



**RHODE ISLAND  
JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES**

VOLUME 2      NOVEMBER, 1984      NUMBER 2

FRONT COVER

The Feital Family, Pincus, son Jacob, Annie, @1900.  
(Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, donation of Diana Feital Goldstein).

# **RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES**

NOVEMBER, 1984

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2



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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

130 SESSIONS STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02906



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The Library of Congress National Serials Data Program (NSDP), Washington, D.C. 20540, which operates the U.S. Serials Data System, has assigned the following International Standard Serial Number (*ISSN*) to the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, a publication of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association: **ISSN 0556-3609**.

## HARRY CUTLER: AN OUTLINE OF A NEGLECTED PATRIOT

BY STANLEY B. ABRAMS

High of purpose, keen of mind;  
Ardent in his people's cause;  
Rallying to all mankind;  
Railing against unjust laws;  
Yearning o'er the suffering.

Charity his highest goal,  
Upward e'er his thoughts ascend;  
Truth, Justice, Mercy rule his soul,  
Loyal patriot, loyal friend,  
Ever noble, ever true  
Rings our

Harry Cutler.

Marion L. Misch<sup>1</sup>

In an article announcing the sudden death of Harry Cutler at the age of forty-six on August 28, 1920, the *Providence Journal* reported that he was one of the best-known jewelry manufacturers in the country, a former member of the Rhode Island General Assembly, and a prominent figure in world-wide Jewish affairs.<sup>2</sup> Of his funeral on September 16, 1920, *The Boston Jewish Advocate* noted: "The entire city of Providence turned out today to pay final tribute to the late Colonel Harry Cutler . . . a true American citizen of whom American Jewry and America was well proud."<sup>3</sup>

At a memorial tribute to Cutler held in March of 1921, Rhode Islanders thronged to the Strand Theatre in Providence to honor the memory of a noble humanitarian. "Jew and gentile, rabbi and minister of the gospel took part in the most moving tribute to any of her sons that Providence had witnessed in many years."<sup>4</sup>

These panegyrics point to a man whose achievements and contributions to his people, his community, and his nation went beyond normal expectations. Although an occasional reference or document has found its way into this journal,<sup>5</sup> historians have virtually ignored Cutler's role in the formation of national Jewish relief organizations and his activities in the arena of social justice. From 1905 until his death, Harry Cutler thrust himself into efforts to bring relief to the Russian Jews suffering from pogroms; fought for Russian recognition of American passports regardless of race or religion; opposed measures to restrict immigration into the United States; championed relief for Jewish soldiers and other Jews during World War I; represented the interests of Zionism at the Paris Peace Conference; and introduced a host of social justice legislation while serving in the Rhode Island General Assembly. Throughout, Cutler experienced the same pain and agony of accommodating his heritage to the pressures of American citizenship as befell his fellow Jews.

Harry Cutler came to the United States in 1882 from Czarist Russia, escaping at the tail end of another infamous pogrom that took the life of his father. Assisted by a Christian neighbor, eight year old Harry, his sister and mother joined thousands of others and escaped. Settling in upstate New York the young Cutler sold newspapers and ran errands while his mother labored in a canning factory. After a few years in New York City and a few more in Fall River, Massachusetts, the family settled in Providence. Here, as a sixteen year old, Cutler was hired as a shipping clerk by a jewelry firm. He advanced rapidly, first to the position of foreman and finally to general manager. At twenty-four he purchased a jewelry factory that was about to go bankrupt with a small sum of borrowed money. By the beginning of the 20th century the Cutler Jewelry and Comb Company developed into one of the leading firms of its type in the United States, and Cutler emerged as one of a handful of Jewish manufacturers in Providence.<sup>6</sup> The jewelry industry recognized his leadership abilities and elevated him to the presidency of the New England Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths Association in 1907. He was also named to the National Board of Trade.<sup>7</sup>

During his apprenticeship in the jewelry industry Cutler attended night school in Providence's public schools, acquiring the only formal education he was to receive. Limited exposure to schooling did not seem to handicap him. His command of the English language, both as a public speaker and in his written communications, was remarkable. This ability to articulate his

thoughts coupled with his financial success, national notoriety, and valuable business connections throughout the East Coast gave the thirty-one year old Cutler the essential requirements for a smooth transition from immigrant Jew to American Jew. Nevertheless, Cutler seems never to have forgotten the bloody murder of his father, the fate of all Russian Jews, and his deeply imbedded sense of service to community. These motivations led him to embrace Zionism, Jewish relief, and social legislation, activities which consumed a substantial amount of his energies for the next fifteen years.

The 1903 Kishinev pogrom and the two years of violence that followed triggered an unprecedented outburst of activity within the American Jewish communities. In Providence, Jews and non-Jews alike expressed shock at the deliberate killing of Jews, staged rallies, and began to raise funds for relief work. Undoubtedly because of Cutler's prominence among the business circle composed of German Jews, he received a telegram from Jacob H. Schiff and Oscar S. Straus, heads of the New York firms of Kuhn, Loeb and Company and R. H. Macy and Company respectively, to organize a local relief effort. Cutler assembled a conference of all Jewish organizations in Rhode Island, presided over its deliberations, and was elected permanent chairman of what came to be the United Jewish Relief Committee of Providence.<sup>8</sup> The Committee functioned as an affiliate of the New York-based national relief effort.

Contributions collected in Rhode Island exceeded initial projections. Less obvious but equally important was Cutler's ability as chairman to organize and unify approximately forty-four disparate Jewish organizations into a single unit.<sup>9</sup> Many of these organizations, founded by German, Polish, and other Jews, vied with one another for the support and allegiance of new immigrants and the contributions of established Jewish residents. The organizational network was an expected configuration and mirrored the geographical divisions within Providence. The first wave of immigrants in the 1880s and 1890s had established themselves in the North End, while the newest arrivals from Russia and Eastern Europe were settling on the South Side. A manifestation of this division based on nationality and urban geography was the formation of two separate Hebrew Free Loan Associations only three years apart.<sup>10</sup> However, despite Cutler's efforts to create a permanent city-wide relief organization, the United Jewish Relief Committee fell apart, and the component societies resumed their separate activities. The emergency had been met and the disparate Jewish communities were not prepared to act as one.

In New York the call for a new representative body elected by *all* Jewish organizations prompted the German Jewish elite to preempt the more radical elements in 1906 to form the American Jewish Committee (AJC). Composed of Straus, Schiff, Julius Rosenwald, Louis Marshall and others,

the AJC retained an elitist inner circle while publicly supporting an ambitious program to defend the rights of the Russian Jew. Although the Russian Jews accepted the German leadership, they resented the notables and criticized their assimilationist philosophy. Harry Cutler had been invited to attend the organizational meeting of the AJC, did so, and was elected to serve on its executive council.<sup>11</sup> As a policy-forming agency the council established the goals for the AJC: lobby against immigration restriction, work to abrogate the commercial treaty between Russia and the United States, and embrace overseas relief. Under its aegis, local community councils would coordinate all Jewish activities in their districts.

Cutler deeply immersed himself in all AJC causes. Aware that Russia had been discriminating against American citizens by refusing to grant visas to American Jews, Roman Catholic priests, and protestant missionaries, Cutler initiated potential remedies on the state level. Shortly after his election as a Republican from the 21st District to the House of Representatives of the Rhode Island General Assembly he introduced a passport resolution on March 30, 1909. This resolution, calling upon the president of the United States, the cabinet, and members of Congress from Rhode Island to secure from Russia full rights for United States passport holders, drew national attention to Cutler. The national AJC adopted the resolution and attached to it a clause that failure to grant these rights should be sufficient cause to abrogate the 1832 commercial treaty with Russia.<sup>12</sup>

The House took two years to consider the matter before the Committee on Foreign Affairs held hearings on the issue in December 1911.<sup>13</sup> Most of the luminaries of the American Jewish Committee testified: Schiff, Straus, Cyrus Adler, Louis Marshall, Cyrus L. Sulzberger, and of course Harry Cutler. Although it is unlikely that one man could sway the Committee, Adler recalled in later years that one of the most dramatic moments of the hearing occurred when Cutler moved all those present with his statement regarding the travail of his own family as Jews in Russia.<sup>14</sup> The outcome of this and other hearings was approval of a resolution calling for treaty abrogation and led to final annulment by President William H. Taft in 1913.<sup>15</sup>

As the tide of Eastern Europeans swelled American cities in the first decades of the 20th century, calls for some form of immigration restriction echoed throughout the nation. The AJC, as did so many other ethnic organizations, took up the cause and actively lobbied against any restrictions. Once again Harry Cutler, representing the American Jewish Committee, testified before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization on March 11, 1910. Speaking on behalf of all immigrants, Cutler detailed his personal climb to success from humble beginnings as an immigrant boy. He noted that in Rhode Island the foreign born comprised a

greater percentage of employees than the native born and that these workers had immeasurably contributed to the industrial importance of Rhode Island.<sup>16</sup> Two years later, Cutler, Marshall, and Julius Rosenwald wrote President Taft, requesting that he oppose a literacy test urged by those in favor of a restrictive immigration policy.<sup>17</sup> Taft vetoed the bill the following year.

Concurrent with his activities on behalf of the American Jewish Committee, Cutler, as a member of the Rhode Island General Assembly, demonstrated his compassion for the working class and the ill. From 1909 to 1912 he served three consecutive terms in the House; however, he failed at two attempts to gain a seat in the state Senate thereafter.<sup>18</sup> His legislative agenda reflected Cutler's commitment to improve the quality of life. His concern for the control and treatment of tuberculosis led him to introduce a bill calling for the establishment of a state tuberculosis hospital and municipal tuberculosis centers in 1911.<sup>19</sup> He initiated legislation to expand Rhode Island's technical training facilities and to erect a new dormitory at the state-run Home and School for Dependent Children.<sup>20</sup> However, his most notable legislative contribution was a bill providing compensation for employees injured on the job — the first workmen's compensation act introduced in the General Assembly.<sup>21</sup> Although none of the bills proposed by Cutler was enacted exactly as intended, technical training was expanded, "fresh-air" schools were opened for tuberculosis children throughout Providence, and improved programs for dependent children evolved.

This brief legislative record reflects Cutler's concern for a better society, and at the same time hints at his assimilationist tendencies. While serving as president of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David, Cutler was also on the board of St. Joseph's Hospital, a Catholic institution; he also served as director of Church House, a protestant organization. Additionally, Cutler's patriotism peaked as a member of the General Assembly, when in 1910 he introduced a resolution calling for a portrait of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry to be displayed in the State House.<sup>22</sup> Cutler was rewarded in 1913, first by being named Auditor General of the Perry Centennial Commission which had been established to celebrate Perry's victory on Lake Erie in 1813, and then by being promoted to the rank of colonel in the First Light Infantry Brigade of Rhode Island,<sup>23</sup> a reserve unit Cutler had joined as a private some years earlier.

Cutler's rapid Americanization and his partial alienation from his ethnic heritage was a common experience among upwardly mobile Jews at the turn of the century. It did not escape the attention of young intellectuals and communal leaders who were advancing several theories of survivalism. The debate divided American Jewry into camps espousing cultural pluralism, Zionism, and secular nationalism, and it threatened the hegemony of the

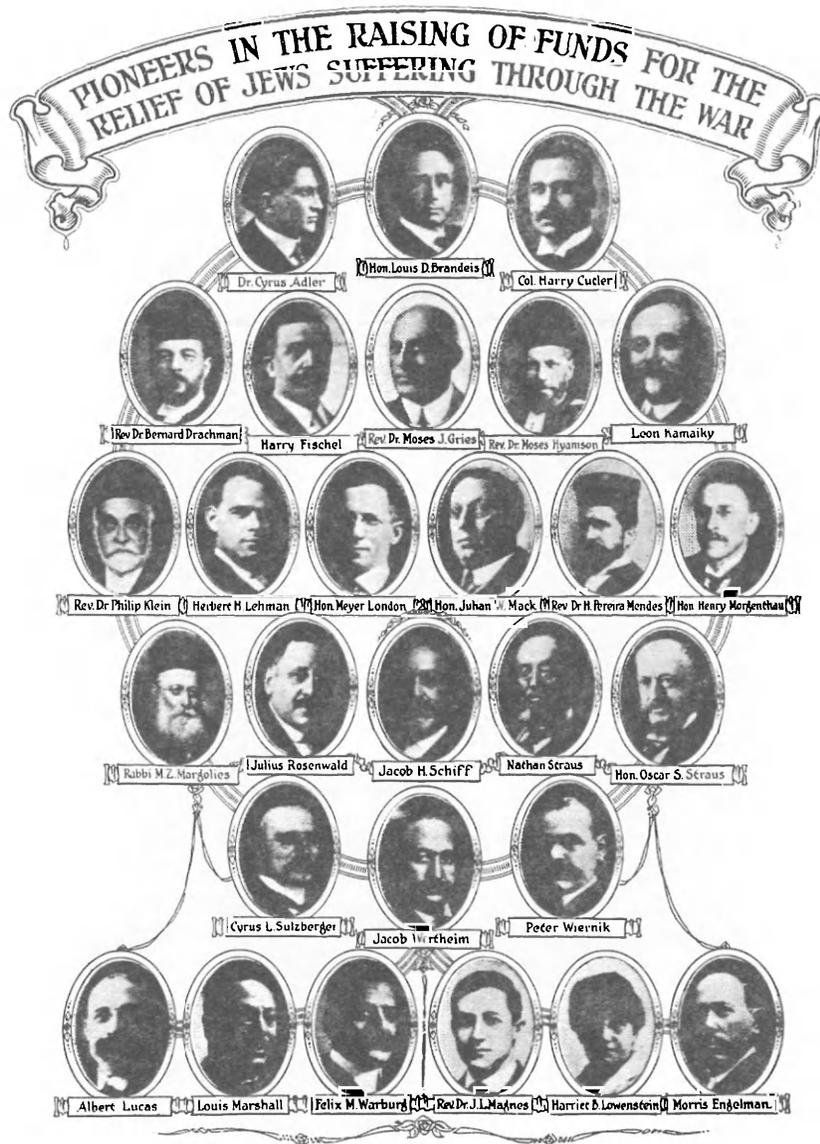
American Jewish Committee in its arena of politics and diplomacy. When the Zionists in early 1915, led by the able Louis Brandeis and Stephen S. Wise, called for a democratically elected central body, the American Jewish Committee regarded the movement with apprehension. Although the Zionists shortly formed the opposing American Jewish Congress, the outbreak of World War I and the fate of Jews all over the world led to an unprecedented collaborative effort to provide relief. However, with America's entry into the war, the fall of the Russian tsar, and Britain's Balfour Declaration calling for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the conflict within American Jewry intensified once again.

In the fall of 1914, shortly after the start of the war, the American Jewish Committee assembled in New York and formed the American Jewish Relief Committee to aid Jews in countries affected by the war. Under the chairmanship of Felix M. Warburg, son-in-law of Schiff and senior partner in the firm of Kuhn, Loeb, the Germans held the directorships but Orthodox and labor relief organizations became constituent members. Despite disputes over policy, the relief effort remained united, raised over \$16.5 million between 1914 and 1918, and distributed the proceeds to over 700,000 Jews through an umbrella agency known as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).<sup>24</sup>

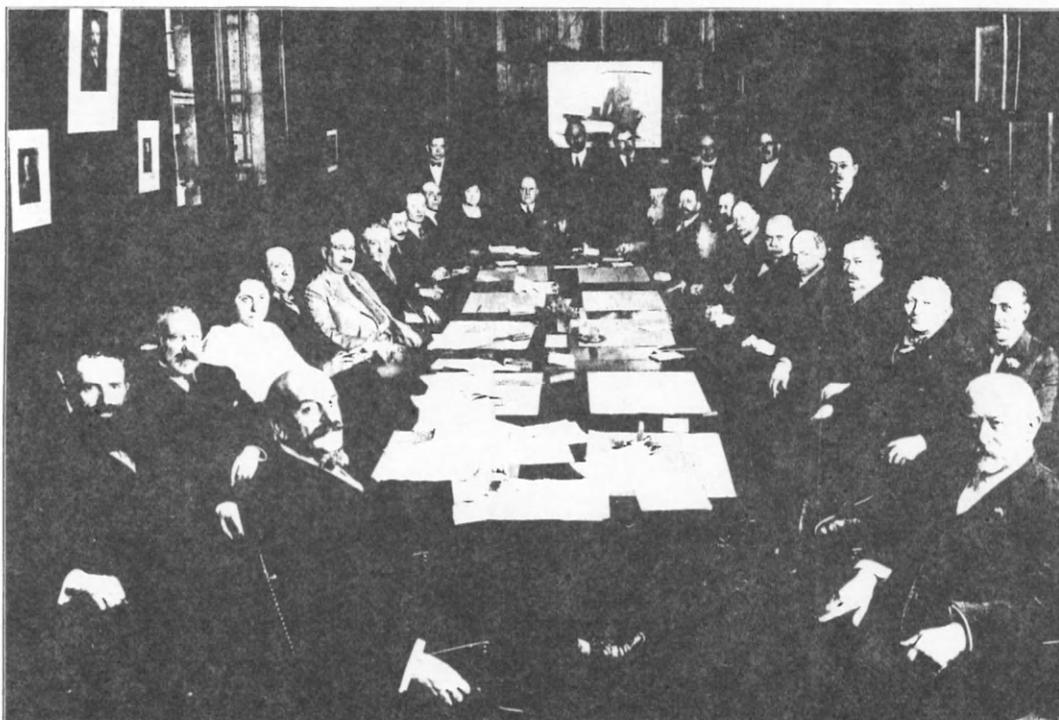
Colonel Harry Cutler participated in the organizational meeting of the JDC and served on its executive board for the next four years. In this capacity, he was involved in all major fund-raising efforts and relief programs sponsored by American Jewry throughout the war. In Rhode Island, Cutler served as chairman of the American Jewish Relief Committee and the Jewish War Relief Commission, both of which functioned under the aegis of the JDC.<sup>25</sup>

The activities and importance of Jewish communal work took on added meaning after the United States entered the war in April 1917. A large number of American Jews were already serving in the army and navy and greater numbers were anticipated with the enactment of a selective service law. Since 1913 the Young Men's Hebrew Association had attended to the needs of Jews in the military. However, as the United States drifted into war, the YMHA was inadequately prepared to serve as mouthpiece and arm of the American Jewish community for the benefit of Jewish servicemen.<sup>26</sup>

Once again the American Jewish Committee and Felix M. Warburg led the charge. Hosting a conference in New York City in April of 1917 it produced the Jewish Board for Welfare Work in the United States. As was the case with all of the AJC's organizations, another prominent German, Cyrus Adler, was named its chairman.<sup>27</sup> Cutler was not in attendance, presumably occupied as chairman of the Selective Service Board No. 5 in



A Meeting of the Joint Distribution Committee of the American Funds for Jewish War Sufferers, July 10th, 1918



Seated from left to right are:—Felix M. Warburg, Chairman; Aaron Tritelbaum, Albert Lucas, Secretary; Mrs. F. Friedman, official stenographer; Boris D. Bogen, Executive Director; Leon Sandera, Harry Fischel, Sholem Asch, Alexander Kahn, Jacob Milch, Miss Harriet B. Lowenstein, Comptroller; Colonel Moses Schoenberg, M. Z. Margolies, Israel Friedlander, Paul Baerwald, Associate-Treasurer; Julius Levy, Peter Wiernik, Meyer Gillis, Harry Cutler, Cyrus Adler, Arthur Lehman, Treasurer; Jacob H. Schiff.

