in December. There was reference to a motion made by Mrs. Dalberg to give "some substantial aid toward the hospital". A committee consisting of Mrs. Dalberg and R. Grant was appointed to "go out and find out all the particulars."

There are many examples of aid to the poor in these minutes, such as helping a "poor man buy some stock for his business", "to give Mr. R.—50¢ for groceries", "to give ¼ ton of coal to a poor family", and "\$2.00 to be given a crippled woman". In addition to raffles as a source of money-raising, coffee socials were held at which 10 cents was charged for a cup of coffee and a piece of cake.

Mary Grant's name is also listed in a group which reorganized and was chartered on February 26, 1903 by the Secretary of State of Rhode Island under the name of Miriam Society, Number One, "for the purpose of social and beneficial benefits among the members."<sup>68</sup> The endeavors of Mrs. Grant and her co-workers in aiding Jewish patients resulted in the founding of The Miriam Hospital.

Another of Mary Grant's interests was the orphanage which was built in the rear of the Machzeka Hadas Synagogue at the corner of Willard and Prairie Avenues. The laying of its cornerstone is recorded in the *Providence Journal* of June 22, 1908, and its short history has been documented in a paper titled, "The Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island" by Doctor Seebert J. Goldowsky in the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*.<sup>69</sup>

In a personal reference to this home Mrs. Brown recalls coming home from school one day with a sore throat. On not finding her mother at home, she had wished she were an orphan, so that her

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\*Rosten first heard the neologism *chairlady* as a child. He commented: "It was twenty years before I learned that un-Jews address a chairlady as 'Madam Chairman', which is surely a contradiction in terms. I still think 'chairlady' more sensible, to say nothing of sexually unconfusing." (He identifies the word as Yinglish, i.e., a Yiddish-English neologism.) *Chairperson* is, of course, currently more modish. Ed.



Kindergarten or first grade class, Willard Avenue School, circa 1896. The teacher was Miss McDonald, Fannie Grant (Mrs. Charles C. Brown) ([two rows below, ribbons and curls] was a member of the class). Next to the teacher was Harry Pepper. Courtesy Mrs. Charles C. Brown.



Taken at Machzekas Hadas Orphanage, rear of synagogue at Willard Avenue and Caswell Court, circa 1908. Back row, left to right: Matron holding child, Mrs. Amelia Dolberg, Shammash (sexton) of the synagogue, and Herman Paster. Of the children, the girl on the left holding the flag is Fannie Hornstein; others not identified. Courtesy Mrs. Charles C. Brown.

mother would take care of her. She assumed that her mother was at the orphanage since she spent so much time there.

Others also remember the orphanage. Mrs. Joseph Webber recalls that as a child she and her brother carried in their little red cart large jars of preserved food, which the family had prepared, to the orphanage in the rear of the synagogue on Willard Avenue. "Now we were very impressed by the serious thing we were doing, imagining that these children did not have parents, and that they did not have food enough for them. It was a good thing to do."

Mrs. Sadie Jacobs claimed that the idea for the orphanage started in her home. Once the idea took hold, the neighbors and her mother assembled dishes and bedclothes from their own homes and a little money to furnish the building. The orphanage started with ten children. She remembers how she and her sister would go there after school to help make the beds and do what they could.

The example set by Mary Grant was an inspiration to her daughter, who with some friends started the Junior Aiders of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. The young women met on October 18, 1908 at the home of Fannie Grant (Mrs. Charles Brown) for the purpose of organizing "a club for the benefit of the Orphan Home." They were very enthusiastic, as reflected in the minutes of their secretary, Sarah Bornstein. This girlish endeavor was probably short-lived, as the minutes do not go beyond December of that year. During that time they planned a dance, a whist, and a project for supplying waists (undergarments) for the orphaned children.

The Jewish neighborhood of South Providence was not without its problems of juvenile delinquency. References were made to girls and women who became prostitutes. A few of the more notorious characters went to jail for stealing or embezzlement. Considering the number of people who lived in this area, these misdemeanors and crimes were few and were exceptions to the general behavior.

Sarah Webber, who worked as a probation officer, related some of her experiences with the Jewish problem cases.

I had learned a lot of Yiddish from my contact with the poor Yiddish-speaking immigrants, and, as the one Jewish probation officer, I was sent to deal with the problems of the Jewish families. In those days the boys were sent to Sockanosset School. Once in a while we had a wayward girl who would be picked up in another city for "lewd and wanton behavior", which was an expression for prostitution. Most offenses were for truancy. They were checked on whether they went to school every day.

If a child were on probation, he had to report to me every Saturday morning at the Court. If I felt that, after reporting to me, he would get in with the gang again, I would go into his home, especially if he lived in South Providence, which was convenient for me. The most serious type of case was that of rape. My biggest case load was 12. Before the state took over, the Council of Jewish Women paid the expenses of the probation officer, but even when the state paid for the expenses, I reported to them.

Mrs. Webber's account emphasizes the responsible attitude of Jewish parents (when she would meet the delinquent in his home), and of her sponsoring organization, the Council of Jewish Women.

It is quite evident that there was a great deal of concern over one's fellow man in the Jewish section of South Providence. Most seemed truly to have lived by the precepts of the Torah and Hebraic law:

The Torah impresses us that we must do three things. They are cardinal virtues with the Jew. First to learn; second to work, and third to help . . . that we may extend assistance where it is worthily needed. . . . no Jew knocks at the door of an almshouse. Rather he seeks for such assistance as will provide him the means for obtaining food and shelter honestly won by his own efforts.<sup>70</sup>

#### THEY LIVE AND WORK IN A THRIVING METROPOLIS

What made these few streets in South Providence the center, the Mecca, the beehive of activity that it was? From street and city directories for the period from about 1900 to 1912, an amazing number of stores and services were crammed into this relatively small area. Businesses thrived in the midst of residences, synagogues, and schools.

The following anecdotes are descriptive of the area:

As far as I personally was concerned South Providence was bounded by Dudley Street, Willard Avenue, Gay Street, and Prairie Avenue. Some of the landmarks I remembered as a kid—there was Charlie who had a little soda store on Willard Avenue and Gay Street, where you could get a chocolate soda for 3 cents. Around the corner was Bazar's Hall and the Steamship Agency.<sup>71</sup>

Abraham Bazar himself wrote the following about his steamship agency:

I tried and succeeded in getting the agency for the steam line tickets. When a man came to me for a ticket I didn't care how

much profit I made on the ticket, what I was interested in most was to get some person away from the miseries of the foreign countries, whether he was Russian, Roumanian or Polish. The only thing I cared about was to get his family to the United States. I brought from 2,000 to 3,000 people to the United States from Russia, Roumania and Poland.<sup>72</sup>

Delicatessen, grocery, and variety stores abounded. There was Ackerman's Delicatessen at 190 Willard Avenue, where it was reputed that you could get the best 10 cent corned beef sandwich. Sarah Webber as a child was impressed by the fact that the Ackermans had a pet monkey! Later Lightman and Diwinsky were to open delicatessen stores in this vicinity.

Joseph Jagolinzer's description of Golemba's Grocery Store at 83 Gay Street, where he worked, goes in to mouth-watering detail:

Everything in the grocery store in those days was loose. Butter was cut from the tub; vinegar had to be drawn from a barrel. Any kind of groats, chickpeas, came in sacks, which were lined up. Even the cane sugar and the cubes of sugar came loose in a barrel. Prunes were pressed in a box. One had to dig them up with a fork. The herring was in small barrels. Nothing was probably sanitary, but I do not know if anyone got sick from it. (Jagolinzer describes the herring from an aesthetic point of view). The herrings were laid beautifully—first laid along the edges, then filled in—the line and rhythm of the barrel being followed by the herrings. Jewish people were great herring eaters. You could buy a herring for from 5 to 7 cents. One always had herring in the house, and with bread and boiled potatoes it made quite a meal. The herring came with two fillings, one with milt and one with roe.\* Most of the women wanted the milt. They would use it pickled, and give it color. Also we sold *halvah*.\*\*

Listed in the 1910 City Directory were grocery stores owned by Bernard Gordon at 198 Willard Avenue, Rose Margolis at 182 Willard Avenue, and many others, including those of Greenberg and Jacob Krasnow. The terms "grocery" and "variety" might have been used interchangeably, for there is no clear demarcation between these two types of stores.

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\*Milt is the sperm and roe the eggs.

\*\*A very sweet and flaky confection of distinctive texture made of honey and ground sesame seed, sometimes with streaks of chocolate. (Turkish)



There is an anecdote about Jacob Krasnow's store as told by his son, Harry. He recalled that he had painted a sign for his father's grocery store which showed some of the products inside. A cobbler in the neighborhood liked the sign and asked him to paint one for him. He depicted a girl with some of her leg showing in order to display a shoe. A policeman had the sign removed as not proper. In his eyes it was indecent exposure.

A corner variety store described by Samuel Altman is typical:<sup>73</sup>

On the corner of Willard and Gay was a variety store which was the popular gathering place for the neighborhood. A man would go in to buy a newspaper, a package of cigarettes, or a glass of soda and remain for a discussion that lasted for hours. Everything was discussed on that corner, and the owner of the store would also join in, neglecting customers. The crowd would block the entrance to the store, but no one cared.

In addition to the grocery and variety stores there were various other types of food stores. Shea Large, a baker at 205 Willard Avenue, appears to have been one of the first bakers to settle in the Jewish neighborhood. Julius Katz, a baker at 200 Willard Avenue, was listed as doing business during the same years as Large. Subsequently Snell's and Perler's competed for the bakery business. *Challahs* were sold then in 8 and 15 cent sizes!

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 Zellermyer'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.

The basic meat in the kosher butcher shops that a family would buy was chuck (we could never afford steak), aside from chicken and lamb. We'd buy in the butcher shop either Thursday or Saturday nights for the week. My mother would buy meat to grind herself for hamburg. The chicken came from the slaughterer on Gay Street. You always seemed to eat chicken with the pin feathers. In addition to buying chuck, my mother would buy some

liver, and the butcher would give her bones, lungs, *milz*,\* and cheek for nothing. Somehow she could carve out meals to feed all of us for a week out of stretching this meat.<sup>74</sup>

The hardships experienced by those in the meat business is brought out in this description:

When my father passed away, I left school. I had to run the meat market, plucking chickens by the dozens—full of lice and blood—and my hands were swollen. We had no heat in the market. The glass of the store front was full of ice in the winter.<sup>75</sup>

And there were the fish markets with fresh-looking fish displayed on top of ice in long open cases. Among them were those owned by the Greensteins and the Kaufmans.

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 ice, 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.

Friday shopping had to be a hurried-up affair. You bought your chicken and took it home to clean it out, and you bought your favorite fish for *gefuellte* (stuffed) fish, and perhaps you stopped at a pushcart at the sidewalk's edge to buy some prunes for dessert, and a few soup greens for the chicken soup.<sup>76</sup>

It was not necessary to go far from the neighborhood to purchase other necessities. Dry goods stores and an assortment of department stores were conveniently located.

There was Salk's Dry Goods Store at 247 Plain Street, which also carried dishes, pots, pans, and utensils of all sorts, as well as towels, and linens. Before Passover it was "murder to go down there", according to Joseph Jagolinzer, who described the frantic activity in the store as the women refurbished for the coming holiday. Other dry goods stores listed were those of Nathan Glickman at 174 Willard Avenue and Louis Kimeldorf also on Willard Avenue at number 234.

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\*Spleen, a delicacy when stuffed and baked. (Yiddish)

Max Hellman did business at 24 Robinson Street, and Isaac Hochman had a store at 32 Robinson Street. Simon Leichter was located at 933 Eddy Street, and Sugarman's Dry Goods Store was on the corner of Hilton Street and Willard Avenue.

"There was a dealer on Gay Street named Mendel Ladashinsky (the name was later changed to 'Ladd'), and he had various ways of disposing of the merchandise which the peddlers brought him. He had a big barn back of his house on Gay Street, and in it were chairs, lamps, clothing, consisting of trousers, stockings, etc.—and sometimes the stockings didn't even match", recounted Joseph Jagolinzer.

Blacksmiths were a necessity in those days of horses. There was Samuel Goldenberg at 238 Willard Avenue, near Tremont Hall (located at 240). Fishel Jagolinzer had his blacksmith shop on Gay Street. The City Directory of 1910 also listed as blacksmiths in the area Sam Greenberg and Michael Gold, both of 136 Willard Avenue.

Shoemakers and tailors were common in the area. Joseph Jagolinzer remembers a tailor named Miller, who made a suit for \$25. If a man could not afford that price for a custom-made suit, he could buy one off the rack for \$10. The well-known Troy Laundry was at the corner of Gay and Blackstone Streets. Here, it was said, the boys would stand to pitch pennies and cards. Weinbaum's and Smira's vied for the brisk bottling and seltzer business. And then there was the cigarmaker, Charles Becker, at 252 Prairie Avenue.

The modest origin of Siegal's later famous City Hall Hardware Store was recalled by several people. Max Siegal worked as a stonemason in a jewelry factory, and his wife, Rebecca, stayed in their little hardware store (which also sold pots, pans, and dishes) on Prairie Avenue. Here turpentine could be purchased for 2 cents, if one brought his own bottle, or bottled for 3 cents. When business improved in the hardware store, Siegal brought his work from the jewelry factory to work on in the back of the store, in order to be free to help out when needed. The name "City Hall" in the store's title came from their move from the South Providence area to a store across the street from Providence City Hall on Washington Street. Eventually they moved from this location—the Biltmore Hotel was erected there—to another Washington Street site.

Fannie Brown recalls her mother's starting her millinery shop on Prairie Avenue. She was five years old. It was unusual for a woman to start her own business in those days, and Louis Grant (Mrs. Brown's father) was not pleased with his wife's independent thinking. However,

she did make money in the millinery business, for those were the days of hats trimmed with plumes, egrets, birds of paradise, and the like. Fannie's brother, Max, got his start in this store by buying remnant materials from the Lorraine Mills and then from Crompton.

A very important business for the South Providence neighborhood was David Korn's hay and grain business, at 195 Willard Avenue, which sold feed for horses. In the earlier period hay and grain had been sold from pushcarts.

The neighborhood was not without its bank; yet another of Abraham Bazar's enterprises was Bazar's Bank on Willard Avenue. The Jews of South Providence, as well as other immigrants, could borrow money here for ship passage for members of their families who had remained behind in Europe.<sup>77</sup>

Of special significance in the neighborhood was Ash Street, a small street off Willard Avenue. On this street were all of the junk shops and warehouses owned by men who were so important to the economy of the community. Abraham Bazar was listed in the 1910 City Directory as a "Dealer in Paper Stock of Every Description, Metals, Rubbers, etc." His warehouse was at 11-16 Ash Street and his stores at 151-157 Willard Avenue. Other dealers were Abraham Zellermayer at 38 Ash Street, Harry Zusman at 34 Ash Street, and Charles and Max Silverman at 34 Ash Street.

One person called Ash Street the "Wall Street of Willard Avenue"; but to Abraham Bazar's son, "It didn't look like a Wall Street, which to me means brokerage houses—well, you might say, perhaps brokerages in junk, or call it Scrap Street, rather than Wall Street." Fortunes were built from this junk business. The Bazars handled wastepaper for the most part, and the family is still engaged in that business. One observer has a different memory of Ash Street. On Sundays the junkyards were the site of crap games—both cheap and expensive ones. And all those men who sat around the barber shops on weekdays were out shooting crap on Sunday.

In addition to the smaller merchants and storekeepers there were the manufacturing companies, where many who resided in the South Providence neighborhood worked. Some of the owners of these concerns either lived in this neighborhood or had first settled there, as, for example, Achibald Silverman at 299 Willard Avenue and Charles Silverman at 36 Bishop Street. Their jewelry firm, Silverman Brothers, was founded in 1897, first located on Calendar Street and then at 150 Chestnut Street. Their advertisement in the Providence City Di-

rectory of 1910 lists them as manufacturing jewelers, and the items they made as "Cuff, Ribbon, Beauty, Veil Pins and Photo Frames". They also had an office at 337 Broadway in New York City. Harry Cutler operated the Cutler Jewelry Company\* at 7 Eddy Street. Henry Lederer and Brother, Inc. were manufacturing jewelers at 227 Eddy Street, while Marks Jewelry Company operated at 124 Mitchell Street. Another interest of Bazar's was his Mounted Combs business at 165 Willard Avenue.

On October 1, 1911 the South Providence Business Men's Association was chartered "for charitable, intellectual and social advancement of its members and others". The list of the incorporators represents a cross-section of the business and professional men of South Providence: Herman Paster, Simon Scoliard, Louis M. Grant, Louis Shaw, David Troupiansky, Mark H. Plainfield, Max Siegal, Jacob Abish, Jacob Kaufman, Barnet Bander, Norbert Fleisig, Charles Silverman, Benjamin N. Kane, and Ilie Berger.<sup>78</sup>

#### THEY LEAVE SOUTH PROVIDENCE

Willard Avenue, Gay Street, Robinson Street, Ash Street, Prairie Avenue, Blackstone Street, Dudley Street—these were the streets of South Providence which became the haven of that group of Jews who migrated to them over seventy years ago. Here they established their first homes in the United States. Here they met their *landsleit*\*\* and relatives. Here they raised their children, earned their living. Here they pursued their interests—intellectual, religious, social. Reaching out from this neighborhood some of that generation and certainly their progeny became part of the wide community of Jew and Gentile, as they became "Americanized" and shed their Old World customs.

This experience of arrival, adjustment, growing, and learning for the immigrants spanned a period of relatively few years, and then the community disappeared leaving no physical trace. It survives now only in what has been documented, in the memories of those who still live, and the memories of their children.

At this very moment as I sit at my desk trying to put down on paper the things I remember of my 50 years in South Providence, the City Redevelopment Commission is in the midst of pulling down houses, shops, and synagogues on Willard Avenue.

\*This was comprised of two separate corporations, the Cutler Comb Company and the Providence Jewelry Company, both incorporated in 1905.

\*\*From the German *Landsleute*, compatriots. (Yiddish)

Yesterday's busy streets are nothing but empty lots today. Day by day streets are changed beyond recognition, and the face of the neighborhood as we knew it is rapidly vanishing. The homes and stores and the shops of a whole neighborhood have been declared as slums and are being torn down . . . . In a few years the old neighborhood will be forgotten, and no trace will remain of the once busy, thickly settled blocks where for over 50 years Jews lived and worked and brought up families, and built three great synagogues, and formed many important institutions . . . .<sup>79</sup>

It is not easy to formulate in words just what created the neighborhood that was Jewish South Providence. There is no doubt, however, that the fortuitous combination of men and women who lived and worked there made it what it was. It is also not easy to single out individuals who "did the most for the community", or "who had the most influence". There were many leaders. There were many who were not particularly in the limelight, or about whom there has not been much publicity, but whose influence was nevertheless important. To serve as a representative sample, the following few have been chosen to demonstrate the drive, talent, and concern that existed among so very many of these settlers.

Concerning Abraham Bazar, his son, Maurice said, "One of my father's weaknesses—he was too trustworthy. At one time he was the richest man in South Providence, but, when he died, he didn't have anything. Back then we were considered the wealthy ones". Maurice Bazar enumerated many of his father's businesses: "He started so many businesses—Bazar's Hall, Bazar's Bank, his agency for steam line tickets, a jewelry business where celluloid combs were made, a movie house, bowling alleys, pool tables, even a wet wash laundry." And, of course, he spoke of the junk business. Abraham Bazar's concern was his people, and as he himself wrote in a document which his son still preserves, "I have employed thousands of people of all kinds. My employees were never fired. They left of their own accord, and remain friends of mine always."

Sara and Alter Boyman were known to the entire Jewish community. Benjamin Brier counted Alter Boyman as one of the great men of the area, a leader, in or out of office, and had often looked to him for guidance. As a tribute to Alter Boyman on his death in 1966, the following editorial was carried in the *Rhode Island Herald*:<sup>80</sup>

Alter Boyman was consulted on every Zionist or Jewish matter in the state as well as outside Rhode Island. Listening to Mr. and

Mrs. Boyman reminiscing about the old days was listening to the story of the growth of the Jewish community of Rhode Island, the history of the Zionist movement, the story of the establishment of the State of Israel. Names like Golda Meir, Zalman Shazar, and many others were familiar to them—these people had slept at their home on Reynolds Avenue, had eaten with them, had discussed with them the details of the Zionist dream. Mr. Boyman's interests were always with others—the poor, the afflicted, the ill, the needy—for himself he asked nothing. . . . He was never one of the wealthy men of the community, but he always was one of the most respected and most consulted men in the community.

Concerning Sara Boyman it was written at the time of her death: "Without fanfare, with a quiet almost shy approach, she went through life very simply doing what she felt was her duty to her family, to her community, to her people. Her concern for the welfare of individuals and for the many organizations which she felt needed her help was all-encompassing. . . . The community has lost a truly good person . . . a gentlewoman in every sense of the word."<sup>81</sup>

Doctor Ilie Berger, who died on the same day as Alter Boyman, was a successful dentist. He managed in spite of his busy practice to spend much time and energy in helping his fellow Jews. In the same editorial praising Alter Boyman were these words about Doctor Berger:

. . . in his native city of Bucharest only in his very early teens he became involved in an organization which helped Jews emigrate and helped them with matzohs,\* potatoes, coal, etc. His desire to help continued unwaveringly for the more than 60 years which he put into work for the Jewish National Fund, for the General Jewish Committee (of which both he and Mr. Boyman were founders), for the Jewish Home for the Aged, for The Miriam Hospital, for so many other groups.

Commenting on both Doctor Berger and Boyman the editorial continued:

These men came to America as immigrants without money. They had known persecution. They came to America because this was a land of freedom and opportunity. "The gold in the streets" which many of them had been told about wasn't there, but the freedom to work for their people was. And this is what these two men did all their lives.

