

# **RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES**

VOLUME 12 NOVEMBER 1997 NUMBER 3

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Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D. (1907-1997) and Judith Weiss Cohen (1923-1997)



# RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D. AND JUDITH WEISS COHEN  
IN HONOR OF THEIR VAST CONTRIBUTIONS TO  
THIS PUBLICATION AND TO  
RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORY

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*Keith Stokes, Executive Director of the  
Newport County Chamber of Commerce.  
(From The Jewish Voice of RI, July 1996.)*



## A WHITE, BLACK, JEWISH FAMILY

BY JANE S. SPRAGUE

When people become institutions, and centuries go by with their names more attached to streets and buildings than to relationships and actions, we often are startled to learn of their human qualities: passion, humor, stubbornness, shyness, tears and fears hidden behind the deeds that have given them immortality. Even our own ancestors often are just names on a family tree with little known of who they were and how they lived their intimate lives.

That makes the ancestral stories uncovered by Keith and Theresa Stokes of Newport especially engaging. Stimulated by Stokes family oral history and inherited memorabilia, they have searched census records, discovered wills, read personal correspondence, scoured books and historical documents to discover the passion and pathos of Keith's ancestors. These stories unmask the institutionalized image and humanize the most well known of the Jews of Colonial Newport, Rhode Island, and Antebellum Richmond, Virginia. It should make a book, and Theresa Stokes may take that challenge. For now, let's look at an abbreviated account of a fascinating phase of American Jewish history.

### The Players:

**Moses Michael Hays**, a Sephardic merchant trader from New York City who moved to Newport in the mid-1700s, and his family. Especially important are his sister, **Reyna**, and two of his daughters, **Catherine** and **Sloe**.

The **Myer Myers** (Hays's brother-in-law) family from New York City. A son, **Samuel**, married an older Hays daughter, **Judith**.

**Isaac Touro**, religious leader of the synagogue in Newport, married **Reyna Hays**. They had three children, one a boy named **Judah**.

**Richard Gustavus Forrester**, son of **Gustavus Myers**, who was the son of **Judith and Samuel Myers**.

**Keith Stokes**, executive director of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce, former member of the Newport City Council.

### The Locations:

Newport, Jamaica, Boston, New Orleans, Richmond, Va., and Harlem.

### The Time:

About 1760 to today.

### THE EARLY NEWPORT YEARS

Keith Stokes describes the Sephardic Jews who immigrated to Colonial America from Holland and the Caribbean as "already well assimilated, successful business-

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This article is adapted from *The Jewish Voice of Rhode Island*, Jane S. Sprague, Editor, with amplification from Theresa Stokes.

men, particularly as merchant/traders." Records bear that out.

They built elegant houses in Newport along what is now Washington Square and the streets around Touro Synagogue, and they adorned them with fine furnishings. They had extensive libraries, were well read and well spoken — both the men and the women. While influential in the general community, they lived Jewish lives, conducting services in private homes.

Moses Michael Hays was one of the leaders, working intimately with Aaron Lopez, Jacob Rivera, Moses Seixas, and others in tight, interlinking circles of business, family and community.

By the late 1750s, seventy-five Jewish families, representing a population of 250 to 300 people, lived among Newport's 8,000 residents. It was time to build a synagogue. Among the supporters of the project were New York Jewish community leader Judah Hays and his son Moses Michael Hays. It was at this time that the community sought a trained spiritual leader to help lead them in the project.

"The romantic story," Stokes says, "was that Isaac Touro was shipping out for America from Holland, indentured, when one of the Newport Jewish merchants came upon him aboard ship and rescued him. The truth is that he was a rabbinical student, recruited to lead the Newport congregation and oversee the construction of the synagogue."

The community hired Peter Harrison, who had just done Redwood Library, as the architect. Harrison was reluctant to do the job since he knew nothing of synagogues. But Touro told him in minute detail about the great synagogue in Amsterdam, so Harrison designed the Newport synagogue, on a reduced scale, from those descriptions. Myer Myers, the New York City silversmith, crafted adornments.

After finishing this project in 1763, Touro settled down as *chazan* (cantor, Yiddish) for the Newport congregation. Two years later he married Hays' sister, Reyna, who was affectionately called by her English name, Polly. By 1776, sixteen years after coming to Newport, Isaac Touro was living in a community in revolt. Times were not right for merchant/traders, so the Jews began to leave. There was a fast exodus once the British captured the harbor and town. All left, that is, but Isaac Touro and Moses Michael Hays. Stokes refutes the claim that Touro or his brother-in-law, Hays, were Tories. His research indicates that the community's spiritual leader stayed to negotiate protection for the synagogue so it would not be desecrated. During the occupation, the synagogue was used as a hospital for British and Hessian soldiers, with Touro watching and guarding the Torah.

Through these turbulent times, men's loyalties were constantly questioned. Moses Michael Hays was not spared from the scrutiny of his fellow patriots. In fact,

the Jewish men in particular were under suspicion, and when his time came, Hays rose to the occasion when he appeared before the General Assembly of Rhode Island on suspicion "of being inimical to the United American Colonies and the arduous struggle in which they are engaged against the force of Great Britain." In a written and verbal address, Moses Michael Hays answered the charges, stating that though he had always supported the cause, he refused to sign a declaration on the fact that, among other things, the Continental Congress had not granted the vote and equal liberties to Israelites.

Never a hearty man, Isaac Touro contracted an affliction which his family hoped a better climate would cure. They went to Jamaica and were soon joined by the Hays family. It was there that the last Hays child, Sloe, was born, and it was there that Isaac died.

#### ALONE IN BOSTON

By the end of the Revolution, Newport was nearly destroyed. Hays returned to the new country, this time to fashionable Hanover Street, in the North End of Boston. With him were not only his wife and children, but also his widowed sister Reyna and her small children, Judah, Abraham, and Rebecca Touro. Although one might not consider a household of eleven people as being "alone," the Hays clan was the only Jewish family in Boston. That did not seem to impede either the depth of their Jewish lives or their ability to integrate into the larger community. As in Newport, they observed Judaism and kept a kosher home.

Hays believed so strongly in adhering to one's religious beliefs that when a Christian lad, Samuel Mays (later an ardent abolitionist), stayed in their home, Hays insisted that the Irish servant girl, Excy Gill, see to it that young Samuel said his Christian prayers.

Hays left trade for insurance and became prominent in the general community. A Mason, he brought the Scottish Rite to Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and gathered as members all the prominent men of Boston, most notably, Paul Revere as Grand Master. He co-founded the institution that would later become the Bank of Boston, whose headquarters still displays his Masonic apron. Stokes says that Hays's great disappointment was never getting elected to public office.

As with many fathers, Hays was picky about his daughters' futures. The strong-willed Catherine and her cousin, Judah Touro, developed a loving and, according to Stokes's research, physical relationship during their late teens. Hays considered Judah sickly and unattractive and would have none of it.

In his dual role as Catherine's father and Judah's uncle/guardian, he shipped Judah to Europe on a business mission that he did not think the youth could fulfill,





*Judah Touro (1775-1854). Moses Michael Hays considered him "sickly and unattractive" and unfit for his daughter's hand. (Sketch of a daguerreotype in possession of the American Jewish Historical Society.)*

thereby expecting him to remain abroad. Hays grossly underestimated Judah Touro's business acumen. When he returned, triumphant, Hays expelled him from the house at State and Hanover. When Moses Michael Hays died in 1805 he remembered all his and his sister's children ... all except Judah. Perhaps, Stokes theorizes, it was just a case of "out of sight, out of mind."

#### A FRESH START SOUTH

Judah Touro settled in another port city, New Orleans. Using his northern contacts, he set up a merchant/trading business, eventually with his own ships, and began to accumulate wealth.

"He was extremely frugal," Stokes says, "squirreling away every penny. He worked hard and hardly ever socialized, yet he was the most eligible bachelor in New Orleans. Mothers were incensed when he showed no interest in their daughters. He is described as literally running away from women. It was probably the mothers. His only friend was his next door neighbor and business associate, David Rezin Shepherd."

Both Touro and Shepherd fought in the War of 1812. Afterwards, some said that Judah, wounded when a 12-pound shot grazed his thigh, was impotent; others thought he and Shepherd were lovers. There is no evidence to support either claim. Just the contrary.