Standing, left to right:—Abraham Zucker, Isidore Herahfield, Meyer Berlin, Stanley Bero, Louis Topkis, Morris Engelman.



Louis Winnerman (1896-1950), drafted July 1918 for World War I; enlisted in 1941 for World War II.

(Rhode Island Jewish Historical Society, Ruby Winnerman Collection).

Rhode Island.<sup>28</sup> Internal problems befell the organization during its initial months of operation, a predictable outcome considering its heterogeneous composition. In July of 1917 Adler "retired" as chairman and selected Cutler as his successor. There is some indication that Warburg prevailed upon Adler to resign in favor of Cutler because as a Russian Jew he might be better able to restore harmony to the Jewish Board for Welfare Work.<sup>29</sup> As Adler himself noted in his autobiography: "I thought this was the proper thing to do because Cutler had some military experience . . . and he represented what was undoubtedly the largest element of our boys in the army."<sup>30</sup>

The agency, renamed the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB), underwent two reorganizations in the next nine months in an apparent effort to satisfy the Jewish secular and non-secular groups it represented. Cutler, however, rode out the storm and retained his chairmanship. On August 8, 1917 Cutler led a delegation from the JWB to a conference with the secretaries of the Navy and War in Washington, D.C. The officials assured Cutler that Jewish servicemen at home and abroad would have adequate facilities for religious services and social events, enough furlough time for the high holy days, and Jewish chaplains in the near future.<sup>31</sup>

On a request that the government recognize the JWB as the official agency for Jewish welfare work in the military sector the officials remained temporarily uncommitted.<sup>32</sup> Cutler, however, persisted in his quest for official recognition. Throughout 1918 additional responsibilities were shifted to the agency, with official formal recognition coming in November. From now on, the JWB exercised complete hegemony in the field of military welfare services. This was a major accomplishment for a national Jewish organization, and much of the credit belonged to Colonel Harry Cutler.<sup>33</sup>

The success of Cutler's activities within the JWB did not go without notice. The American Jewish Congress, the major opponent of the American Jewish Committee, had embraced pro-Zionism at its founding in 1915 and renewed its efforts for Jewish self-determination throughout the world after America's entry into the war. Although Cutler had been involved in the Zionist movement since 1914 and had been named to the executive committee of the Zionist Organization of America in 1916, he was not an active member of the congress until he was named to represent Rhode Island at the May 1917 meeting of the organization. There, the delegates adopted a comprehensive pro-Zionist platform.<sup>34</sup> When the American Jewish Congress held another convention in Philadelphia in the following year, Cutler was the natural choice once again to head Rhode Island's Jewish delegation. The chief concern of the delegates was to formulate a bill of rights for minorities and to elect a delegation to represent

American Jews to present it at the Paris Peace Conference. Among the nine men elected, only Cutler and Louis Marshall had served on the American Jewish Committee; Julian W. Mack, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Jacob De Haas, Rabbi B. L. Levinthal, Nahum Syrkin, Joseph Barondess, and Morris Weinchevsky represented a cross section of the American Jewish community.<sup>35</sup>

Undoubtedly, this was one of the high points of Cutler's career. As one of nine spokesmen for the 3.5 million Jews in the United States and indirectly over 14 million Jews in the world, Cutler felt proud that he was able to span the gap between the assimilationists and traditionalists. Aware of the significance of Cutler's position both the Jews of Rhode Island and state officials honored him at separate banquets in January 1919.<sup>36</sup> Leaving for Europe, Cutler made his mission clear: "We ask that in the treaties to be enacted by the nations of the world there will be included provisions which will give equal rights — political, civil, and religious — to the Jews of all lands."<sup>37</sup>

Cutler attended those sessions of the Paris Peace Conference for which authorized participation for his delegation had been granted. In time, he expressed mixed feelings about the progress made at the conference. Although optimistic on universal Jewish rights and the British trusteeship of Palestine, Cutler was distressed over the outbreak of pogroms in Poland and over the failure of world leaders at Versailles to protest these actions.<sup>38</sup>

When word arrived that his wife had taken seriously ill, Cutler interrupted his work and returned to the United States. The remaining months of 1919 were spent with his ailing wife, making occasional speeches on behalf of Zionism, and working as closely as possible with his organization, the Jewish Welfare Board. On June 17, 1919 Secretary of War Newton D. Baker awarded him the Distinguished Service Cross in an elaborate ceremony in Washington, and Rhode Islanders honored Cutler with a reception at the Strand Theatre.<sup>39</sup> He accepted these and other honors on "behalf of my helpmate, who is making the sacrifice and has been making it in order that I may be a servant of the people."<sup>40</sup> Colonel Harry Cutler's helpmate, wife Ida, died on February 2, 1920 at the age of forty.

Cutler grieved deeply at his loss, and this undoubtedly contributed to the minor stroke shortly afterward that limited his activities for several months. Nevertheless, when Secretary of War Baker asked him officially to represent the JWB on the new War Memorials Commission, Cutler accepted.<sup>41</sup> While in Paris, Cutler had traveled through the French countryside to inspect United States military cemeteries. Improper identification and markings on Jewish graves troubled him and his new appointment gave him the opportunity properly to honor the Jewish soldiers buried in Europe.<sup>42</sup> One

of the responsibilities of the War Memorials Commission was to develop a plan to concentrate all the American dead in a few large cemeteries in Europe. Despite the warnings of his personal physician, Dr. William F. Flanagan, Cutler volunteered to conduct on-site inspections for possible cemetery locations in both France and Belgium and sailed for Europe with Dr. Flanagan on August 12, 1920.<sup>43</sup> Less than a week after arriving in London, Cutler suffered another stroke and died on August 28, 1920.

Cutler's body arrived sixteen days later in New York City. A full military honor guard escorted the body on the train to Providence, where it was immediately taken to Temple Beth-El to lie in state for twenty-four hours before the funeral.<sup>44</sup> Rabbi Samuel M. Gup of Beth-El spoke eloquently in praising the life and in mourning the death of Harry Cutler, and Dr. Henry Englander, a close friend of the deceased, and former Rabbi of Beth-El, began his eulogy with the words of King David — "Know ye not that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"<sup>45</sup>

Whether Harry Cutler truly deserved the accolade of "great man" is questionable. What is far more certain is that Cutler's achievements and contributions to his people, his community, and his nation went beyond the expectations of Judaic service to community. He had realized his boyhood dreams of individual freedom, social equality, and economic security only as a citizen of the United States. This overwhelmed him, as it did so many other prosperous Jews, with a sense of patriotic duty and obligation to his new country. "My activities," he once remarked, [are] "simply an attempt to pay back a little of the debt I owe to the United States." While this commitment was certainly a guiding force, so too, was his sense of obligation to his fellow Jews, be they in the United States or in other parts of the world. Thus he immersed himself in the fight against immigration restriction, relief for Russian Jews suffering through pogroms and war, relief for Jewish soldiers and proper identification of the Jewish dead, and the cause of Zionism. In all of these endeavors, Cutler was overshadowed by Louis Brandeis, Louis Marshall, Jacob H. Schiff, Oscar Straus, and many other Jewish luminaries. Nevertheless, Cutler was perhaps better equipped by virtue of his personal experiences as a Russian Jew to bridge the gap between assimilationists and traditionalists. His life might represent an answer to the dilemma faced by some American Jews: how to express loyalty to America while at the same time retain ties to their heritage — of *Eretz Israel*, the land of Israel. Additionally, Harry Cutler truly emerged as the most notable Rhode Island Jew among national Jewish circles between 1905 and 1920.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>This poem was written by Marion L. Misch in honor of Harry Cutler on January 5, 1919. Original in Temple Beth-El Archives, Providence, R.I.
- <sup>2</sup>"Harry Cutler," *Providence Journal*, August 29, 1920.
- <sup>3</sup>*Boston Jewish Advocate*, September 16, 1920.
- <sup>4</sup>*Providence Journal*, March 7, 1921.
- <sup>5</sup>See, *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, vol. 2: 104-107, 194-207; vol. 3: 162-163; vol. 5: 148-152; vol. 6: 50-51, 130-135; vol. 7: 362-363, and individual mention on many other pages.
- <sup>6</sup>"Office Boy Who Made Good," *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 6, 1913.
- <sup>7</sup>*The Manufacturing Jeweler*, 41 (October 1907), 664, 666.
- <sup>8</sup>Beryl Segal, "The Year 1905 in Rhode Island," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 5 (November 1968), 147-148.
- <sup>9</sup>Beryl Segal, "The General Jewish Committee — The First Quarter Century, 1945-1970," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 6 (November 1971), 7.
- <sup>10</sup>David C. Adelman, "Gemilath Chesed: Hebrew Free Loan Association of Providence," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 1 (December 1954), 129-133.
- <sup>11</sup>*Fiftieth Anniversary Observance of the American Jewish Committee, April 10-14, 1957* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1958), 295.
- <sup>12</sup>Rhode Island, House of Representative Reference File, Legislative Bill Reference Drawer, 1909. Resolution H179.
- <sup>13</sup>U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *House Reports*, 1 (62nd Cong., 2nd sess.), 1911-1912.
- <sup>14</sup>Cyrus Adler, *I Have Considered The Days* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941), 293-294.
- <sup>15</sup>U.S. Congress, Senate, *Senate Documents*, 85 (61st Cong., 3rd sess.), 1910-1911, SD 839.
- <sup>16</sup>Adler, *I Have Considered The Days*, 294.
- <sup>17</sup>Letter cited in Charles Reznikoff, ed., *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty. Selected Papers and Addresses* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), vol. 1, 119-121.
- <sup>18</sup>*Providence Journal*, October 27, 1911, and November 2, 1912.
- <sup>19</sup>Legislative Bill Reference Drawer, 1911. Resolution H180.
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 1910. Resolutions H23 and H52.
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 1911. Resolution H139.
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 1910. Resolution H28. The portrait is hanging in the governor's reception chamber of the Rhode Island State House.
- <sup>23</sup>*Providence Journal*, July 15, 1911.
- <sup>24</sup>See, Morris Engelman, *Four Years of Relief and War Work by the Jews of America, 1914-1918* (New York, 1918).
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 9-11.
- <sup>26</sup>Oscar I. Janowsky, *The JWB Survey* (New York: The Dial Press, 1948), 47-49.
- <sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.
- <sup>28</sup>*Providence Journal*, May 10, 1917.
- <sup>29</sup>Janowsky, *The JWB Survey*, 49.
- <sup>30</sup>Adler, *I Have Considered The Days*, 301.
- <sup>31</sup>*Providence Journal*, August 10, 1917.
- <sup>32</sup>At this conference Cutler introduced items not on the agenda. For example, he suggested to the military secretaries that the United States dispatch troops to the Eastern Front to fight "shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of the newest democracy . . ." Also, that American soldiers of Russian background "would cheerfully go to fight for the land of their nativity, while simultaneously fighting for the land of their adoption . . ." *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup>Janowsky, *The JWB Survey*, 52-53.

<sup>34</sup>*Providence Journal*, May 16, 1917.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, December 19, 1918.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, January 6, 1919.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, February 14, 1919.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, June 3, 1919.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, June 23, 1919. Cutler also received the French Medal of Honor on October 3, 1919.

Both medals with citations are in the Harry Cutler folder, Temple Beth-El Archives, Providence, R.I.

<sup>40</sup>*Providence Journal*, January 6, 1919.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, May 28, 1920.

<sup>42</sup>"Jewish Interests in Army and Peace Terms," *Providence Sunday Journal*, April 20, 1919.

<sup>43</sup>*Providence Journal*, June 12, and August 10, 1920.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, September 13, 1920.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, September 17, 1920.

ORGANIZED IMPULSES OF RESISTANCE AND  
ASSIMILATION WITHIN THE PROVIDENCE  
JEWISH COMMUNITY, 1880-1921

BY PATRICK JANSON

Even as the 19th century's final two decades turned, a new stream of Jewish immigration poured across the Atlantic and into the United States. Ushering in a new century as well, this tide of hopefuls became more a flood than a trickle. Fleeing homeland civil disorder as well as social and economic hardships, the largest segment of these "new" immigrants journeyed to this country from Eastern Europe, particularly Russia, Poland and the Slavic regions. Escaping Russia's bloody pogroms of 1881-82, some 10,429 Jews set foot upon American shores during the period's initial years. Still other volatile socio-economic forces prompted the migration of an additional 107,710 Jews in 1892 from the Russian Pale alone, and just five years earlier thousands of Romanian Jews had fled persecution to seek a more tolerant climate in America. Yet another outburst of anti-Semitic violence in Russia, culminating in the 1903 Kishinev massacre, sparked further immigration. By 1920 more than four million Jews had swelled the nation's population.<sup>1</sup>

Mostly youthful and relatively poor, the earliest arrivals were often unskilled in trade or craft; others new but modest merchant professions. Hence, the initial Eastern European Jewish current reaching American shores offered little to industrial America beyond a pool of cheap, blue-collar labor. The majority of Jewish arrivals — atypical of some earlier immigration patterns — journeyed as family units rather than individuals seeking prosperity. Most came to stay. Certainly all were different — these Eastern Europeans — quite unlike any preceeding immigrant group traveling to America. Carried with them was a culture wholly alien to their new hosts, largely based upon the unique Yiddish language and *shtetl* traditions. Moreover, these European outcasts resembled no western races.

hence they met near immediate resistance in their new land from those who scorned even their mere appearance. Often clad in long, tattered coats, odd-looking hats, and sporting “untamed beards,” these Jewish immigrants at best were a curiosity to most Gilded Age Americans. At worst, they were perceived as threats to idealized Anglo-Saxon, western society. Even their religious brethren of Germanic origins — who had themselves arrived but a generation before — did not readily accept these destitute people; through their “backward” ways and strange appearances the East European Jews proved an embarrassment to their already assimilated German counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

The greatest swell of new immigrants swept onto East Coast shores, and numerous ethnic communities sprang to life in the East’s urban industrial centers where low-paying jobs and cheap housing might be secured. This trend was especially pronounced during the years spanning 1899-1910, when 86 percent of all Jewish immigrants settled in the North Atlantic states.<sup>3</sup> Among the cities receiving a sizeable number of displaced Jews was Providence, which witnessed the growth of two modest but viable ethnic enclaves: one contained within the city’s North End triangle, the other southward off Elmwood Avenue.<sup>4</sup>

More dynamic social pressures faced these new immigrants as the centuries turned, most prompted by vocal nativists whose racist sentiments generated a strong pulse that beat consistently across the nation for a number of years. Combined with other social and economic externalities, such impulses created a formidable American hurdle for most urban Jewish communities. Language barriers hampered Jews in all intra-ethnic circumstances, employment of any significance — even for qualified workers — was difficult to attain, and basic problems in assimilation presented the Jews with a serious dichotomy as they struggled both to “fit in” to the larger society and maintain their cultural heritage as well.<sup>5</sup> While such pressures weighing upon Jews in larger ethnic ghettos set in cities like New York were not, perhaps, as pronounced in smaller urban areas like Providence, New England’s new residents were hardly free from these forces.

While evidence suggesting overt local discrimination is slight, prevailing national impulses — coupled with the Jews’ own recent history — served to unite Providence Jews into a relatively cohesive ethnic community. Rising from this unified homogeneity were various and diverse mutual assistance organizations and societies founded upon fraternal and charitable impulses. These groups gained impetus as a means of fostering ethnic security, primarily mirroring — like the larger ethnic community — traditional family life and the responsibilities inherent within Eastern European Jewish tribalism.<sup>6</sup>

During these formative years, the local Jewish community was largely comprised of *folksmasn* — “ordinary” or common Jews deeply mired in family and cultural traditions that extended to the greater community. Echoing the sense of mutual obligation developed in their homeland, *shtetl* experience, these people placed community responsibility above individual concerns. Hence, in the throes of America’s difficult social and economic realities during the 19th century’s concluding decade — and partly as an attempt to slow acculturation — several mutual assistance societies emerged as a natural step in the development of Providence’s Jewish enclaves.<sup>7</sup>

Among the first mutual aid, or benevolent, societies appearing in Providence was the Ladies Mutual Assistance Association, organized as early as 1880 for the express purpose of promoting mutual benefit and charity in the Jewish community. The subsequent surge of Jews to Providence was later reflected in the sudden emergence of four additional organizations of similar intent during the years 1887-1890: the Young Mens Mutual Assistance Association, the Providence Hebrew Assisting Association, Moses Montefiore Association, and the Ladies Hebrew Union Aid Association. Chartered by the Rhode Island General Assembly, all professed to offer assistance or “mutual benefit” while engaging in charitable activities directed toward the community’s less fortunate.<sup>8</sup>

Jewish immigration to the United States peaked during the 1890s, with more diverse elements landing in New York to disperse along the eastern coast. This influx, which particularly influenced the make-up and character of Providence’s ethnics, was generally comprised of people possessing more advanced cultural and educational backgrounds. Members of Europe’s “Jewish intelligentsia,” these newcomers had been especially active in political and religious movements across the ocean. Further, greater numbers of more skilled workers entered the country at the outset of the 20th century,<sup>9</sup> and the influence of these newly arrived elite soon was felt within the local Jewish community.