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\*Unleavened Passover bread. (Hebrew)

Abraham Zellermyer was known as the Mayor of South Providence. "He was almost a legend in his lifetime in South Providence. For 20 years he was president of his *Shul* (synagogue), and when a man came to the Naturalization Office for his citizenship papers, and he was asked the question, 'Who is President?' he quickly answered, 'Zellermyer!' There was hardly a fund in South Providence that Zellermyer did not support, and did not collect for . . . this self-made man of South Providence with his big heart and with the native capacity for leadership, and with the sympathy for his fellow man . . ." <sup>82</sup>

The concern and good deeds of many others—Frank and Sara Scoliard, Archibald ("Archie") and Ida Silverman, Mary and Louis Grant,—the list is long, and the limitation of space precludes citing them all.

From this relatively small sector of South Providence came many successful businessmen, whose names and concerns are part of Rhode Island's economy—familiar names to Jew and Gentile alike—Brier, Kane, Grant, Siegal, Silverman, and many others. Some became successful and prominent professional men. Most became good citizens and an asset to Rhode Island. They came from this busy colorful life in which they knew the warmth of a family and the closeness of a community which cared. Although many were not wealthy in material possessions, they were rich in personal relationships.

The neighborhood is no longer identifiable, but its impact on the larger community will be felt for many years through those who grew up here, and through the values which they imparted to their children.



# NOTES

<sup>1</sup>From an autobiographical note printed by Abraham Bazar. Undated. Collections of RIJHA.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Joseph Jagolinzer, July 20, 1976.

<sup>3</sup>Article titled "Fifty Years in South Providence," written in Yiddish by Samuel Altman and translated by Beryl Segal. In *The Jewish Herald* (Providence). In four chapters appearing consecutively in the issues of June 29, July 6, July 13, and July 20. This quotation is from Chapter One.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Mrs. Joseph Field and Mrs. George Silverman, August 23, 1976.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Harry Krasnow, 1959.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Mrs. David Krasnow, July 16, 1976.

<sup>7</sup>Interview with Mrs. Jacob Horvitz, June 25, 1976.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Harry Krasnow, July 30, 1976.

<sup>9</sup>See Note 3, Chapter One.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Mrs. Joseph Webber, July 19, 1976.

<sup>11</sup>Article titled, "The Old Neighborhood," by Beatrice Levin, *Providence Sunday Journal*, January 25, 1948.

<sup>12</sup>Interview with Jacob Leichter, July 30, 1976.

<sup>13</sup>Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Brier, August 5, 1976.

<sup>14</sup>Interview, See Note 7.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with David Korn, August 3, 1976.

<sup>16</sup>Interview with Maurice Bazar, July 29, 1976.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Milton Horowitz, August 24, 1976.

<sup>18</sup>Interview, See Note 7.

<sup>19</sup>Interview, See Note 2.

<sup>20</sup>Interview, See Note 12.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Ethel Scoliard, August 3, 1976.

<sup>22</sup>Interview, See Note 4.

<sup>23</sup>See Note 3, Chapter 2.

<sup>24</sup>Interview, See Note 16.

<sup>25</sup>Interview, See Note 7.

<sup>26</sup>Interview, See Note 2.

<sup>27</sup>Interview, See Note 16.

<sup>28</sup>Autobiography, *As I Remember It*, by Benjamin N. Kane, (undated). Printed. Copy in collections of the RIJHA.

<sup>29</sup>Interview, See Note 16.

<sup>30</sup>Interview, See Note 2.

<sup>31</sup>Interview with Mrs. Charles C. Brown, August 13, 1976.

<sup>32</sup>Interview, See Note 4.

<sup>33</sup>*RIJHN* 5:120, (No. 1) Nov., 1967.

<sup>34</sup>*RIJHN* 2:34, (No. 1) June, 1956.

<sup>35</sup>*RIJHN* 2:50, (No. 1) June, 1956.

<sup>36</sup>*RIJHN* 2:44, (No. 1) June, 1956.

<sup>37</sup>*RIJHN* 2:28, (No. 1) June, 1956.

<sup>38</sup>*RIJHN* 2:45, (No. 1) June, 1956.

<sup>39</sup>Certificate presented to President Zellermyer on the 25th anniversary of the synagogue. In possession of the family.

<sup>40</sup>*RIJHN* 2:85, (No. 1) June, 1956.

<sup>41</sup>Lester Bradner in *A Modern City: Providence, Rhode Island and Its Activities*, ed. by William Kirk. (See References) pp. 329-331. Also *RIJHN* 5:408, (No. 4) Nov., 1970.

<sup>42</sup>*RIJHN* 5:82, (No. 1) Nov., 1967.

<sup>43</sup>See Note 11.

<sup>44</sup>See Note 3, Chapter Three.

<sup>45</sup>See Note 3, Chapter Four.

<sup>46</sup>Edward McSorley in *Our Own Kind*, pp. 54-58. (See References).

<sup>47</sup>*RIJHN* 5:406-7, (No. 4) Nov., 1970.

<sup>48</sup>*RIJHN* 2:54, (No. 1) June, 1956.

- <sup>49</sup>RIJHN 2:47, 48, 54, (No. 1) June, 1956.  
<sup>50</sup>Interview with Sadie Jacobs, November 28, 1970.  
<sup>51</sup>See Note 2.  
<sup>52</sup>RIJHN 2:151-191, (No. 3) Dec., 1957.  
<sup>53</sup>For more on Doctor Starr see pages 284-286 this issue of the *Notes*.  
<sup>54</sup>See Note 53.  
<sup>55</sup>See Note 4.  
<sup>56</sup>See Note 4.  
<sup>57</sup>See Note 31.  
<sup>58</sup>See Note 52.  
<sup>59</sup>See Note 12.  
<sup>60</sup>RIJHN 4:294, (No. 3) Nov., 1965.  
<sup>61</sup>See Note 3, Chapter Three.  
<sup>62</sup>"A Communitywide Testimonial to Dr. Ilie Berger on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday, May 1, 1955.  
<sup>63</sup>Article titled "The Loans That Start Poor Jews in Business," the *Providence Journal*, March 3, 1912.  
<sup>64</sup>RIJHN 5:279, (No. 3) Nov., 1969.  
<sup>65</sup>See Note 3, Chapter Two.  
<sup>66</sup>RIJHN 2:21-85, (No. 1) June, 1956.  
<sup>67</sup>See Note 31.  
<sup>68</sup>RIJHN 2:36, (No. 1) June, 1956.  
<sup>69</sup>RIJHN 3:88, (No. 1) Nov., 1958.  
<sup>70</sup>See Note 63.  
<sup>71</sup>See Note 12.  
<sup>72</sup>See Note 1.  
<sup>73</sup>See Note 3, Chapter 3.  
<sup>74</sup>See Note 12.  
<sup>75</sup>Interview with Nathan Fishman, July 13, 1976.  
<sup>76</sup>See Note 11.  
<sup>77</sup>See Note 3, Chapter 3.  
<sup>78</sup>RIJHN 2:56, (No. 1) June, 1956.  
<sup>79</sup>See Note 3, Chapter 1.  
<sup>80</sup>*Rhode Island Herald*, February 11, 1966.  
<sup>81</sup>Article by Beryl Segal. *Rhode Island Herald*, clipping in RIJHA collection, undated.

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## NEWPORT'S JEWS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION\*

by ANDREA FINKELSTEIN LOSBEN, B.A., M.A.

In this bicentennial year Americans have an enhanced awareness and deep pride in their nation's history. Schools have had special educational programs, communities have sponsored patriotic celebrations and exhibitions, and numerous nations of the world have shown their support with spectacles such as Operation Sail (Tall Ships). Americans have been keenly interested in the contributions to American independence of their respective ethnic groups. As a result of the opening on July 12, 1976 of the Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia many visitors have become aware of the part played by Jewish men and women in the early history of the United States. Students in their Hebrew schools have been taught about famous Jewish patriots, such as Haym Salomon, Michael Gratz, Aaron Lopez, and Francis Salvador; yet they have learned little or nothing about the Jews who remained loyal to Great Britain. Tories such as Isaac Hart and David Franks have rarely been discussed, because they chose the losing side of the controversy. However, these Jews should not be relegated to anonymity, but rather should be credited for the strength of their convictions and the courage with which they adhered to them.

A break between Great Britain and her North American colonies was inevitable, for the colonies had matured and were ready for home rule. The vast distance between England and America, the lack of a distinct office to handle American problems, the multiplicity of factions in England all led to this separation. A primary cause for the break was the high priority which the West Indies, rather than North America, was accorded in Britain's colonial affairs. Furthermore, there was no concept of dominion status in the eighteenth century, such as was developed decades later in the Durham Report on Canada. Hence, for all of these causes, compounded by a series of hated retrogressive, restrictive taxes and laws, such as the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, and the Townshend Duties, the colonies were driven to rebellion.

The Jewish community of colonial Newport in Rhode Island reacted to these influences much as did the Christian Americans. There was no Jewish position toward independence, just as there was no Baptist or Congregationalist attitude. It was purely an individual de-

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cision, for the American Revolution was in many ways a civil war within the British Empire. It is intended in this paper not only to discuss the contributions and sacrifices made by the Newport Jewish patriots, but also to take note of the hardships suffered by the Newport Jewish Loyalists in these troubled times.

Many historians have advanced the concept that the American Revolution had its origins in the first English settlement in 1607. They have argued that, as the colonies became more populous, more civilized, and more mature politically and economically, they moved closer toward independence. Salutary neglect, experience in self-government within the colonial legislatures, and a general pragmatic, optimistic attitude of the colonists contributed to the growth of this posture. The great distances separating the Motherland from the colonies and the inability of the London government to comprehend and handle local colonial problems speeded up this process. The eventual separation of the Mother Country and her colonies appeared to be inevitable. However, this break could have been delayed for a period of years if England had acted more wisely and if the colonists had been less militant. The grievances produced by British colonial policies of the period 1763-1776 culminated in 1776 in the Declaration of Independence.

To understand why England acted as she did during this period inevitably leading to rebellion in 1776, one must perceive her posture as she emerged victorious from the French and Indian War. The year of 1763 was a turning point in her relationship with America. It was, by happenstance, an important year in Newport's Jewish history as well, for in that year the synagogue, which was to become the focal point of many Jewish activities, was dedicated. As a result of the Treaty of Paris of 1763 England possessed one of the largest empires in the world and was confident that she was the greatest power on earth. Unfortunately, she was left with a debt of £140,000,000 approximately one half of which was incurred in defending the American colonies.<sup>1</sup> To assure Britain's continued greatness her ministers deemed it necessary to exercise greater control over her dominions. The measures instituted to eliminate this tremendous debt and to alleviate her financial burdens were a proximate cause of the problems with her colonies.

Newport in 1763 was a busy seaport community. Morris Gutstein stated that it "... was becoming one of the most thriving cities of the time. On the eve of the Revolution, the prediction that Newport would become the metropolis of the New World was being realized. Besides the various oil and sugar refineries, candle and furniture factories, distilleries, breweries, ropewalks and other factories in the city,

from five to six hundred vessels traded from this port"<sup>2</sup> This was truly the beginning of Newport's brief Golden Age. Newport was a cosmopolitan town with a great variety of shops, numerous houses of worship, various civic projects such as the construction of the Point Bridge, the Redwood Library, and the Jewish Social Club, founded in 1761.

The Jewish Social Club is important as a measure of the success and sophistication of the Jewish merchants of Newport. Patterned after the gentlemen's clubs of London, it met each Wednesday night during the winter and offered its members the opportunity to enjoy dinner, drinks, whist or other games, and comradeship. Guests were welcome within bounds: "Each of the members shall have Liberty to Invite his friends to the Club. Well understood one at a time Only."<sup>3</sup> Even though all of the members were Jews and belonged to the Congregation Jeshuat Israel, it was forbidden to speak of synagogue affairs. The eighth rule stated. "That none of the members shall . . . [make] Conversation relating to Synagogue affairs, on the forfeit of the vallue of four bottles good wine for the use as aforesaid."<sup>4</sup> It is quite clear that this was to be completely separate from the synagogue. It is evident that these men were quite satisfied with their relationship with the Mother Country, for, as the bylaws stated, "After Supper if any of the members have any motion to make relating to the Club, he must wait til the Chairman has first drank some Loyall Toast . . ."<sup>5</sup> Moses Lopez, Isaac Polock, Jacob Isaacs, Abraham Sarzedas, Naphtali Hart, Moses Levy, Issachar Polock, Naphtali Hart, Jr., and Jacob Rodrigues Rivera were successful enough to afford the luxury of membership in the Club.<sup>6</sup>

Jews came to Rhode Island because of Roger Williams's liberal policies toward religion and because Newport's harbor offered excellent commercial opportunities. Jewish merchants and traders, such as the members of the Social Club and Isaac Hart, Moses Michael Hays, Isaac Elizer, and Moses Mendes Seixas were able to conduct their business affairs in a community where they were thought of as men, not merely as Jews. Aaron Lopez was respected as a great merchant prince, not as a rich Jew. Like their Christian counterparts, they experienced successes and failures and contracted debts in their trade. While Jews in Rhode Island were second class citizens in respect to political privileges, they were in business treated as equals with their Christian neighbors.

It was natural for the Jews to feel welcome in British North America and at this time in 1763 to hold allegiance to Great Britain. In 1656 Oliver Cromwell had for the first time since the late thirteenth

century admitted Jews to Britain and her possessions.<sup>7</sup> This offered the opportunity for many Marranos to leave the Iberian Peninsula and come to the colonies where they could practice their religion openly. In 1684 Jews received the protection of the Colony of Rhode Island when the General Assembly "Voted, in answer to the petition of Simon Medus, David Brown, and associates, being Jews, presented to this Assembly, bearing date June the 24th, 1684, we declare, that they may expect as good protection here, as any stranger, being not of our nation residing amongst us in this his Majesty's Collony, ought to have, being obedient to his Majesty's laws."<sup>8</sup> As Stanley Chyet has stated, "Religious liberty was never an especially great problem for the Jew in America. Almost from the beginning, he 'found little trouble securing religious freedom,' and 'no colony drove him out because he was a Jew.'"<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Jews of Newport were integral parts of the community on the eve of the Revolution.

The Reverend Ezra Stiles noted that there were some sixty Jewish people living in Newport in 1760. He named as family heads Moses Levy, Isaac Elizer, Aaron Lopez, Moses Lopez, Issachar Pollock, Jacob Isaacs, among others, and counted their dependents.<sup>10</sup> While he appears to have underestimated the number of Jews, it is important that he left some record of those who lived there at that time. Although the Jewish community of Newport was never large,<sup>11</sup> it had sufficient aspirations to want to build a synagogue which would make the Jews even more at home in Newport.

Thus 1763 was an important year for Newport's Jews, as it was for the British Empire. The *Newport Mercury* printed a long and favorable article about the synagogue:

On Friday last, in the afternoon, was the Dedication of the new Synagogue, in this Town. It began by a handsome Procession, in which were carried the Books of the Law, to be deposited in the Ark. Several Portions of Scripture, and of their service, with a Prayer for the Royal Family, were read and finely sung by the Priest and People. There were present many Gentlemen and Ladies. The Order and Decorum, the Harmony and Solemnity of the Musick, together with a handsome Assembly of People, in an Edifice the most perfect of the Temple kind perhaps in America, and splendidly illuminated, could not but raise in the Mind a faint Idea of the Majesty and Grandeur of the ancient Jewish Worship mentioned in the Scripture.

Doctor Isaac De Abraham Touro performed the Service.<sup>12</sup> It is also important and relevant to acknowledge the loyalty felt for the British Royal family by Newport's Jews in 1763.

As a group the Jews of Newport were never too deeply involved in colonial politics. One obvious reason for this was their exclusion from voting or holding public office in Rhode Island. The Jews of the colonies further did not take part in the legal battles for independence, since prior to the Revolution there were no professional Jewish lawyers. Nevertheless, several Jews joined with numerous Christians in 1762 in petitions relating to a local tax problem that had economic consequences. Naphtali Hart, Isaac Hart, Issachar Pollock, Jacob Rodrigues Rivera, Jacob Isaacks, Moses Levy, Aaron Lopez, Isaac Elizer, and Nathan Hart maintained that the ratemakers had been negligent and partial, and that the present ratebill should be voided. They wanted three new ratemakers selected each year: one merchant, one farmer, and one tradesman. The General Assembly concurred with their petition.<sup>13</sup> The Jews were especially eager to have a fair tax structure, as they were expanding their trade as a result of the ending of the French and Indian War. They greatly enlarged their trade with the West Indies in the hope of acquiring new markets for their products, obtaining the sugar and molasses essential for their rum distilleries, and earning the money needed to pay their English creditors. Newporters had been engaged in smuggling, as were most of the colonists elsewhere. Thus, the great change in the British attitude toward the colonies angered them greatly. The Navigation Laws had never really bothered the colonists, for they were not enforced. However, in 1763 Prime Minister George Grenville ordered the British Navy to enforce them in an effort to lessen smuggling.

The enforcement of the Navigation Acts presented a problem to some British businessmen. They aided the colonial cause in an effort to keep their business healthy. One of Aaron Lopez's factors, the firm of Lane, Benson, and Vaughan of Cork, wrote to him on October 1, 1764 that "Our T. B. is now in London soliciting a Repeal of the Lumber Act under the direction of Lord Hillsborough & some others in Power & we have the pleasure to tell you that he makes not the least doubt of succeeding as soon as the English Parlimt meets . . . ."<sup>14</sup> Jacob Rader Marcus has noted that the efforts of Aaron Lopez to "expand his business in the 1760s were hindered by the new economic policy of Great Britain. The English authorities . . . were determined to make the colonies pay, in part at least, for the expensive French and Indian War. To this end they increased duties and taxes, and they tightened all trade regulations in order to stop smuggling . . . ."<sup>15</sup>

The English government asked for colonial suggestions on ways to pay their share of taxes to England; however, the colonists preferred to pay taxes in the old way. According to this method the Secretary



of State of England sent a letter to the colonial governors explaining the request; they in turn gave it to the colonial assemblies, which usually granted the money liberally. Benjamin Franklin told Grenville in 1764 before the Stamp Act was passed that the colonists would prefer to pay the money to England by the old method, rather than through a direct tax. In July of 1764 the General Assembly of Rhode Island appointed a committee to confer with other colonial committees ". . . to prevent the levying a Stamp Duty upon the North American Colonies . . . and for the Prevention of all such taxes, Duties, or Impositions, that may be proposed to be assessed upon the Colonists, which may be inconsistent with their Rights and Priviledges as British Subjects. . . ." <sup>16</sup>

The Stamp Act, which passed Parliament, took effect on November 1, 1765. Duties were placed on deeds, bonds, leases, and all other legal documents, newspapers, and commercial papers of various types.<sup>17</sup> The Newport Jews were affected in their trade by the Stamp Act as indicated in a letter from William Stead to Aaron Lopez dated February 4, 1766, ". . . for on account of the Opposition to the Stamp Act, it has put an entire stagnation to Trade. . . ." <sup>18</sup> Aaron Lopez postponed a lawsuit against a long overdue debtor because stamps were required on all legal documents.<sup>19</sup> The Newport Jews did not act as did their fellow Jewish merchants in Philadelphia, who signed the Non-Importation Agreement in 1765. Although there were only twelve Jewish merchants there, ten of them signed the document. They were Barnard Gratz, Michael Gratz, Mathias Bush, Benjamin Levy, Sampson Levy, Hayman Levy, Jr., Joseph Jacobs, Moses Mordecai, Abraham Mitchell, and David Franks.<sup>20</sup> As Chyet stated, "If Aaron, like most of his Rhode Island colleagues had been rather less than whole-hearted in his approval of the non-importation movement, he had not utterly denied it his support. . . ." <sup>21</sup>

The Stamp Act was repealed by Parliament in 1766. For a short time things returned to normal for the Newport Jews. However, in 1768 Parliament passed the Townshend Duties. These placed a small import duty on paper, tea, glass, and white lead. The revenue from these taxes was to be used to pay the salaries of the royal judges and governors in America. While the rest of the colonies joined in non-importation agreements again, Newport merchants carried on their trade as usual. Merchants in other colonies felt that Rhode Island was taking advantage of their loss in trade by ignoring the non-importation agreements. Schlesinger said of the merchants of Newport that ". . . they had so long accustomed themselves to defiances of the trade regula-

tions of Parliament that it violated no moral scruple to ignore the extra-legal ordinances of nearby provinces."<sup>22</sup>

Aaron Lopez and Jacob Rodrigues Rivera were seen as the leading Newport Jewish merchants at this time. Joseph and William Russell of Providence wrote to them on October 11, 1769 asking them and all other Newport merchants to come into the agreement. The Russells said: "You will find by the Letter which goes now to the Merchants at NewPort with an Agreeemt. That the Merchts here have come into, Not to Import any Goods from Great Brittan after this time untill the Greav. Act which we so much complain of is repealed, we find the people amongst us being so urgent that we should come into this agreeemt. as all the Rest of the governments had. . . ." <sup>23</sup> It is significant, too, that these men wrote to Lopez and Rivera as the leading merchants in Newport to relay his information to the others. The Newport merchants entered into the non-importation agreement only after eight colonies had placed a temporary embargo on their trade.<sup>24</sup>

Newport's merchants, both Christian and Jewish, were practical men and happy to resume trade. They did not need a total repeal of all the Townshend Duties to operate their businesses. However, the Sons of Liberty wanted total repeal. In secret, Samuel Nightingale of Providence wrote to Aaron Lopez as a friend and as the leader of Newport's merchants to warn him of a prospective visit by Boston's Sons of Liberty on August 8, 1770. He wrote: ". . . the Sons of Liberty in Boston have chose . . . (a Committee) to come to this Town and Newport, and Stur Up and Inflamm the Inhabbitance to Oblidge the Importers to Countermand the Orders for Goods and if any goods dose come, to Oblidge them Reshipt. . . ." <sup>25</sup> Whether the Jewish merchants wanted it or not, they were being caught up in the independence movement.