Records show that he had a relationship of some kind with Ellen Wilson, "a free woman of color." According to Stokes family oral history and verified in Judah Touro's will, Touro set Ellen up in a house, provided a stipend for her, and in his will paid off the mortgage and created a fund to pay her taxes. Records also show

that a John Touro, a mulatto, became the accounts keeper for Judah's business. Oral history says there was a second child born to the union in about 1820, although Touro's will states he had "no forced" heirs. Perhaps he had already secured the future of his progeny.

Frugality was not Judah Touro's sole legacy. He was a man of enormous generosity and strongly held convictions. If Christian churches became distressed, Touro would buy and refurbish them, then lease them back to their congregations. He funded the Touro Infirmary in New Orleans, still in existence, with the proviso that it be a true public hospital, open to whites, people of color and slaves.

Much to the consternation of other businessmen, Touro would buy their slaves, educate them, free them and set them up in businesses which, quite often, competed with their former masters. Perhaps the abolitionist and humanitarian philosophies of his uncle had rubbed off on Judah.

Judah lived a quiet life in New Orleans, where he remained until his death in 1854. At the time of his passing he became known as one of America's first great philanthropists. Still, we wonder, did he long for his first love, his Catherine? What was she doing?

#### A SOUTHERN BUSINESSWOMAN

Catherine and sister Sloe, with Irish servant Excy Gill, moved to Richmond, Virginia, about 1819-20, where two older Hays sisters were living, each married to Myers brothers.

It was not an easy family relationship. The Myerses, although practicing Jews, had assimilated and accepted many Southern ways. Catherine was an ardent abolitionist and not the least bashful about saying so. She also objected strongly to family members marrying gentiles and converting. She and Sloe faithfully maintained Jewish traditions and kept kosher.

That didn't keep her, however, from raising pigs on her dairy farm. Stokes laughs about the day the pigs got loose, and Catherine, fearing she would never find them, insisted that the rabbi light a candle for their safe return. There were objections but, the Myers and Hays support of the synagogue being what it was, the candle was lit and the pigs came home.

Catherine and Sloe lived on Broad Street in a large double house. Sister Judith and husband Samuel Myers and their son, Gustavus, lived on the other side. The Myers employed a servant girl, Nellie Forrester, "a free woman of color," setting the stage for an affair between their son and the pretty housemaid. Marriage was out of the question under Virginia law, so the child of their passion, Richard Gustavus Forrester, became the charge of Catherine and Sloe, who raised and educated him

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as a Jew. This would not be the only child the sisters would nurture.

Because Richard could not be educated in Richmond, the sisters had the faithful Excy Gill take him to Canada and Boston for schooling. When Richard returned, about 1840, there was another "child of color" under Catherine's care (Sloe had died in 1834), Narcissa Wilson, Ellen Wilson's child from New Orleans.

"Poor Catherine," we might lament. "Was this how she was to mother Judah Touro's child?" Yet Stokes mentions no record or correspondence in which Catherine rues her lot in life.

#### THE FORRESTER HERITAGE

Richard Gustavus Forrester and Narcissa Wilson, considered first cousins once removed, married and created a Jewish home. Narcissa bore twenty children, the last after she had turned 50.

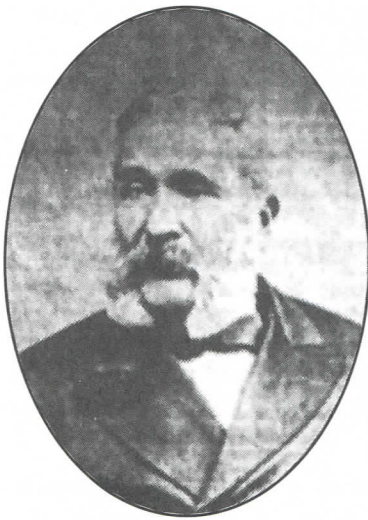
Richard's father, Gustavus Myers, an attorney, drew the wills for his aunts Catherine and Sloe and for Excy Gill. The sisters left hefty bequests for Richard and established investments and trusts for him and his heirs. Even Excy, who had managed to accumulate over \$100,000, left all of her estate to Richard. Catherine died in 1854 and Excy the next year.

The 1860 census listed Richard as a free resident of Richmond, a mulatto who ran a dairy and pig farm and was a building contractor. By all standards he was a well-established, highly regarded man who owned his own home on College Street. Richard was one of two men who negotiated directly with Lincoln for the surrender of Richmond.

After the Civil War, Richard followed in his father's footsteps when he was elected to the Richmond City Council. He was one of the first men of color to be elected to this office, and later became the first to serve on the school board, becoming instrumental in establishing a quality educational program for newly freed slaves. He also helped establish the Order of St. Luke, which became an early bank for newly freed slaves and freemen. His son, William M. T. Forrester, became Grand Master of the Order. Stokes adds that the senior Forrester parlayed his inheritance into an even larger fortune by making "very smart investments."

One of his sons, Richard Gill Forrester, had made his mark in history by raising the first federal flag over the Virginia Capitol when the Confederates evacuated. Having worked as a page in the State House, he had saved the flag when it was torn down, then raised it again to greet the incoming Union forces. After the war, he landed a plum job as a letter carrier and married Cora Briggs, also of mixed color. He tried to keep his family in Virginia, but Richmond was a depressed community. Medical care was below par, and Cora died in childbirth; the death of the infant, her





*Richard Gustavus Forrester, grandson of Moses Michael Hayes, and his wife, Narcissa Wilson, assumed to be the daughter of Judah Touro. (From The Jewish Voice of RI, July 1996.)*

sixth child, followed in a few months. So in 1887, Richard Gill Forrester accepted a position with the New York Railroad and moved his family to the thriving Jewish community in Harlem, where he became an active member of the 125th Street synagogue and kept a kosher home. In the 1900 census he and his children were listed as white.

#### NEWPORT AGAIN

As with other wealthy families, Richard sent his daughters to summer in Newport. They were well aware of their family connections to the seaside town. Both Catherine and Sloe were buried there, and the books and records the Forresters had inherited from the Hays library added to their knowledge.

Thanks to the Hays and Gill inheritance, the Forrester children were very well educated, attending Julliard, Wilberforce and other prestigious schools. Two of the sisters, Ellen and Bessie, decided to move permanently to Newport, living at first in the house at 22 Broadway, the very same home once occupied by their Hays ancestors during Colonial times. Later, Ellen and her husband lived on the property now occupied by the Touro Community Center. Bessie married George Barklay, a black dentist, and by 1919 they owned a rural home on the Newport/Middletown line. This seems to have been the end of the Forrester adherence to Judaism. Bessie joined George's church, Trinity Episcopal, and Ellen became a Congregationalist when she married. Bessie's daughter, Ruth, married Archie Stokes, and bore Keith.

"My Forrester relatives owned a lot of property in Crown Heights, New York," Stokes, age 37, says. "When I was a child I spent a lot of my vacations there. I loved baseball, so being in New York was a dream. It was the Jewish children in Crown Heights who taught me to play stick ball."

Stokes greatly admires his female ancestors. "The 18th and 19th century women in my family were most extraordinary. They clearly were the ones to persevere in keeping the Jewish faith. Many never married because they could not find Jewish men who were as well educated as they or accepting of independent women."

Catherine Hays particularly engages Keith Stokes's affection and respect. "She made all the difference in my family. Because she was such a strong keeper of the faith, she maintained the family, raised Richard and Narcissa and enabled us to have wonderful advantages. Catherine practiced what she preached and did so all her life."

The provisions made by Catherine, Sloe and Excy in the mid 1800s still benefit the family. Stokes was able to earn an undergraduate degree from Cornell and a masters from the University of Chicago thanks to the wealth that began to accumulate in Colonial Newport and passed to Richard Gustavus Forrester.

Today, Keith and Theresa, their four children and his mother, Ruth, live in that spacious, though now hardly rural, house that his grandmother first called home in 1919. One room is filled with inherited photographs and books that go as far back as the Hayses, Touros, and Myerses.

Soon, Theresa Stokes may have her own ancestral records to incorporate into their children's heritage. Born in Guatemala, the granddaughter of Jose Guzman, a native of Spain, she and her mother, when they reflect on some of his habits and his name, suspect he was a crypto-Jew. That research has only just begun.



## A BRIEF HISTORIC NOTE ON SOME "JEWISH" DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

BY STANLEY M. ARONSON, MD AND BETTY E. ARONSON, MD

In the late decades of the 19th century, the Jewish population of London was increased substantially by an influx of coreligionists from the ghettos of eastern Europe. These poor immigrants to England, but a small part of a much larger Polish-Russian exodus to the West, settled mainly in the crowded East London districts of Stepney and Whitechapel. Poverty also narrowed their choice of medical aid and many therefore relied upon the free care rendered by local dispensaries.