Promoting increased political awareness, as well as displaying a determination to secure better jobs, these active, better educated Jews likely accounted for the dramatic increase in Jewish naturalization. During the decade 1881-1890, only 84 Jews were naturalized in Providence; however, 1,328 Jews received American citizenship in the decade immediately following. These figures also mirror the community’s steady population growth over this latter period. Still, the rates of naturalization seem even more striking when viewed as a percentage of Providence’s total Jewish population, which by 1900 stood at 1,996. Hence, fully 66.6 percent of the region’s Jewish community was naturalized during the 1890s, corresponding with the arrival of the educated, politically-oriented “intelligentsia.”<sup>10</sup>

This is a critical factor in further examining the development of subsequent local Jewish institutions intended both to ease assimilation and, in some respects, to foster an intrinsic resistance to cultural erosion. As the local ethnic community expanded, so, too, did the General Assembly's list of petitioning organizations seeking state charters. Bouyed by the new arrivals, the breadth of such societies broadened as well. While assistance groups continued to emerge in response to community needs, another trend clearly developed wherein the nature of chartered Jewish organizations in Providence began to undergo a slow but steady transformation.

Increasingly, Jewish organizations reflected Providence's altered makeup and shifting priorities within the ethnic enclaves as labor-oriented societies, literary groups, and cultural-based organizations became more prevalent. Naturally the worker-oriented groups emerged in response to the influx of local Jews into the area's workforce, which maintained its essentially blue-collar character. However, as skilled labor permeated the Providence community, artisan-related societies followed as well, these somewhat patterned themselves after old craft guilds. In 1894 the Rhode Island Shoe Makers Aid Association organized to provide aid for its artisan members; the Cooperative Union of Cigar Makers followed in 1896, focusing upon the promotion of the social and commercial interests of its respective skilled members.

Growing cultural diversity indeed was apparent, also, for many societies were formed with the express purpose of forwarding social and literary impulses in the Jewish community. The Hebrew Dramatic Club (1895), the Young Men's Hebrew Association (1898), and the Oxford Club (1901) all appeared in Providence and were fairly typical of the Jewish enclaves' fraternal inclinations. Several women's groups emerged as well, perhaps following the example of the National Council of Jewish Women which organized in 1893 to encourage social service. A wide array of such societies occupied local Jewish women, including the Ladies Friendship Lodge (1897), the Providence Charitable Society (1904), and the South Providence Ladies Aid Association (1908).<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, while noting some deviation, most women's groups continued to organize along charitable lines and did not display the diversity of men's groups, perhaps indicating the altered persuasion of the community's male laborers and leaders.

Simultaneously, economic advancement and community well-being did continue as a prevailing, if altered, theme and the promotion of business steadily gained increased emphasis. The South Providence Enterprising Association (1899) and the Workingman's Money Saving Association (1896) were organizations launched to promote and encourage thrift and investment among members. Also, along with organizations like the United

Hebrew Assisting Association (1907), these groups reflected the urge to forward the cause of aspiring businessmen in need of guidance and modest financing. Closely allied to this impulse was the Gemiloth Chasodin — or Hebrew Free Loan Association — chartered in 1903. This benevolent organization dispersed interest-free loans to needy local Jews desiring to “earn an honest living without recourse to charity.” While not specifically concerned with easing the path toward enterprise, this important Providence-based association assisted many Jews in initially establishing themselves in the city, enabling them to retain their dignity and look to the future without seeking direct charity.<sup>12</sup>

The incidence of labor-related organizations grew markedly, then, with the arrival of skilled workers to Providence. While only five such organizations existed locally in 1903, ten others were chartered between 1906 and 1915. This also reflects the increasing presence of Jews in the workforce, representing various occupations, suggesting perhaps that a diverse economic foothold was gained rather early.

Culturally spawned groups displayed steady growth as well, particularly those associations seeking to preserve traditional values. Only two organizations of this mold served local Jews in 1903, but this number increased five-fold during the ensuing twelve years. The Agidath Achin, chartered in 1904, is but one ready illustration of this impulse; the Workman of Zion (1904) is yet another union which proposed advancing Jewish cultural awareness, largely through Hebrew education. Clearly a variety of Jewish institutions and organizations emerged during this period in response to internal and external pressures. Moreover, the distinction is easily drawn, for the most part, between those groups seeking to ease and assist the assimilation process and those, conversely, desiring to slow acculturation.

Equally contrasting was the area’s most significant trend, if not the most numerically dramatic. This was the eventual evolution of societies focusing upon politics, Zionism and education. These elements grew critical to the pervasive issues of assimilation, community survival, and the volatile question of unrestricted immigration to the United States in general. These organizations likely were derived from the local Jewish community’s strong determination to respond with verve to both local and national pressures.

Although Jews venturing to Providence by the century’s turn seemed to integrate a broad cultural milieu in the local ethnic community, they were faced with the problems related to pluralism in that they, like their brothers elsewhere in America, clung to their traditional culture while also attempting to penetrate American society.<sup>13</sup> The need to “fit in” was especially pronounced in the realms of economics and politics which became

the effective battlegrounds of assimilation. As such, it was difficult for Jews to fully retain their true cultural identity, particularly among the second generation as it slowly but certainly compromised some elements of its heritage to become more "Americanized." This caused much consternation among the more rigid traditionalists in the local Jewish community. Many of the later arrivals to America bore an acute awareness of Jewish consciousness, and this became commonly reflected in Zionist tenets.<sup>14</sup> Hence, largely in reaction to evident acculturation, organizations such as the Patriots of Zion Chonevey Zion I of Providence (1901), the South Providence Hebrew School (1911), and the Providence Hebrew Institute (1907) appeared and worked with other local religious associations to propagate the eroding Jewish ethos. These attempts at education were intended to serve as vehicles for the continued transmission of Jewish values, history and traditions to subsequent generations, even as they integrated into the larger society.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, education in general was to play a larger, more important role for Jews, national and local. In particular, programs emerged and groups organized to promote literacy in English. A heightened awareness of the American political process quickly became crucial to Jewish communities the land over, and Providence was no exception.

Between 1890 and 1904 only one organization — the Wendell Phillips Educational Club — was chartered specifically to promote education and assimilation in the capital city. However, from 1905 to 1919, a consistent pattern developed wherein twelve such groups formed in Providence, with the largest incidence of growth occurring in 1910. Among these were the Twenty-third District Republican Club and the Hebrew American Club, ostensibly chartered to "promote better citizenship," among other principles.<sup>16</sup> Hence, rather than organizing to resist the power of the assimilationists, by the century's first decade Providence Jews were in several instances instead striving to instill themselves into society's mainstream.

Although still clinging to their inherent sense of ethnicity, local Jews had nonetheless realized at least the modest fruits of their new environs and desired a larger harvest. Slow economic advancement eventually gave way to more consistent progress, with merchants and a scattering of professionals more readily emerging from the community. Moreover, as the local Jewish population base expanded, so, too, did the number of skilled workers: after 1900, nearly 70 percent of all local Jewish workers were skilled. Occupational diversity also followed, with peddlers, jewelry workers and assorted independent craftsmen growing numerous.<sup>17</sup> However, despite these evident gains — and the increased efforts toward naturalization — the

nation's Jews on the whole continued to be subjected to harsh nativist attacks.

As a growing nationalism swept the country at century's turn, racially-motivated invectives echoed about Washington's congressional halls. While much of the anti-Semitic sentiment remained based upon ages-old and tired stereotypical views of Jews as greedy and immoral people, most of the new prejudicial current was sparked by continued Jewish immigration and the striking pattern of swift upward Jewish mobility. The nationwide emergence of a new Jewish middle-class, sprinkled with clothing manufacturers, real-estate speculators, and a variety of other ascending businessmen, while not entirely typical, transcended accepted barriers established in and around the ethnic ghettos. Born of this trend was a native resentment of Jewish dynamism and ability, which also spawned a creeping xenophobia of irrational proportions. As this "ethnocentric aversion" spread, doors that had at last been opening to Jews were suddenly slammed shut. Excluded from social and business clubs, private schools and resort areas, Jews also found themselves falling victim to a tightening employment market where white collar jobs were commonly withheld from qualified individuals. While this heightened social and economic discrimination was not restricted to Jews alone, these were the people who appeared to bear the brunt of racial resentment, even as they struggled finally to escape the bondage of the textile machines and the peddler's cart.<sup>18</sup>

From 1905 to 1915 revived nativist sentiments reflected a volatility rivaling the 1890s furor. Hence, even during the reform-minded progressive era, racist-motivated legislators strove to frame new legislation in Congress intended to implement restrictive immigration policies. A particularly strong effort was forwarded in 1906, with literacy laws much the heart of the legislative movement.

Viewing mounting immigration as a threat, to so-called racial purity — as well as a potential political lever — racist groups like New England's decade-old Immigration Restriction League became particularly vital in spreading anti-immigration propaganda during the period of 1905-1906, with Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge a key sympathizer. Related propaganda was personified by odious literary efforts emanating from several popular and respected periodicals of the time, which continued to hurl their poisonous barbs through the First World War. Kenneth Roberts, writing in the *Saturday Evening Post*, decried immigration as a factor threatening to "engulf" the white race. Roberts referred directly to Polish Jews as "human parasites" and loudly clamored with other vocal restrictionists for a halt to immigration. Madison Grant, in his book *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), targeted the influx of Polish Jews to New York, contending that race was the "detriment of civilization and that only

the Aryans had built great cultures.” No more a respected figure than historian Henry Adams, of Boston’s great patrician family, took to spreading this curious venom; he perceived Jews as the embodiment of capitalism’s ills and expressed a desire to “put every money-lender to death.”<sup>19</sup>

Organized labor joined the chorus, with the nativist-oriented American Federation of Labor (AFL) lobbying actively for restriction and literacy tests. Naturally labor viewed the immigrant as competition for jobs, and unions long schemed to thwart the continued infusion of foreign elements into the American labor market. Amid such cumulative pressures, restrictive legislation was narrowly defeated in 1906, but the message was clear: Anglo-Saxon nativism was taking root nationally and Jews across the country should be concerned.<sup>20</sup>

Members of the local Jewish community recognized the need to respond to such palpable acts of discrimination as did their brethren elsewhere. While nativist barriers were not so visible in New England as in other regions, the threatening posture confronting Jews could not be ignored. In Providence, the North End Political Club (1906) was among the first organized responses. Established to strengthen the Jews’ minority-status political foundation, the society sought to mold greater cohesion within the local community and electorate while protecting people’s “equal rights . . . in their enjoyment of citizenship.” Hence, in attempting to secure their social, economic and political status from external forces, local Jews adopted traditional democratic methods to bridge ethnic gaps, encourage voter participation and awareness, and provide the additional education needed to assure their future. There existed power in unity and concerted efforts.<sup>21</sup>

A small but active Socialist party was founded in South Providence during this period by Joseph Shore and Jacob Lavlow, but this political impulse achieved little.<sup>22</sup> Most local Jews genuinely preferred to respond not through overt patterns of resistance but, instead, by attempting to work within the traditional political system. The United Hebrew Citizens of Rhode Island (1905) and the Samuel H. Zucker Hebrew Educational Association (1914) followed over an extended period with intentions similar to those professed by the United Hebrew Citizens: to promote assimilation and political participation by qualifying “men of the Hebrew faith in the highest duties of citizenship . . . .” Combined with the Twenty-third District Republican Association and the North End Political Club, such organizations served as effective conduits through which a broader flow of education might be achieved and eventual political benefits could also be accrued. Not only was political awareness fostered through participation in the programs of these groups, but a keener sense of patriotism and a thrust toward naturalization, registration and voting also were promoted.

Interestingly, a glance at the names of charter members of these organizations provides a kaleidoscopic image of the local Jewish community's activists, with all manner of occupations represented. Tailors, jewelers, peddlers, merchants, attorneys, janitors, grocers, clerks and physicians all united to forward their common cause.<sup>23</sup>

Federal legislation directed at devising literacy tests hit closest to home since at least 19.8 percent of the the 5,652 Russian Jews residing in and about Providence in 1905 were classified illiterates. In wards exhibiting the greatest concentration of Jews (Ward 3 in particular), the second highest degree of illiteracy was also found, exceeded only by Ward 9 which contained the city's heaviest concentration of foreign-born Italians.<sup>24</sup> Had the literacy requirements been in effect at the time these people emigrated, few would have found access into the country. As reflected by Ward 9 configurations, the question affected ethnics other than Jews. So long as America remained weary of its asylum role, literacy tests and all other restrictive legislation forwarded by immigration foes posed a serious threat to continued immigration. Not surprisingly, such legislation would affect family and friends of already established Providence ethnics, especially Jews who displayed a protracted inclination toward immigration well into the twentieth century.

Since little of significant measure could be effected to frustrate social ostracism, Jews — as previously demonstrated — sought to work on their own behalf in the more critical arena of American politics. There, at least some recourse might be initiated to counter potentially pernicious discriminatory legislation at the state and national levels. The supplemental education and information provided by the various political and educational societies gave impetus to Providence Jews to penetrate political circles. Their entrance into politics was often easier than gaining employment, since urban political machines, anxious to accumulate votes in exchange for favors and patronage, were generally willing to embrace Jewish activists seeking to carve out their own niche within the system. Most political bosses reasoned that, like it or not, these new immigrant-citizens would in time represent an influential segment of the electorate; therefore, both major parties, whether in Providence or New York, admitted Jews to their ranks, albeit to modest, inconsequential positions at first.<sup>25</sup>

Locally, most politically active members of the Jewish community sought to profess loyalty to that party which appeared to best serve particular needs and interests; hence, ethnicity bridged party gaps. Issac Hahn, the first Jew elected to public office in Rhode Island, was a local manufacturer who found Republican policies favorable; his son, Jerome, later served as the state's first judge of Jewish origins. Also loyal to the Republican standard was Third Ward representative Jacob Eaton, a Romanian Jew naturalized



J. Jerome Hahn

J. Jerome Hahn (1868-1938), b. Albany, N.Y., moved to Providence in 1870, attended public schools; B.A. and law degree (1889) from Boston University. Second Jew to pass Rhode Island bar examination, Hahn became Associate Justice of Superior Court in 1919 and an Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, 1931-1935. He was an Honorary President of Temple Beth-El.

in 1899. He was a significant component of local patronage systems controlled by political strongman Charles Brayton. Eaton, much involved with Providence's Jewish organizations, sat eleven years in the General Assembly, served on several state committees, and was selected Rhode Island's first State Jury Commissioner in 1918. A prominent figure for North End Jews, Eaton was counted on by local Republicans to "deliver the vote" each election day.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, Eaton counted as his allies Rhode Island political luminaries like United States Senator LeBaron Colt and Governor Emery J. SanSouci.<sup>27</sup>

Emerging from local political tidepools, and inspired by early leaders like Hahn and Eaton, a solid core of Jewish political figures rose within the city's political mechanisms to serve their community. Rivals or allies, men like Issac Moses, Harry Bachrach, Phillip Joslin and George Helford all achieved some prominence in local party politics. Moses eventually became the first Jewish state senator in 1930, a Democrat serving the North End's Second District.<sup>28</sup>

This injection of Jewish political influences into the mainstream should not be overlooked, for by 1905 the Providence Jewish community did comprise a sizeable portion of the local electorate (though by no means in a position of power). Although Jews represented but approximately 3.8 percent of the city's total population, a thick ethnic concentration in particular wards allowed Jews to at least wield some political clout in city-wide elections. For example, in Eaton's Third Ward, Jews of Polish, Russian and Slavic origins constituted 12.8 percent of the population in 1905; coupled with a viable Italian population, the immigrant presence in that ward soars to a meaningful 27.9 percent — a sufficiently large ethnic bloc capable of influencing any election.<sup>29</sup> While not so pronounced elsewhere as in the Third Ward, it is clear that the expanding Jewish community, bolstered by other ethnic elements, was gaining political currency during this critical period.

Local political influence, while initially modest, was enveloped by a more significant aura emanating from national impulses. Generally, the nation's Jews were traditionally strongest politically in the urban Northeast during the new century's first two decades, if only because Eastern European Jews constituted such a swelling portion of the electorate. In the ensuing struggle over literacy tests and immigration restriction, then, it is scarcely surprising that the most potent and unified opposition to such measures was generated by urban-North representatives, despite the influence of virulent Brahmin Yankees like Lodge. Consequently, with marginal House of Representatives support, enough pressure was brought to prompt President William Howard Taft's 1912 veto of a Senate proposed anti-immigration bill. Heavy

Jewish pressure thwarted yet another such effort two years later, with the American Jewish Committee undoubtedly receiving support from sympathetic senators like LeBaron Colt. President Woodrow Wilson also vetoed a similar bill in February, 1915.<sup>30</sup>

To the chagrin of local and national Jews, as well as other ethnic groups, legislation restricting the flow of immigration into the United States was finally enacted in 1917 and strengthened in May 1921, with the establishment of illiteracy clauses and a quota system the foremost features. Hence, American nativism, aided by the resistance to post-World War I tide of renewed immigration to this country, culminated in the enactment of the nation's first quantitative restrictions. Still, this development need not necessarily be viewed as being reflective of eroding Jewish influences or activities. Rather, the success of anti-immigration forces is best tied to the nation's post-war disillusionment and, significantly, the natural maturation and consolidation of second and third generation ethnics as they more securely found their place within the larger American society. This consolidation was also reflected within the structure of Providence Jewry.