Even after the duties on tea were removed, Lopez was advised by his Amsterdam brokers, Daniel Cromelin and Sons, against importation. They wrote: ". . . As you will have certainly been acquainted that the Parliament has of late taken off all the Duties on the Teas imported to America . . . and enables the People of England to send to your Parts said Article almost as cheap as could be imported from hence, we think it much more for your Interest to postpone executing your Said order til we know what Influence this Sudden and unexpected alteration may have with you. . . ." <sup>26</sup> Lopez was becoming more involved in the consequences of the colonial dispute as the year progressed. In August 1773 he and others were appointed to a committee to draft a letter to the English Secretary of State in respect to Fishing rights in Canadian waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.<sup>27</sup>

By July 20, 1775 the families of Aaron Lopez, Moses Seixas, Jacob Myers, Benjamin Hart, Isaac Touro, Isaac Elizer, Moses Levy, Hiam Levy, Jacob Isaacks, Isaac Hart, Francis Pollock, Moses Michael Hays, Jacob Rodrigues Rivera, Jacob Hart, Myer Pollock, Myer Benjamin, and others<sup>28</sup> took part in a Public Fasting Day, with prayers for peace at the synagogue.<sup>29</sup> The inevitable break with Great Britain occurred with the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Rhode Island joined the conflict:

This Assembly taking into the most serious Consideration the Resolution of the most Honorable the General Congress of the United States of America, of the Fourth Instant, declaring the said States Free and Independent States, do approve the said Resolution, and do most solemnly engage that we will support the said General Congress with our Lives and Fortunes.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, Newport Jews, along with Newport Christians and all other colonists, were now forced to make a decision as to whether they would rebel or remain loyal to the King and Great Britain.

As noted in earlier paragraphs of this paper, the War for American Independence was a civil war within the empire. The colonies were fighting to secede from the Mother Country and create a new, dynamic nation less decadent in their eyes. However, it was also a civil war within the colonies, for families and friends throughout the colonies fought one another in support of their personal convictions. "Loyalism pervaded the entire Atlantic seaboard. Rather, it was a civil war that transcended geographical regions and class differences. . . ."<sup>31</sup> Many Jewish historians have written that the majority of Jews were patriots. Chyet pointed out that "Before the critical non-importation days of the 1760s, the American Jew had been 'passive politically' and 'content with the measure of economic and civil rights which he possessed'. The Revolution, although it achieved little for the Jew respecting political rights in the newly independent states themselves, found him on the whole a Whig."<sup>32</sup> Marcus added that the Jews, who at this time were mainly natives of Central Europe, ". . . did enjoy many liberties and opportunities in British America, but these only whetted their appetite for more. As Whigs they were not satisfied with a half a measure of freedom; they wanted it full and were not willing to wait. They were not gradualists."<sup>33</sup> And Gutstein maintained that, "With the exception of a few isolated individuals, the Jews in the colonies espoused the cause of American liberty."<sup>34</sup> However, much evidence has been found to show that there were many Jews who decided to remain loyal to the Crown. Many of these Loyalist Jews were from Newport, Rhode

Island. There were all types of Tories, those who openly were in favor of Britain and those who tried to remain neutral, but decided that their conscience and economic interests led them to loyalty to Great Britain.

In June 1776, with the war fever at its height in Rhode Island, the General Assembly feared the danger to the Colony of allowing Tories to wander about freely. In order to determine just who were Tories, it was enacted that,

. . . all the Male Inhabitants of this Colony, of Sixteen Years of Age and Upwards, who shall be suspected of being inimical to the United American Colonies, and the arduous struggle in which they are engaged, against the Force of Great Britain shall make and subscribe the following Declaration or Test, to wit:

'I the Subscriber do solemnly and sincerely declare That I believe the War, Resistance and Opposition, in which the United American Colonies are now engaged, against the Fleets and Armies of Great Britain, is on the Part of the Said Colonies just and necessary: And that I will not, directly or indirectly, afford assistance of any Sort or Kind whatever to the said Fleets and Armies, during the continuance of the present War, but that I will heartily assist in the Defense of the United Colonies.'<sup>35</sup>

On July 10, 1776 the Rhode Island Brigade offered a list of suspected persons to Metcalf Bowler, the Speaker of the Lower House. The Jews included in this list of Tories were Isaac Hart, Isaac Touro, Myer Pollock, and Moses Michael Hays. These men, together with numerous Christians, were to appear at the Colony House to subscribe to the Test Oath on Friday, July 12, 1776.<sup>36</sup> At the time of his Rhode Island Assembly challenge, Moses Michael Hays was 37 years old. Born in New York in 1739, the son of Judah Hays, he had been admitted as a freeman in that town in 1769. Hays had been a watchmaker in New York before he moved to Newport in 1770. There he set up shop as a general merchant near the Point section of town.<sup>37</sup>

When Moses Michael Hays was called upon to take the oath, he refused. The following account is preserved in the General Assembly Papers:

Mr. Moses Hays appeared & Refused to sign the Test and Called for his accusers. He was then Told there was a number Present whom he there saw. He likewise called for his accusation which was Read. I have and ever shall hold the strongest Principles and Attachments to the Just Rights and Privileges of this my native Land, And ever have & shall conform to the Rules & Acts of this

Government and pay as I allways have my proportion of its Exigencies. I always have asserted my Sentiments in favour of America and confess the Warr on its part Just. I decline subscribing the Test at Present from These Principles. First that I deny ever being Inimical to my country and call for my accusers and proof of Conviction, Second that I am an Israelite and am not allowed the Liberty of a Vote, or Voice in Common with the Rest of the Voters Tho Consistent with the Constitution, and the other Colonies, Thirdly Because the Test is not general and Consequently Subject to many glaring Inconveniences, Fourthly, Continental Congress nor the General Assembly of this nor the Legislatures of the other Colonies have never in this contest taken any notice or Countenance Respecting the society of Israelites to which I belong. When any Rule, Order or directions is made by the Congress or General Assembly I shall to the utmost of my power adhere to the same.<sup>38</sup>

Moses Michael Hays carried this further when he asked for vindication from the General Assembly on July, 17, 1776.<sup>39</sup> Hays was a patriot and not a danger to the Colony. However, he raised some interesting points in his rebuttal to the General Assembly, stressing the inequality that faced Jews politically. It had long been evident that Jews were second class citizens in Rhode Island and did in fact remain so until the 1842 Constitution, which much later assured to Jews the right to vote and hold public office. Hays had perhaps been optimistic enough to want the Revolution to be a social revolution and bring equality to the Jews. Hays also knew in his own conscience that he was patriotic and was greatly annoyed that his sincerity was doubted.

However, the three other Jewish men under suspicion—Isaac Touro, Isaac Hart, and Myer Pollock—were definitely Tories.<sup>40</sup> Isaac Hart refused to sign the Test until it was general.<sup>41</sup> The Hart family had lived in Britain for over a century when Isaac Hart and his own family settled in Newport. Isaac Hart was a leader of the Jewish community and with Jacob Rodrigues Rivera and Moses Levy in 1759 had purchased the land for the synagogue. Huhner stated that Isaac Hart had associated with the aristocracy, was the partner of Governor Wanton in a privateering venture during the French and Indian War, and joined him on the Loyalist side in the Revolution.<sup>42</sup> Isaac Hart had been a member of the Redwood Library and had donated money toward the purchase of books for its shelves.<sup>43</sup> After the British left Newport in 1779 the Harts, fearing Whig resentment, followed the British to Long Island, where they received some land. Not too long after

their arrival on Long Island, the following appeared in *Rivington's Rolay Gazette* on November 23, 1780:

'A party of rebels about eighty in number . . . arrived at south-side Long Island, where they surprized a body of respectable loyal Refugees belonging to Rhode Island, and the vicinity thereabout, who were establishing a post in order to get a present subsistence for themselves and their distressed familites. . . . Mr. Isaac Hart of Newport in Rhode Island, formerly an eminent merchant and ever a loyal subject, was inhumanly fired upon and bayoneted, wounded in fifteen different parts of his body, and beat with their muskets in the most shocking manner in the very act of imploring quarter, and died of his wounds in a few hours after, universally regretted by every true lover of his King and Country. . . .'<sup>44</sup>

Isaac Hart had contributed a great deal to Newport Jewry during his life there, and he should be remembered as a man with strong devotion to his King and to the Mother Country which allowed him to prosper financially and live openly as a Jew.

Jacob Hart, who had been born around 1700, arrived in Newport in 1750. When the war broke out, Jacob Hart, also a Loyalist, removed with his family to New York. He had intended to travel to Nova Scotia, but his money ran out. He petitioned Sir Guy Carleton, the British Commander in Chief, for aid. Carleton granted the family an allowance of a dollar a day and rations from the army supplies. In October of 1783 the Jacob Hart family arrived in England practically destitute. On November 4, 1783 Hart applied for aid from the Commissioners, who granted a pension of £40 a year. Unfortunately he died a year later at the advanced age of 84. His widow, Esther, received £30 a year until her death on June 26, 1785.<sup>45</sup>

Moses Hart, Jacob's son and also a Loyalist, had owned half an acre of land at Easton's Point in Newport, containing an oil works, stable, stores, and a house. Because the state of Rhode Island had confiscated his estate, Moses Hart received from Great Britain compensation in the amount of £324, 6 s. At the end of 1785 his grant was cut to £18 a year.<sup>46</sup> The aid was not great, but the English officials felt they were aiding to some extent loyal subjects who had lost all they owned in supporting the British cause.

Naphtali Hart's house in Tiverton was taken by the State because Hart had been declared inimical to America. The General Assembly voted in 1779 to repair the house, probably in the hope of renting or selling it.<sup>47</sup> Also by order of the Council of War, the Sheriff of Newport was to seize the property belonging to Isaac Abraham de Touro,

Nathan Hart, Isaac Hart, Joshua Hart, Moses Hart, and Samuel Hart, as well as that belonging to many non-Jews because they "... have left this State, and gone off with the Enemy, whereby they have forfeited the Protection of this and the other United States and are considered as aliens."<sup>48</sup> The final separation between Rhode Island and the Hart family occurred in July 1780 when the General Assembly passed an Act preventing Isaac Hart, Samuel Hart, Moses Hart, and Samuel Hart, Jr. from returning to Rhode Island. If they should attempt to return, the Act stipulated that they be placed in jail until they could be sent out of the State.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the Hart family, who had helped Newport prosper, were forbidden ever again to enter its limits because of their loyalty to the King.

Isaac Touro, the distinguished hazzan of the synagogue and father of Abraham and Judah Touro, often referred to as the "Jew-Priest", was among those called upon to take the Oath. In the Rhode Island Archives one finds this reference to Touro: "Revd Mr Tororo Appeared & Refused to Sign the Test as he has not been Naturalised & Its against his Religious Principles & Like-wise he is a Subject to the States of Holland."<sup>50</sup> Isaac Touro, a native of Holland, had been elected the hazzan or minister of the congregation in 1758. In 1773 he married Reyna Hays, the sister of Michael Moses Hays. Touro remained in Newport when the British occupied it on December 8, 1776 and remained there until they withdrew in 1779. At that time he moved to New York with his wife and three children. His sons, Abraham and Judah, would become very famous in their own right in Newport history in the nineteenth century. He served as hazzan to a small group of New York Jewish Loyalists during the absence of Gershom Mendes Seixas, and also went into business. However, on March 13, 1780 Isaac Touro appealed to Major General William Tryon for aid. He also sought financial assistance from the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in London, which was sympathetic, but in a letter of January 22, 1781 offered no help.<sup>51</sup>

In December of 1782, realizing that there was no future for him in the colonies, Touro finally decided to move with his family to Kingston, Jamaica, where there was a large Jewish community. He appealed to Sir Guy Carleton, the Commander in Chief of the British forces in America, for money for this purpose. Touro wrote on December 12, 1782 that,

... from the distresses which your petitioner suffered from persecution for his attachment to (His Majesty's) government, and coming with his Majesty's troops from Rhode Island to this city (New York), he was so reduced in his circumstances, that had it

not been for the humane intervention of General (William) Tryon, General (John) Marsh, and other respectable persons, he must have sunk under the weight of his affliction and distress; . . .

That the petitioner is now anxiously desirous of removing himself and family to the island of Jamaica, but is incompetent to defray the expences of his passage. . . .

Your petitioner therefore humbly prays that your Excellency will be favorably pleased to order a twelve month's allowance to be paid to him, to enable him to remove with his family to the island of Jamaica.<sup>52</sup>

Apparently the petition was approved, for Isaac Touro died in Jamaica a little more than a year later. His widow brought her three children to Boston to live in the home of her brother, Moses Michael Hays.

Myer Pollock had been called upon by the committee administering the Test Oath to appear and subscribe to it. He refused to sign it because, he stated, it was "contrary to the Custom of Jews." However, one finds in the General Assembly Records that Myer Pollock did finally sign the Test Oath in July 1776.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, Pollock was a Loyalist.

Myer Benjamin or Benjamin Myers (he was known by both names) came to Newport from Hungary with his Austrian wife Rachel in 1761. He was made the steward of the Newport Jewish Club the same year. On March 26, 1764, a notice appeared in the *Newport Mercury* stating that Myer Benjamin was insolvent.<sup>54</sup> The Jewish community came to his aid by appointing him the sexton and kosher butcher. He held these posts until his death in 1776.<sup>55</sup> His widow Rachel was a Tory and remained in Newport with her nine children until the French under Rochambeau arrived in 1780. Her son Benjamin was an ardent Loyalist. She had no means of support and went to New York, where she petitioned for aid from Sir Henry Clinton. She stated in her letter of April 3, 1781,

That your Petitioner was for many years an inhabitant of Newport, where she supported, by her industry, a large family of children;

That from the decisive part her son, Benjamin Myers, took with the associated refugees and other loyalists at Rhode Island, she was obliged to leave that place after it was evacuated by his Majesty's troops and come to this city in a flag of truce (ship) with all her family, consisting of nine children;

That she has in the maintenance of her family struggled with many difficulties, and from the assistance she has derived from a



few benovelent friends, hitherto been able to support, tho indifferently, her children, But all her industry is not now sufficient to afford them the necessaries of life, which constrains her to implore your Excellency to extend her some relief from the government, by permitting her to receive for her family such rations of provisions, etc. as may be thought necessary.<sup>56</sup>

Rachel Myers fled to Canada in 1783 when the British left New York. However, she later returned to the United States, and one of her sons, Mordecai, served as an American officer in the War of 1812.

Of those Jewish Tories who remained in Newport in 1779, it was recommended to Major General Horatio Gates that Jacob Isaacks, Hyam Levy, and Simeon Levy be committed to the Provost, while Moses Levy was to be confined to house arrest.<sup>57</sup> Thus, those Jews who had been active participants in Newport society, who had helped maintain the synagogue, and who had shared in the failures and prosperity of the seaport, were now outcasts because they remained loyal to the government which they felt had given them more rights, freedoms, and privileges than any other country in the world at that time.

On the whole, Newport Jews were pragmatic and middle of the road. They waited until war and independence were evident before taking positive action. The whole revolutionary movement was an evolutionary action. It took over a hundred years and thirteen violent years of taxes and reactions by the colonists for the colonies to start thinking of themselves as Americans and not Englishmen. Even Aaron Lopez, who has been considered a patriot, avoided the non-importation agreements of the 1760s and 1770s when he could. As Chyet has pointed out about Lopez, "During all the years of disturbance leading to the final rupture in 1776, Aaron, it is clear, had been something less than unwavering in his support of the Continental Cause. Fugitive that he was from an Inquisition-ridden Portugal, able in British-ruled America to practice his religion without fear, permitted under the aegis of the British Crown to pursue his commercial affairs with as much opportunity as was accorded any other enterprising colonial merchant, Aaron did not see in George III the royal brute that Thomas Paine perceived."<sup>58</sup> Once the war began, Aaron Lopez did as the Philadelphia Jewish merchant Michael Gratz did, supply the army with needed stores. For example the State of Rhode Island owed Lopez £235, 7s, 10d for cloth for knapsacks in May 1777 and £22, 16s for gunpowder in February 1776.<sup>59</sup> He even sold the State a whaleboat in February 1776.<sup>60</sup> The latter two sales were made in fact before the Declaration of Independence.

For most of the war Aaron Lopez, his father-in-law Jacob Rodrigues

Rivera, and his son-in-law Abraham Mendes and their families and servants lived in Leicester, Massachusetts. While Rivera became a farmer, Aaron Lopez continued to carry on trade to some extent. As a result of the war Lopez lost a great many ships and much merchandise. In 1780 Lopez tried to obtain some of his property from Jamaica. James Wilson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and William Lewis of Philadelphia tried to get Congressional approval and protection to have some of the material sent to Lopez. In their letter to Congress they stated that "That Gentleman before the Commencement of the present War had Property to a very large Amount in the Island of Jamaica. . . . The character of Mr. Lopez, as a Friend to the Liberties and Independence of the United States is clear & unimpeached. . . . He is a Merchant of extensive Business, is active, enterprising, and public spirited."<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, Aaron Lopez died before he was able to rebuild his mercantile empire.

While the Lopez and Rivera families were in Leicester, Moses Mendes Seixas became the lay leader of the congregation and warden. During the absence of Isaac Touro various lay members of the congregation conducted the services. Moses Seixas was a Whig and Moses Levy, who was perhaps mildly patriotic, signed an agreement in 1780 to defend Newport. Moses Seixas sustained various losses from the quartering of British and Hessian officers in his home. He registered such claims with the General Assembly on April 29, 1782: ". . . Damage done to his House & furniture by British & Hessian officers being Quarter'd on him—60 dollars."<sup>62</sup>

Although the Jewish men from Newport who fought in the continental army were few in number, the names of some who offered their services on behalf of the new country are known. Abraham Isaacs was a private in Colonel Christopher Greene's Regiment for three years.<sup>63</sup> Isaac Jacobs was a lieutenant in Colonel Robert Elliott's Regiment of Artillery from January 22, 1777 to August 27, 1777, when he resigned.<sup>64</sup> Samuel Benjamin also fought in the war. Asher Polock, a tallow chandler born in London, England, was fifty-two years old when he enlisted on April 16, 1777 for the duration of the war.<sup>65</sup> Polock also acted as the butcher for his unit. Solomon Roffee, born in Bristol, Rhode Island and a blacksmith by trade, enlisted at the age of twenty on April 14, 1781 in the First Rhode Island Corps.<sup>66</sup> For his war-time service, Solomon Roffee was awarded along with other veterans of the war land from confiscated estates.<sup>67</sup> Thus a few members of the Jewish community have been identified who actively supported the patriot cause once independence had been declared. Even the synagogue served during the war. Since

the British had vandalized the State House when they used it as a barracks, the General Assembly elected to use it as a meeting place.<sup>68</sup>

It has been said that one third of the colonists were Whig, one third Tory, and one third neutral. Based on such material on colonial Newport Jewry as is available in various repositories, one finds that this was essentially the case in Newport. However, many Jewish merchants and their families were pragmatic, pursued their own self-interest in trade, and tried to avoid involvement in the adversary reactions to the British legislation of the 1760s and 1770s. There were no Thomas Jeffersons, John Dickinsons, or John Adamses among them to argue the pros and cons of independence in Congress, because Jews had always been second class citizens politically and did not hold office such as delegate to Congress. There were patriots, exemplified by Aaron Lopez, Asher Pollock, and Moses Michael Hays, who supplied the army, fought the battles, and also argued for the rights of Jews in the colonies. However, there were also Loyalists, such as Isaac Touro and Rachel Myers, who had to flee Newport when the British left, and Isaac Hart, who lost his life and fortune for his allegiance to the Crown. There was no Jewish position on the American Revolution, just as there were no other religious or ethnic positions on the issues. All men and women throughout the North American colonies had to listen to their own consciences and decide whether to be English citizens living in the colonies, or Americans.

In essence, the Jews of Newport, like their Christian and Jewish counterparts throughout the colonies, found themselves on opposing sides in the conflict over the birth of the United States.

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A.F.L.

#### NOTES

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<sup>2</sup>Morris A. Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*, (New York, 1936), pp. 173-4.

<sup>3</sup>*Jewish Club Formed in 1761*. Newport Historical Society, Box 69, Folder 2.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>Bernard Postal and Malcolm H. Stern, *American Airlines Tourist's Guide to Jewish History in the Caribbean*, (New York, 1975), p.7.

<sup>8</sup>*Rhode Island Colony Records*. Volume II, Rhode Island Archives, p. 111.

<sup>9</sup>Stanley F. Chyet, "The Political Rights of the Jews in the United States, 1776-1840," *American Jewish Archives Critical Studies in American Jewish History*. Volume II, (New York), p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>Esra Stiles, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, edited by Franklin Bowditch, Volume I, (New York, 1901), p. 11.