### TAY SACHS DISEASE

Warren Tay, an ophthalmologist of Scottish descent, was consultant to the East London Dispensary. During one of his periodic visits he came upon an infant who was thought to be blind. Tay employed a newly devised, noninvasive instrument called an ophthalmoscope which enabled him to visualize the interior of the infant's eyeball. He noted symmetric abnormalities of the retina consisting of "... a conspicuous, tolerably defined, large white patch and showing in its center a brownish red, fairly circular spot." This commentary, published in 1881, represented the first report of what was later to be called the cherry-red spot. In the next few years Tay encountered two other visually impaired infants, each exhibiting the retinal cherry-red spots. He believed that these alterations defined a distinctive disease: a degeneration of the macular region where the nerve fibers from the retina coalesced to form the optic nerve. In a later paper he mentioned, in passing, that all three infants were of Hebrew extraction.

In 1887, Dr. Bernard Sachs, a New York pediatrician and neurologist, encountered an infant who showed what Sachs initially interpreted as an arrest of cerebral development. He published a careful analysis of this infant's clinical course which, he concluded, represented some form of neurodegenerative disorder. During the next decade he identified nineteen further children from the New York region with this heredo-degenerative disease, "... characterized by a triad of manifestations: an arrest of all mental processes; a progressive weakness of all muscles of the body terminating in generalized paralysis; and by rapidly developing blindness associated with ... the cherry-red spot and optic atrophy." All of his patients, he observed, were Jewish. He further concluded that the disease was hereditary since he found

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Stanley M. Aronson, M.D., M.P.H., received his undergraduate education at the City College of New York, his M.D. degree from New York University, and his M.P.H. degree in public health from Harvard University. He has held teaching posts at Columbia, State Univ. of N.Y., Yale, and Brown, where he was founding dean of the Brown University School of Medicine. Betty E. Aronson, M.D., received her undergraduate education from the City College of New York and her M.D. degree from New York University. She is a trained pediatrician and virologist, joining Brown's faculty at its inception as a medical school. The Aronsons have been together, maritally and professionally, for over fifty years.

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it frequently in more than one sibling within the family. He therefore named the disease *Infantile Amaurotic Family Idiocy*. Finally, he provided his colleagues with the first comprehensive pathological analysis of the disease, describing, amongst other features, an abnormal accumulation of a fatty substance within the brain cells. This intracellular aggregation later led others to choose "storage diseases" as one of the generic names for metabolic disorders such as the illness described by Tay and Sachs.

By the turn of the century, this arcane, uniformly fatal disorder of infancy came to be known as Tay Sachs disease (TSD); for the next half-century it remained little more than a morbid footnote in the lengthier pediatric texts. Only a modest number of physicians was acquainted with TSD, and to the general public it was essentially unknown. By 1940, fewer than 350 published cases could be extracted from the world's medical literature, and most of these were without competent clinical description or autopsy verification.

#### THE JEWISH CHRONIC DISEASE HOSPITAL

In 1953, well before the establishment of health maintenance organizations and length-of-hospital-stay committees, the Jewish Chronic Disease Hospital of Brooklyn (JCDH) decided to dedicate much of its pediatric division to the necessarily extended and nonreimbursable care of infants and young children with "incurable brain diseases." JCDH was, truly, a nonprofit institution.

There were no religious stipulations for admission to the unit but because of the neighborhood and selective word-of-mouth information, most of the hospitalized children in this facility were Jewish. Inevitably, the unit evolved into a center for the diagnostic evaluation and extended care of infants with TSD and related disorders. The funds needed to maintain the ward were generously provided by individual members of the hospital's Board.

This diagnostic and research unit was probably the only academic unit in the United States at that time devoted solely to the study and continued care of children with fatal brain disease. Investigative programs were also begun on the clinical profiles of a variety of hereditary childhood brain disorders. These early studies involved a spectrum of diagnostic tests as well as biochemical studies of blood, spinal fluid, and other accessible biological fluids.

If the clinical unit had provided only compassionate shelter for these dying youngsters it would have been deserving of lasting recognition. But gathered around this nineteen-bed facility was a team of dedicated clinicians, geneticists, nurses, chemists, and psychiatric social workers who were determined that TSD, as well as a variety of biochemically related brain disorders said to be Jewish, should not be relegated to the italicized footnotes of medical dictionaries.

It was in the sobering setting of the JCDH inpatient unit that the anguished parents of these dying children met and consoled one another. In the process, they found renewed strength with which to address the oppressive burdens of guilt that families inevitably confront when they learn that they, as silent carriers of a fatal hereditary disease, had been unwitting instruments in its transmission to some of their offspring. In the beginning, many of these parents had believed that their secret burden was unique to them. But through counselling, educational sessions, and group discussions, the unspoken sense of helplessness and isolation began to diminish. As they worked with psychiatric social workers, physicians and clergy, many then reinvested their energies into productive avenues such as fund-raising, lobbying for federal aid, counselling of new parents, and even persuading uninterested scientists to divert their energies into investigations of these inborn brain disorders. Research grants were established which attracted increasing numbers of gifted investigators into the relatively unexplored territory of neuronal metabolism. And it was during these evening sessions that the thought was first broached that such remorselessly fatal diseases might indeed become preventable.

Within the first year of the inpatient unit operation, eighteen children with TSD had been hospitalized. And through accumulated experience much was learned about better ways of rendering nursing care, particularly in answering the nutritional needs of unconscious children. Parents were encouraged to work with the nursing staff, and a special training division was established expressly to educate registered nurses from other institutions in the rational management of neurologically impaired infants and children. Nursing practice handbooks were published summarizing the collective experiences of the support staff.

By 1957, affected infants from other states were being admitted, and a national association of parents had been created. The nucleus of JCDH scientists inevitably helped bring together an international network of research workers with parallel scientific interests. In 1958 the first international symposium on TSD and related disorders was held in Brooklyn. Scores of scientists from both hemispheres attended, presented their research findings, shared their hypotheses and dreams, and contributed manuscripts to a textbook on these diseases. It was during these scientific sessions that TSD and related disorders were first collectively referred to as the sphingolipidoses (SphL), since each one of these illnesses was shown to share a similar biochemical flaw. A malfunctioning enzyme somewhere in the complex metabolic pathways of the sphingolipids resulted in an unwanted piling up, or storage, of intermediate fatty metabolites within certain brain cells. There have since been four further international symposia, each culminating in a textbook summarizing the latest findings in this family of diseases.

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## DISEASES RELATED TO TAY SACHS DISEASE

*What are these "related diseases?"*

A disease is considered new when its clinical and pathological features seem sufficiently distinctive. And since its underlying mechanism is often unknown at the time of the discovery, medicine — for want of a better labelling system — has identified it by the names of its discoverers. Thus we had eponymic diagnoses such as Tay Sachs disease (known better today as GM<sub>2</sub> gangliosidosis).

In 1914, a German pediatrician named Albert Niemann described a fatal disorder of infancy somewhat similar to TSD in many of its clinical manifestations but with the following additional features: abnormal skin pigmentation and enlargement of liver, spleen, and lymph nodes. In 1922, Pick provided additional pathologic findings of this disorder, eventually called Niemann Pick disease (NPD). Most of the early cases were confined to Jewish children of Ashkenazic background, and NPD, too, proved to be a recessively transmitted hereditary disorder which, at a cellular level, was caused by the abnormal accumulation of one of the sphingolipids.

In 1882, a French physician named Gaucher described a systemic disease in which both spleen and liver were excessively enlarged. He mistakenly assumed that it was a form of cancer, but the name Gaucher's disease (GD) has persisted despite the fact that it is now demonstrated to be biochemically similar to TSD and NPD. It, too, is inherited and concentrated in children of Ashkenazic Jewish heritage.

There are yet further hereditary brain diseases which seem to preferentially affect Jewish infants and children, but they are so rare that little will be said about the frequency of their carrier states.

## THE SPHINGOLIPIDOSIS REGISTRY

By 1955, a registry of cases of neuro-hereditary diseases was established at the JCDH. This archive gathered the records of hundreds of patients with these diseases. By 1960, the registry had accumulated detailed demographic and medical information on over 400 families. Extensive records were maintained on each family including data on three or more generations of maternal and paternal forebears of each patient: their religions, places of birth, occupations, fertilities, illnesses, causes of death, and ages at death.

## DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

Particular attention was directed to the places of birth of the grandparents of the infants with the hereditary sphingolipidoses (i.e., TSD, NPD, GD). With the aid of Yiddish culture scholars from Columbia University, a group of Jewish grandparents with no known relatives suffering from any of the SphL disorders was carefully assembled to serve as controls. The Jewish ancestors of the SphL group tended to

originate more from the Lithuanian and neighboring northeast Polish provinces, particularly the districts of Kovno, Grodno, Suwalki, and Vilno, than did the control group. These results were then compared with yet another set of grandparents of another, biochemically distinguishable, hereditary brain disease of early childhood, a disease called familial dysautonomia (FD) or Riley Day syndrome. This latter disease is also found almost exclusively in Jewish children; but, in contrast to the SphL group, these grandparents were largely derived from the Lwow and Bukovina regions and the neighboring western Ukraine Jewish settlements.

The eastern European Jews of the 19th century were not a homogeneous group. Their ancestors migrated east from separate places, at separate times, and under differing sociopolitical pressures. In their separate communities, over the centuries, each group endured unique environmental and public health pressures. It would stand to reason, then, that their genetic profiles, by the 19th century, would also differ. Historians have shown striking cultural discontinuities (e.g., culinary, religious, linguistic), geographically distinguishing the Jews of east Europe. It is therefore interesting to note that the hereditary disease clusterings described above correspond closely with the linguistic and cultural discontinuities of the eastern Ashkenazim.

#### HOW COMMON ARE THE SPHINGOLIPIDOSES?

Most epidemiologists agree upon the following: the *carrier* rates for the SphL are highest in Ashkenazic Jews whose ancestry can be traced to the Kovno, Grodno, Suwalki, and Vilno regions (as high as 5%); intermediate frequencies are found with the other Ashkenazic groups (about 2-3%); and low frequencies in Jews of west European origin (about 0.3%), rates which are in the same range as the carrier rates found in non-Jews of west European origin. The rate amongst Yemenite Jews is extremely low. Cases of TSD have now been observed in virtually all non-Jewish ethnic groups except for the Gypsies, certain Mongolian groups, and the Inuit population of Alaska.

A few words of explanation: TSD, as a prototype of the SphL, is a recessively transmitted inherited disease. For the disease to appear, the infant must inherit the TSD gene from *both* parents. The disease is expressed only when the infant has two TSD genes. Possessing just one TSD gene, on the other hand, makes the child a silent carrier of the TSD gene but otherwise a normal person.

#### *Why does the abnormal gene for Tay Sachs disease persist?*

Abnormal genes which result in a disease which is lethal before the victim can reach adulthood should gradually disappear over many generations since the chance of the gene surviving into the next generation is lessened. The gene frequency of any of the SphL disorders should, therefore, gradually lessen until the genes ultimately disappear. Yet, if anything, the frequency of the disease seems to have increased

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from the middle of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century.

One explanation offered for the paradoxical survival of the TSD gene is a phenomenon called biological advantage. Perhaps the most illustrative example of this is a hereditary disease found principally in African-Americans called sickle cell (SS) anemia. There is little that distinguishes a carrier of this disease from an otherwise normal person. But when two SS carriers marry, a fraction of their offspring will inherit the clinical disease. Yet the SS gene persisted in Africa because the SS carriers, under certain circumstances, possessed a survival advantage over the non-carriers. The nature of this advantage has now been identified: the blood cells of the SS carriers resist the incursion of the malaria parasite more effectively than do the blood cells of the noncarrier. Accordingly, more SS carriers survive under the pressures of endemic malaria. When, however, SS carriers move to non-malarial regions such as the United States, the advantage disappears and, accordingly, the frequency of the SS gene will gradually diminish in the local African-American population.

Is there a biological advantage for TSD carriers? Is there, perhaps, some infectious disease analogous to malaria which the TSD gene helps to resist? A review of the causes of death of the thousands of grandparents of American TSD children was undertaken in the hopes of finding some quantitative distinction when compared with the control group of Jewish grandparents. There was a striking paucity of deaths caused by tuberculosis in the TSD grandparent population when compared with controls, which has led to the speculation that the TSD gene may provide some added immune mechanism diminishing the lethal threat of the tuberculosis germ. Tuberculosis had been a major health hazard in the shtetls of eastern Europe, but is no longer a measurable burden to the Jews of the United States. If the conjecture that the TSD gene confers a certain biological advantage then it may be further presumed that the TSD gene frequency will now gradually diminish since the advantage it had bestowed is no longer operative.

#### THE PREVENTION OF TSD AND RELATED DISORDERS

Largely through the creative scientific labors of John O'Brien, Roscoe Brady and others, a simple test has been devised which reliably identifies the clinically silent carriers of TSD. By 1970, this test had been made available to many Jewish communities. A laboratory was established at The Miriam Hospital, directed by Dr. Michael Sheff, to provide a voluntary screening facility for Jewish couples from the greater Rhode Island region planning to marry. If both prospective parents are shown to be carriers, they are advised of the likely outcome should they decide to have children (about one in every four of their offspring would be victims of TSD). Alternatives, such as adoption or amniocentesis, are discussed. Since 1970, and through 1996, there have been no cases of TSD in this region. Indeed, since the test



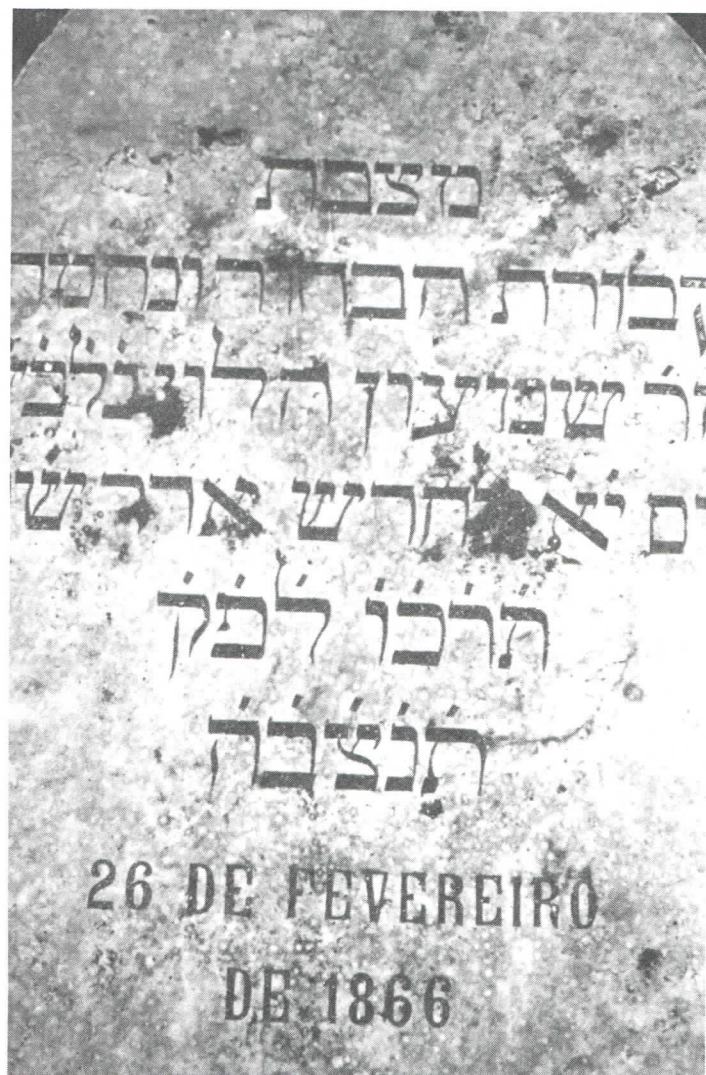
has been widely employed, the nationwide incidence of TSD has dropped dramatically.

Similar screening tests can now detect the carriers of NPD, GD, and scores of other hereditary metabolic disorders.

Should any reader wish a listing of references to the medical literature pertaining to Tay Sachs disease and related disorders, please contact the authors at the Brown University School of Medicine, Providence, or by e-mail:

<smaronson@worldnet.att.net>.





*Jewish headstone, Cape Verde Islands. (Photo by R. Lobban.)*



# JEWES IN CAPE VERDE — THE RHODE ISLAND CONNECTION

BY RICHARD A. LOBBAN, JR., PH.D.