By 1916 the incidence of new Jewish organizations chartered solely for beneficial and mutual aid purposes in Providence had diminished markedly. In their place were more literary, social, trade and professional organizations concerned with projecting local Jews into more prominent social and economic roles within society. The South Providence Junk Peddlers' Protective Union (1916), the Keystone Athletic Club (1916), the Star Social and Literary Association (1917), and the People's Forum (1917) typified the Jews' new endeavors to forge ahead rather than maintain the status quo. Resistance to external impulses like immigration restriction, while still common, lessened as did the need for certain specific Jewish organizations of earlier origin, thus mirroring the pronounced incidence of Jewish integration into American society.<sup>31</sup> The level of maturation and assimilation achieved illustrates the effectiveness of the community's diverse organizations and societies in helping Providence Jews internalize the demands of patriotism and citizenship, while concurrently adhering to the history and traditions of their forefathers. The emerging cultural pluralism made it possible for Jews to penetrate every sector of activity within Providence, and within each make substantial contributions.\*

\*For a similar conclusion, although approached from a different perspective and environment, see the condensed version of Lawrence H. Fuch's lecture elsewhere in this volume. Ed.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 60-61; Maldwyn A. Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 201-202; Samuel Joseph, *Jewish Immigration to the United States* (New York: Arno Press reprint edition, 1969), 43, 99, 109; Judith E. Smith, "Our Own Kind: Family and Community Networks," *Radical History Review*, 17 (Spring 1978), 99-103; Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans: Three Generations in a Jewish Community* (Englewood Cliffe, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), 34.
- <sup>2</sup>John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New York: Atheneum reprint edition, 1973), 66, 160; Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 51, 55-56; Brian Kempner, "Jewish Immigration into Providence: A Comparison of the Settlement of the Soviet Jews, 1970-1982, with that of Russian Jews, 1881-1924," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 9 (November 1983), 13.
- <sup>3</sup>Joseph, *Jewish Immigration*, 149.
- <sup>4</sup>This triangle is, roughly, a geographic delineation framed by Orms, Chalkstone and North Main streets. By 1906 the Providence Jewish community was overwhelmingly Eastern European in character, with 72.9 percent of Russian origin. Sidney Goldstein, *The Greater Providence Jewish Community: A Population Survey* (Providence: The General Jewish Committee of Providence, Inc., 1964), 11.
- <sup>5</sup>Maxine Sellers, *To Seek America* (Englewood, California: Jerome S. Ozer, 1977), 164; Goldstein and Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans*, 27.
- <sup>6</sup>Smith, "Our Own Kind," 106-107, 110-111.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 110-111; Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 11; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 65.
- <sup>8</sup>From 1885 to 1900 the Providence Jewish community grew from an estimated 250 to 1,607 residents. Sidney Goldstein, "The Greater Providence Jewish Community after 25 Years of Development," *Rhode Island History*, 25 (April 1966), 51-52; "Chartered Organizations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 2 (May 1956), 21-84.
- <sup>9</sup>By 1914 nearly two million Jews had arrived in the United States, most falling within the age range of 14-44. Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 5-6, 27, 55, 60-61; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 37-38.
- <sup>10</sup>Statistics extracted from the following sources: Alice Goldstein's Rhode Island state census work as reported in "Mobility of Providence Jews," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 8 (November 1978), 62-93; Marvin Pitterman, "Some Casual Observations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 3 (November 1958), 46-47.
- <sup>11</sup>"Chartered Organizations," 21-34; Lois Banner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 102.
- <sup>12</sup>"Chartered Organizations," 21-84; Benton H. Rosen, "The Gemiloth Chasodin of Rhode Island: The Hebrew Free Loan Association," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 5 (November 1969), 275-288; Pitterman, "Some Casual Observations," 98-108.
- <sup>13</sup>Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 128.
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 61; S. Goldstein, "The Greater Providence Jewish Community," 51-52.
- <sup>15</sup>Efraim Inbar, "The Hebrew Day Schools — The Orthodox Communal Challenge," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 7 (Spring 1979), 13.
- <sup>16</sup>Goldstein and Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans*, 25, 77-78.
- <sup>17</sup>S. Goldstein, *The Greater Providence Jewish Community*, 11; see also *Rhode Island Bureau of Industrial Statistics: Advance Sheets of the 1905 Rhode Island State Census* (Providence: E.L. Freeman, 1907), Part 4, Table III, 176-196.
- <sup>18</sup>Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 160-162; Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 405-406, 423.
- <sup>19</sup>Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 158; William E. Leuchtenberg, *Perils of Prosperity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 206-207; Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 53, 406.

- <sup>20</sup>Also organized were various national fraternal orders, like the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, which was originally chartered in the 1870s as an anti-Catholic group. See Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 163, 173-174.
- <sup>21</sup>"Chartered Organizations," 21-84; S. Goldstein, *The Greater Providence Jewish Community*, 12.
- <sup>22</sup>Eleanor F. Horvitz, "Old Bottles, Rags, Junk! The Story of the Jews of South Providence," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 7 (November 1976), 238.
- <sup>23</sup>"Chartered Organizations," 21-84.
- <sup>24</sup>The Rhode Island State Census of 1905 lists 7,974 Providence Jews, some 71 percent being of Russian origin. Of these, ages 15-50, 1,118 Russian Jews were listed as illiterate in 1895. Given the steady influx of immigrants, even with the changing character of post-1900 arrivals, it is unlikely that this number decreased. Moreover, figures from the Bureau of Industrial Statistics indicate a still sizeable portion of both Jewish and Italian immigrants as being functionally illiterate at the time of the 1905 state census. Henry E. Tiepke, comp., *Census of Rhode Island, 1895* (Providence: E.L. Freeman, 1898), 276, 328-340; *Rhode Island Bureau of Industrial Statistics*, Part 4, 260-265.
- <sup>25</sup>For a sound and cogent examination of the Jewish entrance into the American political system see Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 371-404; also see Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956).
- <sup>26</sup>Erwin Strasmich, "Issac Hahn — Pioneer Jewish Textile Manufacturer," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 6 (November 1972), 308; Melvin L. Zurier, "Jacob Eaton: A Biographical Note," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 5 (November 1965), 289-295.
- <sup>27</sup>Unpublished materials maintained in the archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, including political leaflets and personal papers.
- <sup>28</sup>Melvin L. Zurier, "Issac Moses: A Colorful Figure," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 4 (November 1964), 116.
- <sup>29</sup>*Rhode Island Bureau of Industrial Statistics*, Part 4, Table XIV, 228-340.
- <sup>30</sup>Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 191-192.
- <sup>31</sup>S. Goldstein, "The Greater Providence Jewish Community," 52.

## THE JEWS OF NEW ENGLAND: ANYTHING SPECIAL?\*

BY LAWRENCE H. FUCHS, PH.D.

Growing up in the Bronx in the 1930s, I had a parochial New Yorker's view of Jewish life in the United States which was not changed until I entered the U.S. Navy in World War II. I sensed that there was a bustling, dynamic Jewish existence in Chicago, and that there were many Jews in Hollywood, most of whom had come from New York. I was also vaguely aware of a smattering of Jews scattered throughout the rest of the United States, some in Boston, others in Philadelphia, Detroit and places west and south, especially Miami Beach where some Jews went for vacations and retirement.

But Jewish life was for me New York City. Irving Howe has given us a glorious account of the evolution of the vibrant, extraordinary creative variety of Jewish existence there in *The World of Our Fathers*: Yiddish culture, Zionism, Jewish socialism, Jews in politics, Jews in universities, and for a young boy Jews in mainstream American sports and entertainment. New York had become the premiere musical interpreters and expositors of Americana to Americans and the world. George Gershwin had become the most authentic musical genius the United States had produced; Irving Berlin's superpatriotism had been reflected in a half-dozen pop tunes, including "God Bless America;" Jerome Kern had given us *Show Boat* in 1927; and Rogers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* was about to be conceived in January 1940, the month of my bar mitzvah. But of Aaron Copland, Manhattan's quintessential musical interpreter of Americana, we primitives of the Bronx had heard nothing.

Then there was New York West, also known as Hollywood. There Louis B. Mayer, who had moved to Los Angeles in 1918, joined with Marcus Loew

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\*This is a condensed version of the author's lecture before the membership of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association at their Annual Meeting, April 21, 1984, prepared by George H. Kellner, Ed.

and Sam Goldwyn to found MGM. Danny Kaye, John Garfield, Barbara Stanwyck, Paul Muni, Edward G. Robinson, the Marx Brothers, Eddie Cantor, George Burns, and George Jessel made us cry and laugh in film and radio. Each of them adapted Jewish themes in blazing displays of American pastiche.

So where did Boston Jewry fit in? Not in the world that mattered to me most: big-time sports. Hank Greenberg, born and raised in the Bronx, had just won the American League's Most Valuable Player award, and Sid Luckman quarterbacked the Chicago Bears to the first of four National Football League championships. Later, I would learn that another Brooklyn boy, Arnold "Red" Auerbach, had become the most successful coach in basketball history in, of all places, Boston, where the Celtics won the championship nine times during his coaching tenure from 1950 to 1966. But in January of 1940 I still thought that the Boston Celtics were exclusively Irish and that Boston was Irish and Yankee — and certainly not Jewish.

The fact is that one out of every ten Bostonians was Jewish and there were about 100,000 Jews in the Boston metropolitan area. Another fact is that Jews from Boston had already contributed more significant thought — often translated into social action — about the relationship of Jews to American society than had the Jews of New York City or any other community in the United States.

Such thought and action was badly needed in the United States of 1940. In that year, revivalist preachers such as Gerald B. Winrod and Gerald L. K. Smith and the Catholic priest Father Charles E. Coughlin spread hatred for Jews throughout the land. Coughlin preached that the Jews were responsible for the Great Depression, and there probably was no city in which he was more popular than Boston. The Irish Catholics upset the Yankee protestants, who believed Popery meant superstition at best and anti-Christ at worst. The Jews were threatening because beneath their squalor lurked a restless energy searching for wealth and power. The travel writer and illustrator Joseph Pennell, in *The Jew at Home*, published in 1892, warned: "Make him an Englishman or an American, break up his old customs, his clannishness, his dirt and his filth — or he will break you." Geologist Nathaniel Shaler of Harvard wrote that the Jews, like the Aryans, represented a superior people who would not be amenable to succumb to Christian influences. It was better simply to keep them out. Robert A. Woods, the head of the South End Settlement House, was ambivalent about the immigrants he observed in Boston's North and West Ends. Writing in 1903 Woods asserted that "the rise of the Jewish master tailor presents an instructive instance of the evolution of the capitalist. He works endlessly . . . . At first, he makes less than his employees; but perseverance, by quick

perception as to organizing and subdividing the industry into specialties . . . he gradually develops his business . . .” Frederick A. Bushee, a statistician and economist, blamed the Jews for anti-Semitism. Yet, he could also admire their drive for education, and remarked: “Their death rate is remarkably low, and at the same time their birth rate is very high . . . They have also the smallest number of defectives of any one nationality . . . In addition to their strong physical characteristics, most of the Jews have keen intellects.”

Both Woods and Bushee believed that it was the Jewish obsession with the special practices required by their religion that made Jews as a group disliked. If only Jews would stop being so special, so different, and would accept the tenets of Christianity, they would be welcome by others. Bushee concluded that Jews “cannot become a very valuable element in any society” as long as they remain Jews. “The change in attitude must come from them, for no nation can assimilate an element which consciously holds itself aloof.” From the descriptions of Wood and Bushee, one would have a hard time distinguishing the Jews of Boston’s North and West Ends from those on the Lower East Side in 1903. What then made them special? In what ways, if any, did the Yankee assimilationism and Boston parochialism shape Jewish life in the city? Was there some particular chemistry of acculturation that led to a distinctive Boston Jewish product?

Many Jews have heard of Mary Antin, the young Jewish woman who lived and breathed American ideals on Union Place in Boston’s West End. Antin saw the same neighborhoods as Woods and Bushee, but understood much more than they about the people who lived there and the nature of American democracy. About the immigrants she wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1911 “they are the hope of ward politicians, the touchstones of American democracy.” She knew the distaste which native Americans felt for the Jews but added: “What if the cross-legged tailor is supporting a boy in college who is one day going to mend your state constitution for you?” What never ceased to amaze Antin was that she — just as much as the children of families who had lived in America for generations — was entitled to claim the myths, heroes, and symbols of America as her own. Bubbling with patriotism, she repeatedly mentioned her feelings for George Washington in her book, *The Promised Land*. When writing a poem about George Washington the patriotic volcano exploded.

I could not pronounce the name George Washington without a pause. Never had I prayed, never had I chanted the songs of David, never had I called upon the Most Holy, in such utter reverence and worship . . .

Mary Antin always capitalized the word Citizen, and through

naturalization she had become one — a fellow citizen of George Washington. She wrote: “One could say ‘my country’ and *feel* it as one felt ‘God’ or ‘myself.’ For the Country was for all Citizens, and *I was a Citizen* and when we stood to sing ‘America’ I shouted the words with all my might.”

Undoubtedly, teenage girls in New York City were having comparable experiences. But this was Boston, where the United States began. It was unquestionably the most self-consciously patriotic metropolis in the United States. It was also the most self-consciously education-minded, intellectual hub of the United States, and at the center of that intellectual hub was the great Harvard University. Mary Antin desperately wanted to go to Radcliffe but her plans were frustrated when her father decided to leave for New York City in 1901.

Other struggling Boston Jews, however, were more fortunate. One of them, the journalist Theodore H. White, begins his personal autobiography, *In Search of History*, with the statement: “I was born in the ghetto of Boston on May 6, 1915. No one ever told me it was a ghetto . . . America was the open land . . . We were of the Boston Jews.” As much as for Mary Antin, American history was loved by young White, and opportunity was the quintessential American ideal, and it was to be seized through education. As White put it “Harvard had the keys to the gates . . . [and] all that laid there was to be looted.” The way to Harvard was clear to him: listen to the teachers, read the books, and otherwise be a model student. Still on his way to Harvard, White went to the prestigious Boston Public Latin School, founded a year before Harvard itself. The sheer power of an education there for a young Jewish boy from Dorchester may be difficult to imagine today. White writes, “In our Latin School assembly hall, the frieze bore proudly the names of boys who had graduated to mark American history. From Franklin, Adams, Hancock, on to Emerson, Motley, Eliot, Payne, Quincy, Sumner, Warren, Winthrop — the trail blazers pointed the way . . .”

White, who was a Zionist and taught Hebrew school after hours while at Harvard, brings us close to what is special about Boston in relationship to its Jewish community. Boston, as no other city did, provided two traditions — the patriotic and the intellectual — which, in combination, made it possible for Jews to resist the city’s other powerful traditions — the assimilationist and the ethnically parochial — and to conceptualize in wholly American and Jewish ways the relationship of minority groups in general and Jews in particular to the American experience.

Foremost among the young conceptualizers was the young philosopher of Harvard, Horace Kallen. Arriving in the United States as an immigrant boy of five from Germany in 1887, Kallen grew up terribly poor. Still, he set his

sights on Harvard and graduated in 1903, the year of Wood's and Bushee's publications. At Harvard, where he also was a Zionist, he was impressed in a general way by William James's teaching about the concept of pluralism — the possibility of multiple loyalties existing in harmony. Later, Kallen believed that the equal dignity of individuals could be protected only insofar as men and women were permitted to be different. The son of an Orthodox rabbi, he had faced assimilationist pressures growing up in Boston. Sensitive to these influences on various immigrant communities, Kallen in 1915 wrote an article on cultural pluralism for the *Nation* magazine. He argued that the United States should not only permit but should value its mosaic of people, as a "cooperation of cultural diversities . . . a commonwealth of national cultures . . ." Rejecting the concept of the "melting pot" made so popular in Israel Zangwill's 1907 play by that name, Kallen compared the United States to a symphony orchestra. He wrote that each ethnic group has its own "theme and melody" to contribute to the American symphony.

Another Bostonian and Harvard man, Louis Dembitz Brandeis, was strongly impressed by Kallen. He found particularly appealing the way in which Kallen reconciled Zionism with Americanism. One could actually become more American by becoming more Jewish. One could be a Zionist supporter and ardent American patriot living in the United States, amplifying those ancient Hebrew values of social justice, freedom for the individual, and respect for differences as an active American citizen. Cultural pluralism assured that Jewish Americans could continue to strengthen the United States through Jewish ethics and that American Jews could plant seeds of Americanism in a reborn Israel.

Brandeis, generally recognized as the most brilliant lawyer in the United States, had already demonstrated that he was everything the anti-Semitic Jews tended to think Jews could not be. Like some of the Brahmins on State Street, he was abstemious, almost ascetic. He appeared to care little for money and much for virtue. Capable of commanding enormous fees from corporations, Brandeis decided in the 1890s, long before his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1916, to implement his view of the good civic society by devoting his efforts to being a "people's attorney."

As a counsel for the Massachusetts Board of Trade he fought against gas utility increases. Later, he represented policy holders and advocated a system whereby savings banks would offer life insurance policies at economical rates. In 1907 he successfully argued a case before the Supreme Court that upheld an Oregon law limiting the working day for women laundry workers to ten hours. Beginning in 1908, Brandeis worked to prevent the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad from acquiring a monopoly in New England, and in 1910 and 1913 he argued before the

Interstate Commerce Commission against rate increases because railroads were being mismanaged.

It is not clear that Brandeis was uncomfortable with his Jewish identity in his earlier years, but there was no question that he was comfortable as an American. His biographer in the *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, Alfred H. Kelly, saw Brandeis as emerging as a lifelong champion of an open, libertarian, democratic society. Who can say how much of that result was due to his father's influence, who fell in love with the United States when he first arrived in 1848 and immediately applied for citizenship papers, or to other factors — such as Boston, where he lived from his 20s to his early 50s? It was in Boston that he met Kallen, that he attended Harvard, and that he put his ideas of social justice into practice.

It was in Boston's Faneuil Hall, as a Fourth of July celebration in 1915, that he declared that America had always believed that each people had something of peculiar value that it could contribute to its high ideals. Brandeis said, "America has believed that we must not only give to the immigrant the best that we have, but must preserve for America the best that is in the immigrant . . . . America has believed that in differentiation, not in uniformity, lies the path of progress . . . ." In the milieu of assimilationist and parochial Boston, where the great bulk of Jews still struggled for a decent life and respectability, Brandeis and Kallen said it was all right to be Jewish and American, too.