- <sup>11</sup>Malcolm H. Stern, "Newport Jewry—Whence and Whither," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. 5:319, (No. 4) Nov., 1970.
- <sup>12</sup>*Newport Mercury*. Monday, December 5, 1973.
- <sup>13</sup>*Petitions to the Rhode Island General Assembly*. Volume XI, Rhode Island Archives, p. 37.
- <sup>14</sup>*Aaron Lopez Letters*. Newport Historical Society, Folder 622.
- <sup>15</sup>Jacob Rader Marcus, *Early American Jewry 1649-1794*. Volume I, (Philadelphia, 1951), p. 138.
- <sup>16</sup>*Rhode Island Colony Records*. Volume VIII, p. 236.
- <sup>17</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776*. (New York, 1968), p. 65.
- <sup>18</sup>*Aaron Lopez Letters*. Newport Historical Society, Folder 651.
- <sup>19</sup>Stanley F. Chyet, *Lopez of Newport*. (Detroit, 1970), p. 76.
- <sup>20</sup>Edwin Wolf 2nd and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson*. (Philadelphia, 1957), p. 47.
- <sup>21</sup>Chyet, *Lopez of Newport*. p. 77.
- <sup>22</sup>Schlesinger, p. 153.
- <sup>23</sup>*Aaron Lopez Letters*. Newport Historical Society, Folder 629.
- <sup>24</sup>Marilyn Kaplan, "The Jewish Merchants of Newport, 1740-1790," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. 7:25, (No. 1) Nov., 1975.
- <sup>25</sup>*Aaron Lopez Letters*. Newport Historical Society. Folder 631.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, Folder 635.
- <sup>27</sup>*Petitions to the Rhode Island General Assembly*. Volume XV, p. 41.
- <sup>28</sup>*Census of the Colony of Rhode Island 1774*. Rhode Island Archives.
- <sup>29</sup>Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*. p. 178.
- <sup>30</sup>*Rhode Island Colony Records*. Volume IX, p. 440.
- <sup>31</sup>Catherine Crary, *The Price of Loyalty*. (New York, 1973), foreword, (by Richard Morris).
- <sup>32</sup>Chyet, "Political Right of the Jews in the United States, 1776-1840, p. 33.
- <sup>33</sup>Jacob Rader Marcus, editor, "Jews and the American Revolution, A Bicentennial Documentary," *American Jewish Archives*, Volume XXVII, number 5, p. 105.
- <sup>34</sup>Gutstein, *The Story of the Jews of Newport*, p. 176.
- <sup>35</sup>*Rhode Island Colony Records*. Volume IX, p. 431.
- <sup>36</sup>*General Assembly Papers, Revolutionary War "Suspected Persons" 1775-1783*. Rhode Island Archives, p. 10 and p. 16.
- <sup>37</sup>Lee M. Friedman, *Jewish Pioneers and Patriots*. (Philadelphia, 1943), p. 147.
- <sup>38</sup>*General Assembly Papers, Revolutionary War "Suspected Persons" 1775-1783*. p. 14.
- <sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.
- <sup>40</sup>Marcus, *Early American Jewry*. Volume I, p. 155.
- <sup>41</sup>*General Assembly Papers, Revolutionary War "Suspected Persons" 1775-1783*. p. 14.
- <sup>42</sup>Leon Huhner, "Jews Interested in Privateering in America During the Eighteenth Century," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*. Volume XXIII, p. 166.
- <sup>43</sup>Morris Gutstein, "A Newport Ledger, 1760-1770," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*. Volume XXXVII, p. 166.
- <sup>44</sup>Crary, p. 196.
- <sup>45</sup>Cecil Roth, "Some Jewish Loyalists in the War of American Independence," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*. Volume XXXVIII, p. 89.
- <sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 90.
- <sup>47</sup>*Rhode Island Colony Records*. Volume X, p. 311.
- <sup>48</sup>*Council of War*. Volume IV, Rhode Island Archives, p. 24.
- <sup>49</sup>*Rhode Island Colony Records*. Volume XI, pp. 161-162.
- <sup>50</sup>*General Assembly Papers, Revolutionary War "Suspected Persons". 1775-1783*. p. 14.
- <sup>51</sup>Roth, p. 88.
- <sup>52</sup>Marcus, "Jews and the American Revolution, A Bicentennial Documentary," pp. 189-190.
- <sup>53</sup>*General Assembly Papers, Revolutionary War "Suspected Persons", 1775-1783*.

p. 17.

<sup>54</sup>*Newport Mercury*. March 26, 1764.

<sup>55</sup>Stern. "Newport Jewry—Whence and Whither," p. 320.

<sup>56</sup>Marcus. "Jews and the American Revolution, A Bicentennial Documentary," p. 188.

<sup>57</sup>*Military Papers*. Volume XII, Rhode Island Archives, p. 225.

<sup>58</sup>Chyet, *Lopez of Newport*. p. 155.

<sup>59</sup>*Military Papers*. Volume XIII, p. 319.

<sup>60</sup>*Rhode Island Colony Records*. Volume IX, p. 344.

<sup>61</sup>Herbert Friedenwald, "Memorials Presented to the Continental Congress," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*. Volume II, p. 126.

<sup>62</sup>*General Assembly Papers, Revolutionary War Claims for Damages, 1776-1781*. Rhode Island Archives, p. 84.

<sup>63</sup>*Military Papers*. Volume XVI, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume II, p. 32.

<sup>65</sup>*Regimental Book 1781-1783*. Rhode Island Archives, p. 12.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 26, 33.

<sup>67</sup>*Reports to the General Assembly*. Volume IV, Rhode Island Archives, p. 55.

<sup>68</sup>*Rhode Island Colony Records*. Volume XI, p. 460.

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## THE EDUCATION OF AN IMMIGRANT

by Beryl Segal

### BREAKING UP OF FAMILIES

Orinin, the *Shtetl* in the Ukraine where we were born, reared, and educated, was a family-centered village. Family names, family resemblances, and family traits were a common occurrence. Grandparents, parents, and their married children lived either in the same ancestral house or a few houses removed to be within earshot of one another.

Not only were family ties among the living important, but the dead as well were involved. The cemetery was within sight of the *Shtetl*. The dead were freely consulted, asked to intercede in sickness, invited to participate in festivities of the family, and visited before holidays. Even people who after marriage had moved away from Orinin came back for *Kever Avot*, a pilgrimage to the Grave of their Ancestors, at least once a year before the High Holidays.

Such were the customs and the life habits of every village, every *Shtetl* in the Ukraine.

The First World War wrought havoc among the families. The sons and daughters dispersed to the four corners of the globe, never again to return to Orinin. Each morning we would wake up to hear that this one or that had slipped out of town during the night.

My two older sisters were the first to leave the *Shtetl*, one to live in Minneapolis, the other in Fargo, North Dakota, places we had never heard of in our village. My older brother followed them to America and did not rest until he brought over the rest of the family. My younger brother, who could not enter the United States, went on to Cuba. The youngest son of the family is in Israel, now the head of a teachers' seminary for *kibbutzim*. My youngest sister lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

My wife's family was less fortunate. Her three brothers and a sister emigrated to Canada. The rest of the family stayed behind in the Ukraine, suffering hunger and deprivation. Some died at the hands of the enemy.

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This is the third of three papers by Mr. Segal, recounting his lifetime experiences. The previous instalments describe life in a *Shtetl* in the Ukraine (*RIJHN* 6:542-577, No. 4, Nov. 1974), and life for a Jew in the Russian army in World War I (*RIJHN* 7:104-139, No. 1, Nov. 1975). The three essays tell the story of one family making the progression from life in an East European *Shtetl* to Americanization, the last generation to have made that historic pilgrimage, as the *Shtetl* as a social institution no longer exists. Ed.

Every family, with minor variations, had similar stories to tell. Every immigrant in America can relate the saga of his own experiences and of the fate of his family.

After wandering through Europe, and after an ocean voyage that seemed like a nightmare on the Holland-America Liner, the Ryndham, we finally landed on the shores of America. There were shouts of "Land! Land!" as the miracle of a city on the sea came into view. The Lady on the Water, the Statue of Liberty, well known to every immigrant who ever came to America through New York, arose before us as we prepared to disembark at Ellis Island.

My wife and I did not come to America expecting to find bricks of gold in the streets. We came to find a free life, to have the opportunity to work at whatever was available, and to satisfy our thirst for learning.

Now, as we look back over the fifty years since we took up the wanderer's staff and came to America, we can still point to the three things we hoped to find and did find in the new land: freedom, opportunity for work, and learning. We live a free life among free people. We are not discriminated against at every step because we are Jews. We have learned and are continuing to learn throughout our adult years in America.

We had every opportunity to achieve what we could to the full extent of our abilities. And we saved our lives from certain destruction during or after the wars and the revolutions that plagued the Ukraine after we were gone.

But one thing we could not make whole again. The family togetherness, the family unit, the family warmth have forever gone from our lives. It is like a delicate vase—once broken it may never be put together again.

The family structure was shattered, but not wiped out altogether. Although scattered, those fortunate enough to have made the break did not forget those who stayed behind. We helped them to come and join us. This was repeated many times over among the East European immigrants who came to America.

First came the "papers", or visas, from the American consul in the land from which we emigrated. Then the "*Shif's carten*", the boat passage for one or two members of the family, and then the long wanderings around European ports, while seeking a ship to take them to America.



IN A MIDWESTERN CITY

We were not allowed to step on the soil of New York. We felt like Moses must have felt when he was told: "Here is the land . . . You can only look at it from a distance . . . But you cannot enter it . . ."

The skyscrapers of New York were dazzling in the spring sun as we were led to the waiting railroad trains to be sent to our destination, Minnesota. On our first day in the New Land we traveled across almost half of it and saw it through the windows of a fast-moving train. Freshly plowed fields stretched out before us, and towns and villages passed by before we could make out their names. A streak through the window and gone.

In Chicago we stopped for a few hours, which we spent in the railroad station. We sat in the cavernous building and were terrified to step outside. The clang of the street cars, the rushing crowds, the noise that pervaded the city, all of these alarmed us, and we clung to one another for protection against the unknown. We were hoping that Minneapolis would be less frightening, and were glad when we were herded once more into the coaches to roll on to our destination.

My sisters and their husbands, who came to meet us in Minneapolis, looked strange; they had changed so much in the few short years since they left Orinin to sojourn in America. Their dress was different; their speech was different; their manners were changed. Are these my sisters?—the thought crossed my mind. We were no doubt as strange in their eyes as they were in ours. After bringing them up to date on the family and the events in Orinin, we had nothing more to talk about. We were relieved, in fact glad, to be left alone after supper.

After a few days we became adjusted to our surroundings and felt reunited with at least part of the family. On the second week of our stay I began to look for work, and my wife began to count the days to the birth of our first child. In the second week I also registered at the civics classes for newcomers conducted by the YMCA.

In Minneapolis at that time there were four systems of schools for Jewish children. The Orthodox congregational schools were the most popular. Next were the Reform temples with their Sunday schools. The least popular were the Yiddish schools. But the crown of the city was the Talmud Torah, the sponsors of which were mostly Zionists and other "progressive" elements in Minneapolis. The pupils were not allowed to utter a word in any language other than Hebrew. Their pupils numbered in the hundreds, and they occupied a large modern

building of their own. I later learned that the Minneapolis Talmud Torah was a model school for the entire Mid-West. They frowned upon the Sunday school of the Reform temples and the Yiddish schools, both of which at that time were anti-Zionist.

I visited all of the schools and inquired about an opening. The only one that needed a teacher was an Orthodox school that was holding classes in a synagogue and whose principal was a distant relative of ours. I was told that I was to teach the beginners' classes in reading, some prayers, and the elements of writing. After the children mastered the art of reading I suggested a textbook that we had used in schools where I had taught before coming to America. The principal was shocked. "We have a textbook", he said. "The *Siddur* (prayer book) withstood the test of generations." "But the children are tired of reading without understanding the content", I protested. "This is the way we are teaching here. If you don't like it, look for another place," he replied.

The breaking point came one day when, after a session of reading and learning the *Kiddush*,\* I sang before the children the famous Yiddish song "*Afn pripechok brenta feierl*",\*\* a favorite with Jewish children everywhere. The class caught on to the melody, and we were singing the refrain together, when the door opened and the principal brushing me aside, took over the class and commanded: "*Daven! Daven!* (Pray! Pray!). This is no place for songs". Daggers darted from his eyes. I knew that my days were numbered in my first job.

During the morning hours I attended the civics class at the YMCA. The teacher was a very compassionate woman. She taught us how to speak out, to express a thought or a greeting in English, to carry on conversations with one another, and to have no fear of saying what was on our minds. "You have had all kinds of experiences," she would say to us. "Tell us about these experiences. Do not be afraid of embarrassment. Stand in front of the class and speak."

I remember an Armenian young man, whose family was massacred by the Turks, telling about it and starting to cry. A girl from a South American country tried to picture the house where she lived with her parents and pigs and a goat all in one room. My account of a pogrom in the *Shtetl* was pale beside the tales of horror and starvation of the others in the class room. We did express ourselves and speak out, thanks to our patient teacher.

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\**Kiddush*, prayer proclaiming the holiness of the Sabbath or a holiday. (Hebrew)

\*\*"A little fire is burning in the oven, and the room is warm, and the *Rebbe* is teaching his little children the *Aleph Bet*."

And that became the pattern of our lives and has been ever since: student in the morning hours and teacher in the afternoon and evenings.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

After a year of preparation in language and the history of the United States, so skillfully taught at the civics classes, I plucked up enough courage to enroll at the University of Minnesota, situated on the shores of the Mississippi. To this day I do not know on what grounds I was admitted. All of my records were lost. All I could produce was the record of my studies at the YMCA, but I was admitted to the university and registered in four courses.

One of the courses was a "snap". It was Elementary German, and I felt as if I were cheating the class. They had such difficulty in reading and even more in translating, while to me it was the easiest thing in the world. Neither the instructor nor the students in the class could understand how I, a foreigner from Russia, knew the language. Yiddish, Jews, and Jewish problems were little known in Minnesota at that time. At a university of five thousand students and faculty, most of them blond Swedes and Norwegians, Jews hardly mattered. There were only two professors who were Jews during my time. One was in the music department and the other a botanist. The music instructor considered himself a German, while the botanist was a member of the Labor Zionist Organization. He wrote articles in the Yiddish newspaper *Die Zeit* (The Times) on growing wheat in Palestine. I also made my debut in the Yiddish press with my series of articles titled "Under the Rule of Petlura", the last Hetman of the Ukrainian Republic, whose followers burned, raped, and pillaged every little town in the land. Petlura was assassinated later in Paris.

Another subject was English, and it was a delight. New names of novelists, poets, and essayists of the English literature were a discovery to me. Dickens and Scott, Keats and Shelley, Charles Lamb and Samuel Johnson were names that I heard for the first time in my life. The more reading we had to do the better I liked the course.

Psychology, the third subject, opened new vistas for me and literally opened my eyes to human traits that I knew existed but could not name. The Psychology I course arranged them for me, classified them, and made them fall into place. So many actions of my friends and my own reactions were made clear. What amazed me was the number of human emotions and characteristics which were familiar to me from my studies in Jewish sources in my childhood that were the topics for analysis in psychology.

Because I was older than the average student, four or five years older, and because my experiences spanned a continent, an ocean, and two cultures, I was remarkably impressed by the clarification of urges and motives behind human actions, and the sublimations and substitutions that occur in everyday life. For a while I thought that psychology would be the field to which I would devote my time and my energies.

But then I was introduced to biology. I was captivated, as every freshman is, by the mystery of living. Life assumed meaning beyond the everyday acts of living. "What is Man?"—a question asked so many times in Jewish liturgy—confronted me every time I looked at an ameba, a paramecium, a bacillus. Man is a superior being I was brought up to believe. And yet the Tree of Life, a chart familiar to every dabbler in biology, showed the interrelationships of the Animal World. When we dissected a frog for the first time I was struck by the similarity of structures as between man and the frog, between all vertebrates and man, and especially between mammals and man. I had handled frogs when I was a child, and the so-called lower animals were always under foot when I grew up in Orinin. It had never occurred to me to compare man with these animals. Man is man, created in God's image, and all other animals were made for man to do with as he pleased. To make a readjustment in outlook, to stare at an animal and observe its front and rear legs, brain and nervous system, muscle and skeleton, all of them similar to those in the human body, was at once shattering and exhilarating to me.

The simple faith I had brought with me from Orinin was shaken, but not destroyed completely. It shifted to a higher plane. What biology would hold for me in the future was at once tantalizing and frightening. I knew then that I would pursue the science further. I would forever be fascinated by amebae and insects, by beasts and man. Something a professor of biology said to me has remained with me to this day. We were both standing at a street-car stop (college professors in those days had no cars), and he engaged me in conversation. When I told him some of my story, he asked me: "And what are you going to do?"

I really had not thought about this. It was my first year at the University of Minnesota, and I was content with just being there. I answered hesitatingly: "I hope to teach . . . Biology."

The good-looking blond Swede smiled and looked at me, a dark Jew from Russia, and said: "You must remember that you will be at a disadvantage all the time. If your classmates get B and C, you will

be expected to have As. If your competitor for a job is passable, you will have to prove your excellence. You are a foreigner, and a Jew, and your English is not the best. Three strikes against you to begin with. These are the realities of life".

Although much has happened since that conversation, I still remember it.

In the meantime my dream was realized. I was engaged as the teacher of the Workmen's Circle school in Saint Paul, the Twin City of Minneapolis. The school was new, and I had to grope my way through the curriculum. Yiddish was the chief subject, of course, and in Jewish history I had to select from the larger works of Graetz and Dubnow. As for Jewish literature we had to improvise, there being no printed material for children. But what caused more difficulties was the social and political orientation of the school. The teachers were raw, and the school boards were confused. Some wanted the children to be sympathetic to unions, just as the Workmen's Circle was. Others were not satisfied. They were more revolutionary. Those were the days when the cleavage between Right and Left was just beginning.

The strife began in the branches of the Workmen's Circle and spilled over to the schools. The children did not know what we wanted of them. The meetings of the Workmen's Circle branches were stormy and the organization was torn apart.

In the midst of all this we received a letter from Providence, Rhode Island indicating that a Workmen's Circle school was opening in the city and that I could apply for the position. The letter came from Alter and Sarah Boyman, cousins of my wife. We were young and not rooted anywhere. It was a great adventure to pack up and go with our daughter to another city. Providence had a special attraction for us. My wife was anxious to be near relatives, and I realized from the map how near it was to New York, where my parents lived and whence the schools drew their inspiration. Three times as many Workmen's Circle schools were located in New York City as in the entire country.

At the end of the first semester of 1924-5 we said good-bye to the Mid-West and the Mississippi and traveled to Providence, Rhode Island.

#### AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

I was pleasantly surprised, and so were my friends, that my application to Brown University was accepted and that the transcript from the University of Minnesota was so favorable. In those days a transcript was not merely a listing of subjects and grades, but was ac-

accompanied by remarks from the various teachers. My teachers testified that I knew several languages and that my comprehension of the depths of psychology was considerable. The truth of the matter was that I knew Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, German, and some Hungarian that was still fresh in my mind from the days of captivity during the First World War. I was not by any stretch of the imagination a linguist. A good report was also attached from the Biology Department.

And so I entered Brown University in the middle of my second year, and here, too, my favorite subject was biology and its allied sciences, botany and chemistry.

The Arnold Laboratory at Brown had an atmosphere all of its own. It always smelled of preserved animals and formaldehyde. The water for study was supplied to us by Professor Frederick P. Gorham, who taught bacteriology. Every morning he brought a pail of it from a farm. I knew of the existence of bacteria, but I never had looked at them face to face. Each student was asked to examine a drop of the water under the microscope. The world that was revealed in that small drop of water was astounding. A mixture of forms and shapes, giants and dwarfs, linear and crooked, dividing and uniting, swarmed under our eyes, oblivious of the stare of strangers and intruders. That was my first glimpse of that world, a world that was to be my daily companion for many years. I saw amebae, paramecia, and other protozoa, some moving slowly in the drop of water, others darting back and forth, some with long feelers protruding ahead of them, others with flagellae all around their bodies, some circular, others elongated, some changing their shapes under the eyes of the beholder, others dividing and subdividing leisurely. They were to follow me wherever I went and whatever I did during the first few weeks until the novelty wore off. I sat at the microscope all by myself looking at various organisms and their constant activities. It was a glorious time in my life. I would spend hours on end, when time would permit, in the bacteriology laboratory. Because of my relatively advanced age and my frequent visits to the laboratory, I became an assistant to the assistant of Professor Gorham, Ralph Stuart, who was not much older than myself. He led me into the field of pathological bacteria, in which he was interested, and I began to use the phraseology of the bacteriologist. I was at home in the Arnold Building.

There were others in the Department of Biology who had a profound influence on me. Professor Albert Davis Mead was a fascinating teacher and an innovator in his field. He studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and mastered the art of sculpture, so that he could use that skill in teaching evolution. In his laboratory the students walked

around a gallery containing clay models of various animals and individual organs and limbs to demonstrate the development of each species. The course in evolution was very popular with the students, and the reading list which he suggested introduced students to the great biologists of the world. They learned evolution and the philosophical implications of the subject at the same time.

There was Professor Eugene Walters in Comparative Anatomy in whose course the students dissected mice and mounted the skeletons in glass-topped boxes. At the end of the course we were marked on the neatness and originality of the arrangement of the skeletons in the boxes.

I preserved my box with the glued skeleton for many years until the glue dried up and the mouse bones rattled about in the case.

They were fascinating teachers and extremely fair-minded. I did not detect a single case of prejudice or bias in any of them. Their enthusiasm for biology rubbed off on us.

My work in the Workmen's Circle school was the other side of the coin. I followed the same pattern as was established in Minnesota. After three o'clock I was transformed, as if by a magician's wand, into a teacher of Jewish children. The dual life and interests did not exclude each other. The school was on Benefit Street, and the walk between Brown University and the Workmen's Circle became my daily routine.

I was the only teacher in the school. Classes were held five times a week. The children came for instruction daily except Fridays and Saturdays. On Saturdays we usually met as various clubs. We had a dramatic club, a choir, a dancing class, and a children's orchestra. On Sundays the school gathered for singing, which was taught by Arthur Einstein, a noted composer and choir master. They sang folk songs, songs of workers, and songs composed by Einstein. Parents would gather to listen to the singing with great joy.

It was springtime for the Workmen's Circle schools. Only a few years earlier a pioneer teacher, Jacob Levin, had opened a school in Harlem, and now the school system grew by leaps and bounds all over the country. In New England alone the net of schools began in Peabody, Massachusetts and spread to Lynn, Boston, Providence, Worcester, Springfield, New Haven, Hartford, Norwich, Fall River, Brockton, Bridgeport, and New London. In every city where a branch of the Workmen's Circle existed a school was opened. As teachers came over from Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine new schools were opened. Yiddish teachers were at a premium.

The curriculum of the schools was unique in America. In the first place we did not prepare boys for Bar Mitzvah and had no prayer book instruction, as did the other schools. The language of instruction was Yiddish, the tongue of so many of the new immigrants. While the use of Yiddish was the chief characteristic of the Workmen's Circle schools, there were others just as striking. The children were taught to be in sympathy with the workers of America. Those were the days of the rise of unions, such as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and the bakers', hat makers', and carpenters' organizations. Their parents were workers, and their children sang workers' songs and presented plays with a social content. The teachers held annual conferences and interim meetings. During these conferences and meetings the school program was hammered out and opinions as diverse as the numbers present were expressed. New textbooks and teaching materials were published, and new tools for learning were exchanged. New heroes came on the scene. The children must know all of them and what they stood for: Eugene Victor Debs, Norman Thomas, Morris Hillquit, David Dubinsky, Abraham Cohen, Samuel Gompers, and a host of others—all leaders in the labor movement. Heroes of an older generation in other lands were also included in the curriculum of the schools, revolutionaries, as well as those who revolutionized the thoughts of mankind: Spinoza, Mendelssohn, Garibaldi, Marx, and Engels. We loaded them all on our children. The Workmen's Circle published a series of biographies, and I was invited to write about the life and teaching of Moses Mendelssohn in Yiddish. This was, by the way, my first published book.