## INTRODUCTION

Some may wonder what a professor of African Studies is doing writing in a journal focused on the Jewish history of Rhode Island. In fact, in the present climate of multi-culturalism, there is a remarkable tale which links these diverse peoples and regions. Perhaps it is best to tell this story by beginning with some of the earliest history of the Jewish presence in Rhode Island and work our way backward into these complex ties.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN RHODE ISLAND

It is generally known that among the first Jews in Rhode Island, none was of Ashkenazi origins, that is, none was from central or eastern Europe, where the vast majority were to find their roots in later centuries. Rhode Island Jews were descending from the Sephardic route, which was itself long and convoluted. Where did the Jews who built the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, find their origins? When the first Rhode Island Jews arrived in 1658, from where did they come, and why? Why had the community grown to fifteen families by 1677 and what did they do to afford the construction of the pre-Revolutionary Temple Jeshuat Israel in Newport which became better known as the Touro Synagogue? Why had the Jewish community there declined to three families by 1818 and was extinct by 1822? Why did the prominent Jews of this earlier time have such unlikely Jewish names as Aaron Lopez and Jacob Rivera?<sup>1</sup>

We must recognize that these Jews were Sephardic. Essentially, Sephardic or Oriental Jews were those who fled the ancient Roman oppression in the Middle East by escaping into the minority communities of the southern Mediterranean, whether ruled by ancient Greeks and Romans, early Christians throughout North Africa, or, after the 7th century A.D., Muslims. So it was that Jews gradually percolated into Europe. Once there, Moors brought with them Jews who served as cartographers, astronomers, translators, merchants, scribes, and other such learned professionals. This chapter lasted well over 700 years and was only terminated in 1492, which is

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Richard Lobban, Jr., Ph.D., is Professor of Anthropology and African Studies, Rhode Island College. This paper was first presented at The University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, February 11, 1996 and in a revised form at The Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston, July 18, 1996. The author also wishes to express gratitude for information and stimulation of aspects of this paper to Israel Benoliel, Carol Castiel, Michael Fink, David Gitlitz, Joli Goncalves, Steve Gorban, Norman Orodener, M. Mitchell Serels, and Donald Wahnnon. An earlier version has already been published as "Jews in Cape Verde and on the Guinea Coast," in *Cimboa*, No. 2, Year 2, Spring 1997. The present article is a revised version of that article, reprinted with permission. This version explores the Rhode Island connection to a greater degree.

remembered in the Arabo-Judaic World primarily as the year of the expulsion, rather than as the time of the discovery of the New World by Columbus. The relation between Jews and Moors or Arabs continued to function in North Africa after their joint expulsion by Crusading Spaniards and Portuguese. However, in Iberia itself, the middle ground for Jews vanished and the "choice" was death, forced conversion, or exile. The long history of forced Jewish emigration was to resume, but this time descendants of these migrants would finally sail into Rhode Island waters.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND IN PORTUGAL

Jews may have first arrived in Iberia as early as the time of the Phoenicians, with whom they had been allies in the 8th century B.C. when the Romans occupied Iberia and caused one of the great dispersals of Jewish populations. Still greater numbers of Jews arrived in Iberia with the Muslim North African Moors who swept across the Straits of Gibraltar in 711 to drive out the unpopular Goths, and to begin their seven centuries of occupation of this westernmost part of Europe. Maghrebi Jews were key associates of the Moors in the sciences, commerce, and cartography.

However, by the 11th century the Reconquista movement developed to recover Iberia from the Moors. In 1143 an independent Portuguese monarchy was established, and in 1249 the territory of Portugal was restored to Christianity with a parallel movement in Spain working its way from north to south to expel the Moors and also Jews.

A tidal shift in regional relations took place in the 15th century when Prince Henry of Portugal crossed to Ceuta in North West Africa to become the first to seize North African territory. The next decades until his death saw steady Portuguese maritime expansion to sub-Saharan Africa, motivated by strategic interests to bypass the Moors and to acquire the fabled riches in ivory, gold, and slaves. The navigational and cartographic teachings of Arabs and Jews were critical in this endeavor when Europe began to awake from its Dark Ages.

In this same century, anti-Semitic sentiments expanded and led finally to the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions and expulsion or conversion of Arabs and Jews. In the watershed year of 1492, the last group was driven out of Granada, and the xenophobic Inquisition emerged, as the now liberated treasury of Spain turned to financing the great New World voyages of Columbus.

The social pathology of the Inquisition soon spread to neighboring Portugal, where Portuguese kings Joao II, and especially Manuel I in 1496, determined to exile thousands of Jews to São Tome, Principe, and Cape Verde. The numbers expelled at this time were so great that the term "Portuguese" almost implied those of Jewish origin. Those who were not expelled were converted by force or were executed.

Despite the important role of Portuguese Jews in commerce, education, science, and mathematics, they faced riots, pogroms, and profound oppression during the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, when they were termed *Marannos* or *Judeus Segredos* (Secret Jews). The forced conversions led to Jews becoming known as *Novos Cristãos* (New Christians), a name which endured for centuries more. It was not until 1768 that Portugal officially abolished the distinction between “Old” and “New” (i.e., Jewish) Christians.

Meanwhile, to begin to develop and colonize the Cape Verde Islands, which had been discovered between 1455 and 1462, the Portuguese king granted a Royal Charter in 1466 to give the “right” to trade in slaves to Portuguese residing in Cape Verde. This lucrative offer was soon to be rescinded, and in 1472 slave trading rights were restricted to an exclusive royal monopoly. Thus from the very beginning of its history Cape Verde and its diverse multi-cultural peoples were situated within the context of a slave society and the slave trade.

#### JEW IN THE WEST AFRICAN COAST AND ISLANDS

Despite their despised, exile, or *degradado* (convict) status, the small number of Europeans and Jews residing in Cape Verde were allowed to engage in trade, as long as they did not compete significantly with the Portuguese trading monopolies. On the other hand, if trading policies of the King were not sufficiently liberal then there was little incentive or reward to trade at all. Such was the eternal tension in Cape Verde between free Judeo-European traders in the islands and on the coast and the monopolistic tendencies of the Crown. To a certain extent, this structural rivalry remains right to the present. Some Cape Verdean commercial interests are focused on economic and political links to Portugal while others have made their ties to the politics and economics of coastal West Africa. Those who officially served the Portuguese ruling class came to be known as *capitãos*, who were almost never Jews, and free-lance traders, usually termed *lançados*, who were often but not completely, of part Jewish origin.

The term *lançados*, derived from the Portuguese verb “to throw out,” is related to their outcast or fugitive role in Luso-African coastal commerce. Figuratively, the term *lançados* means “outcasts.” They were usually fugitive Portuguese settlers, including those exiled *degradados* following their conviction for some political “crime” as was the case for Jews following the full-scale Portuguese Inquisition in 1536, but Christian *lançados* were also known.

At least by the early or mid 1600s Cape Verdean *lançados* had trading centers all along the Senegambian coast, especially at such places as Gorée (famed for the Crioula female slave traders or *Senhoras*); Joal, “Portuguese Town” in Gambia; and Ziguinchor in the Casamance, as well as in Cacheu, Bissau, Bolama and further down the upper Guinea coast including the Portuguese role in the construction of

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Al-Mina castle in modern Ghana, which also included a visit by the famed navigator Christopher Columbus.

The excellent research of Jean Boulegue<sup>2</sup> has brought to light many fascinating details of the Portuguese Jewish presence in Senegambia and Guinea. For example, in 1517 Portuguese King Manuel I made reference to a group of *lançados* on the Senegambian coast; most of these were Portuguese Jews who had been deported.

According to Boulegue, Jews from Cape Verde and Portugal were already known in Joal as early as 1591, and a synagogue was noted there in 1641. In 1606, in Portudal, also on the Senegalese coast, there were 100 Portuguese following the "Laws of Moses." Boulegue notes that in 1614 the Governor of Cape Verde recorded that the greatest number of *lançados* were Jews. In 1622 the Cape Verdean Governor, Dom Francisco de Mourra, reported to the Portuguese King that the Guinea coastal rivers were "full of Jews who were masters of the local regions and were quite independent of the Crown." No doubt such information relating to "the Jewish danger" gave "justification" to the Portuguese to punish two wealthy members of the Jewish community around the synagogue in Rufisque, Senegal, for "economic excesses" in 1629. When a branch of the Portuguese Inquisition was established in Cape Verde in 1672, one result was the seizure of Jewish-owned merchandise. As the 17th century evolved, the Portuguese were steadily displaced from Senegambia, but they retained their bases in the Cape Verde islands and in Guinea at Cacheu, Bolama, Bissau, Buba, Geba, Mansoa.