That the immigrant Jews of Boston were extremely poor at the turn of the century has been well documented in *The Other Bostonians*, a study of social mobility by Stephen Thernstrom. But Thernstrom shows that by 1950, three out of four of the sons of Russian-Jewish immigrants had entered middle-class occupations, far more than for any other immigrant group, including those from England, Wales, Sweden and Germany. Forty-four percent of the Jewish second generation men had at least one year of college while the male children of no other group were above thirty-one percent. Of course, Jews are notorious for the investment which they make in education, stemming in large measure from their own deeply held Jewish values. But was the gap between the fathers and the children as great in other cities as in Boston, where the intellectual tradition was so strong? Perhaps, but without comparable studies for other cities we do not know. My guess is that both the intellectual and patriotic traditions of Boston had a special power for Boston Jewry. Boston produced few Jewish moguls, tycoons or even magnificent entrepreneurs in the decades before World War II, and no Hank Greenbergs. The special contribution of Boston Jewry was to produce American patriots who became true believers and apostles of an old American ideal — that every person can rise regardless of background — and a new American idea that celebrates ethnic and religious diversity within the frame-work of an embracing, individualistic civic culture.

## THE JEWS OF PAWTUCKET AND CENTRAL FALLS PART I

BY ELEANOR F. HORVITZ

The Pawtucket-Central Falls City Directory for 1869 listed one Jewish-owned business in the shopping district of Pawtucket: Schwartz and Lederer, 56½ Main Street, dealers in fancy and dry goods. The enterprise stocked shawls, cloaks, silks, zephyr, worsteds, and ladies' and gentlemen's furnishings. Its partners, Joseph Schwartz and Ludwig Lederer, lived at 58 Mill Street and at the corner of Mill and Exchange streets respectively.

These "pioneer" Jews, and those who followed them, were like other Jews who migrated to urban areas all over the United States, particularly in the latter part of the 19th and in the early part of the 20th centuries. Some were reformed; but most were Orthodox, some more observant than others. Some joined Socialist groups — the so-called intelligentsia — where they discussed social and political issues, and concerned themselves little with the synagogue. The religious founded and remained loyal to just one synagogue, Congregation Ohave Sholam. As was traditional, these Jews created a whole network of social and charitable organizations. On a personal level they helped each other in times of sickness and distress, and they celebrated together. But for the most part they were businessmen, small and large, and it was in this arena that these Jews contributed to the economic growth of Pawtucket and Central Falls.

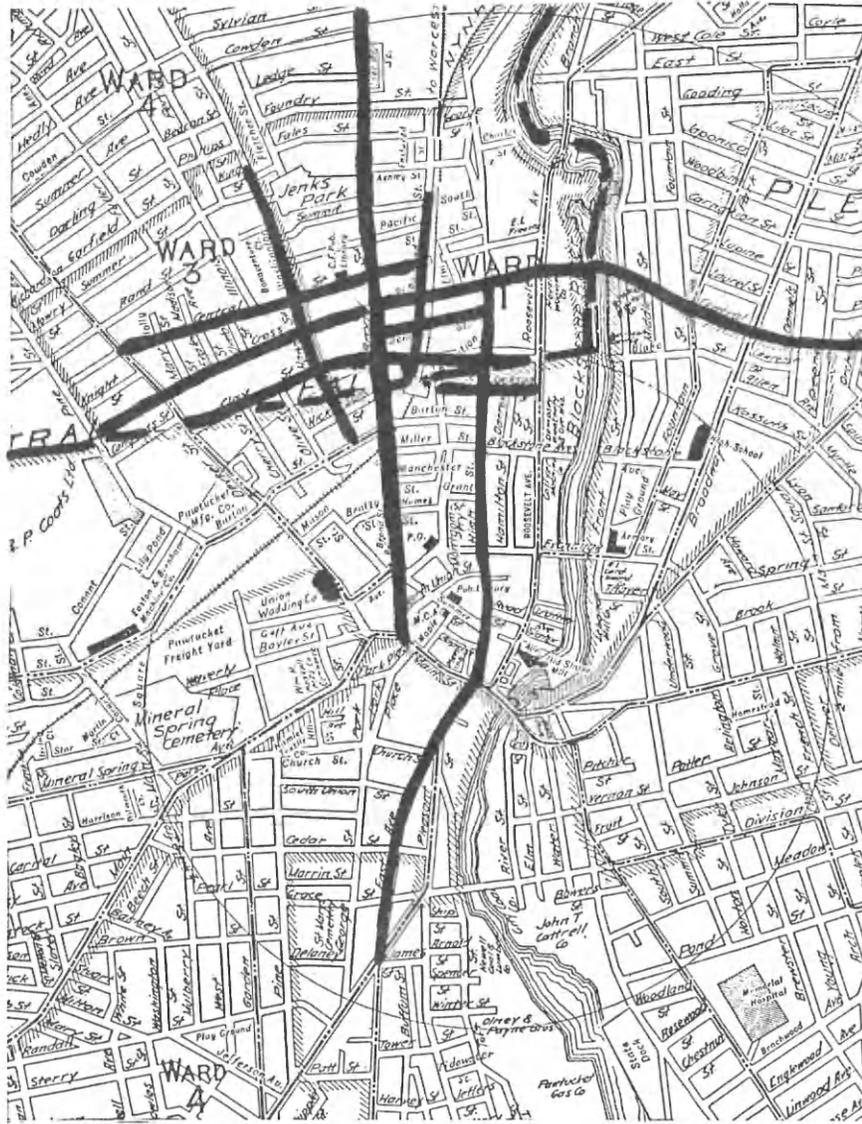
As the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in America, Pawtucket had a long history of attracting skilled craftsmen, artisans, and investors. These people took advantage of the area's waterfall, navigable river, and close-by iron deposits and turned it into a shipbuilding and ironworking town. Those who followed converted these assets into a textile and textile machinery manufacturing center, although metal and ironworking continued to remain an important part of the economy. The construction of the Blackstone Canal and the Providence & Worcester Railroad, both of which passed

through Pawtucket and adjacent Central Falls via a spur line that crossed the Blackstone River spanned by a "tin bridge,"<sup>1</sup> gave added impetus to business and encouraged many manufacturers to locate there.<sup>2</sup>

By 1869, Pawtucket showed evidence of becoming a city, advanced by increased population and significantly augmented urban services. A rather large and distinct commercial district with stores that rivaled those of Providence emerged along Main, Mill and Pleasant streets. A library, chartered in 1852, and a public high school catered to its educational needs. Gas lights replaced oil street lamps, horsecars, drawn along tracks laid down on Main and Pine streets and Pawtucket Avenue, all led into Providence. Several distinguished church buildings graced an otherwise dreary industrial skyline.<sup>3</sup> On April 1, 1885 the town was incorporated as a city, and befitting its industrial base elected Frederick C. Sayles of the W. F. & F. C. Sayles firm, owners of the giant Saylesville Bleaching Co. and Lorraine Woolen Mills, its first mayor.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, since Providence had annexed a huge chunk of land from North Providence in 1874, the cities of Pawtucket and Providence now abutted. It was only two miles between the Jewish community in Providence's North End and the center of Pawtucket traveling by way of North Main Street and Pawtucket Avenue.

Central Falls had its own history. It, too, owed its growth to its water power and to the textile and metal firms it spawned there. These industries, like those in adjacent Pawtucket, served as the cornerstone for the city's economy throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. It generated educational institutions such as Lincoln High School in 1889, provided recreational facilities in the four-acre Jenks Park on Broad Street, established churches and organizations, and converted streets into thriving commercial thoroughfares. Growth and maturity, as elsewhere, triggered incorporation as a city on March 18, 1895, officially severing its ties to the town of Lincoln.<sup>5</sup> And like Providence and Pawtucket, Central Falls and Pawtucket shared streets such as Broad and Dexter even though Main Street in Pawtucket became Mill Street once it entered Central Falls. These two abutting communities recognized no boundary when it came to social interaction, commercial transaction, or the movement of workers from one community to the other. This relationship, too, existed between the Jews of Providence and Pawtucket.

Central Falls and Pawtucket also experienced virtually identical population compositions. In the early years of the 19th century, the population of both towns was predominantly native born and protestant, although English and Scottish immigrants, the wet nurses of the textile industry, could be found there. With construction of the canal and railroad, Irish workers remained behind and traded a shovel for a loom. The French Canadians followed, but of the two towns Central Falls attracted a larger



PAWTUCKET-CENTRAL FALLS, 1935

Blackened streets mark areas of Jewish settlements.

number of them. The steady arrival of additional immigrants elevated Central Falls' population to 9,000 by 1870 — 40 percent of them foreign born. As the trickle turned to a tide at the turn of the century, immigrants from all corners of the globe converged and established their ethnic neighborhoods as best they could in these towns. One section of Central Falls, variably called "Bowery" or "Falesville" became one of the most cosmopolitan sections as "Poles, Hebrews, French, Germans, Irish, Scotch, English, and Syrians" lived side by side and worked "in the factories of the city or in the neighboring city of Pawtucket."<sup>6</sup> By 1900 one could also count Portuguese, Scandanavians, and Italians among its members.<sup>7</sup> A decade later the combined total of the foreign born and native-born children of foreign or mixed parentage made up 80 percent of the population of Central Falls and 70 percent of the population of Pawtucket.<sup>8</sup> Both communities had become microcosms of the world's nationalities, and Central Falls the most densely settled community in the nation.

Within this heterogeneous mass of humanity lived about three percent of the state's Jewish population. Some of these Jews had moved into Central Falls as early as 1880, but unlike their Irish and French Canadian counterparts, seldom worked in its mills and factories. Instead, many invested a small amount of capital in a horse and wagon and turned to peddling. For the most part German, these Jews were joined in the 1890s and after by Jews from Eastern Europe escaping pogroms, poor crops, and compulsory military service.

Some of the German Jews opened businesses in Pawtucket but had their residences in other cities such as Providence or as far away as New York City. Few had anything to do with the Jewish residents of Pawtucket; some even worshiped at Temple Beth-El in Providence.<sup>9</sup> As Diana Feital Goldstein recalled:<sup>10</sup>

There were some wealthy Jewish people in business in the early days, the real Deutch [German] . . . a Mrs. Simon who had a big store, Mr. Cohen, the Shartenberg's. Mr. Cohen, who had his shoe store on Main Street, was so wonderful. He was not aloof like the other German Jews. He was an aristocratic man, but you'd never know it. He would sit with my father and they would talk and talk and compare notes.

Jacob Shartenberg became one of the most prominent of the German Jews. He first appears in the 1882 *Pawtucket-Central Falls City Directory* as proprietor of the New Idea Store on 96 Main Street while boarding at the Benedict House. The following year he was listed under dry goods and did business at 30 Elm Street. By 1886 he had moved to a home at 427 Main Street; and by 1890 he evidently had acquired a partner because the firm was



Pawtucket's Main Street, looking west from Slater Trust Co., (1916).  
(Photo courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RHi x3 510).

again listed as the New Idea Store, located in the Weeden Building at 264-270 Main Street, under the name of Shartenberg and Robinson, owners.

Although a resident of Pawtucket, Shartenberg joined the Reformed Jews of Providence and participated in the dedication ceremonies of the congregation's temple, Sons of Israel and David.<sup>11</sup> Shartenberg was also instrumental in founding the Retail Merchants' Association of Pawtucket in 1899, serving as its first president. Six years later this Association became the Pawtucket Chamber of Commerce.

The New Idea Store anchored Pawtucket's retail district, and Main Street housed small and large Jewish businesses. Although no specific Jewish residential section existed, with the exception of the area around Jackson, High, and Darrow streets where the congregation Ohave Sholam later built a synagogue, the closest to it might have been the area along the Pawtucket-Central Falls border. Here on Central, Broad and Dexter streets, Jewish grocery, butcher, and other stores catered to both communities' Jewish residents. As Jack Cokin recalled:<sup>12</sup>

I had an aunt who lived on a street where the city line went through her house. Our family did our shopping at Radkin's on Central Street. The butcher, the delicatessen, everything was on that street.

Streets named Cross, Clay, Jencks, Broad, Pine, Mill, Fales, and Hawes also housed Jews. Jewish-owned stores, some exclusively kosher, were interspersed. Often a family lived in the same dwelling as their store, either upstairs or in rear rooms. For the majority of residents, rented tenement flats rather than home ownership was probably the rule in the early years since over 70 percent of all dwelling units in Central Falls in 1920 were rental units.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, these early Jews were the nucleus and acted as magnets in attracting others. In response to the question, "Why did your family settle in Pawtucket or Central Falls?" the majority of those interviewed answered that a relative was living in those communities. Others found economic opportunities more enticing there than elsewhere. In time, a chain migration was well under way, and the process linked together family members scattered throughout the eastern seaboard. More Jews seemed to have arrived first in Central Falls, undoubtedly attracted by its larger and more cohesive Jewish population. Tillie Vascofritz remembered her family boarding in the Rosenfeld house on Cross Street where she was born. Abraham Goodman, leaving his wife and daughter in Russia, came to Central Falls because of his wife's sister and brother-in-law, the Feital's were there. He, too, moved into the Rosenfeld's house. Harry Goldberg was told by his relative in Pawtucket that he could make a better living there than in New York City where he worked in a market. Joseph Farber's decision to

locate in Pawtucket was somewhat extraordinary. Born in Austria, he had immigrated to New York at the age of fourteen around 1884. After an unfortunate real estate experience several years later, he answered an advertisement selling a business in Pawtucket. When he and his brother Samuel arrived in Rhode Island, the man had decided not to sell. Pleased with the area, they stayed and opened a sheet metal shop in Pawtucket.<sup>14</sup>

Making a living sufficient to satisfy the needs of the whole family was not always possible. While some became economically secure early on, others struggled. Sam Shlevin recalled:<sup>15</sup>

My father never had any money, was always a rag peddler. He always bought a horse that was blind because it was cheaper . . . I was about six or seven years old, and I sold newspapers. I was the only newsboy allowed to sell opposite Sam Feital [he had the largest newsstand in downtown Pawtucket]. I sold the papers on Saturday, and on Sunday I went to Memorial Hospital. I got such wonderful tips . . . I worked from the day I was able. . . I felt that I was never a youngster. I had to work. As a result, I was part of a grown-up family.

While Shlevin was denied a normal childhood, Tillie Vascovitz never felt “deprived of anything” growing up in Pawtucket at that time. Her father was a butcher, but his business often kept him from the family. “The only time our family sat down to a complete meal was Friday nights when the butcher shop was closed,” she recalled. “Other nights you got your supper when Ma, who worked in the business all my father’s life, had time to come upstairs to make it.” Yet even she was not spared from helping out in the store after school.<sup>16</sup> Jack Cokin’s first memory of a house was a tenement flat owned by Peney Feital, consisting of a living room, dining room, kitchen, and three bedrooms. “I think most of the Jews I knew in our circle,” he remembered, “were quite comfortable. I didn’t know of any that were really poor. When I became active in the Gemileth Chesed, I realized that there were people who had to borrow money . . .”<sup>17</sup>

The need to communicate effectively in the home, in the shop, and in the larger community exposed these immigrants’ varied levels of literacy. Most of those interviewed recalled that only Yiddish was spoken in the home and the Jewish paper was received daily. Yet the push to become Americanized forced them to learn English and become functionally literate. Tillie Vascovitz’s father never attended school in America but he “wrote quite well. He taught himself to write, mostly phonetically. Both my parents were self-taught.” While her grandmother spoke only Yiddish, her parents spoke both Yiddish and English in the home.<sup>18</sup> Jack Cokin remembered that his father was so anxious to learn English that he “would sit with the *Pawtucket*

*Times* and copy the first page,” in the office of his furniture business. His mother “read a lot and had a good vocabulary.”<sup>19</sup> Although local papers were well subscribed, the New York City published *Forward* became the favorite Yiddish newspaper. Among the Jewish women the *Bintel Brief* [Bundle of Letters] column became a favorite. Written by readers, many of them women, these letters focused on immigrant problems and asked the editor for advice. “Our upstairs neighbor would bring the paper down to my mother to read with her . . . . These letters were their soap opera.”<sup>20</sup>

Despite the congested housing, struggle for economic security, and mastery of communication skills, these Jews did not seem to have eloiigned themselves from recreation. Outings of all sorts were a favorite pastime, particularly spending a day or more at a neighboring farm owned by a Jewish relative or friend. Most frequently noted in these interviews were the Fine, Friedman, and Globus farms in Attleboro, and the Horvitz and Gleckman farms near Baker’s Corner in Seekonk, Massachusetts.

The latter two became sites for many Jewish picnics. The owners of the Globus farm took in boarders. Guests were served at a kitchen table that accommodated as many as twenty people. Fine’s farm rented cottages which Jack Cokin, a relative of the owners of the farm, described as so luxurious that “after we vacated one which we had occupied, it became a chicken coop.”<sup>21</sup> The Gleckman farm was a favorite for the Fourth of July holiday and for watching fireworks.<sup>22</sup>

Families often shared their outings. Gathering on Sundays or holidays at a home, they would travel together out of the city. Gertrude Goldstein Hak fondly recalled her experiences:<sup>23</sup>

We traveled, for example, to Newport in three or four cars. We always went together in a caravan . . . . The families would travel with full meals packed in the carriers which were located on the running boards. Sometimes we would stop to picnic at the Vanderbilt farms in Foster [Rhode Island]. The preparation of cooking those meals would take the entire day.

While in the cities, Jewish boys and girls played the same games and pursued the same sports as others. They sledged on hills near St. Paul’s Church and on East Avenue in Pawtucket, played pick-up games in Park Place and on the streets, and organized sports in the Pawtucket Boys Club after it opened in 1902, although none of the sports was organized for Jewish children. In Central Falls, a favorite playground was St. George’s lot.

After the opening in the early 1920s of Ohawe Sholam Synagogue on High and Jackson streets, Jewish teenagers used its basement for social activities. Junior B’nai B’rith sponsored Sunday night dances, alternating

weekly between one held in Woonsocket and one held in Pawtucket. Since city ordinances prohibited music and dancing on Sundays, black curtains were hung to darken the hall to the outside. People would come from all over, recalled Diana Feital Goldstein, because it was the largest Jewish hall in which to congregate. They also staged plays and held Sunday night parties in people's homes.<sup>24</sup> For large events, such as a wedding or *Bar Mitzvah*, the women — mostly friends and relatives — would prepare the food, each her own specialty. Some of these affairs might be held in the yard where Japanese lanterns hung as decorations. On occasion, a hall might be hired. A family named Pearlman from High Street organized themselves as a *Klezmer*\* and played for such events.