The seats of honor in the schools were reserved for the so-called Classics of the Yiddish literature. Mendele, Sholom Aleichem, Peretz, and Asch were idolized. Their pictures hung on the walls, and theirs were household names among the children. We sang their songs, performed their plays, and read their stories. The children in those days heard Yiddish spoken in the home, on the street corner, and at meetings and concerts. It was not a strange language to them.

New schools were opened every day. Every ship brought teachers to this country among the immigrants, and they were immediately offered positions. Poland was the chief exporter of teachers.

There were, however, voices of discontent at the annual conventions. Some teachers rebelled at the exclusion of Hebrew from the curriculum. Yiddish might be the spoken language today, but Hebrew was the language of the Jew in every land, in every situation for many millennia. We compromised by permitting the introduction of Hebrew elements in Yiddish. To the Pedagogical Bulletin, published monthly



by the Workmen's Circle schools, I submitted a list of several hundred Hebrew words and expressions used in Yiddish. This Hebrew Manual was reprinted in a special edition and was used with variations by most of the teachers.

There were complaints about the exclusion of such names as Rashi, the Rambam, Yehudah Halevi, the Gaon of Vilna, or the Baal Shem Tov from the gallery of great Jews of another era. Reb Levi Yitzhak of Barditchev had the honor of being included in the Pantheon because of his hymns and songs in Yiddish and his supplications to God in the spoken tongue, as a son talks to his father.

The very name of God gave us great trouble. When we had to mention the name of God in Bible stories, we were somewhat embarrassed. The schools of the Workmen's Circle were free of all superstitions, and God was among them. Someone even suggested omitting God from all Bible stories and substituting "Nature" whenever God's name was mentioned.

In the meantime we learned, we sang, we danced, we wrote, and we were on the crest of acceptance. In contrast to the custom at the Hebrew schools, we spoke the language of the day, spoken and understood by all.

With the coming of the Great Depression the Yiddish schools began to decline. The decline was gradual, but the signs were clear. The flower was wilted before the fruit had a chance to ripen.

#### IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

The 1927 graduating class of Brown University, as well as those graduating from other colleges in the land, had no reason to rejoice. No scouts from industry and business came to recruit students for positions, as in the previous years. Those who came did not promise anything. The government did not have any openings. Colleges began to reduce their staffs.

The recession prior to the 1929 depression was beginning to be felt by the communities, and we, the students, were left holding our sheepskin diplomas. We deluded ourselves. We thought that an advanced degree would land us jobs. Instead of going out into the world we retreated back into school for masters' degrees.

We moved to Rochester, where the Workmen's Circle had a school for children, known among the teachers as a large, influential, well-appointed school. I was very flattered when my name was considered as a teacher there. The University of Rochester had a graduate department and a medical school. I should be able to pursue my studies

toward a masters' degree. The prospect looked promising. Once again we arranged our lives as student by day and teacher by evening.

The Workmen's Circle consisted of workers and a sprinkling of small businessmen sympathetic to labor. The workers were mostly members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the clothing factories constituting a major industry in Rochester. There was a close relationship between the Amalgamated and the Workmen's Circle. In those days the Workmen's Circle was known as the Red Cross of the unions. In time of strikes the facilities of the Workmen's Circle were open for the union. We, on the other hand, enjoyed the facilities of the Amalgamated Hall for our plays and concerts.

The school was large and demanded all of my time. The community around us did not exist so far as we were concerned. We had our own lectures, our own picnics, and our own parties in our own Lyceum. The Workmen's Circle home was our *shul* (synagogue). The Workmen's Circle Lyceum was a beehive of activity day and night. The union and the Workmen's Circle formed a self-sufficient community within a community. They were young and energetic and were riding the crest of popularity.

And thus it transpired that we came to Rochester, where we were to stay for two or three years, and remained for a decade.

Since the University of Rochester did not offer a course in bacteriology in the graduate school, students in bacteriology were referred to the medical school. The hours interfered with my schedule and could not be tailored to fit my convenience.

Disappointed, I turned to a field of study entirely new to me. In my childhood I played with insects, ran after colorful butterflies with homemade nets, watched in the summer night the flickering lights of fireflies, and tortured poor house flies, which had insisted on entering our house and evaded being caught. The University of Rochester had an admirable Department of Entomology, a department devoted to the study of insects.

Cornell University, in nearby Ithaca, New York was the Mecca of entomologists. The Comstocks, a husband and wife team,\* devoted their lives to development of the science. In 1925 Comstock published his first textbook on entomology, and it became the Bible of all students in the field. Some studied the habitat of insects, others classified the insects according to their species, while others dissected them and studied their anatomy. The enthusiasm for entomology spilled over to

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\*Anna Botsford Comstock and John Henry Comstock.

neighboring Rochester. Doctor Paul Robert Needham, a son of a collaborator of the Comstocks, came to Rochester and taught the Ecology of Insects. His father was an avid student of insects and had a large house in a field near Cornell in the midst of which a gurgling stream meandered in the meadow. Doctor Needham senior\* contrived means of observing the development of the dragonfly from larva to pupa to adult in his stream. He published a pioneer text book on aquatic insects. The students of entomology waded in the brooks and streams in search of insects which deposit their eggs in or around bodies of water and undergo their early life as burrowing larvae and pupae in the mud to emerge from the water as winged creatures, delightful to the eye as they hover, alight, and zig-zag in the sun. I was one of those students.

The classes were small, and there was an intimacy between teacher and students. We frequently visited at Cornell and gained enthusiasm for the study, as well as knowledge, of insects in the great library and museum in the Department of Entomology in the School of Agriculture at Cornell University.

My assignment was the water penny, an aquatic beetle as large as a pea, which no one had ever seen flying in the air. The beetle spends all of its life under stones in running water. When the beetle is in the pupal stage it resembles a penny—hence its name. We contrived a tank of running water containing rocks simulating the natural habitat of the water penny. All of our efforts at rearing the beetle from its egg to adulthood were unsuccessful. Some ingredients that were present in the stream we could not supply in the tanks because we didn't know what they were. I found a swift little stream near Rochester and made my observations there. I was particularly interested in the wings of these insects. They have hard forewings and delicate transparent hindwings, as all respectable beetles are supposed to have. Water penny beetles alone never use them. They never open their fore wings, so no one had ever seen the hind-wings behind them. I brought the beetles to the laboratory and carefully dissected the hind wings and spread them out as wings are supposed to be and made drawings of these wings. Because they were not to be used in flight, the hind wings were folded and creased and tucked away behind the hard front wings. Straightening them out was a problem. They were extremely delicate and, of course, tiny. The whole process had to be performed under the microscope using dull needles to manipulate the wings. For this work I was awarded the degree of Master of Science, as well as the key of the Sigma Xi society. The water penny is of little significance

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\*Doctor James George Needham.

in the economy of the land, as far as I know. It was an exercise in pure research for the sake of knowledge.

Horseflies on the other hand were of a different category. The Tabanidae, as the horseflies are called, live around the dung of animals and are extremely annoying. Besides, they were suspected of carrying diseases from domestic animals to man, and vice versa. There are several hundred species of horseflies in the eastern part of the country, and I undertook to classify them. In the course of my work I learned that the same flies are also present in Europe and a similar classification was available in German, made by Dr. Von O. Klobner of Hamburg, Germany, who permitted me to use it. That was in 1936, during the Nazi regime. My work on the water pennies and on the horseflies were published in the New York Journal of Entomology.

But in the course of this work with insects I slaughtered hundreds of insects and all in the name of "Science". I wondered whether it was worth all of the destruction. I was especially sorry for the innocent water pennies, which I had to pry from the stone to which they clung, camouflaged, hardly moving from place to place.

My aversion to this slaughter grew on me. I was sorry that I had interrupted my vegetarian diet in favor of meat. Even though I did not eat the animals I had to study, the truth was that I took away life, animal life. I resumed my vegetarian eating habits and have persisted in them to this day.

Amidst all of this workload in Rochester we accomplished much during our stay in the city. My wife, after taking a few courses in high school, matriculated at the Community College of the State University of New York. In the summer she worked as a counsellor at Camp Yungwelt in Toronto, Canada, taking with her our two children. I became Assistant to the Director of Camp Kinder Ring of the Workmen's Circle. My job included writing plays for the weekly concerts which the children presented in Yiddish. Some of those plays were published in a booklet titled "Three Plays for Children". I began to write for the *Kinder Zeitung*\* and *Kinder Journal*, two magazines for children appearing monthly in New York. They were creative years for me.

But the depression affected people more and more, and the prospects for finding work in my field grew dimmer and dimmer. The country was waiting for F.D.R. to revitalize the economy.

We became restless again and were once again ready to move.

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\*Children's Times.

BACK TO PROVIDENCE

We returned to Providence ten years older, if not wiser. Our wandering was at an end. Our two children needed stability. We wanted to establish roots in the community. Experience taught me not to expect a niche in the academic world. The irony was that people asked with astonishment: "Since 1927 and you haven't found any work?" forgetting that during the depression there was no work for anybody.

My older brother Isaiah had come to Providence in the meantime, opened a drugstore, and fared well. I returned to my routine: student in the morning and teacher in the afternoon. I was to gather still another degree. I registered at the Rhode Island College of Pharmacy and Allied Sciences, at that time a small college on Benefit Street in Providence. The dean on examining my credentials remarked: "I predict that pharmacy will give you employment sooner than all your bacteriology and entomology put together". After two years I was a Registered Pharmacist.

The Workmen's Circle re-opened the school in a new place, after they had lost their home on Benefit Street during the depression. In order to accommodate the students of both South Providence and the North End we hired two drivers, who transported the children in their cars to school in a central location on Snow Street in downtown Providence. The arrangement sounded attractive, but in reality it could not last very long. Children missed the car. The car broke down. Drivers became ill. The last straw was the loss of our drivers in the forties when they were drafted into service. Though the school committee worked with all their might, they had to give in to circumstances and reluctantly closed the doors of the school forever.

Three things then happened to us in rapid succession. First I met Rabbi William G. Braude. It was a turning point in my life. I must admit that I had not crossed the threshold of a synagogue to pray since we had come to America. Though the Rabbi was younger than I, we found a common thread. His congregation, Temple Beth El of Providence, was located at Broad and Glenham Streets. The Rabbi's study was in the temple in a little room behind the Aron Ha-Kodesh.\* There among bookshelves reaching from the floor to the ceiling we sat and talked. We walked about leisurely in the Temple neighborhood. For the first time I learned that knowledge could be gained outside of the confines of a classroom. These walks were to me a university without walls, without formal subjects, without the fear and trepidation

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\*Ark of the Law.

of professors. All that I had heard at my father's house, all that I had learned in the Yeshivot assumed deeper meaning and I saw them in a hidden light.

During our walks I remarked that I wouldn't mind teaching in his school provided its Board of Directors would not mind having a former Workmen's Circle teacher in their school. At the next meeting of the board the Rabbi was authorized to engage me. I became the teacher in the afternoon classes of the Beth El Religious School. Our friendship grew, and we published jointly two essays in Yiddish in the journals of Yivo dealing with the influence of Hebrew on Yiddish.

The second event that changed our lives was our meeting with Walter Rutman at the house of the late Alter Boyman. Rutman was a chemist turned editor and publisher of the *Rhode Island Jewish Herald*.<sup>\*</sup> He had also been a victim of the depression. In the course of our conversation he suggested that I write on matters of concern to Providence. It was his belief that a local newspaper must be interested primarily in local affairs.

That was, in fact, the only time that Rutman ever suggested to me anything about the content of my contributions. It was his belief that a newspaper must be independent and free from outside influences or subsidy, a principle to which he has adhered. My association with his newspaper spans a period of thirty-five years.

The third event was the following. Dorothy Waxman, my wife's cousin, who was a secretary at The Miriam Hospital, reported the possibility of a position in the hospital pharmacy. She knew of my desire to find this kind of work. Because of my work in bacteriology I was engaged to work in both the pharmacy and the laboratory. I worked at The Miriam Hospital under four administrators until I retired in the 1970s. The prophecy of the Dean of the School of Pharmacy and Allied Sciences had been fulfilled.

In the ensuing years my wife, Chaya, has taught in the religious school of the former Congregation Sons of Abraham, of which Rabbi Abraham Chill was the spiritual leader, and more recently in the school of Temple Beth El.

At Temple Beth El I met the late David C. Adelman, a remarkable man who burned with the idea of forming a Jewish historical society in Rhode Island. The year was 1950, and the Jewish neighborhoods of Providence in the North End and South Providence had begun to disintegrate as the younger people moved to the suburbs and their

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<sup>\*</sup> Now the *Rhode Island Herald*.

elders followed them. The old established institutions saw their memberships diminishing and sites abandoned. In the rush to move out of the neighborhoods, many valuable documents were abandoned. A new generation grew up unaware of what had preceded them. Adelman, a practicing attorney and son of an early Jewish family in Providence, desired to rescue from obscurity any remnants of historical value. He encountered great difficulties in piecing together the story of Temple Beth El,\* the first congregation in Providence.

Impressed by a column of mine in the *Jewish Herald* noting the urgency of preserving the memorabilia of the institutions and organizations of an earlier period, Adelman convened a meeting which resulted in the founding of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. The Association faced the usual problems of any new organization, but now appears to be firmly established. It has been my good fortune to be associated with the organization and its publication, *the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, since their inception.

#### CONCLUSION

This and the previous accounts trace the odyssey of one family from a *Shtetl* of Eastern Europe to the land of milk and honey, the last of a dying generation to have made this pilgrimage. It is well to record these experiences and impressions while they are still living history.

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\*Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David.

SAMUEL STARR, M.D. 1884-1950

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

by BENTON H. ROSEN

Samuel Starr, born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1884, was one of the early group of Jewish physicians in Providence. After graduating from Boston English High School, he matriculated at Harvard College with the Class of 1907 and continued his education at Harvard Medical School, where he received his MD degree in 1910.\*

He served his internship at St. Joseph's Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island and remained a resident of that city until his death on January 1, 1950.

The following are his own comments published in the 25th Annual Report of the Harvard College Class of 1907:

BORN: Boston, Mass. Dec. 31, 1884. Son of David, Rebecca (Rosenfeld) Starr.

PREPARED AT Boston English High School, Boston, Mass.

IN COLLEGE: 1903-06. DEGREES: S.B. 1907 (1910); M.D. 1910.

MARRIED Nancy Mildred Kapland April 11, 1916, Providence, R. I.

CHILDREN: Robert Elliott May 26, 1919; Beverley K. Dec. 9, 1920.

OCCUPATION: Physician

ADDRESS: 206 Waterman St., Providence, R. I.

Leaving college I entered the medical department of the University remaining there four years, receiving the degree of MD in 1910. In the fall of 1910 I began my internship at St. Joseph's Hospital, Providence, R. I. and left that institution to go into private practice in February, 1912. After about a year in practice I entered the office of Dr. William I. Harris as his medical assistant.

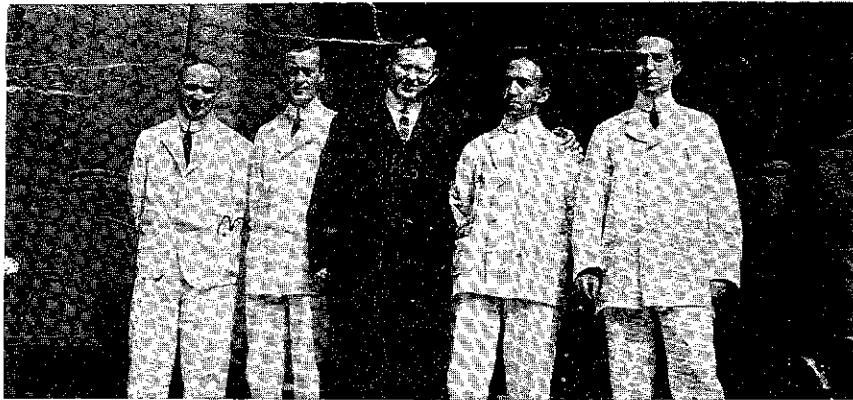
I remained with Dr. Harris until I married, which was in April, 1916. I then located my home and office at 143 Prairie Avenue, Providence, R. I., living here until May, 1920.\*\*

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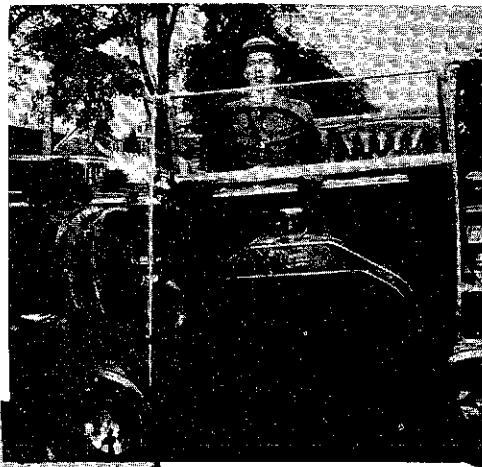
\*Coincidentally, two other Jewish young men who became Providence physicians were classmates of Doctor Starr at Harvard in both the College and the Medical School—Doctors Harold Libby and Isaac Gerber.

\*\*His office and residence were located at 721 Broad Street from 1920 until 1927.

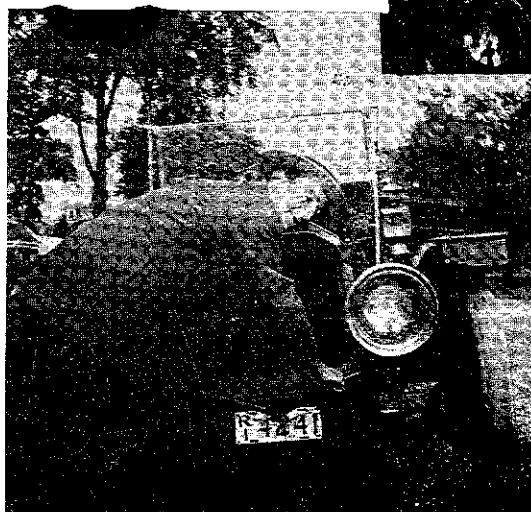




Interns at St. Joseph's Hospital, Providence, Rhode Island, 1911-1912.  
Left to right: Doctors Robert White, J. L. Drummey, B. F. Conley, John  
S. Enos, and Samuel Starr.



Morris touring car, circa 1912.



No self starter.

The outstanding events of the last few years are the building of my new home and the specialization in treatment of mental diseases by the Freudian method of psychoanalysis. I enjoy both very much. In addition to my private practice, I am psychiatrist at the Miriam Hospital in Providence.

I have done very little traveling—to Florida, and to the woods of Maine, and of course, to neighboring states.

PUBLICATIONS: "Everyday Language Lessons", American Book Co., 1914; "Vocabulary of Common Words" (In Russian, Italian, English, and Yiddish), American Book Co., 1914; numerous articles in medical journals.

MEMBER: Providence Medical Society; Jacobi Medical Society; Men's Club of Temple Beth El.

## LOOKING BACK . . .

by RABBI ARTHUR A. CHIEL

The *Sabbath Visitor* was a religious periodical established in Cincinnati, in 1872, by Rabbi Max Lilienthal, a pioneer in Reform Judaism and a close co-worker in that enterprise with Rabbi Isaac M. Wise. (According to a parenthetical note in the 1887 bound collection, on page 505, the *Sabbath Visitor* first appeared on Jan. 1, 1872 and was re-cast in format in May, 1886.)

The *Sabbath Visitor* was a journal offering inspirational and educational reading matter for the Jewish family. It included articles on holidays and customs, on Bible and Jewish history and also fiction of an uplifting character.

A feature of the *Sabbath Visitor* which engendered considerable interest among youngsters of all ages was the "Letter-Box" conducted by "Cousin Sadie." We have before us the 1887 and 1888 editions of *Sabbath Visitor* and a perusal of the letters offers an interesting insight into Jewish life of that era.

The "Letter-Box" reveals that Jews had spread across the United States . . . children wrote from almost every one in the Union and occasionally . . . from Canada, too. The youthful correspondents often share observations about their town or city as to its size and enterprise. There is a synagogue or one is in process of construction or because the Jewish community is too small they join family or friends in other centers larger than their own. Very often the letter-writers indicate that the arrival of the *Sabbath Visitor* is particularly important to them because it is their only tangible link with the Jewish life and heritage. (Two letters are of Rhode Island interests).

\* \* \*

We have selected a number of letters from the *Sabbath Visitor* which should be of interest to you.

Dear Cousin Sadie: The many duties devolving upon me as my share of the housework, numerous studies at school, piano lessons, etc., have taken up most of my time for the past six months, hence my long silence. Having also made several efforts to be promoted, I am pleased to note my success. Being confident the reasons stated will be

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Rabbi Chiel is spiritual leader of Congregation B'nai Jacob of Woodbridge, Connecticut. These excerpts are reprinted from *The Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, New Haven Edition, issues of July 8, July 29, and August 5, 1976, with the kind permission of the author and the publisher.

sufficient, I again take pleasure in contributing (as I hope) my mite to the interest of the readers of the Letter-Box, in the perusal of which my enjoyment has steadily increased.

As stated in my previous letter, we live within five miles of the ocean, and Watch Hill, a noted seashore resort, can be reached by water in an hour and a half. There are at present four boats plying back and forth hourly to the Hill, including Sunday, as you remember I mentioned in my last letter that Westerly has two weekly Sabbaths, and strictly speaking, none. By-the-bye, I find in the list of the Watch Hill News many Western, and particularly Cincinnati people, and among them are quite a number of Hebrews. Should you, dear Cousin Sadie, also happen to come this way it would indeed be a pleasant surprise. You have a standing invitation to visit our home, as well as any other of the dear cousins who may happen to come to this locality. But I perceive that instead of giving (what I desire to be) interesting news, I am entirely off the track, so I must change my programme at once.