In the 16th and 17th centuries the term *ganagoga* was also used in the Upper Guinea/Cape Verde region to imply Jewish *lançados*, but in practice *ganagoga* also meant people who were able to speak many local African languages. Allied with them were the *tangomaos* who represented a still deeper connection to the African languages. It seems most likely that the term *tangomão* is a corrupted form of *targuman*, which means "translator" in Arabic or Hebrew. Muslims and Arabic-speakers were and are widespread in this area, especially the northern and interior regions where the *tangomãos* or *lançados* traded.

*Lançados* were reputed for being resourceful and courageous and having initiative. The term also connotes the mixed-race traders living in the trading communities in the islands or on the coast where they conducted trade. They often had African wives from the local groups and, as such, their children can be said to be the nucleus of the future Crioulo population. They were economic intermediaries or middlemen for the Portuguese regional trade.

Other references to Portuguese or Iberian Jews sometimes use the term *Ladino* to note this social group which constituted a portion of early migrants to the Cape Verde Islands. Other references use this term for the people and/or the language of 16th and 17th century Sephardic Jews from the Iberian peninsula. This term



especially includes those *Ladinos* who sought refuge in Turkey at this time. The term *ladinos* could also refer to baptized African slaves. In either case, the reference was often racist and derogatory, and implied a “lying, wandering, sneaky, and thieving” group which was particularly untrustworthy. In certain social contexts it could be used affectionately to mean a “scamp.”

While seeking to convert or expel Jews from Portugal, the Crown in the 16th and 17th century allowed, or even encouraged, the *lançados* to settle along the Senegambian and Upper Guinea coast to trade for ivory, hides, slaves, gold, gum, wax, and amber while based in Cape Verde. Within the islands Jews would receive these same items for later resale to those traders who wanted to avoid the risks of coastal trade even if it meant higher costs in the islands. Jews in Cape Verde were also active in the trade of hides, urzella, and coffee.

Restrictions for the *lançados* prohibited them from selling iron bars, firearms, and navigational instruments, yet the *lançados* were clearly critical in the economic network which linked the Crown trade monopolies to the coast. Spanish and English smugglers using ties to the *lançados* were frequent violators of these rather schizophrenic Portuguese prohibitions. Evidently, such trading enterprises were “too effective,” so in 1687 the King of Portugal ruled that Cape Verdean Jews and *lançados* were officially forbidden to sell cloth, currency, or *panos* to foreigners. By producing *panos* with slave labor in farming and weaving, the Cape Verdean merchants undermined the royal economy. Yet this rivalry continued for centuries.

Another short chapter of the history of Cape Verdean Jews appears in the 1820s, when some of the very few Jews of Portugal were involved in the “Liberal Wars” in Portugal. These Jewish “Miguelistas” fled to Santo Antao for refuge and exile. A final chapter of Jewish history in Cape Verde took place in the 1850s when Moroccan Jews arrived, especially in Boa Vista and Maio, for the hide trade. In short, Jewish history plays a role in Cape Verde and Guinea that is far greater than expected or recognized.

Thus, as early as the later 15th century and through the 16th and 17th centuries, a Jewish coastal presence was deeply established. This brought on an important synthesis which was responsible for playing a central role in the creation of a Crioulo culture. These Jews, both in the Cape Verde Island and on the coast, were at the heart of the Afro-Portuguese merging which became Crioulo culture. The anti-Semitism of Spain and Portugal and the financial goals of the Portuguese Crown were constantly trying to restrict the Jews’ success. The more successful, the more restrictions, but also the more deeply struck were the commercial and cultural roots of these people.

The *lançados* were themselves undergoing a transformation because of their intermediary and collaborative relation with African cultures. This contradictory

nature at once set them apart, while embedding in them a multiracial and multicultural identity that was being concurrently synthesized. In Cape Verde this was to become the essence of Crioulo culture. This process has its close parallels in East Africa with the commercial presence of Omani and Shirazi Muslims who were trading for ivory and slaves for the African interior. A trade language and an entire cultural group, now known as KiSwahili, evolved in this other regional context. In the Senegambian case, French and British expansion finally reduced the presence of the *lançados* and their military bodyguard associates, the *grumettas*, to only Portuguese Guinea and to urban and coastal entrepôts. Until the war of national liberation (1963-1974) in Guinea-Bissau, Crioulo people, culture, and language were still mainly in urban areas. During the war, the use of Crioulo spread throughout the countryside, and the former commercial *lingua franca* has become the national folk language for both Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau.

Clearly the Jewish and African slaver/trader alliance was already of very great historical depth. This relationship was based upon several factors. On the one hand, the Portuguese Crown and its *feitores* and *capitães* gained tremendous wealth from the slave trade and they did little to oppose it; however, they were pleased to have a social pariah group, like the *lançados*, be responsible for the front-line operation of the trade. Meanwhile, their commercial skills and higher level of literacy put the Jews in a strong position to have a critical role in an economy and society which otherwise shunned them. It should be made very clear that, by no means, were all Portuguese slavers Jewish, nor were all Portuguese involved in the slave trade; likewise the slave trade in the interior necessitated strategic African collaboration.

A reference to a *lançado* expedition to the goldfields of Bambuk in 1785-88 referred to a Jewish *ganagoga* who married a daughter of the Muslim Iman of Futa Toro. In their heyday, the *lançados* owned and operated their own ships, river craft and canoes, as well as carrying firearms, daggers, and swords. Above all, they were traders in wax, gold, hides, cloths, ivory, and cotton. However, by the late 18th century, a clearly defined *lançado* community in Senegambia was gone, but not really departed. Virtually all *lançados* had African wives and consorts, and their subsequent generations continued to play a central and substantial role in the culturo-linguistic melange which constitutes Cape Verdean Crioulo culture. This was formed in the context of the merging and blending of Iberian, Moorish, Jewish, and African peoples.

Although there is no formal Jewish synagogue in Cape Verde today and there is no official rabbi, an elder named David Cohen was reported to lead other Jews in prayer in the 20th century. Historically there was a definite Jewish presence among early Cape Verdeans. Jews first came to the island of Sao Tiago as refugees from religious persecution during the Inquisition. They were shunned by the wider society of the islands at the time and they were confined to a separate ghetto-like

community in Praia. During the early nineteenth century, Jews also came to settle in Santo Antao, where there are still traces of their influx in the name of the village of Sinagoga, located on the north coast between Riberia Grande and Janela, and in the Jewish cemetery at the town of Ponta da Sol. The family names of Cohen (Jewish "priest") and Wahnnon are prominent in Santo Antão. Apparently the name Wahnnon is a corruption of either a Judaicized Berber stock, or perhaps from the even more ancient name of Hanno in Phoenician times.

Known portions of the Wahnnon family history find them emerging in Tetuan, Morocco, in the 18th century, where they had no doubt fled after the Inquisition. Some returned to Gibraltar for a generation or two, and from there an early Wahnnon arrived in Cape Verde in the 1860s in conjunction with the British expansion of the port of Mindelo, San Vincent and neighboring Santo Antão, a major bunkering and coal depot in the age of trans-Atlantic steam vessels. The current Prime Minister of Cape Verde, Carlos Alberto Wahnnon Veiga, descends from this family on his maternal side.

Other Jewish settlers such as the Ben Oliel Family migrated to Boa Vista where they traded in salt, hides, and other commodities. In the 15th century, this same family had resided in Toledo, Spain, but was expelled to Morocco during the Inquisition years. The more immediate ancestors of the Ben Oliel family, Isaac, Esther, and Abraham, had migrated from Rabat, Morocco, in about 1860 and are buried on Boa Vista. The children of Esther and Abraham were born in Boa Vista, although in the 20th century their descendants often moved to Lisbon; many are buried in the Jewish cemetery there. Other Cape Verdeans with Jewish roots, such as the Cohen and Auday families, had a similar migration, but from Tangiers, Morocco, in the mid 19th century. This family left descendants in Riberia Grande, and perhaps Paul in Santo Antão.

Other Jewish-derived surnames can be found amongst the inhabitants of the islands. Such names include Auday, Benros, Ben David, Carvalho, Cohn, DaGama, Lima, and Seruya.