Providence had an active theatre district, and when it brought in Jewish shows from elsewhere, Pawtucket and Central Falls Jews dressed for the occasion and rode streetcars to Providence. A trip to New York City to attend the wedding of a relative was always a momentous occasion. For these, families boarded a steamer of the Fall River Line in Providence, payed fifty cents per ticket, and sailed to the big affair. These trips often reunited members of extended families scattered throughout the East.

As young Jews, most of the interviewees were either too occupied or too immature to fully recognize currents of anti-Semitism. "I remember one particular kid because I chased him when he called me a 'dirty Jew', but this was an isolated case . . . I can't remember any problems at school, perhaps because it was too obvious, at least to me."<sup>25</sup> Celia Farber Rumpler and Jacob Goodman never encountered anti-Semitism, not in the high school which Rumpler attended nor in the mostly Irish neighborhood where Goodman lived. Most of the reports indicated that the greatest fear came from Polish youth. Living on Lawrence Street, Jack Cokin had to walk by a Polish bakery on the way to Hebrew school. "There were always Polish kids who lived in that house, and they would always give the Jewish kids a hard time."<sup>26</sup> Gertrude Goldberg Hak also experienced trouble on the way to Hebrew school with Polish children, but not from those from their neighborhood. Occasionally it would lead to a fight, but "we always fought back." During Easter, a holiday when Jews were once again accused of killing Christ, Jews became nervous. "We children were kept inside the house . . . in case there might be some trouble with our Polish neighbors. Of course, nothing ever happened."<sup>27</sup>

Sam Shlevin's experience was similar:<sup>28</sup>

At three o'clock the Jewish kids would be assaulted by the Poles. After they finished Hebrew school and had supper, the

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\*An informal group of musicians playing traditional folk music and songs.

same Jewish and Polish boys would play basketball, at the Boys Club. In my mind, that was superficial anti-Semitism . . . It had no real meaning. For here we would play basketball together, swim together right after we just had a fight. Out teams were called the Jewish Ha'coah and the Polish Aces. You couldn't get a seat at those games for they were the two best teams. That neighborhood of minorities — Poles, Jews, Irish — we managed to get along together.

The Pawtucket-Central Falls Jewish community grew to such proportion that serious efforts were launched in the 1890s to establish systematic worship. Congregation Ohave Sholam, also known as Ahavath Sholom, an orthodox synagogue originated in this context. Then, a few men gathered for daily prayers in a small hall near Jencks, Cross, and Central streets, the Jewish area of Central Falls. On April 10, 1905, Abraham Berick, Reuben Bloomberg, Isaac Brown, Harry Cassock and Morris Levenson signed the original papers of incorporation for the purpose of "maintaining and conducting a house of worship of the Orthodox Hebrew religion in Pawtucket, Rhode Island and of transporting business." With money undoubtedly saved from a ten cent membership fee imposed on themselves earlier, these Jews purchased a two-family house at 230 North Main Street in Pawtucket. On the first floor lived the family of Charles Kalman, later occupied by teachers in the Hebrew school; on the second, alterations produced a small synagogue and a meeting room that was also used as a *Talmud Torah*, or Hebrew school. It became the center of the Jewish community, and springing from it were many institutions such as the Hebrew Free Assisting Association. Although conservatives tried to start another temple, their efforts never came to fruition. Thus, Ohave Sholam remained the only synagogue serving the Jews of both communities.<sup>29</sup>

Inadequate for the growing Jewish population's services for high holy days, the congregation often held services at other facilities: the Polish Hall on Central Street, the Pastime Theatre on the corner of High and Exchange streets, the Cottrell Building and another structure on East Avenue in downtown Pawtucket. The Grand Army Hall was used for about ten years. These services were well remembered by Diana Goldstein. Men sat in front of the dividing line, and the women in back of it. "We kids," she recalled:<sup>30</sup>

had a wonderful time, playing outside during services. We also loved looking at the different uniforms from the wars which were in the Hall, as well as at the guns and swords. They were stored in back so that the stage could be used for services. I remember one day the kids got dressed up in the uniforms and went floating across the stage, clanging the swords at their sides.

The religious education received by those interviewed was vividly recalled. Several remembered their teachers at the Hebrew school: Mr. Miller, Mr. Goldstein, and Mr. Goldman. The latter taught students the Hebrew alphabet and how to read from the *siddur*, a volume containing daily prayers. Two classes were needed to accommodate the students, one right after public school, the other toward evening. Mr. Goldman was also a memorable character who expected disciplined students, taught them through repetition and rote memorization, cracked and ate Indian nuts during class, and was not unwilling to use a long stick or cat-o-nine tails to secure the attention of his young pupils. "We were taught all kinds of prayers. There was a prayer for every occasion, but we were never taught the meaning of the words. It didn't materialize into anything," remembered Diana Goldstein. But, she said, he would "go over and over the same thing. This way you'd automatically get to know the *siddur* . . . . A boy would be taught *Humash*\* in preparation for his *Bar Mitzvah*."<sup>31</sup> Another remembered the smell of oranges, occasionally eaten by Mr. Goldman, because "an orange was a rare thing in some of our homes . . . . You learned to read Hebrew, but you never learned anything about it. All they were interested in doing was to teach you to *daven* [to pray]. I don't think the teachers were capable of teaching you anything more."<sup>32</sup> Still, education triumphed despite its peculiarities because parents instilled in their children the love of learning and the obligation to participate in religious services at the synagogue.



Rabbi Hayim D. Bachrach speaking at the building site of Congregation Ohave Sholam, summer 1920.

(Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, donation of Jeannette F. Ritter).

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\*The five books of the Pentateuch or Torah of the "written law."

By 1915 approximately 350 Jewish families lived in the area, and the two-story tenement synagogue had clearly outlived its usefulness. The untiring efforts of Henry Friedman, Samuel Finn, and Sam Cokin secured land for a new synagogue at the corner of High and Jackson streets in Pawtucket. Construction started in 1918 and was brought to completion in 1921. Friedman, in the retail fur business, actively raised funds for the building and became the first president of the congregation.<sup>33</sup> Sam Shlevin remembers how men of the congregation raised money by going to the Morris Plan, a loan company, borrowing \$200 on their own endorsement, and paying it back at a dollar a week. Once completed, the synagogue seated about 408, contained a vestry, kitchen, chapel, and a rabbi's study. To the rear, an apartment house was remodeled for a large Hebrew school. Membership dues for the approximately one hundred families stood at \$75 per year.<sup>34</sup> Several families who lived in Ashton and Valley Falls, Rhode Island, joined. For high holy days they brought their own candles to bless and stayed at the home of relatives or friends.

The spiritual center of the community also spawned a host of organizations such as the Ladies Hebrew Aid Society and the Sisterhood, to name but a few. Chartered on May 21, 1915, the Ladies Aid Society dedicated itself to "rendering assistance to needy or indigent persons and for carrying on work of a charitable and benevolent character."<sup>35</sup> Until the new synagogue was erected, the organization held its meeting in an upstairs room of the Grand Army Hall. Meetings frequently were conducted in Yiddish, and because so many members could not read or write English, those who could were elected to officer positions of secretary and treasurer. The contributions of this organization to the synagogue and the Jewish community was illustrated in a letter written in 1964 by Mrs. Morris Sholes to Mrs. Abraham Mal:<sup>36</sup>

My husband and I moved with our children to Pawtucket where we found a small but vigorous Jewish community, which held its services in the Pawtucket Grand Army Hall. The Ladies' Aid as the women's auxiliary was known, gave active and enthusiastic support to the organizers of the new congregation. Mr. Eisenberg and his building committee bought the site . . . from Frank Crook. At the time of the purchase the property consisted of an old theatre and a house. The theatre was torn down to make room for the synagogue and the house was move to the back in order to house the Talmud Torah. It was the Ladies Aid who purchased the cornerstone of the synagogue. The parchment listing the names of the members of the organization rests within the cornerstone. Thus, the Ladies Aid of more than forty years ago built the

foundation on which the dreams of this present Sisterhood could be realized. When the building was completed, the Ladies' Aid bought the key to the synagogue. So the women of my generation helped to open and keep open the doors to Jewish tradition, culture and learning in the Pawtucket community.

During my term as president of the Ladies' aid a committee composed of Mrs. Samuel Finn, Mrs. Morris Carlin and myself selected and purchased the large sterling silver and crystal chandelier for the sanctuary. It contained 152 bulbs, each bulb representing one member of the Ladies' Aid at the time the chandelier was purchased.

The Sisterhood, an outgrowth of the Ladies Hebrew Aid Society, was chartered on May 1, 1935 as the Sisterhood of Ahavath Sholom of Pawtucket and Central Falls. Its charter was signed by: Sophie Tesler, Pearl E. Curran, Rebecca Luber, Rose M. Brown, Anna Handler, Bertha Berkelhammer, and Eva Hak. It was commonly known as the Ladies Aid and Sisterhood\*. The synagogue was also the meeting place for the Men's Club, the Jewish Couples of Pawtucket (JCOP), the Youth Group, the Young Marrieds of Ohawe Sholam, and the Junior Congregation. Additionally, associated with it was an active Sunday-Hebrew School and a Hebrew High School. The Jewish War Veterans and the Gemileth Chesed also used its hall.

A complete record of the rabbis who served the congregation is not available; however, some recollections indicate that rabbinical spiritual leadership was sporadic. A Rabbi Lakeb tended to the congregation in 1924, and the following year Rabbi Abraham Schisgall was brought by a member of the congregation. Rabbi Schisgall came from Slutsk, Russia, and remained at his post for approximately seven years. Rabbi Gold and Rabbi Rakovsky followed. In 1940, Rabbi Aaron Goldin assumed the spiritual leadership. He ministered to a congregation that had grown to around three hundred families, and high holy service brought nearly eight hundred people to the synagogue, some sitting in the aisles.<sup>37</sup> After his departure in the early 1960s, members conducted services themselves, with the exception of 1964-1966 when Rabbi Joseph M. Rothberger conducted services. For high holy days, rabbis from elsewhere were called to Ohawe Sholam.

During Rabbi Rothberger's tenure elaborate plans for a new synagogue and school were advanced. It was to be erected on East Avenue between Lowden Street and Glenwood Avenue, and it was to have the finest religious school in the area. The new location was to accomodate those congregation

\*See Appendix A for a complete list of the original officers and members of the Ladies Aid Society.

members who were moving out of the old neighborhood toward Providence and elsewhere in Pawtucket. The land had been purchased by men of the congregation, including Max Alperin, Dr. Charles Jagolinzer, Samuel Shlevin, and Charles Steingold, and they became stockholders of the Conservative Blackstone Valley Temple-Center. The synagogue was given a five year option to build, providing \$150,000 was raised during that period. A conservative-orthodox tug-of-war ensued with one faction favoring a conservative temple. This doomed the grandiose plan of Rabbi Rothberger for a Blackstone Valley Temple-Center.<sup>38</sup>

In the interim Ohawe Sholam celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1968 in grand style, receiving greetings from Governor John Chafee, Mayor Robert Burns of Pawtucket, Abraham M. Mal, president of the synagogue, and other dignitaries. Rabbi Chaim Raizman was formally installed during the celebration.<sup>39</sup> Shortly thereafter a new building committee, consisting of Carl Passman, chairman, Ralph Buckler, Herman Geller, Ed Gershman, Dr. Hyman Lillian and Hilton Rosen was established, and Alexander Rumpel served as architectural advisor. A much more modest building was planned and the congregation was to be orthodox. Funding for the over \$200,000 structure was partially provided by the sale of the old High and Jackson street synagogue. In 1979 ground was broken, and in 1981 the new synagogue was dedicated. The present members are working to revitalize the active Ohawe Sholam congregation of the past.<sup>40</sup>

The synagogue was unquestionably the center of the Pawtucket-Central Falls Jewish community, unrivaled by any other organization. But as with all communities, organizations emerged to meet the needs of a diversified population. As early as December 18, 1890 the Pawtucket Hebrew Benevolent Association was formed to "unite fraternally all men professing the Jewish religion, and to assist them when sick or in distress."<sup>41</sup> The Pawtucket Assisting Association of 1915 and the Brotherhood Assisting Association of Pawtucket and Central Falls of 1920 also engaged in charitable work. The Pawtucket and Central Falls Junk Peddlers Association helped "members in sickness or distress" after its founding on April 26, 1915.<sup>42</sup> Women, too, had their benevolent association in the Pawtucket chapter, Council of Jewish Women, established on March 17, 1916 as an educational, social, and charitable organization. Its charter was signed by Eva Harriet, Sophie Zarchen, Freda Halpert, Sophia Levy, and Esther Brown.<sup>43</sup>

Another fascinating women's organization, one still active in the 1980s, is called the Pawtucket Hadassah. Julius G. Robinson delegate to the National Zionist Convention of 1924 held in New York City, and secretary of the Zionist Organization of Pawtucket and Central Falls, heard Henrietta Szold, the founder of Hadassah, speak at the convention. Back in Rhode Island, this inspiration produced a chapter of Hadassah in Pawtucket on

December 18, 1924. That evening in a meeting hall of Ohave Sholam, officers were elected, and his wife chosen president. On the 25th Anniversary of the organization she made the following remarks:<sup>44</sup>

The work was difficult. We had to educate the community to the need. Money was scarce . . . our first project was a sewing group . . . . We made hospital shirts, some of our members made every stitch by hand. We started the collection of milk bottles and the Jewish National Fund blue boxes that we put into the homes . . . . The women did not have cars and they walked many miles collecting the filled bottles and boxes with nickles and quarters . . . . We had a cultural group where we discussed current events . . . . We had no quotas in the beginning but we raised money through rummage sales, home and public bridges . . . food sales.

During World War II the organization worked for Palestine and for America, and with the formation of Israel in 1948 it assumed still heavier financial commitments for which it won national honors.

As always, Hebrew education was as important for these Jews as for others. The Samuel H. Zucker Hebrew Education Association supported religious education throughout Pawtucket and Central Falls. Its headquarters at 70 East Avenue, Pawtucket was the site for an elaborate dedication ceremony on December 20, 1914 of a Holy Scroll, a gift of Mrs. S. H. Zucker in memory of her parents. Jews from Providence and throughout the Blackstone Valley attended. Harry Cutler gave the chief address, a children's chorus sang, a string orchestra played several selections, and Rabbi Israel S. Rubinstein of the Sons of Zion Congregation of Providence performed the religious rites.<sup>45</sup> The Hebrew Institute of Pawtucket and Central Falls, organized on December 21, 1917, labored for the cause of education, religious training of children and adults, and to make Jews useful citizens.<sup>46</sup>

One of the most important organizations was the Gemileth Chesed Association of Pawtucket and Central Falls. It was organized on October 13, 1909 and began to officially function the following year. This Hebrew Free Loan Association loaned funds without interest to newly arrived immigrants, men in economic difficulty, and to widows with children to support.<sup>47</sup> During the period from 1922 to 1928, the Association charged its members \$3 per year, and in the 1926 calendar year alone loaned \$17,880 to 104 recipients.<sup>48</sup>

Additional organizations consisted of the B'nai B'rith Lodge No. 899, named after Henry Friedman, a successful fur salesman who had moved to

Pawtucket from New York, the Jewish War Veterans which assumed the name of Reback-Winston Post No. 406, and various philanthropic organizations as a need arose. The B'nai B'rith Lodge was considered one of the more progressive: it had its own drill team, uniforms, and marching formations. Its installation team traveled throughout New England and New York to install at various lodges.<sup>49</sup> The organization had degree teams, like Masonic organizations, and consistently won national prizes.<sup>50</sup> The Reback-Winston Post, named after two veterans, was chartered on May 8, 1946. A plaque listing the names of those who served in World War II hangs in a meeting room of Congregation Ohave Sholam in Pawtucket. The United Jewish Appeal of the Blackstone Valley, composed of businessmen and residents of Pawtucket and Central Falls, has generated an impressive record of contributions.

These institutions, as those in other communities throughout America, succeeded in retaining elements of the people's collective Jewish traditions and at the same time directed them toward an embrace of American opportunity. After all, it was the lure of religious freedom, of preservation of heritage, tradition, and history, that brought them here. Once in Pawtucket and Central Falls they experienced fully the lure of America. It allowed these Jews a life far more complete than anything expected and far more open than they envisioned. Some of them resisted the temptation and forestalled absorption, but in the end the process gradually eroded their ways — the fabric of their collectivity, the bond of common experience, the sharing of language. Still, Jews in these communities remained Jews, their institutions survived and even multiplied, and their religion was kept alive by their synagogue and Hebrew school\*

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Geraldine Foster for assisting me by conducting several oral history interviews, and the following persons for their cooperation and kind assistance: Jack Cokin, Claire Ernstof, Thomas Gleckman, Diana Feital Goldstein, Jacob Goodman, Gertrude Goldberg Hak, Carl Passman, Celia Farber Rumpler, Alexander Rumpler, Madeline Bogin Sanek, Samuel Shlevin, and Tillie Vine Vascovitz.

Eleanor F. Horvitz

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\*Part II of this history, focused primarily on occupations, merchants, businesses, manufacturers, and professions, will be published in the next volume of this journal.

APPENDIX A

OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE LADIES AID SOCIETY  
CONGREGATION OHAWA SHOLAM  
MAY 21, 1915<sup>1</sup>

*Possible Officers*

Kittie Heller  
Elizabeth Karlin  
Gertrude Friedman  
Fannie Juster  
Hattie Kalman

*Members*

Ray August	Sarah Rosenfield	Fannie Eisenberg
Annie Cokin	Esther Slifkin	Pearl Horowitz
Anna Feital	Baily Weisman	Sarah Levine
Annie Gabor	Bertha Law	Mrs. Nathanson
Adele Kalman	(Chairlady)	Anna Sonkin
Dora Mogileftkin	Rebecca Bogen	Sophie Frucht
Fannie Plotkin	Anna Dimeberg	Mary Jaffee
Mammie Silver	Ruth Fishman	Annie Levine
Bessie Vine	Mary Kalman	Rose Needle
Jennie Robinson	Rose Kaplan	Kate Sinelnicoff
Sadie Bellon	Mary Morgan	Sarah Tesler
Sadie Cohen	Julia Rosenfield	Rose Mogileftkin
Bessie Feital	Anna Selzen	Miss Bessie Kalman
Anna Glickman	Sophie Derber	Miss Annie Kalman
Rose Karnovsky	Rebecca Finn	Mr. Goodman*
Adele Mogileftkin	Lizzie Chernack	Mr. Charles Kalman*
	Anna Weisman	

<sup>1</sup>These names were taken from the Charter of the Ladies Aid Society, Congregation Ohawa Sholam, Pawtucket, R.I., Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives, Providence, Rhode Island.