You, dear Cousin Sadie, and perhaps others of the dear cousins, may also remember that I mentioned my eldest sister as quite a soprano vocalist, and I am naturally proud of her. Last May she gave a concert, with the assistance of her vocal teacher, Miss Hoffman, and her husband, of Providence, who is reputed to be one of the best pianists in New England, several of her best pupils and others. Contrary to the usual apathy here for concerts generally, it proved a grand success, the large opera-house being completely filled with the best Westerly and neighboring families. While all participants did well, my sister had the greatest applause, and received numerous and elegant bouquets. The newspapers of this place, as well as those of Providence, spoke of her singing in very flattering terms, one paper even predicting for her a brilliant future were she to adopt singing on the stage as a profession.

The few Jewish people who live here and were present were delighted, and told my dear parents what an honor it was to have their daughter, a Jewish girl, so highly praised and greatly respected in this community. At present we have visitors from Hartford and New York, who somewhat interrupted the completion of our contribution to Israel's Flower Garden, at which my sister Sophia and myself are

at work, but we hope to have it complete soon, to be forwarded. With kindest regards to all, I remain your loving cousin.

Rose Stern, Westerly, R. I.\*

\* \* \*

Dear Cousin Sadie: This is my first attempt to write to the VISITOR. I have no school this afternoon. I study spelling, grammar, arithmetic, history, reading, geography, music, writing and drawing. Providence has a population of 105,000 and has a great many public buildings and schools. There are five different railroads that run from this city, which are called the New York and New England, New York, Providence and Boston, New York and New Haven, Boston and Providence and the Providence and Worcester.

I belong to a society called the Young Sons of Israel. The society is going to have a semi-annual entertainment on Dec. 6, 1888. I go to Sunday and Sabbath-schools. Our teacher is the Rev. Dr. Sessler. The congregation is going to build a synagogue here on Friendship Street. There was a large Republican parade passed my house last Monday night, but remember, I am not a Republican.

I have not seen any letters from this city since I have been taking the VISITOR. I guess I have written enough for the first time. If I see my letter in print, I will try to write a better one next time. Please add my name to the I.F.G. Love to you and all the cousins.

E. L. Rodenberg, Providence, R. I.\*\*

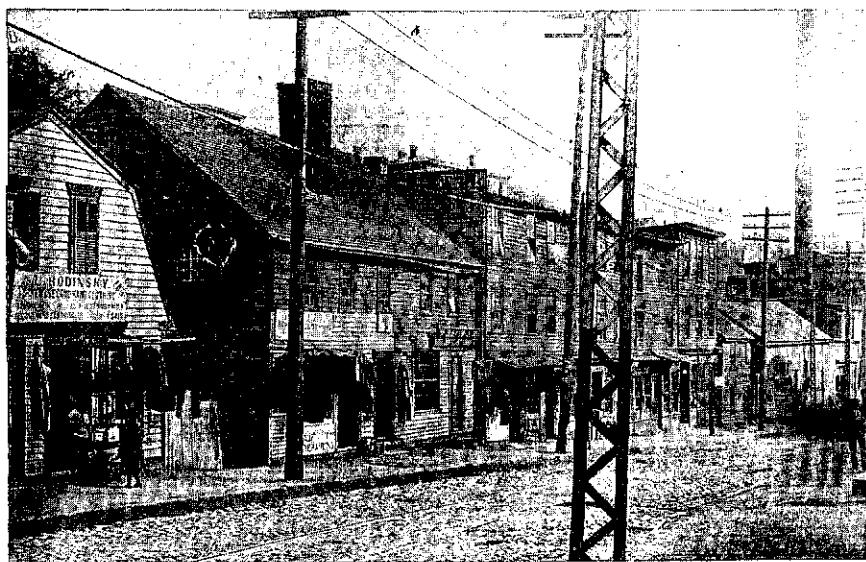
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\*Jacob Stern, listed as a merchant in Westerly, Rhode Island in 1892, was proprietor of the Bee-Hive.

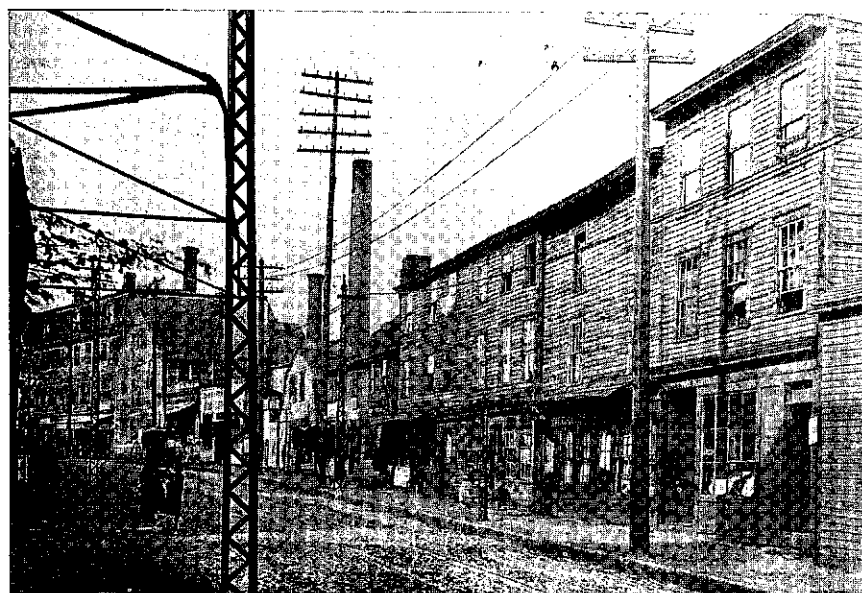
\*\*Gustave L. Rodenberg, a traveling salesman, was listed in 1880 and 1890.

**"JEWTOWN"**

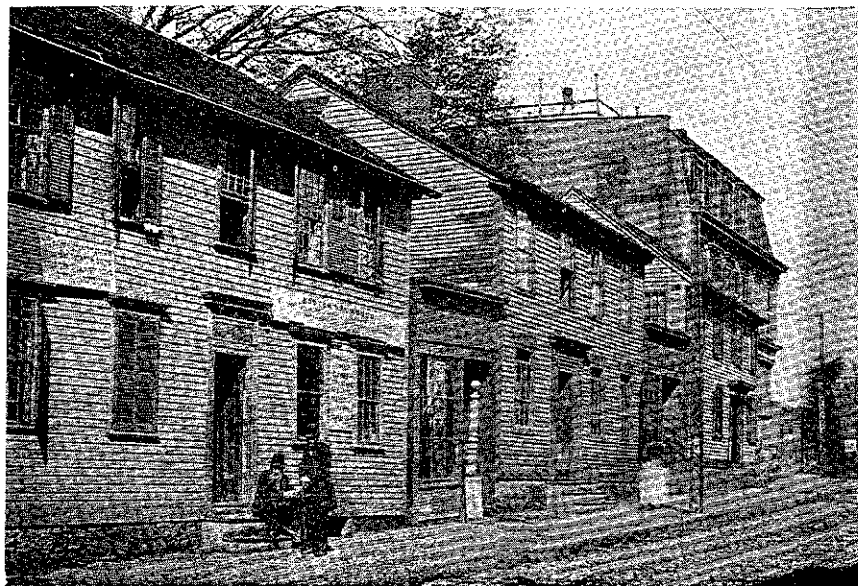
The North End of Providence at the turn of the century—a picture essay.



Lower Charles Street—circa 1895: (No. 87) P. Weinberg, tailor; (No. 89) Philip Goldstein, shoemaker; (No. 91) Morris Effros, variety store; (No. 93) Samuel Hayman, painter; (Nos. 99 and 105) Louis Rodinsky, clothing; and (No. 103) Reuben Volpe, clothing.



Extended view of same.



Lower Charles Street—circa 1895.

No. 90 Israel Levy, dyer

No. 92 Erminio Falcone, hairdresser



Lower Chalkstone Avenue—circa 1905.

No. 175 Hyman Yaffe, baker

## A VISIT TO PRESIDENT GERALD FORD AT THE WHITE HOUSE

by RABBI THEODORE LEWIS\*

On April 1, 1976 I received a letter from Rabbi Saul J. Rubin of Congregation Mickve Israel of Savannah, Georgia. In his letter, Rabbi Rubin pointed out that on the occasion of Washington's Inauguration an attempt was made by the six colonial Jewish communities—New York, Philadelphia, Newport, Savannah, Richmond, and Charleston—to send a single letter of congratulations and expressions of Jewish fealty to the newly established government.

Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, as the oldest congregation in America, was asked to formulate a joint address on behalf of all communities. However, communication between the cities was difficult and slow. The president of Congregation Jeshuat Israel of Newport, Moses Mendez Seixas, thinking that the arrangement had been abandoned, acted independently and sent a letter to President Washington on August 17, 1790. Congregation Mickve Israel of Savannah also independently sent a letter to President Washington. Congregation Shearith Israel of New York learned that Congregation Mikve Israel of Philadelphia was about to do likewise. The trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel requested Manuel Josephson of Philadelphia to include them in his address, as well as the congregations of Richmond and Charleston.

Rabbi Rubin in his recent letter suggested that it would be a wonderful gesture, if in this Bicentennial year of American Independence one letter be drafted on behalf of our six colonial congregations and sent to President Gerald R. Ford, expressing our sentiments as the third century of American Independence dawned. Thus, we would do what our congregations had tried but failed to do in 1790.

He submitted a first draft and asked the Rabbis of the various congregations to amend it, if necessary, in any way they saw fit. After the letter had been approved in its final form, communication was established with the White House to determine if the President could fit the acceptance of the letter into his busy schedule. (See back cover)

On July 2, 1976 we received the following telegram from the White House, signed by our own Milton E. Mitler,\*\* who is deputy special assistant to the President in all matters pertaining to the Bicentennial:

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\*Spiritual leader of Congregation Jeshuat Israel, Touro Synagogue of Newport, Rhode Island.

\*\*Formerly a resident of Newport, Rhode Island.



"On behalf of President Ford, and as the spiritual leader of one of the six colonial synagogues, you are cordially invited to visit with him, in the Oval Office of the White House on Monday, July 12, 1976, at 12:15 p.m. You should come in through the Northwest gate to the West lobby at about 12 noon. The President is looking forward to seeing you and the other Rabbis at that time".

On Monday, July 12, 1976 Rabbi Louis Gerstein of New York, Rabbi Saul J. Rubin of Savannah, Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah of Philadelphia, Rabbi Edward L. Cohn of Charleston, Rabbi Jack D. Spiro of Richmond, and myself presented ourselves at the appropriate entrance as requested and were admitted to the White House after our identification was checked by the military police on duty. On entering the White House we were met by Milton E. Mitler and other staff members and were briefed as to what to expect. A short while later we were informed that the President would receive us. It is hard to describe the feelings that one experiences as one enters the Oval Room of the White House and is ushered into the presence of the President of the greatest democracy on earth. Despite the trepidation that we felt, President Ford made us feel at ease, as soon as we were formally introduced to him. Rabbi Rubin told the President that it was a tradition of our faith that when we met a Head of State a special blessing was recited. The honor of reciting this blessing fell to me. I recited the blessing in Hebrew and translated it into English. Rabbi Edward L. Cohn of Charleston then recited the Shebecheyonu\* in Hebrew and English. The framed address from the six colonial communities was presented to the President by Rabbi Saul J. Rubin and read by him. The President listened attentively and made some appropriate remarks in reply. As the President's birthday was to occur in a couple of days time, Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah, presented a scroll and a Shofar\*\* to the President. The handwritten scroll read in part: "As our forefathers tendered President Washington felicitations on the occasion of his inauguration, expressing in those documents love of America and dedication on the part of the Jewish citizens to the majestic precepts and freedoms for which it was established, we in this generation would affirm their sentiments."

Rabbi Louis Gerstein pointed out that the Shofar was sounded in ancient Israel in the Jubilee Year, the fiftieth year, which heralded freedom for all. As this was the Bicentennial of American Independence, in other words, four times fifty years, it was felt significant, and appropriate that a Shofar should be presented to the President on this

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\*A blessing of thanksgiving.

\*\*A ram's horn sounded on ceremonial occasions, such as on the New Year.

occasion. This may well be the first time that a Shofar was sounded in the White House.

After the ceremonies had been completed, the President asked us to be seated around him and engaged us in conversation for about a half an hour. I was particularly moved when the President spoke of the great impact Washington's letter to "The Hebrew Congregation in Newport, R. I." had on him. He made a particular reference to "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance". The President expressed interest when I pointed out that these words were not original with Washington, but were contained in the letter that Moses Seixas, the president of our congregation, had written to Washington. But Washington was so impressed with these words, they seemed to express the motivation and the ideals of his Government, that he lifted them out of the Seixas letter and incorporated them in his own letter to Seixas.

After the conversation, the President called over his photographer and said, "Gentlemen, let us take a picture together". Each of the Rabbis and their families, who were admitted to the Oval Room for this part of the ceremonies, had their photographs taken with the President. Guides were then assigned to us to give an in-depth tour of the White House and its beautiful grounds. We saw the china, the silver, and the furniture that has been used during the past two centuries in the White House. We saw the paintings of the former presidents and their wives. We saw the Rose Garden, where Tricia Nixon had been married and where a reception had been held for Queen Elizabeth. Beautiful trees were pointed out to us on the grounds as having been planted by various presidents. All in all, it was a most thrilling experience and one which I shall always treasure. To me, as an Irish immigrant, it was particularly significant to have the honor to represent the oldest Synagogue in America, and to be greeted by the President of the United States of America in the Oval Room of the White House. The record of this trip to Washington would not be complete without my expressing sincere appreciation to Milton and Lil Mitler for extending to me the hospitality of their home and for graciously giving me an extensive sight-seeing tour of the Capitol.

## A MATTER OF A DATE

by RABBI THEODORE LEWIS

Some time ago I was browsing through the illustrated brochure published by the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue. I turned to the page on which there was a reproduction of George Washington's famous letter to "The Hebrew Congregation in Newport, R. I." I noted that in a footnote to the letter reference was made that this letter was written by him on August 21, 1790. This struck a dissonant chord in my memory. I checked the facsimile of the Washington Letter which hangs on the west wall of the Synagogue and noted that the date ascribed to the letter was August 17, 1790. I wondered about the discrepancy. Was the true date August 17, 1790 and that in the brochure simply a typographical error or vice versa?

I decided to do some research and see whether I could determine the actual date when the letter was written. Using the facilities of the Newport Historical Society I took out a copy of the *Newport Herald* dated September 9, 1790. In this edition, the letter to the Congregation from Washington is reported in full, but unfortunately, no date is given when the letter was written. However, in looking at the August 23, 1790 edition of the *Newport Herald* I found a verbatim copy of the letter that Moses Seixas had written to President Washington on behalf of Congregation Yeshuat Israel. This letter is dated August 17, 1790.

A number of questions may be asked arising out of this fact. Is it reasonable to suggest that Washington, in the midst of a heavy schedule of formal appointments in Newport, would take time out to reply on the same day to an address from the Hebrew Congregation in Newport? Secondly, other organizations submitted letters to Washington, which, if he were to reply to on the same day, would make serious inroads on his time. Furthermore, Washington's letter shows that great thought was given to his reply, which is really a literary masterpiece. It would hardly be conceivable that such a thoughtful reply would be written on a day when he was heavily involved in civic formalities and receptions.

To try to clarify this matter further, I wrote a letter to the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. and suggested that they refer to the letter book of George Washington's secretary, Major William Jackson. Perhaps there was a date recorded on the copy of the letter that Washington wrote.

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Reprinted with permission from *Touro Monthly*, vol. XII, No. 10, June 1976, publication of Congregation Yeshuat Israel.

On July 30, 1975 I received the following reply from John C. Broderick, Chief, Reference Department, Manuscript Division, The Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.:

This is in reply to your letter of July 16.

The letterbook copy of President George Washington's reply to the address of the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, August 17, 1790, is in the secretarial handwriting of William Jackson. However, the letter book copy is undated. It has, in the past, been given an attributed date of August 17, 1790, but the phraseology in the following paragraph would appear to imply that Washington had received the address while in Newport and had prepared his reply a few days after this stay there:

"Gentlemen,

"While I received with much satisfaction your address replete with expressions of affection and esteem: I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport from all classes of Citizens."

Thus it appears that, while August 17, 1790 is the date attributed to the George Washington Letter, it is more than likely that the letter was written some days later.

BICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION  
AND THE JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL OF AMERICA

Newport, Rhode Island

Sunday, May 23, 1976/Iyar 23, 5736

PROGRAM

Rosecliff, Bellevue Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island

10:00 a.m.-10:45 a.m.—Reception

10:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—“The American Jewish Experience: Personal Perspectives”

Moderator: Israel Shenker

Participants:

Dr. Arthur F. Burns

Dr. Louis Finkelstein

Dr. Martin Meyerson

Hon. Bess Myerson

Elie Wiesel

1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.—Luncheon

Morris L. Levinson, Chairman

Invocation—Hamotzi: Rabbi Balfour Brickner

Birkat Hamazon: Samuel Brochstein

2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.—Program

Greetings: The Most Rev. Peter Leo Gerety,

National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Tribute to Past Presidents: Moses Hornstein

Presentation of SCA's 50th Anniversary

Synagogue Statesman Award to Matthew B. Rosenhaus:

Rabbi Irving Lehrman

Acceptance: Matthew Rosenhaus

“To Bigotry, No Sanction”:

A Bicentennial Address, Prof. Paul A. Freund

3:30 p.m.—Bus leaves Rosecliff for Touro Community Center

The Touro Community Center, Touro St., Newport, Rhode Island

3:45 p.m.-4:15 p.m.—Reception

(Guests must be seated in the Touro Synagogue no later than 4:25)

The Touro Synagogue, Touro St., Newport, Rhode Island

4:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.—Commemorative Ceremony

Opening Remarks: Sol M. Linowitz

Psalm Reading: Rabbi Theodore Lewis

Remarks: Rabbi Joseph Lookstein

Rabbi Henry Siegman

Musical Offering: Roberta Peters

Reading of George Washington's Letter: Sol M. Linowitz

Address: The Vice-President of the United States

Closing Prayer: Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz

REMARKS AT THE 50th ANNIVERSARY JUBILEE OF THE  
SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL OF AMERICA, TOURO SYNAGOGUE  
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

MAY 23, 1976

BY NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

I thank you for the privilege of allowing me to participate in this important gathering, which is one of the high points of the Bicentennial celebration. To stand in the simple beauty of this historic temple is to return to the very roots of our nation. Indeed, there was a Touro Synagogue before there was a United States of America.

And Jewish families lived and worshipped here in Rhode Island for over a century before the synagogue was completed. They chose Rhode Island with good reason—because the founders of this colony had guaranteed freedom of religion. Those early Jewish settlers made a decision shared by so many millions of immigrants of all faiths who arrived on these shores over the past two centuries. Their loyalty was to the new land, while, at the same time, they determined to remain firm in their religious beliefs.

Nowhere has our Nation's commitment to religious and personal liberty been voiced more eloquently than in the letter which George

Washington wrote to the congregation of Touro Synagogue. "To bigotry no sanction," Washington proclaimed, "to persecution no assistance."

This freedom which our forefathers sought in the new world benefitted both the people who found it and the land which extended it.

For not only did the openness of American society offer opportunity for new life to the poor, the oppressed and the persecuted, but those who came here—and their children after them—gave new life to this Nation. As it says in the dreams of the Hebrew prophets, we have been enriched by the gathering of the exiles from all over the world.

The Jewish experience in America is a particularly vivid illustration of opportunity for the individual being translated into betterment for all. We could not subtract the Jewish contribution from American life without impoverishing our science, our literature, our art, our commerce, our law, indeed, without vastly diminishing America. The Jewish contribution to the American experience is beyond calculation—and out of all proportion to the numbers of Jewish Americans involved.

Today, I would like to discuss the American moral heritage which created this environment for individual fulfillment which led, in turn, to our nation's unmatched achievement. The spiritual and religious forces which inspired our founding fathers shaped life in America from its very beginnings. These forces inspired the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

And, most important of all, these spiritual and religious forces have continued to shape the American character to this day, a character dominated by such qualities as respect for the dignity of the individual, kindness, generosity, neighborliness, equality of opportunity, equality before the law, a restless energy, a willingness to take risks, and faith, hope, and love. The contributions of America to religious freedom are as monumental as its contributions to political liberty and to economic freedom.

Settled by people of many faiths—Church of England, Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, Jews, Huguenots, Quakers, and many others, Americans through trial and experience developed not alone an understanding, but a mutual respect of one faith for another. And it is this framework of diversity within unity—of people of so many faiths—which has been the greatest source of America's strength and vitality.

Life for our forebears in early America was rugged. In this testing environment, there developed a belief not alone in individual rights, but an equally firm conviction of individual responsibility. Survival

depended upon individuals shouldering their responsibilities fully as much as asserting their ambitions and employing their energies in their own ways. The individual was held responsible for his actions. He was expected to contribute to the community.

In young America and in the struggling communities behind it, people's moral and religious assertions were judged by their performance. For his acts, the individual was deemed answerable to himself, to his God, and to his community. He could take no refuge in blaming others or in blaming society for his actions. He expected to suffer the consequences of his own behavior. This is the unique essence of American life and character.

Today, the basic principles of America's founding and its growth—its dedication to human dignity and the spiritual nature of man, its trust in free individuals taking responsibility for their actions—are being seriously challenged. Totalitarian socialist societies have developed which ignore the concept of man as a spiritual human being. They repress personal liberty, and they forbid religious freedom. They deny individual economic freedom.

In the present world, centrally-controlled, Marxist power is on the march throughout the world, supported by subversion, so-called wars of liberation, and growing military power. Unfortunately, in this period, we have seen some striking failures of moral example both in public and private life here at home. This can be dangerous. Uncorrected, it can weaken the moral fiber of our society.

There is a growing tendency in our times to excuse immoral conduct because we think we understand the forces that produced it. One suspects there is a connection between this kind of thinking and the movement away from the basic American tenet of individual responsibility for one's life and actions.

Every society in the history of man has had its strengths and its weaknesses. But no society can endure for long by allowing criminals to escape the penalty for their crimes by reference to some vague theory or concept of a collective guilt, or personal stress, or because it is alleged that "everyone does it."