Jewish cemeteries or graves are in Brava (at Cova da Judeu), Boa Vista, São Tiago (in Praia and Cidade Velha), Santa Antão (especially at Sinagoga), São Nicolau (at Mindelo), Fogo, and probably in other islands as well. In the 19th and 20th century Praia cemetery, for example, there are about eight grave markers still extant with Hebrew inscriptions. These were originally outside of the cemetery walls, but as it expanded, the walls were relocated and thereby integrated these deceased Jews with their Crioulo cousins.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is apparent that the Jewish history of Cape Verde is long and complex. Cape Verdean Jews have ceased their community of religious believers,

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but the dimension of Jewish cultural identity unquestionably survives. With several Jewish cemeteries still existing with Hebrew inscriptions, it seems that this might be an ideal project of historic preservation for those concerned with Cape Verdean or Jewish history.<sup>3</sup>

The role of Jews in the slave trade is confirmed in Cape Verde, but it is essential to realize that they were only brokers within a system fully endorsed by the Portuguese kings who made the greatest fortunes of all. Moreover, for those who engaged in finger-pointing in their analysis of the slave trade, we must not forget that there was also active African participation and coordination as they sought to control this economy in Africa's interior. The celebrated ancient African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai were all built upon the slave export business as much as the plantation South in the United States is intimately linked to slave imports and as much as Samuel Slater's famous industrial textile mill wove cheap cotton which had been cultivated, picked, and transported by slaves. This business has few heroes. For those who single out Jews in this sorry traffic of humans, it must also be recalled that African Muslims were earlier into the trade across the Sahara, down the Nile, and in the Indian Ocean; it is in those regions of Muslim Africa that this cruel trade still continues.

In Cape Verde, the Cape Verde-Israel Friendship Society in Praia is now headed by Dr. Januario Nascimento. It seeks to rediscover lost ties. Other members, among them Abraao Levy, Policario Levy, and Antonio Julio Rodrigues, are involved in activities such as fund-raising and the maintenance and restoration of the Jewish Cemetery of Penha Franca in Santo António.

Recently in Rhode Island, more and more people from Portugal, the Cape Verde islands, and the Azores are coming forth to tell of memories of their families maintaining Jewish practices, many not knowing why, such as going to their cellars on Friday nights to light candles in memory of long-forgotten Sabbaths.



#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> These dates are found in R.J. Sullivan and M.I. Wright, *The Rhode Island Atlas*, 1982, R.I. Publications Society, Providence, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Boulegue, 1989, *Les Luso-Africaines de Senegambie*, Lisbon, Ministry of Education.

<sup>3</sup> For further sources on Cape Verdean history and culture see Richard Lobban and Marlene Lopes, 1995, *Historical Dictionary of Cape Verde*, 3rd Edition, Scarecrow Press, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706.



## JEWISH VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II ORAL HISTORIES — PART IV

BY PEARL F. BRAUDE

The following oral histories were transcribed and edited from one of the over forty interviews conducted by Pearl F. Braude of Providence, Rhode Island, in 1989 and 1990. More of these interviews will be published in future issues of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes as space permits and as funds become available for transcriptions.

### MAX SIMMONS

Max Simmons was born October 10, 1922, in Providence, Rhode Island. He grew up on Pratt Street and attended Hope High School. Now retired, he was a baker for many years, most recently at Kaplan's Bakery on Hope Street, Providence.

PEARL BRAUDE: Can you tell me when you were inducted?

MAX SIMMONS: I enlisted in May of 1942. I went to Signal School in Newport. I became a signalman, you know, Morse code, the flags, and what some were for, and blinker lights and all that. ... And from there, from there I went down to Norfolk, Virginia, and my ship was assigned to me, and I had to wait until my ship came.

PB: Do you know the name of the ship?

MS: *U.S.S. Green*. ... It was an old four-stacker destroyer. ... And I picked that up. I had to go all the way down to Trinidad.

PB: How did you go there?

MS: Well, they had a transport, took a lot of enlisted men all over wherever they had to go, but my stop was Port of Spain.

PB: What was your rank?

MS: Oh, I ended up being the signalman ... Third Class Signalman.

PB: And then?

MS: Went down to South America. ... We went to Recife and Rio de Janeiro.

PB: For what purpose?

MS: Well, we were just patrolling ... looking for submarines and all that. Then we came back to Norfolk, Virginia, and then we went to the North Atlantic. We escorted ships going to Europe.

PB: Did you see any action on the way?

MS: I got the Presidential Unit Citation. We sank a submarine, and we had [survivors] come up. We took three of them, and one of them died, and we took the [others] back to Virginia.

PB: Because from the whole submarine there were only three people left?

MS: Yes, and ... we sank a German sub.

PB: So that was on the way to [Europe] or escorting American ships? ... Mostly troop ships, I suppose? ... What happened after that?

MS: Well, I stayed in Europe. Well, all told, I was in the service 44 months ... I went to different ports, you know, Italy, and ... Then our ship came back to the United States, Charleston, South Carolina, and they converted it into an attack destroyer — they put these little amphibious boats on it. ...

PB: You mean in order to have amphibious landings?

MS: You know, to help in any invasion. And then, I got transferred. I was in Algiers and Oran in North Africa. And I went on, I got transferred, I had to come back to New York, and I had to pick up a big APA, it's a big attack transport. It had all amphibious boats, and we carried mostly Army troops. ... And then I made the invasion of Iwo Jima.

PB: So you were with troops invading Iwo Jima?

MS: Yes.

PB: About how many troops do you think you had on the ship?

MS: I don't know. I wouldn't remember. ... It was ironic — one of the soldiers was a brother to one of the girls who graduated high school with me.

PB: Do you remember his name?

MS: Tainsh, Betty Tainsh's brother. ... He died a little while ago. ...

PB: So you went, you made the invasion ...

MS: ... just like an armada, of ships ... Airplanes, you know, the bombing and strafing. ... I had to stay awake.

PB: At Iwo Jima, what did you do?

MS: I had general quarters. ... I had a post to man. ... I was a signalman. I had to stay up on top [fifty-two hours in a row] ... waiting for flag hoist and ... general quarters, that's what you have to do.



*Max Simmons during World War II.*

PB: Was your signal kind of an order to the other ships, or telling the other ships what you were doing?

MS: See, we weren't a battle ship, you understand? We were just a transport. We had the soldiers aboard, and when the time came the personnel aboard used to lower these amphibious boats to take the soldiers onto the beaches, and then it was up to the Army after that.

PB: To invade?

MS: To invade, right.

PB: I see; but you were stationed at a certain post, and you were doing you said, signal work, so what was, what was your duty? I mean, how did you function?

MS: I [was] on general quarters in case I was needed. ...

PB: Ready for any kind of action? ... in case you were bombed?

MS: They had suicide planes. ... And they hit a couple of the ships, you know, [at] Okinawa.

PB: Now, when did you get to Okinawa?

MS: Right after Iwo Jima.

PB: Did you come back and get more troops?

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MS: Yes, and then after Okinawa, shortly after that the war was over, you know, the atomic bomb was dropped, and then we went around picking up Army troops. ... To take them home.

PB: So you were there for 44 months, and what was your final rank?

MS: I was a Signalman Third Class. Third class Petty Officer.

PB: Do you have any letters that you wrote home to your mother or father?

MS: Oh, no.

PB: You didn't write letters?

MS: My mother, my mother was dead.

PB: She died before you went to the service?

MS: Yes, my father wasn't too much of a father, so what's there to write home?

PB: So you didn't write home to anybody?

MS: I wrote home to my, my, I wasn't married, but ...

PB: You had a girl?

MS: Well, I, she was engaged to somebody else.

PB: But you managed?

MS: And I persisted. ...

PB: Your name was Simmons, which, of course, is not a very Jewish name.

MS: Well, my name was changed. My name in the service was Simkofsky.

PB: I see. Now, did anything happen that could be considered anti-Semitic?

MS: Well, sure, you always find a lot of anti-Semitism aboard ship.

PB: What happened?

MS: You know, that destroyer, I was the only Jew on the ship, and I used to get a lot of —

PB: Razzing?

MS: Yes, I almost got in a fight.

PB: What happened?

MS: Well, I'd be the signalman, and I had to go up on top deck, you know, with the

captain and all that; and you had to pass the gunners, you know, forward gunning group, on the way up ... you know, when you have to climb up to the, to the top of the deck; and every, every time we both had the same shift, you know, same watch, and all the time this guy was the head of gun crew — I was the “pork and bean baby.” ... “How was the bacon, Abie, did you eat, did you enjoy the bacon?” Always some remark. He was from the South. ... Like a redneck. ... Oh, I straightened him out.

PB: What did you do?

MS: Because I was a tough kid. I didn't take any ... I went up to him one day, and I told him, I said “You don't like me being Jewish, and you think you're big enough to do something about it, and why don't we go back to the aft and we'll straighten it out. I said you're such a brave guy in front of your crew. Come on, right now.”