\*Note the inclusion of two males.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>It was known as "tin bridge" because it was constructed of wood and covered with tin. By 1876 it had been replaced by an iron structure but the original name was recalled by several interviewees.
- <sup>2</sup>John William Haley, *History of Pawtucket, Central Falls, Lincoln and Cumberland, Rhode Island* (Pawtucket, 1937), 55; George H. Kellner and J. Stanley Lemons, *Rhode Island: The Independent State* (Woodland Hills, California, 1982), 56, 59-60.
- <sup>3</sup>*Pawtucket, Rhode Island* (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission: Providence, 1978), 51.
- <sup>4</sup>*Rhode Island Manual, 1931-1932* (Providence, 1932), 91.
- <sup>5</sup>*Central Falls, Rhode Island* (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission: Providence, 1978), 25.
- <sup>6</sup>"Anniversary and Industrial Edition," *Pawtucket Evening Times*, March 31, 1906.
- <sup>7</sup>Susan Marie Boucher, *History of Pawtucket, 1635-1976* (Providence, 1976), 99.
- <sup>8</sup>Kellner and Lemons, *Rhode Island*, 79.
- <sup>9</sup>Oral history interview with Celia Farber Rumpler, conducted in the offices of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, Providence, R.I., July 10, 1984. This tape, and others cited below, are located in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives.
- <sup>10</sup>Oral history interview with Diana Feital Goldstein, in her Providence home, July 15, 1984.
- <sup>11</sup>*Providence Journal*, December 8, 1890.
- <sup>12</sup>Oral history interview with Jack Cokin, conducted by Geraldine Foster, in the home of Gertrude Goldberg Hak, Pawtucket, R.I., 1983.
- <sup>13</sup>Kellner and Lemons, *Rhode Island*, 80.
- <sup>14</sup>Celia Farber Rumpler interview; oral history interview with Tillie Vine Vascovitiz, conducted in the offices of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, July 12, 1984.
- <sup>15</sup>Oral history interview with Sam Shlevin, conducted in his business office, Providence, R.I., July 11, 1984.
- <sup>16</sup>Tillie Vine Vascovitiz interview.
- <sup>17</sup>Jack Cokin interview.
- <sup>18</sup>Tillie Vine Vascovitiz interview.
- <sup>19</sup>Jack Cokin interview.
- <sup>20</sup>Diana Feital Goldstein interview; Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976), 533.
- <sup>21</sup>Jack Cokin interview.
- <sup>22</sup>Diana Feital Goldstein interview.
- <sup>23</sup>Oral history interview with Gertrude Goldberg Hak, conducted by Geraldine Foster, in her home in Pawtucket, R.I., 1983.
- <sup>24</sup>Diana Feital Goldstein interview.
- <sup>25</sup>Tillie Vine Vascovitiz interview.
- <sup>26</sup>Jack Cokin interview; Celia Farber Rumpler interview; oral history interview with Jacob Goodman, conducted in his home in Pawtucket, R.I., July 3, 1984.
- <sup>27</sup>Diana Feital Goldstein interview.
- <sup>28</sup>Sam Shlevin interview.
- <sup>29</sup>"Anniversary Issue," *Pawtucket Times*, October 8, 1921.
- <sup>30</sup>Diana Feital Goldstein interview.
- <sup>31</sup>*ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup>Sam Shlevin interview.
- <sup>33</sup>"Anniversary Issue," *Pawtucket Times*, October 8, 1921.
- <sup>34</sup>Sam Shlevin interview; *Rhode Island Herald*, April 5, 1968; "Anniversary Issue," *Pawtucket Times*, October 8, 1921.
- <sup>35</sup>Charter of the Ladies Aid Society, Congregation Ohawe Sholam, Pawtucket, R.I., May 21, 1915, located in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives.

<sup>36</sup>*Rhode Island Herald*, April 5, 1968.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, October 25, 1979.

<sup>39</sup>*Pawtucket Times*, April 8, 1968.

<sup>40</sup>In response to the question, "Where were the Jews of Pawtucket and Central Falls buried?" information reveals not in their own cemetery. Only two Jews, Pauline, wife of Adolph Feder, and Emma, wife of Max Feder, both dated 1894, were buried in the interdenominational Moshassuck Cemetery in Central Falls even though the Congregation Sons of Israel and David of Providence purchased plots for the burial of non-members, relatives of members, and for charitable causes. Other Jewish congregations and organizations, too, purchased plots.

The Jews of Pawtucket and Central Falls used plots in the Jewish cemetery called Lincoln Park in Warwick, R.I. Four areas, purchased at various times and from different sources, are designated for Congregation Ohave Sholam of Pawtucket. See, "Jewish Cemeteries," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 3 (November, 1958), 63.

<sup>41</sup>The Pawtucket Hebrew Benevolent Association at the time of its charter included the following businessmen: S.J. Gunther, Max Feder, Samuel Paul, Morris Glickman, Barney Sentler, A. Goodman, Louis Berick, Abraham Berick, S. Needle, Louis Rosenberg, Morris Greenberg, and David Gilbert.

<sup>42</sup>The Pawtucket and Central Falls Junk Peddlers Association at the time of its charter included the following peddlers: David Cohen, Harry Baker, Harry Goldberg, Barney Tetelbaum, Harry Steingold, Jacke Dimeberg, Jacob Goldstein, and Sam Sentler.

<sup>43</sup>"Chartered Organizations," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 2 (May 1956), 69.

<sup>44</sup>Papers of Pawtucket-Central Falls Hadassah located in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives.

<sup>45</sup>*Pawtucket Times*, September 21, 1914.

<sup>46</sup>"Chartered Organizations," 75.

<sup>47</sup>Benton H. Rosen, "The Gemiloth Chasodim of Rhode Island," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 5 (November, 1969), 287.

<sup>48</sup>Account Book, 1922-1928, Gemileth Chesed Association of Pawtucket and Central Falls, located in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association archives.

<sup>49</sup>Oral history interview with Alexander Rumpler, in the offices of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, July 10, 1984.

<sup>50</sup>Sam Shlevin interview.

## MASONRY AND THE COLONIAL JEWS OF NEWPORT

BY BERNARD KUSINITZ, M.D.

The evolution of Masonry in the Old World and its establishment in the New World is full of uncertainty. Some people trace its origins back to Solomon's Temple and to ancient Egypt, but most suggest that it rightfully belongs to the guilds of the Middle Ages. Likewise, some suggest that Masonry entered the New World in the 17th and 18th centuries at Nova Scotia or at Annapolis, Maryland. Henry W. Rugg in his book, *History of Freemasonry in Rhode Island*, stated that with the formation of the English Grand Lodge in 1717 in Massachusetts, "There has been a governing body of the Craft from which directly or indirectly all Masonic lodges in existence trace their origin." Actually, the undisputed historical beginning of duly authorized Masonry in the United States began in 1730 in both Philadelphia and Boston, and each city claims precedence. In Newport the first authorized lodge, St. John's Lodge No. 1, was established in 1749. However, if you grant the hypothesis that a veil of mystery and uncertainty clouded the European genesis and the American origin, then you should also be able to accept my findings that a form of Freemasonry was introduced and practiced by the first Jewish settlers of Newport as early as 1658. Consequently, one could argue that the first documentable instance of the practice of Freemasonry in the American colonies preceded others, and that it occurred nearly a century before its duly authorized counterparts. In short, the early history of Masonry in Rhode Island was directly related to the Jewish community of Newport.

Alvah H. Sanborn, a Mason, speaking on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Van Rensselaer Lodge of Perfection, Newport, in 1924, made the following comments:

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Address delivered November 14, 1983 at Touro Synagogue on the occasion of the visitation to St. John's Lodge No. 1 of the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons for the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Charles A. Calverly, Jr., and adapted for publication. Ed.

Masonry in Newport goes back to the very early period in colonial history — how far, no man ventures to assert. Of course, there were Masons in Newport long before St. John's Lodge No. 1 was established in 1749, and tradition tells us that there were meetings long before the opening of the seventeenth century. While tradition is not history, it is a well established fact that Masonry flourished in Newport from the earliest time, and as Newport was one of the largest and most prosperous communities in the New World, the fact is by no means surprising.

Sanborn's use of the word "tradition" is unfortunate because it clearly gives the impression that historical data cannot substantiate such claims. Furthermore, the tradition of which he spoke does not acknowledge the relationship of Masonry to the Newport Jews, nor does he clarify further the bare fact of that tradition. Did Sanborn imply that tradition which asserts that the three white stones embedded in the peculiar mortar of Newport's Old Stone Mill as evidence of its Masonic origin? How about the tradition that speaks of a gathering of Brethren in Newport in 1656? Or perhaps it was the tradition that suggests that certain peculiar marks on the stonework of the Newport State House point to the involvement of Masons in its construction? One cannot confirm nor deny any of these traditions — and that has kept them alive.

None of these traditions, however, point to an actual beginning of the Craft in Newport. It is a missing element that must be addressed. An exposition of this link turns to history, and the first clues appear in an 1868 manual for Masons of Connecticut, titled *Guide to the Chapter*. Authored by John Gould, whose family has been a member of the St. John's Lodge No. 1 of Newport since 1760, this volume revealed that "the earliest account of the introduction of Masonry into the United States is in the history of the lodge organized in Rhode Island [around] 1658, or 59 years before the establishment of the first lodge in Massachusetts." As the basis for his claim, Gould quoted from Rev. Edward Peterson's 1833 *History of Rhode Island*. While Peterson's work contains one glaring inaccuracy, his major contribution is clear.

In the spring of 1658, Mordecai Campanell, Moses Pechekoe [Pacheco], Levi, and others, in all fifteen families, arrived in Newport from Holland. They brought with them the three first degrees of Masonry, and worked them in the house of Campanell, and continued to do so, they and their successors, to the year 1742.<sup>1</sup>

Together, these two statements are significant from both the Jewish and the

Masonic standpoint. Jewish tradition, backed by historical evidence considers this to be the actual beginning of the Jewish community of Newport.

Peterson's remarks were not based on mere tradition, but on the testimony of Nathan H. Gould. Gould's family, although not Jewish, knew more about Jewish colonial history in Newport than any other. Its members had been Masons, had lived in Newport, and while there had acquired documentary evidence to substantiate the claim.

When the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts heard of Peterson's claim it wrote to Nathan H. Gould, who was by then a Mason of high rank, for further information. Gould's reply was printed in the 1870 *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts*. In it he substantiated Peterson's findings based on Masonic tradition and on a fragile document he uncovered in 1839. This document and other papers had been found in an old chest that had belonged to one of Gould's deceased relatives. I have seen several different versions of what was said in that document. While all vary somewhat in style and detail, the text is essentially identical. The first part of the document presents dates in Hebrew and English in some versions but is obliterated in others. This is followed by textual material which was quoted by Gould in his reply.

Wee mett att y House of Mordecai Campanell and after  
Synagogue wee gave Abm. Moses the degrees of Masonrie.

Admittedly, this is a fragile basis for such grandiose claims. To be sure, skepticism on the part of 19th century Masons existed: some were concerned about its unknown authorship, and others about the lack of corroborative evidence.

Nevertheless, I accept it as authentic, and I accept the idea that just nineteen years after the founding of Newport itself the dim beginning of both Judaism and Masonry may be found. First, the names cited by both Peterson and the document have been historically verified as authentic.<sup>2</sup> Second, the fragmented document was written in a style consistent with that used by 17th century Newport Jews. Third, the entire Gould family of Newport has been found completely reliable in everything they have written, and there was no good reason to think that Nathan Gould would forge such a document. Fourth, while 19th century Masons were unable to assign authorship to the document, an author can be deduced and both he and the chest can be linked and traced.<sup>3</sup> Last, the document should be accepted as authentic as long as we do not read into it what it cannot support. While it was not a duly authorized form of Masonry, the evidence indicates that Newport Jews practiced whatever form of Masonry existed in the Old World or was possible in the New. No place does it state or infer that a

Masonic lodge *per se* was involved, or that anyone associated with it claimed authority despite the use of the word “lodge” by Gould. One should not read too much into the words “degree” or “three degrees” either. Perhaps “rite” or “ritual” could have served as well. The document should be taken at face value; that is, a group stayed after religious services and inducted one of its members into “Masonrie.” These people acted on their own because no legal authority from an official governing body had been activated.

In 1693 this first wave of Jewish “pioneers” was joined by additional immigrants from Curacao. The few references that exist for Jews in Newport in the 1680s suggest that these newcomers augmented those who remained from the first group. Historians have repeatedly stated that not too much is known about the community: they purchased land for a cemetery in 1677 and they were involved in a court case.<sup>4</sup> In my research I have found no evidence for the existence of this community for a period of fifty to sixty years. This leads one to two probable conclusions. The first is that its members left either singularly or in groups so that the community disappeared in time. The second is that a Jewish community existed but that its members were of modest accomplishment, leaving no evidence of their existence nor can one trace any of their names to the brilliant community that followed in the 1740s and 1750s. One might also suggest that the practice of Masonry in Newport either diminished or disappeared with the collapse of the first Jewish community.

Although this recitation of the origins of Masonry in Newport may still have its doubters, no one debates the establishment of the first duly authorized lodge in Newport, the founding of St. John’s Lodge No. 1 in 1749. These Jews came from New York, Boston, Portugal, the Caribbean islands, and if you want to go back farther, from England, Holland, Poland, and Germany. These were the famous Jews of colonial Newport, and among them were the families of Aaron Lopez, Jacob Rodrigues Rivera, Moses Levy, Isaac Hart, Isaac Pollock — five of the most important families in Newport. They epitomize the commercial success of Newport in its Golden Age prior to the American Revolution, and their names ubiquitous in civic, religious, mercantilistic and Masonic endeavors. They were followed by such names as Isaacs, Sarzedas, Hayes, Seixas, Elizer, Myer, Mendes, Jacob, and many others. Together, they created a complete Jewish community with a full range of services and institutions.<sup>5</sup> These were men of distinction, ability, and social consciousness, but their number was not large as some historians have suggested. Instead of nearly a thousand, my estimate places the number of families at twenty to thirty, for an approximate total of two hundred people.

If my estimate of the number of families is correct, then my calculations

suggest that from two-thirds to five-sixths of the Newport Jewish community belonged to the Masonic fraternity. These are impressive numbers. They indicate, that Masonry, more than any other leisure-time activity, was an integral part of these people's lives. Significantly, twice as many men belonged to the Masons than to their own exclusive Jewish Men's Club. Are we not justified, then, in concluding that Masonry and the colonial Jews of Newport had a profound effect on one another?

But who were these fellows, and can we be sure that they were both Masons and Jews? The answer is "Yes, I am sure." Although three separate lists of Masons of the Jewish faith exist, each has errors because the compilers relied almost exclusively on secondary sources for their information. (See Appendix A) Consequently, I have prepared a fourth list based on both primary Masonic and Jewish sources, independent of each other. For a Jewish Mason to appear on my list he had to be named in documents of impeccable credentials. Of course, some names appear on all four lists; several do not make my list; others are pending further investigation. (See Appendix B)

To single out Moses Michael Hayes and Moses Seixas as the two most important Jewish masons is unavoidable. Nowhere was the new chain of command in Masonry more apparent than in the career of Moses Hayes. Appointed in 1768 as Deputy General of Masonry for North America, Hayes' mission, under the authority granted to him by the Grand Council of Princes at Kingston, Jamaica, was to introduce the "Scottish Rite" to America. He had been given, according to the patent, "full power to constitute Lodges of Royal Arch and Perfection, also Councils and Grand Councils of Knights of the East and Princes of Jerusalem. . . ." The appointment of Hayes, a Jew, to such high honors in America, when Jews were being expelled, hated, and persecuted throughout Europe, was but another indication that the New World would be different from the Old and that Hayes was an extremely able individual. His name and Masonry in America are synonymous. Hayes organized the King David Lodge in New York and then was instrumental in moving it to Newport in 1780. He served as its first Master from 1780 to 1782, and after moving to Boston continued to travel throughout the colonies spreading the doctrine of Masonry.

There is little to dispute that after the death of Aaron Lopez, the "Merchant Prince of Newport," and Jacob Rodrigues Rivera and others, Moses Seixas completely dominated the Jewish community of Newport. He was one of its leading citizens, a prominent merchant, and the last president of Congregation Yeshuat Israel before the community faded away. He even acted as the *mohel*, or ritual circumcizer. A master of the English language, he authored two famous letters to George Washington: one from the Masons and the other from the Hebrew congregation. It should be of special

interest and a source of great pride to all Masons that Seixas' penned words "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance" were used by Washington in his address to the new government. Additionally, Seixas was one of the founding members of the Bank of Rhode Island in Newport, serving as its cashier until his death.

His prominence in Masonry was no less pronounced. He served as Senior Warden under Moses M. Hayes in the King David Lodge, and after Hayes' departure he became its Master, supervising the reconstitution of the St. John Lodge No. 1 with the King David Lodge in 1790, retaining his title of Master until 1808. He also served as Grand High Priest of the Royal Arch from 1795 to 1803 after his appointment as Deputy Inspector General of Masonry for Rhode Island. Instrumental in its formation, Seixas assumed the post of Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island from 1802 to 1807. In addition to his service to Rhode Island Masonry, Seixas is also credited with helping L'Union Francais Lodge No. 17 of New York overcome its difficulties. After its formation in 1798 that lodge was placed on probation for six months. Seixas joined it and assisted in petitioning the Grand Lodge of New York for authority to continue its Masonic labors. Leon H. Depas, historian of the lodge, even stated that "the presence of a brother of such stature as Seixas without a doubt helped to enhance the credibility of this group of bretheren." And so they survived.