It is time for all of us, as individual American citizens, each in the discharge of our several responsibilities, to reaffirm the basic concepts that a man's moral and religious assertions are judged by his performance, that he is answerable for his acts to himself, to his God, and to his community. For only in this way are we going to preserve our free society, its values, its opportunities, its blessings. Each of us as an individual American must return to the basic concepts of individual responsibility for our own acts upon which this society was founded.



Your faith, the teachings of Judaism, is based on a moral vision of mankind—on a reverence for individual uniqueness and individual dignity. Judaism teaches, too, that individual dignity and freedom must be accompanied by an acceptance of moral responsibility on the part of the individual. These convictions are so much in keeping with the moral philosophy of our Nation's founding fathers that it is hardly surprising that Jewish Americans have made such an enormous contribution to America's emergence as the greatest, freest nation on earth.

America is grateful for your spiritual heritage and for those priceless contributions which you have made through two centuries of American nationhood. What those who worshipped here in Touro Synagogue heard in 1776, what all Americans heard in that fateful year still rings with relevance today.

The men of the Revolution declared their commitment to human dignity in these unforgettable words: "With a firm reliance on the Protection of divine Providence we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." Dare we do less today? I think not.

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE BICENTENNIAL  
CELEBRATION OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE AND  
THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SHRINE, INC.

Friday Evening, 8:00 P.M.—September 10, 1976

Sabbath Service—Oneg Shabbat\*

at Touro Synagogue, Newport Rhode Island

Rabbi Theodore Lewis

Reverend Eli Katz, Cantor David Koussevitsky, World renowned  
Cantor

Principal Speaker: Honorable Philip W. Noel, Governor of Rhode  
Island

Saturday Morning, 9:30 A.M.—September 11, 1976

Sabbath Service at Touro Synagogue

Rabbi Theodore Lewis

Reverend Eli Katz

Cantor David Koussevitsky

Sermon by Rabbi Lewis: The Jewish experience in Newport, 1658-  
1790

Kiddush\*\* at the Jewish Community Center

Saturday, Evening, 9 P.M. to 1 A.M.—September 11, 1976

At Belcourt Castle, Newport, Rhode Island

Commemorative Champagne Ball

Music by Summer of '42 Band

Sunday Morning, 10:30 A.M.—September 12, 1976

At Newport Harbor Treadway Inn, Newport, Rhode Island

Annual Business Meeting of The Society of Friends of Touro Syna-  
gogue

Sunday Noon—September 12, 1976

At Newport Harbor Treadway Inn

Annual Luncheon of The Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue

Principal Speaker: Colonel Milton E. Mitler, USAF (ret.) Deputy  
Special Assistant to the President for Bicentennial and Special  
Projects

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\*Literally "Sabbath delight" (Hebrew). A cultural and social event associated with the Friday evening service. The Jewish Community Center is across Touro Street from the Synagogue.

\*\*Kiddush (Hebrew) is a prayer and ceremony sanctifying the Sabbath. Accompanied by a collation when the occasion is appropriate.

At Touro Synagogue  
United States Bicentennial Celebration  
George Washington Letter Ceremonies 1790-1976  
Auspices of The Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue National  
Historic Shrine, Inc.

## PROGRAM

12:00—Luncheon .....Newport Harbor Treadway Inn  
Samuel Friedman, Presiding

Installation of Officers .....Judge Alex G. Teitz

Speaker .....Colonel Milton Mitler, USAF (Ret.)  
White House Staff

2:00 P.M.—Annual Exercises .....Touro Synagogue

Star Spangled Banner .....Cantor David Koussevitsky

Invocation .....Rabbi Dr. Theodore Lewis  
Spiritual Leader, Touro Synagogue

Presiding .....Honorable Frank Licht  
Former Governor, State of Rhode Island

Greetings .....Honorable Humphrey J. Donnelly, III  
Mayor, City of Newport

Remarks .....Mr. William Dannin  
President, Congregation Jeshuat Israel

Remarks .....Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky  
Incoming President, Society of Friends

Recognition of 30th Anniversary of Designation of  
Synagogue as a National Historic Site .....Mr. Samuel Friedman  
Outgoing President, Society of Friends

Remarks .....Professor Patrick Conley  
Chairman, Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission

Reading of Letter of George Washington to  
Hebrew Congregation of Newport .....Rev. Charles Minifie  
Rector of Trinity Church

Address .....Honorable Edward H. Levi  
Attorney-General of the United States

Benediction .....Reverend Eli Katz  
Cantor, Touro Synagogue

Dedication of Patriot's Park\* .....Mr. Benjamin Helfner  
Immediate Past President, Congregation Jeshuat Israel

Collation .....Newport Jewish Community Center

\*The new park is adjacent to the Synagogue. Exercises included the planting of two dogwood trees and a ceremonial cannon firing by the Newport Artillery.

ADDRESS BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF  
TOURO SYNAGOGUE NATIONAL HISTORIC SHRINE, INC.

by COLONEL MILTON E. MITLER, USAF (ret.),

*Deputy Special Assistant to the President for Bicentennial  
and Special Projects*

When he appeared at Independence Hall in Philadelphia on July 4th, President Gerald R. Ford said, "Before me is the great bronze bell that joyously rang out the news of the birth of our nation from the steeple of the State House. It was never intended to be a church bell. Yet, a generation before the great events of 1776, the elected assembly of Pennsylvania ordered it to be inscribed with this biblical verse: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land and to all the inhabitants thereof."\* The President went on to say, "The American settlers had many, many hardships, but they had more liberty than any other people on earth. That was what they came here for and what they meant to keep. The verse from Leviticus on the Liberty Bell refers to the ancient Jewish year of Jubilee. In every fiftieth year the Jubilee restored the land and the quality of persons that prevailed when the Children of Israel entered the Land of Promise, and both gifts came from God, as the Jubilee regularly reminded them."

On Monday, July 12, 1976 the Jubilee was again celebrated, this time by the President in a special ceremony in the oval office of the White House. That morning, six rabbis, representing the six colonial Jewish congregations which were in existence in this country when George Washington became President, visited President Ford to repledge the support of the American Jewish community as their forebears did before them. And to celebrate this Jubilee Year—four times fifty—the Shofar was sounded for the first time in the oval office.

I am sure you have received a graphic report of that meeting from our own Rabbi Theodore Lewis, who was one of those six Rabbis. (See pages 302-304 and back covers)

In response to this, President Ford repeated those famous words of George Washington which appeared in the letter our first president wrote to our congregation. It was his reaffirmation of the religious freedom enjoyed by all Americans. It was a very moving ceremony in the Oval Office that day.

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Read at the Annual George Washington Letter Luncheon, Sunday, September 12, 1976, Newport, Rhode Island.

\*Leviticus 25:10. With great prescience these words were ordered cast upon the bell by the residents of the Province of Pennsylvania in 1753. Ed.

The President has called our two hundred year history "The American Adventure". When he attended naturalization ceremonies at Monticello on July 5th, he said, "After two centuries, there is still something wonderful about being an American. If we cannot quite express it, we know what it is. You know what it is or you would not be here today. Why not call it patriotism?"

There is a new awareness that ours is a nation of many faiths and denominations—Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and others—all equally honored and all equally separated and protected from government by the constitution of the United States.

The Bicentennial marks a turning point for our country and its people. The spirit of the celebration has permeated every part of the nation. It has been a "people oriented" event and has produced not only the festival of Bicentennial—the parades, fireworks, and red, white, and blue cotton candy—but has brought to communities lasting contributions in restorations, constructions, educational or cultural programs, or simply the diverse factors of a community coming together for one purpose in full harmony and creating a feeling that will long endure. In addition to our citizen participation in events, the Bicentennial has focused on our history and has caused hundreds of thousands, particularly young people, to become better acquainted with what has gone before and what it is our forefathers sought. The very essence of the American way of life has been spread out for all to see and appreciate. The result has been very gratifying. There is a spirit in the nation, and it is a good one. I am convinced that same spirit would have emerged without the Bicentennial, but I do believe that the Bicentennial served as a catalyst and helped it to emerge that much sooner.

I saw it come in such things as thousands of letters a week to the President, each glowing in terms about how great it is to be an American—letters that emphasized a personal pleasure and gratification in being a part of this great country, or suggesting what the President would do in commemoration, or what the writer was doing, or explaining the song, poem, or essay that was enclosed, or simply singing the praises of our heritage. And, even more touching were the many letters received from those who came to our shores in more recent times from countries throughout the world and who wrote how thrilling it was now to be an American citizen. Of all the letters received, if four or five out of each thousand were negative, it would be unusual.

I also saw it in the flow of gifts to the White House from all parts of the world. Gifts that covered the expanse of human imagination—

each doing what he or she does best, whether it was the needlepoint on a quilt, a wood carving, knitted socks, an elaborate piece of jewelry, a sculpture, a painting, a hand-drawn birthday card. But all carried the emotional feelings of the donor and the desire to be a part of this great celebration.

The gifts are material evidence of something that goes much deeper. They reflect the feelings of the people—the need to contribute, even in a small way, to this significant occasion. They reflect the spirit of the Bicentennial and the spirit of our republic.

And then we saw the manner in which other countries have helped with the celebration—over 94 of them. Sending gifts to us, sending performing groups over here to entertain, or having special visitors come to this country in commemoration of our 200th Anniversary might have been expected. But also to conduct Bicentennial programs within their own countries so that *their* people will know about *our* anniversary—that is beyond what might have been expected. Germany, France, Italy, England, and so many others literally had and still have thousands of Bicentennial programs within their respective countries.

While the feeling continues, the crescendo was reached over the July Fourth weekend and echoed from coast to coast. Millions of Americans celebrated in one mass birthday and with no diversity. Even where things did not go as well as might have been hoped, there was still the prevailing feeling of celebration and faith and the belief in our future. And it was reflected in people's faces, in the media, in the communities—in every walk of life.

There was also a moving recognition of our ethnicity generated throughout this commemoration. The fact that we are a nation of many races and creeds, of many backgrounds and colors, of diverse beliefs and even desires—all of this surfaced, joined, and helped to produce a euphoric experience—the American Adventure.

It continues today and will carry into tomorrow. There is no reason why the spirit which was sparked in 1776 and rekindled in 1976 should not burn brightly from now on. The very values espoused by those brave 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence are still the values by which we live today. We do enjoy the same freedoms that they sought—but even more so, we are still a nation of laws in which each of us has protection from those forces which might take away what is rightfully ours; and we still enjoy the right to select those who govern us.

This has been an exciting year, and it promises to continue in that

vein. It has also been a year which has brought us closer as a people to the basics which helped start the American Adventure than has anything else in our lifetime.

The President's Bicentennial Independence Day proclamation carries these important words—"I ask that all Americans join in an extended period of celebration, thanksgiving, and prayer on the second, third, fourth, and fifth days of July of our Bicentennial Year—so that people of all faiths, in their own ways, may give thanks for the protection of Divine Providence through 200 years, and pray for the future safety and happiness of our nation." To that I would like to add, now that the July 4th period has passed, let us continue to give thanks for what we have and help to maintain our freedoms and way of life for those who follow, so that the American Adventure can continue throughout our third century and beyond that. And so that this nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all, may continue to be the guiding spirit of human understanding for all the world.

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR PHILIP W. NOEL  
DURING THE BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF  
TOURO SYNAGOGUE, SEPTEMBER 10, 1976

by PHILIP W. NOEL

*Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*

The opportunity to participate in the Touro Synagogue Bicentennial Program is especially meaningful for me. This place and its history reflect a vital and central tradition of our state. Religious freedom has been a source of moral nourishment and strength for the people of Rhode Island since its founding. The exchange of letters between Moses Seixas and President George Washington in 1790 drew from this tradition, emphasizing its universality in our nation's infancy.

It is neither surprising nor inappropriate that such correspondence involved a Jewish congregation. The Jewish people have survived for thousands of years, through every conceivable persecution and adversity. They have been sustained by the moral precepts which guided the founders of our state and country.

The religious liberty found in Rhode Island and the promise of its extension throughout the nation must have been especially precious for the members of Congregation Jeshuat Israel in 1790.

The principles articulated in the two 1790 letters extend far beyond the mere tolerance of one group by another. The framers of the Constitution included the guarantee of religious freedom in the First Amendment. This positive encouragement and protection of diversity has enriched all of our lives.

If the Jewish community has benefited from the guarantee of religious freedom, they have most certainly repaid society many fold. In Rhode Island, Jews have long made outstanding contributions in every field of endeavor: government, education, commerce, philanthropy, and, in general, setting an excellent example of concerned and responsible citizenship.

Religious freedom is personal freedom. The Jewish experience can teach us that, whatever a government may allow or forbid, a person is still responsible to his or her own conscience. History teaches us that a government ignores this at its own peril. The United States

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Read at the Friday evening Sabbath Service which initiated the Bicentennial weekend celebration of Touro Synagogue.



has enjoyed success for the past 200 years because it has provided fertile ground for the free mind and soul.

Religious freedom is not something obtained once and then automatically enjoyed in perpetuity. All of our freedoms are fragile.

The Jewish people have been made aware throughout their history that relentless and violent forces have always been prepared to destroy freedom. That is why this occasion can be of such value. It can remind us to reflect on the deeper significance of words we often accept without thinking.

That our heritage of freedom requires constant renewal was well understood by our late President John F. Kennedy. In his 1963 letter to this congregation on the Bicentennial of the dedication of Touro Synagogue, he said:

. . . while religious freedom is secure in our nation today, we are still striving to guarantee civil liberties and equal rights for a sizable minority of our citizens. In this effort, no better tradition exists than the history of the Touro Synagogue's great contributions to the goals of freedom and justice for all.

ADDRESS BEFORE THE BICENTENNIAL OBSERVANCE OF  
THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF TOURO SYNAGOGUE

by THE HONORABLE EDWARD H. LEVI  
*Attorney General of the United States*

I am honored to join you in commemorating the 200th anniversary of our Declaration of Independence and President George Washington's historic message to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport shortly following the founding of the Republic. It is fitting that we choose to remember these events in this place.

The religious impulse in America is strong indeed. Those who first came here were seeking an opportunity to worship freely. This hope has motivated millions of their successors.

America was a metaphorical reliving of the Old Testament—some would say it was more than that—a new land, a chosen people, a vision of the future. In 1630 John Winthrop described his Massachusetts Bay Colony as Israel of old,—“a city set on a hill” with the “eyes of all people upon us.” After the American Revolution, Ezra Stiles, once a minister in Newport with a special interest in this congregation, looked forward to the day when “the Lord shall have made his American Israel high above all nations.” And in the nineteenth century, Herman Melville proclaimed, “We Americans are the peculiar chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of liberties of the world.”

The messianic tradition can be one of exclusivity. Exclusivity can lead to intolerance. Indeed, it was this attitude which prompted the expulsion of Roger Williams from Massachusetts and the genesis of Rhode Island's special place in our history.

The Founding Fathers — George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and their colleagues—were deeply religious men. They shared a sense of America's mission. Yet they were in the tradition of Roger Williams. Their commitment to religious and political liberty for all was, in part, attributable to their unhappy experience with state-established religion. It also reflected a politically pragmatic recognition that America's diversity demanded religious tolerance if a nation of nations was to be established.

Most important, however, they considered religious and political liberty essential because of a shared conviction that God had indeed created all men equal and endowed them with certain rights which no

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Read at the George Washington Letter Ceremonies, Sunday, September 12, 1976,  
Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island.

civil government could properly grant or restrict. In 1876, my great-grandfather, Rabbi David Einhorn, described the Founders of the Republic as "men of deep and profound inner reverence for the unfathomable Universal spirit, in whose name they undertook their immortal great deeds." It was a recognition of the unknowable nature of the Divine that required tolerance and created a sense that, in Jefferson's words, the "integrity of views more than their soundness was the proper basis" of respect among men.

In this conception, to the equality and sovereignty of the people there was joined the ultimate accountability. Thus, Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance for religious freedom spoke of the duty to the Creator "precedent, both in order and time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society."

It is these values which are eloquently expressed in Washington's message to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport. He spoke of a government which "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance" as an example to mankind, "a policy worthy of imitation." He described a government in which "all possess alike liberty of conscience and the immunities of citizenship" and, most significantly, rejected scornfully the idea that toleration could be regarded as an indulgence bestowed by one class upon another, rather than a recognition of inherent natural rights.

Washington's words are particularly impressive when recalled in perspective. Tolerance and mutual understanding then as now could not be taken for granted. During the War of Independence, in order to facilitate the raising of troops, England eliminated the required oath to the Anglican Church, which, in effect, prohibited Catholics from serving the King. But the controversy this provoked culminated in a march in London of 50,000 protesters, led by Lord George Gordon, a member of Parliament, who alternated between addressing the House of Commons and haranguing the crowd outside. This march was soon transformed into what would become a five-day riot resulting in hundreds of deaths, the destruction of many Catholic chapels, and the emptying of the city's jail.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which was ratified within a year of Washington's visit to Newport, expressly prohibited the federal government from making any "law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." But at the same time, more than half of the states, including all in New England except Rhode Island, had state-supported religions. As

late as 1820 the voters of Massachusetts rejected by almost 2 to 1 an amendment to the state constitution which would have extended public support to non-Protestant religious teachers and terminated compulsory attendance and public worship.

Although the United States Constitution prohibited religious tests for holding office, some of the older states retained disqualifications regarding Roman Catholics, Jews, and other minorities. In 1809 the North Carolina legislature unsuccessfully tried to exclude Jacob Henry, who, as a Jew, did not subscribe to the Divine authority of the New Testament as required by the state constitution.

In 1819 Henry Brackenridge rose in the Maryland House of Delegates to put the question, "Have the Jews the right to be placed on a footing with other citizens?" It was not for six years that a law was enacted permitting Jews to hold office, serve on juries, and practice law. The disqualifications against them were not removed from the North Carolina constitution until 1868.

Equality before the law, of course, does not signify an end to intolerance. Washington rightly assumed persistent prejudice when he announced that the new government would give it no sanction or assistance. His echoing words are in no way disparaged, indeed they are given added meaning, because they have charted a course, and not an easy one, for fulfillment.

My great-grandfather, David Einhorn, occupies a certain position in the growth of American Judaism: author of one of the outstanding prayer books, abolitionist, defender of human rights. It is perhaps inappropriate for me to speak of him, but it also would be odd for me not to recognize—as others have done—the historic centennial address which he delivered in 1876. He spoke then of the vision of the founders of the Republic—the religious spirit of Washington, the Jeffersonian rejection of the concept of the racial sanctity of any class of men, the wisdom of Franklin, who was able to direct the lightning flashes of his spirit to destroy the chains of servitude. His message was perhaps commonplace. He recognized the power and the greatness of our Republic which had been achieved within one hundred years. The country had become a giant, but its strength was not in possessions, but, because of its founders, and its people, it had become a messenger of redemption with a deep and profound inner reverence for the unfathomable Universal spirit. And so the country had survived with its message through a veritable multitude of dangers. He asked then, at that centennial: Are the words and thoughts and ex-

amples of the founding fathers "still today the guiding stars which determine our people's thoughts and feelings, our actions and our failures to act?" If the past is to have meaning now, as we desire it to have, this question always must be asked, and it is not to be obscured because the light of history makes the noble qualities more apparent by recognizing imperfections as well. The question comes to us now laden with events of subsequent cruelty in the world which I dare to say would have been unimaginable in my great-grandfather's time. When we have doubts, as often we must, we still must recognize, particularly in this Bicentennial year, that we have had and still have these guiding stars which have helped to create the world's best hope.

In 1852 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow visited the Jewish cemetery at Newport. This synagogue was then closed, and the Jewish community was virtually extinct. Viewing the graves of immigrants, Longfellow wondered, "How come they are here?" And he then recounted a remarkable journey of "pride and humiliation" in words which you know full well:

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

Surveying the cemetery, Longfellow suggested that the Jewish people had expired because they let "life become a legend of the dead." Longfellow was wrong.

He was wrong about the Jewish people. In 1854 Judah Touro remembered his father, who ministered to this congregation. Like his brother before him, he substantially contributed to the restoration of this building—not as a monument to the past, but as a living memorial, a part and symbol of the revival of the Jewish community here.

Longfellow was wrong also if he failed to understand that the American dream is itself a biblical dream, a response and reawakening of an ancient tradition which lives in many ways. It lives in us, and it lives in others.

Today we remember Washington and Jefferson and Franklin and that inspired message of loyalty and hope expressed by this congregation to the federal union and to its leaders. That message and its response are treasures for mankind.

It remains for each of us to keep strong our sentiments with the past so that we may perfect the life of today and tomorrow, to keep strong the varied traditions of different groups which make our country great. In doing so, we shall be rededicated to giving bigotry no sanction, and to recognizing, guarding, and helping to perfect the dignity of each individual among us.

## STRANGER THAN STRANGE WIVES

by NATALIE R. SEIGLE\*

*Strange Wives* is an historical novel of 18th century Jews and inter-marriage in Newport, Rhode Island. It was published by the late New Hampshire historical novelist and poet, Shirley Barker, in 1963, the same year that marked the 200th anniversary of Touro Synagogue.

Miss Barker, born in Farmingdale, New York in 1911, had ancestors who were early settlers of New England. Some even attended the Salem witch trials. Miss Barker received her M.A. from Radcliffe College and her M.L.S. from Pratt Institute in 1941. She worked in the American History Department of the New York Public Library until 1954, when she returned to New Hampshire to write full time. By then she had published two books of poetry, a juvenile, and eight novels, one of which has been published in Braille! *Strange Wives* was her final novel. She committed suicide in 1965.

Shirley Barker's biography, however, does not reveal why a Christian would write an historical novel about Jews. The following is a brief excerpt from a letter I wrote to her on October 7, 1963 in an effort to find the answer:

"... I am interested to learn why and how you came to write a novel about Jews, this particular kind of story, and with such understanding . . . I would be happy to learn anything . . . you could tell me about yourself; (and) the historically accurate background of *Strange Wives*."

Two weeks later, I received the following reply:

"I'll try to answer your questions as honestly as possible, although a writer doesn't always know exactly how his works come about. . . . I think the underlying emotion—not the idea—first came to me when I was a green young girl from New England who went to work in a branch library on New York's Lower East Side. The neighborhood was Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, with Jews from all these countries. It was a poor neighborhood, and many of the people still clung to their old country customs, particularly the religious ones. I couldn't have felt any stranger if I had found myself in China. I remember walking once past Seward Park and gazing through the open windows of a gaunt wooden building

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\*Instructor of Business Communications, Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island.

where bearded men sat on benches chanting. I remember the signs in strange characters that looked like notes of music, and the sharp-faced hooded women, and the children who could not sign their names on Saturday.