What more can one say of the Jewish Mason from Newport, Rhode Island? Such was his prestige; such was his illustrious career. Such also has been the relationship of early Masonry in Rhode Island and the Jewish community of Newport. No matter what standard of comparison one adopts — commercial, religious, patriotic, social conscience — the colonial Jews of Newport and the Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons were synonymous from 1658 to at least the early part of the 19th century.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Peterson is inaccurate in that these Jews came from Barbados and, instead of surviving until 1742, the community left no trace of its existence for a significant period of time.

<sup>2</sup>These names appeared in a purchase of land agreement for a Jewish cemetery in 1677, and again in a court case. Both reaffirmed the names of the Gould document and of Peterson's statement.

<sup>3</sup>The connection that links the fragmented document, the chest, and Nathan Gould involves the relationship of the following families: Pacheco, Carr, Wanton, Hull, and Gould. First, it has to be established that Moses Pacheco was the author of the disputed document. Along with Mordecai Campanell he was one of the two leaders of the pioneer Jewish community. Second, how did the old chest, which contained the critically important document, get from the house of Pacheco to the house of Gould? Reasonable conjecture, based on irrefutable facts, suggests that its history was as follows.

Upon Pacheco's death, the court appointed Caleb Carr as the administrator of the estate. Upon Carr's death, he willed to his son Edward, among other things, "the chest that stands in the hall which I had of Moses Pacheco the Jew." Now there is no question but that the families of Caleb Carr and John Wanton were close. Both men were outstanding Quakers of Newport, and both had served as governors of Rhode Island. The former was active in real estate and in business, the latter was one of Newport's most prominent merchants. Members of both families were Masons. When Carr's will of 1693-1694 was recorded in 1715, John Wanton was one of the witnesses. There is a suggestion also, that branches of the two families were united by marriage. Whether it was because Wanton had better storage facilities or because the two families were close, papers originally belonging to the Carr family ended up in the Wanton family.

The next connection was Hannah Hull. She was a great, great granddaughter of John Wanton. When she died, Nathan Gould's father, also a relation to the Wanton family, was appointed administrator of her estate. This then, is the explanation behind Nathan Gould's story that in an old chest belonging to a deceased relative he found certain papers, including the famous document in question.

<sup>4</sup>Further research on the cemetery is being conducted to ascertain if anything more can be learned about the Jewish community during these years.

<sup>5</sup>To be considered a full-fledged Jewish community the following services and institutions had to be provided: a cemetery, a synagogue, a religious school, a kosher butcher, a ritual bath, and a *mohel*. In addition, the observance of the Sabbath, attendance at weekly and holiday services, the giving of charity, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and the offering of hospitality to visitors and strangers, all are phases of Judaic tradition and all were practiced in Newport.

APPENDIX A

LISTS OF JEWISH MASONS OF NEWPORT

*St John's Lodge<sup>1</sup>*

Christian Myers  
 Moses Isaacs, 1760  
 Isaac Isaacs, 1760  
 David Lopez, 1762  
 Jacob Isaacs, 1763  
 Moses Lopez, 1763  
 Isaac Elizer, 1765

*St. John's Lodge<sup>2</sup>*

Moses Isaacs  
 Isaac Isaacs  
 David Lopez  
 Moses Lopez  
 Isaac Elizer  
 Eleazer Elizer  
 Moses M. Hayes  
 David Lopez, Jr.  
 Solomon A. Myers  
 Abraham P. Mendes  
 Moses Seixas  
 Jacob Jacobs  
 Barak Hayes

*King David Lodge<sup>3</sup>*

Moses M. Hayes  
 Solomon A. Myers  
 Isaac Isaacks  
 (broker, 1760)  
 Joseph Jacobs  
 Eliezer Elizer  
 Moses Isaacks  
 (silversmith, 1760)  
 Isaac Elizer  
 Christian Myers  
 (doubtful)  
 S. Simpson  
 Samuel Levy  
 (member, 1760)  
 Abm. Pollock, 1760  
 D. Lopez, 1762  
 Jacob Francks, 1763  
 (broker in flax)  
 Moses Lopez, 1763  
 Nathaniel Phillips  
 (member, St. John's  
 Lodge, 1793-1795)  
 Daniel Phillips  
 (Father made a  
 member, 1747. In  
 St. Johns Lodge,  
 1793-1795)

*King David Lodge<sup>1</sup>*

Eleazer Elizer  
 Moses M. Hayes  
 Isaac Isaacs  
 David Lopez, Jr.  
 Sol. A. Myers  
 Abraham P. Mendez  
 Moses Seixas  
 Jacob Jacobs  
 Barrak Hayes, 1791  
 Sheftall Sheftall, 1792  
 Abraham Massias, 1800

*King David Lodge<sup>2</sup>*

Moses M. Hayes  
 Solomon A. Myers  
 Joseph Jacobs  
 Eleazer Elizer  
 Moses Isaacks  
 Isaac Isaacks  
 Isaac Elizer  
 S. Simpson  
 Samuel Levy  
 Abm. Pollock  
 David Lopez  
 Joseph Francks  
 Moses Lopez  
 Nathaniel Phillips  
 Daniel Phillips

- <sup>1</sup>Samuel Oppenheim, "The Jews and Masonry in the United States Before 1810," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 19 (1910), 19.
- <sup>2</sup>Morris A. Gutstein, *The Story of Jews of Newport* (New York, 1936), 168-169.
- <sup>3</sup>"The Lyon Collection," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 27 (1920), 416.

APPENDIX B

BERNARD KUSINITZ'S LIST OF JEWISH MASONS<sup>1</sup>

Moses Isaacs  
Isaac Jacobs  
Myer Pollock  
David Lopez  
Jacob Isaacs  
Moses Lopez  
Isaac Elizer  
Eleazer Elizer  
Moses M. Hayes  
Isaac Isaacs  
David Lopez, Jr.  
Solomon A. Meyers  
Abraham Perreira Mendes  
Moses Seixas  
Joseph Jacobs  
Baruch Hayes  
Sheftall Sheftall  
Abraham Rodrigues Rivera

<sup>1</sup>To be included in this list, a name had to appear in both Jewish and Masonic sources. Some names that appeared in Appendix A and rejected here might have been members of Masonic lodges in other communities before moving to Newport. Nevertheless, since their names did not appear in both Masonic and Jewish records for Newport, the assumption was that they were not active members while in Newport.

## SOURCES

*Primary*

- Assorted Documents Pertaining to Masonry. Box 69 folder 3, box 52 folder 8. Newport Historical Society, Newport, R.I.  
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Smith, H. P. "Free Masonry and Odd Fellowship," in A. B. Field, ed., *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History*. Vol. 3, chapter 6. Boston, 1902.  
"The Lyon Collection," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 27 (1920), 416.

## 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. *Rhode Island: A Bibliography of its History*. Edited by Roger Parks, Senior Research Associate, Boston University. This work is volume 5 of the Bibliographies of New England series prepared by the Committee for a New England Bibliography, John Borden Armstrong, Boston University, chairman and series editor. University Press of New England, Hanover, New Hampshire; London, England, 1983. 223 pages, indexed, hardcover.

Items too numerous to mention, many extracted from the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*.

2. *The Jewish Experience in America: a Historical Bibliography*. Compiled from the data base of the American Bibliographical Center by editors at ABC-Clio Inc. ABC-Clio Inc., Santa Barbara, California; Oxford, England, 1983. 190 pages, hardcover.

Items too numerous to mention, many extracted from the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*.

3. *American Jewish Archives*. Published by The American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati. Volume 35 (April 1983), under "Selected Acquisitions" includes entry of "Braude, William G.; Providence, R.I. Autobiography and Miscellaneous Sermons and Lectures, 1932-1976; Typescript and Printed (Received from William G. Braude)."

Volume 35 (November 1983), mentions Rabbi William G. Braude in paper by David Polish, "The Changing and Constant in the Reform Rabbinate," on page 286. Also mentioned is Rabbi Samuel Belkin in paper by Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886-1983," on pages 142-143, 149, 156, 159.

4. *American Jewish History*. Published by the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Volume 73 (December 1983), notes *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 8 (November 1982), on page 211.

Volume 73 (June 1984), notes *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 9 (November 1983), on page 453.

5. *Archival acquisitions*. The archives of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

on September 24, 1984 received the following materials from the Pawtucket-Central Falls Chapter of Hadassah:

Donation program books (1937-1970); Minutes (1924-1977); Account Books (1949-1974; several photographs and snapshots; and miscellaneous items, including letters, program notices and invitations.

### THE THIRTIETH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was held on Sunday, April 21, 1984 at the Rhode Island Jewish Community Center, 130 Sessions Street, Providence. Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky, president, called the meeting to order at 2:40 p.m., and requested that the reading of the minutes of the last Annual Meeting and the Midwinter Meeting be waived. The request was granted.

Bertha Kasper, Treasurer, reported a total income for the calendar year ending December 31, 1983 of \$16,220. Expenses amounted to \$10,911.16, leaving a balance of \$5,309.64 in Fleet National Bank. Mrs. Kasper also reported that \$9,065.78 had been invested in the Fidelity Cash Reserve Fund, that life Membership and Endowment Funds had a balance of \$1,817.23, and that \$2,500 was on deposit at the Pawtucket Institution for Savings. The total net worth of the Association was reported at \$18,692.25. The Treasurer's report was approved as read.

Louis I. Sweet, Budget Chairman, reported an increase in the number of members, and reviewed the 1984 budget as adopted at the Midwinter Meeting. Melvin Zurier, Membership Chairman, elaborated on this report and announced that eighteen new members had been recruited.

Eleanor Horvitz, Librarian and Archivist, explained some of the services and activities she engaged in for the Association during the year. She reported that the *Encyclopedia Judaica* will include information about the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, and that the Pawtucket Preservation Society will publish a 1985 calendar which will include a picture of the old Ahavoth Shalom Synagogue of Pawtucket. Dr. Goldowsky acknowledged Mrs. Horvitz's many contributions and added that, in addition to her regular duties, she also handles publicity and contributes articles to the *notes*.

Dr. Goldowsky next announced the selection of a new Editor of the

*Notes*, Dr. George H. Kellner. He noted that the new Editor received his doctorate in history from the University of Missouri, that recently he had published *Rhode Island: The Independent State*, that he was a cocreator of the multi-image show "Providence: A Century of Greatness, 1832-1932," and that he has contributed numerous articles to local and national historical journals. Dr. Kellner holds the position of Professor of History at Rhode Island College.

Dr. Kellner addressed the audience, indicating his commitment to the Association and to making the *Notes* a respected historical journal. He spoke with enthusiasm about the Association's \$500 grant for a scholar-in-residence, about the possibility of student membership, and about the archives. Additionally, he continued to suggest that members have a voice in the *Notes* through suggestions for improvement and submission of material for publication. In closing Dr. Kellner called upon all members to support him and the Association so that he may fully carry out his responsibilities.

Jerome Spunt, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, reported that in addition to the Secretary, the Association has created the new position of Recording Secretary. Sidney Long has agreed to become the Recording Secretary. The slate of Officers of the Association was read as follows: Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., President; Geraldine S. Foster, Vice President; Stella Glassman, Secretary; Bertha I. Kasper, Treasurer. The new members of the Executive Committee were announced as Zelda Gourse, Barbara Long, and Bernard Kusinitz. The names of Honorary Members of the Executive Committee and the names and terms of continuing members were read. A motion was made, seconded, and carried to elect the slate as presented by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. Dr. Goldowsky introduced the new officers. He also requested a minute of silence in memory of the late Howard Presel, former Executive Committee member, who had died during his incumbency in the past year.

Dr. Goldowsky next introduced the featured speaker, Lawrence H. Fuchs, Ph.D., Walter and Meyer Jaffe Professor of American Civilization and Politics and Chairman of the American Studies Department, Brandeis University. Dr. Fuchs complimented the Association and its work, and added that he felt privileged to address its membership on the topic of "The Jews of New England: Anything Special?" (A condensed version of this presentation may be found in this volume of the *Notes*.)

A question period followed. After adjournment of the meeting at 4:30 p.m., a collation followed.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella Glassman  
Secretary

## NECROLOGY

ADELSON, JOSEPH, born in Russia, a son of the late Elix and Devora (Kusinitz) Adelson. A former Newport resident, he lived in Providence for 58 years. He was a member of the law firm of Adelson and Chernick since 1929. He graduated from Harvard University in 1923, and from Yale Law School, where he was a member of the Order of Coif, in 1929.

He served nine years on the Providence Redevelopment Agency, resigning in 1972 with the post of vice chairman. He also belonged to the Urban League of Rhode Island and to the Rhode Island Bar Association. He was a member of Temple Emanu-El and an officer at the time of its founding.

Died on September 14, 1984 at the age of 82.

BARENBAUM, MORRIS, founder of Morris Clothes. He was a member of Congregation Sons of Jacob, Workmen's Circle, Touro Fraternal Association, the Elks, and the South Providence and Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association.

Died on October 4, 1983.

EPSTEIN, HERBERT W., born in New York City, a son of Samuel and Ethel (Rosenblum) Epstein. He had graduated from Brown University in 1949 and was manager of Max Oberhard, Inc. since 1953. He was a World War II Army veteran.

He served as president of the Newport County Council of the Navy League, member of the Navy League of the United States, of the Naval War College Foundation. He was a trustee and member of the planning and development committee of Newport Hospital, past vice president of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Newport Players Guild and the Newport Discussion Group.

He was founding member of Temple Shalom, vice president of the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue, and financial secretary of Touro Synagogue.

Died on September 8, 1984 at the age of 59.

FEITAL, PEARL, daughter of Harry and Sadie (Silverstein ) Seder. As the wife of Samuel Feital, she had lived in Pawtucket for the past 40 years.

Died on September 30, 1984.

KAGAN, SAMUEL C., born in Russia, a son of the late Harry and Ethel (Brody) Kagan. He lived in Providence most of his life, and he was the founder of Kagan & Shawcross Insurance Agency from which he retired in 1979. A Democrat, he was an Alderman in the City of Providence, and from 1937 to 1976 he served in the House of Representatives in the General Assembly of Rhode Island.

Mr. Kagan supervised the state's redrawing of political districts to comply with the 1970 census, headed a governor's commission studying the problems of handgun control, and rose to deputy house majority leader.

Died on July 6, 1984 at the age of 75.

PRESEL, HOWARD, born in Providence, a son of the late Joseph and Esther (Spiegel) Presel. He graduated from Brown University in 1928. He was a Councilman in the City of Providence for 17 years.

Appointed State Records Supervisor, he supervised the restructuring of Rhode Island's records system in 1952. Under his direction, documents of historical and legal value were processed and preserved. After his retirement in June of 1974, he assumed the same task for the City of Providence.

Mr. Presel belonged to the Players, one of the state's longest active community theatre groups, was a member of the Providence Art Club, and served on the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died on February 28, 1984 at the age of 77.

PRESEL, MARIE N., born in Somerville, Mass., daughter of the late Barnet and Kate Roitman. A Providence resident throughout most of her life, she served as president of the Providence Center for Counseling and Psychiatric Services.

Mrs. Presel was a member of Temple Beth-El and its Sisterhood.

Died on January 11, 1984 at the age of 73.

SOFORENKO, MIRIAM, born in Providence, daughter of the late Charles and Lena (Rosenblatt) Silverman. She was an officer and board member of Insurance Underwriters Inc. and its three affiliated companies.

Active in many civic, religious, and philanthropic organizations, Mrs. Soforenko had served on the board of directors of Temple Beth-El and Temple Emanu-El. She had also been an officer of the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Blindness, and served as chairman of its screening programs. During World War II she won an award for sales of U.S. Savings Bonds.

Died on November 19, 1983 at the age of 66.

STRAUSS, ELSIE, a daughter of the late Max and Sarah (Brooks) Tatz. She was a lifelong resident of Providence. She taught physical education in the Providence School Department for 36 years until her retirement in 1952.

She was a member of the Providence Hebrew Day School, Meeting Street School, the Rhode Island Retired Teachers Association, and the National Retired Teachers Association.

A member of the former Temple Beth Israel, she was active in the Jewish Home for the Aged, the Miriam Hospital Women's Association, and the Pioneer Women.

Died on November 9, 1984 at the age of 89.

SUZMAN, ARLINE, born in Providence, a daughter of the late Joseph H. and Julia (Horvitz) Marcus. She graduated from the former Rhode Island College of Education in 1942, and received a master's degree from that institution in 1962.

A Bristol resident for twelve years, Mrs. Suzman was a member of the Interfaith Choir, and a member of the board of trustees and a past vice president of the United Brothers Synagogue.

She was founder and coordinator of the Hope High School Alumni Association. She was also affiliated with Brown University and Rhode Island College as a teacher-critic in English for undergraduate student interns.

Died on April 5, 1984 at the age of 63.

YOUNG, MORTON, born in Poland, a son of the late Shapshel and Rachel (Levin) Young. He was founder and owner of both the Raymond Mattress Company and Gold Star Mattress, Inc.

A member of Temple Emanu-El and a life member of the Temple's Men's Club. He also belonged to the Providence Rotary Club and to the Touro Fraternal Association.

Died on September 5, 1984.

ZACKS, BENJAMIN, born in Russia, a son of the late Wolf and Fannie Zacks. He lived in Taunton, Mass., before settling in Providence in 1933. He was associated with Benny's from the firm's original store on Fountain Street in Providence.

He served on many boards and committees in the Providence area, including membership in Temple Beth-El and its Brotherhood, the Miriam Hospital Association, and the Touro Fraternal Association.

Died on April 28, 1984.

ERRATUM

*RIJHN* Volume 9, number 1, November 1983, inside the back cover under "Life Members of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association" the name Mrs. Harold A. Gourse should read:

Mrs. Harry A. Gourse.

FUNDS AND BEQUESTS OF THE RHODE ISLAND  
JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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SEEBERT J. AND GERTRUDE N. GOLDOWSKY ..... *Scholarship Fund*  
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For information on becoming a Life Member or establishing a Fund,  
write to the Association at 130 Sessions Street, Providence, Rhode Island  
02906.

**BACK COVER**

Joseph (left) and Jacob Goodman, Pawtucket, R.I., @1910. Joseph, a  
professor of mathematics and physics at Rutgers University, became an  
attorney and practices with the firm of Levy, Goodman. Jacob practices law  
with Semonoff, Gorin in Providence, R.I.

(Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, donation of Jacob Goodman Family)