"Somehow I had the uneasy, wistful feeling that I was in the presence of a very old, very deep rich culture that would always elude me. I revered it, but I had no understanding thereof. After a year I was transferred to another part of the city, and I seldom remembered, but I never forgot.

"More than ten years later I became the patient of a Jewish doctor who did a great deal for me. In one of our talks he suggested that I write—I had had a number of historical novels published by then—an historical novel about the Jews in America. It was several years more before I got around to investigating his idea. Then the first thing that came into my head was the Longfellow poem I had known since childhood.<sup>2</sup> I went down to Newport, and I began to read about the Newport Jews. Slowly my book grew.

"I read, and read, and read in Hebrew history and folklore, both in Palestine, Spain, Portugal, and the New World. Study as I would, awful mistakes would have appeared if I hadn't been with a Jewish publisher whose able editors could correct me when I was wrong."

*Strange Wives* has two concurrent themes: it is a factual sociological history of the early Newport Jews 200 years ago, and a fictional story of two intermarriages in that Newport colony. Newport minister, Doctor Ezra Stiles, a great friend of the Jews and a Hebrew scholar, who years later became president of Yale University, is interwoven within the story framework. Also within the fictional structure are authentic prominent Newport Jews, such as the Lopez, Seixas, Rivera, and Isaacs families. Throughout the novel the history of Touro Synagogue is threaded.

*Strange Wives* is a fascinating novel. But the reasons that prompted a Yankee spinster to undertake the painstaking research to enable her to write it are proof that truth indeed is stranger than fiction.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Stanley J. Kuritz and Howard Haycraft, eds., *Twentieth Century Authors*. H. W. Wilson Co., N. Y. (1942) 1955, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>"The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," *Longfellow's Complete Poetical Works*. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. (1963) 1922, pp. 191-192.



RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING

The Twenty-second Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was held on Sunday afternoon, May 16, 1976 in the Jewish Community Center, 401 Elmgrove Avenue, Providence, and was called to order by the President, Erwin E. Strasmich at 2:40 P.M. After he extended greetings, the Annual Report of the Secretary, Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky, was accepted as read. Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, Treasurer, reported a balance of \$424.20 in the checking account and \$1,220.47 in the savings account, for a total of \$1,644.67. Mr. Sweet, Finance Chairman, stated that for the first time there has been no deficit in the treasury; in fact, there is a small overage. Total income for 1976 should be \$6,000, if all money due comes in. Hence, with a budget for the ensuing year of \$5,100, there should be a surplus of \$900.

Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky, Editor, remarked that to the tripodal purpose of the Association of research, repository, and publication can be added a fourth: education and public relations. He urged the giving to the Association of records of all kinds. He introduced for recognition the authors of papers which appeared in the last issue of the *Notes*.

Mr. Strasmich displayed a 1951 scrap book of a concert in Providence of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, given to the Association by Mrs. Jay Isenberg.

The Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Melvin L. Zurier, presented the following slate of officers for election: Benton H. Rosen, President; Professor Marvin Pitterman, Vice President; Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky, Secretary; and Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, Treasurer. With no counternominations from the floor, Mr. Zurier instructed the secretary to cast one ballot for the entire slate. He then presented Mrs. Goldowsky and Mrs. Sweet with laminated plaques with the legend reading "In appreciation of her several years of dedicated service as (Secretary) (Treasurer) of this Organization." After brief words of thanks from the two women, Mr. Zurier thanked Mr. Strasmich for his four years of service to the Association as president. Mr. Rosen's remarks as the newly elected president included appreciation for the progress made in various areas during Mr. Strasmich's presidency.

Mr. Strasmich introduced Doctor Stanley F. Chyet, Professor of American Jewish History and Associate Director of the American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, who

spoke on "The Age of Brass: The Jew in Nineteenth Century America." He stated that because historians want to characterize periods, he would dub the 19th century a brass experience for the Jews in the United States. Describing brass as a hard serviceable kind of metal, he said that it was needed in the American character for that period. Brass alloy would correspond with "chutzpah." There was no Jewish community in the United States at that time, only some 2,000 or 2,500 individual Jews, and no religious or communal life could have developed for the Jews in this country without a special kind of "chutzpahkeit." This "chutzpah" represented high moral values with a potential for extraordinary moral dimensions.

The meeting was followed by a coffee hour for which Mrs. Erwin E. Strasmich and Mrs. Benton H. Rosen served as hostesses. Centerpiece of the collation was a 25th anniversary cake in observance of the twenty-fifth year since the incorporation of the Association. Assisting as hostesses were Mrs. Goldowsky, Mrs. Bernard Segal, Mrs. Sweet, and Mrs. Melvin L. Zurier.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

by SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.

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

1. *American Jewish Year Book 1972*, Vol. 73. Pub. by The American Jewish Committee, New York, and The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia. 754 pages.  
 Page 348. Listing of Rhode Island Jewish Historical Ass'n. and *RIJHN*.  
 Pages 386 and 391. Estimated Jewish population of Rhode Island in 1971.  
 Page 683. Listing of *Rhode Island Herald* and *RIJHN*.
2. *American Jewish Year Book 1973*, Vol. 74. Publisher, see item 1. 685 pages.  
 Pages 309 and 314. Estimated Jewish population of Rhode Island in 1972.  
 Page 606. Listing of Jewish Federation of Rhode Island.  
 Page 614. Listing of *Rhode Island Herald* and *RIJHN*.
3. *American Jewish Year Book, 1974-75*, Vol. 75. Publisher, see item 1. 724 pages.  
 Pages 306 and 311. Estimated Jewish population of Rhode Island in 1973.  
 Page 643. Listing of Jewish Federation of Rhode Island.  
 Page 651. Listing of *Rhode Island Herald* and *RIJHN*.
4. *American Jewish Year Book, 1976*, Vol. 76. Publisher, see item 1. 612 pages.  
 Page 23. In a paper titled "The Condition of American Jewry in Historical Perspective: A Bicentennial Assessment" by Henry L. Feingold the following citation appears: "Much of the writing of local history emanates from regional Jewish historical societies which have been established in recent years. The Rhode Island society has been followed by others in Los Angeles, Richmond, Maryland, Greater Washington, Michigan, St. Louis, Berkeley, New York City, and Western Canada."  
 Pages 231 and 237. Estimated Jewish population of Rhode Island in 1974.  
 Page 498. Listing of Jewish Federation of Rhode Island.  
 Page 509. Listing of *RIJHN*.
5. *Newport History*, Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society, No. 159, Summer 1975, Vol. 48, Part 3. Special printing in honor of the Bicentennial of American Independence 1776-1976.  
 Pages 281-328. "Touro Synagogue, Newport, R. I.," by Rabbi Theodore Lewis. A history of the congregation and synagogue with several illustrations and appendices. Pages 281-320.
6. *Jewish Perceptions of America: From Melting Pot to Mosaic*, by Abraham J. Karp. 20 pages. The B. G. Rudolph lectures in Judaic studies. Pub. by Syracuse University, March, 1976.  
 Pages 1-3. Account of the exchange of letters between Moses Seixas of Newport and President George Washington.
7. *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. by Bertram Wallace Korn. Pub. by American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass. and KTAV Publishing House, Inc., New York, N. Y., 1976.  
 Pages 63-76. "Ezra Stiles and the Jews: A Study in Ambivalence", by Arthur A. Chiel.  
 Page 574. Mention of Washington's letters in essay by Allan Tarshish.  
 Page 592. Mention of Touro Synagogue in writings of Rabbi Max Lilienthal in 1847. Essay by Sefton D. Temkin.

- Pages 604-5. Note to Temkin's paper discussing the Abraham Touro bequest for "supporting the Jewish Synagogue" and a challenge to the ownership rights of Shearith Israel in New York to Touro Synagogue in 1893-4.
8. *Sesquicentennial Booklet, 1824-1974* commemorating the introduction of Reform Judaism at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina, organized in 1750. Historical survey taken from the Centennial Booklet compiled by Dr. Jacob S. Raisin, Rabbi of K.K.B.E., November 22-24, 1974. 48 pages.
- Pages 9-10. Regarding the growth of the Jewish community of South Carolina in the mid-Eighteenth Century: "Their numbers were further swelled by the arrivals from Georgia, New York, and Rhode Island."
9. *Know Your Community*. The story of the Jewish institutions and agencies of Greater Providence. A Manual for School and Home by Beryl Segal. Pub. by the Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island, Providence, 1976. 67 pages.
10. *Colonial Rhode Island*. A history by Sydney V. James, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1975. 423 pages.
- Page 111. In the summer of 1690 two sloops were commandeered in Newport to meet pillaging of French privateers. After being armed and outfitted they were manned by crews containing "a strange assortment of Newport men including some seamen, leading citizens, Jews, a shipbuilder, white and Indian servants, and a doctor."
- Page 202. Friendly relations of Ezra Stiles with the Jewish congregation in Newport and his interest in Hebrew.
- Pages 208-211. A brief account of the Jewish community of Newport, Touro Synagogue, and Jewish business and cultural activities. Isaac Touro, Carigal, Aaron Lopez, and Naphtali Hart are mentioned.
- Page 237. Association with the "upper crust" of Abraham Rivera and Aaron Lopez of Newport.
- Page 327. In 1765 as the anti-British colonial feelings began to crystallize, a group of "high Tories" called the Newport Junto was described as a "little, dirty, drinking, drabbling, contaminated knot of thieves, beggars, and transports. . . made up of Turks, Jews, and other infidels."
- Page 336. In 1770 "Some Newport men blamed failure of the nonimportation plan on the Jewish merchants, especially Aaron Lopez." See next entry.
- Page 336. Footnote. "It is well known that Lopez went on importing from Bristol, in fact, from Henry Cruger, a leading advocate there of the trade stoppage. Lopez owed Cruger so much money that neither man could afford to halt trade. But there was no occasion for making scapegoats of the Newport Jews; Lopez' situation was only an extreme case of the troubles many others faced."
11. *The Heart of the People*. By Z. Abrams. pub. by Farlag Yiddn, New York, 1928, text in Yiddish.
- Pages 3-30. This section comprises an introduction in English containing the names of contributors. There are lists of names for Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Westerly, and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and Attleboro, Massachusetts.
12. *The Jew and the American Revolution*. By Jacob R. Marcus. Pub. by the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, 1973. 17 pages.
- Page 1. Newport community of 1776 mentioned.
- Page 2. Loyalists: "Isaac Hart, the cultured Newport merchant shipper who had fled to Long Island, was bayoneted and clubbed to death by patriotic Whigs."
- Page 4. Patriotic Jewish Whigs of Newport mentioned.
13. *Brotherhood*, Sept.-Oct. 1976, publication of the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods.
- Pages 6 and 7. "Americans Cherish Religious Freedom," by Bertram Korn. Mentions Newport community, Touro Synagogue, and Roger Williams's letter of 1654 to the town of Providence affirming freedom of religion. Illustration of Touro Synagogue.

14. *Two Hundred Years of American Synagogue Architecture*, catalog of exhibition at The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, March 30 to May 2, 1976. Pub. by The American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts, 1976. 63 pages.

Pages 9 and 10. Mention of Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island.

Page 18. Plate 1. Interior of Touro Synagogue.

Page 47. Model of Touro Synagogue in Newport is listed. Model lent to exhibit by Aid Kushner.

Page 60. Citation in Bibliography: "Synagogue from Providence, Rhode Island." *Pencil Points*, Vol. 27 (December, 1945), pp. 66-67. Percival Goodman, architect.

15. *The Event Is with the Lord*. Ezra Stiles of Newport sends Haim Carigal of Barbados an account of the Battle of Bunker Hill, July, 1775. Edited and with an Introduction by Stanley F. Chyet. Pub. by The American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, 1976. 6 pages.

## NECROLOGY

JOHN J. DANNIN, born in Newport, Rhode Island, May 1, 1901, the son of the late Joseph and Lena (Adler) Dannin. He attended school in Newport and was graduated from Temple University in Philadelphia. He was a partner in the accounting firm of Dannin and Dannin for thirty-five years before retiring in 1974. He served as a welfare director in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He was a former treasurer of the Newport County Red Cross and was a member and former president of the Newport Lodge of B'nai B'rith and of its Central New England Council and District One Board of Governors. He was also a member of the Newport Public Library Board of Trustees, the Rhode Island Society of Public Accountants, the National Society of Public Accountants, the Lions Club, the Elks Club, and a Masonic Order. He was a former president of Touro Synagogue of Newport, Rhode Island.

Died in Newport, Rhode Island, January 7, 1976.

LOUIS FAIN, born in Providence, Rhode Island, February 15, 1896, the son of the late Reubin and Dora (Mason) Fain. Founder of the Waldorf Tuxedo Company in Providence in 1919, he was associated with this firm until 1961. He later became a partner in the investment firm of Fain & Fain. He was an owner of the former Providence Grays professional baseball team, and served in the Navy during World War I. In 1949 Mr. Fain was appointed by Governor John O. Pastore to serve on the Displaced Persons Committee.

He was a charter member and trustee of Temple Emanu-El, honorary vice president of the Jewish Family and Children's Service, a trustee and executive board member of The Miriam Hospital. He was also a member of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island, B'nai B'rith, Camp Jori, Providence Hebrew Sheltering Society, and the American Legion, and a charter member of the Ledge-mont Country Club and the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in East Providence, Rhode Island November 21, 1976.

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JACOB I. FELDER, born in Russia, October 20, 1891, the son of the late Joseph and Mary (Mason) Felder. For thirty years until his retirement in 1956 he owned and operated the Washington Laundry and Supply Company in Providence, Rhode Island. He was a founder, organizer, and president for ten years of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island. He was a member and past board member of the Men's Club of Temple Emanu-El, as well as a member of Congregation Beth David of Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island, the Touro Fraternal Association, the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, the Hebrew Free Loan Association, the Jewish Family and Children's Service, the Providence Hebrew Day School, The Miriam Hospital, and a Masonic Order.

Died in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, June 24, 1976.

JACOB GOODMAN, born in Lithuania, October 29, 1901, the son of the late Nathan and Anna Goodman. A long-time newspaper editor and owner, he was a graduate of Boston University School of Journalism and also attended Harvard University. As a young man he was a reporter for the New Bedford, Massachusetts *Standard Times*.

He owned and edited newspapers in Swanton, Vermont and Osceola, Missouri. In 1958 he became the owner of the *Rhode Island Pendulum* in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. He was an ardent supporter of Israel, was a member of a number of Zionist organizations, Temple Beth Am of Warwick, Touro Synagogue, Friends of Touro Synagogue of Newport, Jewish Community Center, Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, Providence Hebrew Day School, B'nai B'rith, Friends of Westerly Library, and Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, among other organizations.

Died September 24, 1976 in Warwick, Rhode Island.

HARRIET HOLLAND, born in New York City on March 29, 1930, the daughter of Jeannette and the late Jack Sobel. She attended Ithaca College and Brooklyn College and studied at the Art Student's League in New York City. She was a member of the Governor's Permanent Advisory Commission on the status of women.

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She was chairman of a subcommittee working to encourage women to run for political office, was a member of a committee of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission, and a former lecturer for children's groups at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum. She was also active in many other civic and religious organizations. She was a member of Temple Emanu-El, the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, B'nai B'rith, and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, March 23, 1976.

ARTHUR KAPLAN, born in New York City, May 7, 1902, the son of the late Mayer and Sarah (Bernstein) Kaplan. He was associated with the Poole Silver Company of Taunton, Massachusetts since 1946, having served as its president from 1948 to 1965. He was chairman of the board from 1965 to 1969, when he retired. He was president of Temple Emanu-El from 1959 to 1964, was a past director of the Jewelers Board of Trade, a past president of Roger Williams Lodge of B'nai B'rith, a member of the Brandeis University Club, and a board member of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island.

Died June 7, 1976 in Providence, Rhode Island.

BERNARD H. PODRAT, born in Southbridge, Massachusetts, May 27, 1907, the son of the late Samuel and Celia (Shapiro) Podrat. A graduate of Boston University and Boston University Law School, he was until his retirement the president of the former Podrat Brothers, a textile firm in Providence, Rhode Island. He was a member of Temple Emanu-El, the Temple Emanu-El Men's Club, the Friends of the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, and the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island.

Died in West Palm Beach, Florida, January 6, 1976.

HARRY A. SCHWARTZ, born in Paterson, New Jersey, February 11, 1902, the son of the late David and Nettie (Sarna) Schwartz. With his father in 1921, he founded the Cadillac Textiles, Inc. in Paterson, New Jersey, moving the operation to Pawtucket, Rhode Island in 1929 and then to its current location in Valley Falls, Rhode

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Island in 1933. In the textile industry the firm was regarded as a first rate production and marketing company. He served the firm for many years as vice president and treasurer. He became chairman of the board in 1969, but due to ill health retired that year.

He was a founder of the former United Fund of the Blackstone Valley and served as its president and on its executive board. He was chairman of the Blackstone Valley United Jewish Appeal for ten years. He was treasurer of The Miriam Hospital, served as an overseer, was on the finance committee and the board of trustees, and was an honorary vice president of the hospital. He was chairman for Rhode Island of the American Friends of Hebrew University in 1955, a first vice president of the Rhode Island Textile Association, and a member of the Pawtucket Memorial Hospital Incorporators.

In 1959 he was named Rhode Island Jewish Man of the Year by the Rhode Island Bowling Congress and later received a similar award from Roger Williams Lodge, B'nai B'rith. He was instrumental in establishing and constructing a chapel for Jewish patients at the Rhode Island Medical Center.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, January 22, 1976.

WALTER I. SUNDLUN, born in Providence, Rhode Island, September 9, 1890, the son of the late Morris and Evelyn Sundlun. Lawyer, business man, and philanthropist, he was prominent in Republican politics and was twice an unsuccessful candidate for the United States Senate.

He began work at the age of twelve as a delivery boy, worked as a youth as a baggage agent, was an organist on Narragansett Bay steamers, and held other odd jobs while attending public elementary schools, Hope High School, and Lincoln Preparatory School. After high school he travelled the country as New York sales representative for local jewelry companies and later operated a jewelry store on Main Street in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

At the age of 29 he entered law school and received his degree from Boston University. Two years after joining the bar he became

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a public defender. For ten years he was president of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island. He was also president of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth El) and was involved in raising money for the Freedom Crusade, which financed the Radio Free Europe broadcasts. During World War II he was chairman of the Rhode Island Committee for Oppressed Minorities, and gained a reputation as a tireless listener to German propaganda broadcasts, which occasionally featured the names of surviving Americans missing in action. Sundlun's son Bruce, now president and chief executive officer of the Outlet Company, was missing for a time after an air mission from the British Isles in 1943.

After the war, while president and treasurer of National Real Estate and Investment Company, Sundlun remained active in politics. As a lawyer he gained attention for his action in 1947 and 1948 on behalf of Boston Mayor Michael M. Curley's successful bid for a pardon from President Harry S. Truman.

He was an incorporator and trustee of The Miriam Hospital and a trustee of the Jewish Home for the Aged of Rhode Island and the Jewish Children's Foundation. He was a member of Barney Merry Lodge, F. & A. M., Providence Lodge of Elks, the Eagles, the Rhode Island and Bristol Yacht Clubs, the Ledgemont Country Club, and other organizations.

Died in Providence, Rhode Island, September 30, 1976.

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#### BACK COVER

See Page 302 for story. Signers were: Rabbis Louis C. Gerstein, Theodore Lewis, Saul J. Rubin, Ezekiel N. Musleah, Edward L. Cohn, Jack D. Spiro.

A Bicentennial Letter From The Rabbis of the Six Colonial Jewish Congregations

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We, the spiritual leaders of the six Colonial Jewish Congregations, commend to you and our Nation congratulations and divine benediction as the Bicentennial celebration climaxes.

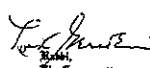
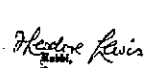
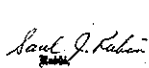
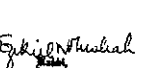
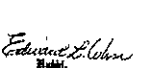

As our forefathers tendered President Washington felicitations on the occasion of his Inauguration, expressing in those documents love of America and dedication on the part of its Jewish citizens to the majestic precepts and freedoms for which it was established, we, in this generation, would affirm their sentiments. May the blessings of liberty, justice and compassion be forthcoming unto our more than two hundred million citizens, to them and their progeny after them. May Washington's promise "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance" continue to be the bedrock of public policy.

As the founding fathers so clearly understood, love and loyalty to country increase in proportion to the freedoms secured, the privileges extended, and the egalitarian principles promoted. The commitment of the stock of Abraham is ever to vouchsafe these American values for all people, whether descendants of the first settlers, or more recently removed to these shores.

We assured, Sir, of the steadfast loyalty of the American Jewish community to the American dream and the American territory. We will defend it against its enemies, foreign or domestic. We will give of our energies, wisdom and skill for the common weal. We will promote the cause of other democracies in this world, including the land of Israel, sacred to all generations of our people. We do so on the conviction that democratic governments need the unique strength which sister democracies can provide, especially in a world where many nations are hostile to elemental human freedoms.

May the "wonder-working Deity" Who has revealed to His children their common origin and destiny and has commanded them to be brethren one to the other, excite the will of all American races and stocks to observe this 200th Birthday in benevolent spirit. May we remember that which is most inspiring in the past. May we reclaim the conviction of Presidents Washington, Jefferson and Madison that in this nation men will forever govern themselves.

Your humble and obedient servants,

 Rabbi, The Congregation Shearith Israel New York	 Rabbi, Congregation Israel Israel (Knesset Synagogue) Newport, Rhode Island	 Rabbi, Congregation Mikveh Israel Savannah, Georgia	 Rabbi, The Congregation Mikveh Israel Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	 Rabbi, Mikveh Israel Beth Shalom Charleston, South Carolina	 Rabbi, Congregation Beth Shalom Beth Shalom Richmond, Virginia
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