PB: So?

MS: No, he wouldn't. He backed down, and he became a good friend of mine after that.

PB: I see, good for you.

MS: That's right, because I, well, I don't want to say this on tape, I was —

PB: You wouldn't take any guff from anybody?

MS: That's right.

PB: Very good, now, did you ever in the time that you were there meet a Jewish chaplain or have anything to do with anything Jewish, [or a] service?

MS: Once ... I went [on] Passover. I think it was in the Philippine Islands. ... It was like a big soccer stadium or, you know, similar to a football [field]. And they had, they had Pesach there. ... Well, you know, I never was a religious guy. I'll never become a rabbi.

PB: Did you have it [Passover Seder] when you were a child?

MS: I don't know. ... I never realized at the time, you know, my father never went to shul, you know, like other Jewish men. I don't know, it just never dawned on me. I went to *cheder*.<sup>\*</sup> I was bar mitzvahed. ... My grandfather was a shammes, and my mother [spoke] Yiddish. ... my father, too. But for some reason it never dawned on me until after my father died, and I got a little older, I said, there's something wrong. My father was from Europe, and he never, never went to shul. ... I don't remember him fasting Yom Kippur or any of the Jewish —

PB: Okay, but he did send you to cheder? Or was that your mother's doing?

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<sup>\*</sup>Hebrew literally, room; Yiddish, Hebrew School

MS: That was my mother's doing.

PB: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

MS: I have, I have five sisters and four brothers.

PB: My goodness, and where are they?

MS: Well they're — let me explain it better. Four of the children are from my father and mother [together]. Both were married twice. [My mother had eight children, four children from each marriage.] My father first was married in London, England. [He had escaped from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, 1905.] He had one child from his first marriage, a girl. ... His first wife died, and then he left the daughter with the grandmother in England. She came over here when she was seventeen, and there's twelve years difference between our ages.

PB: So you're much younger then?

MS: Oh yes, I'm the baby by five minutes. I'm a twin. ... I was too good to be one.

PB: I see; that's lovely. Tell me what happened to your, is it your brother or sister, your twin?

MS: She's here in Cranston. In fact, she's going to pick me up pretty soon. [Esta Simkofsky Schectman]

PB: Now, did any of the other brothers go into the Army?

MS: My full brother, you know,

PB: Your real brother?

MS: Well, they're all from the same mother except that young, that one girl.

PB: Now, were any of your brothers in the service?

MS: My brother Hy was. ... He's six years older than I am. He was in the Army.

PB: Did he live in Providence?

MS: Yes, until we broke up, you know.

PB: What do you mean you broke up?

MS: Well, you see, my father deserted us.

PB: Oh, how old [were you]?

MS: I just turned sixteen, and my brother he was only twenty-one. Right after my mother died.



PB: How many children were left?

PB: Four.

MS: But there were four sisters and —

MS: But they were married. They were already married.

PB: But there were four left in the home?

MS: Four left in the home. My twin sister, and my sister in California, and my brother — he's in Florida now — the four of us were left all alone.

PB: And your father just left you? Walked off?

MS: Went out and left us.

PB: So, who took, did you have an aunt or uncle?

MS: No, nobody. We took care of ourselves. That's why I'm tough.

PB: So, the brother who was in the service, what happened to him?

MS: He came home and he met a woman, a nice girl in Brockton, a Jew, and he married. We all married Jews.

PB: And does he call himself Simmons, too?

MS: Well he changed his name first when he went into business. Then I went in business after I got out of the service. So I figured you can't have two brothers with two different names, and so I changed my name.

PB: To Simmons? From Simkofsky?

MS: Right.

PB: When your brother was in the service, how long did he serve?

MS: Well, I know he got drafted, somewhere around, I think, January or February of '42.

PB: Do you know where he was stationed?

MS: He was in France, I know that. He was a clerk; he had it made.

PB: Is he the one who's in Florida?

MS: He retired.

PB: And where does he live?

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MS: In Boca Point. ... He just built a beautiful home down there.

PB: Was anybody else or another brother in the service?

MS: That's all. ... I had another brother ten years older that died before I was born. ... And then my oldest brother died. He wasn't in the service.

PB: So, you mustered out. Do you have any idea of the exact date?

MS: I went in May of '42 and I got out in '46.

PB: So your ship was brought back to Norfolk?

MS: No, ... I had enough points to go home [from] San Pedro, California. They flew me, they flew a bunch of us back to Boston, and we were discharged from the Fargo Building.

PB: Do you have any citations?

MS: Presidential Unit Citation. But I've lost it. I don't know what happened to it.

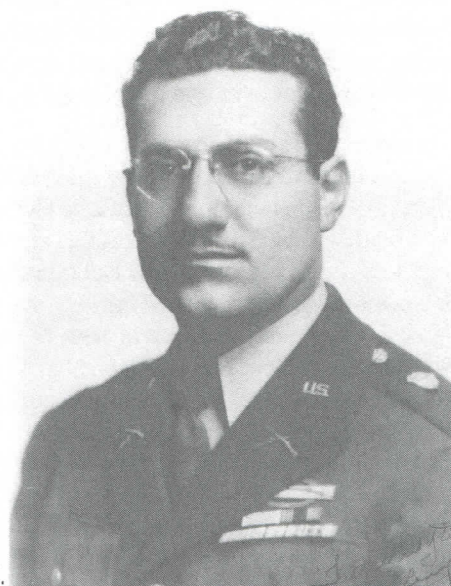
PB: Well, I thank you very much, Max.

#### LEONARD HOLLAND

Leonard Holland joined the Army in April, 1941, and was a battalion commander in combat in the Solomon and New Guinea Islands of the Pacific. He was discharged as a major in 1946 and later became a colonel in the Army Reserves. He was appointed Adjutant General of Rhode Island and Commander of the Rhode Island National Guard by Governor John Notte on January 3, 1961. Such appointments were at the pleasure of the governors. Because General Holland did so much for Rhode Island with the Guard, he was reappointed by five governors, both Democratic and Republican, a never-equalled record. He retired on August 6, 1983.

LH: I was born on April 9, 1916. I was enlisted in the service through the draft on April 15, 1941. I proceeded as a private to Fort Devens, Massachusetts. I stayed [there] for almost one month before they would assign me to [the] installation [where] I would be getting my basic training. While at Fort Devens I worked with the Sergeant Major of that post and learned much about the military ....

In May of 1941, I was transferred to Camp Crofton, South Carolina, which is in Spartansburg. It was a brand new installation; in fact, it didn't have any sidewalks, it had clapboards on the ground and we had to walk on these 2 x 4s, so to speak, until they would complete that camp and that installation; until they started to ship more people into that camp.



Leonard Holland during World War II.

After completing my basic training, I was selected to stay at Camp Crofton, South Carolina, to teach other people.

I taught basic training to many people for almost six months. And December 7, 1941 (Pearl Harbor Day) I was in Greenville, South Carolina, at that time visiting some people, and I was informed to return to the installation and to send home all my civilian clothing and from now on we were a strictly military people, at war with not only Japan but with Germany.

I stayed at Camp Crofton for almost another month and a half, and I was asked by the Commanding Officer of the post to go to OCS [Officer Candidate School] at the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia. I talked [him] out of it the first time because I had a very desirable assignment at Camp Crofton and I enjoyed what I was doing, and he let me get away with it. But two months later he called me in and he said "Either you go to OCS or I'm shipping you out." Under those conditions, I decided I would go to the Infantry Officers' School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

I arrived at Fort Benning, Georgia, in May of '42. I did my basic training there at Fort Benning. It was one of the fast courses— they called them the "90-day wonders" — and after I completed that course I received orders, secret orders, that I would immediately embark for San Francisco where I would receive more orders to go to the Pacific. Unknown to me (at that time it was August 6, 1942 ... the Marines were landing at Guadalcanal, and that was my destination. I joined the 40th



Division in San Francisco, and we set sail, we got on the ships, and we took off heading out that way, but we were stopped and we were held at the Hawaiian Islands to regroup and get more training and more equipment, and I was at Kauai in Hawaii for five or six months and then I received my orders for APO 502.

I understood I was to carry out my obligations at Guadalcanal in the South Pacific. I joined the 43rd Division in the South Pacific, at Guadalcanal [February 1943], and I fought with them through Munda. In fact we were the first Army troops that landed in Munda [island of New Georgia], and from there we went to Kolombangara, Arundel, Fincha [part of New Georgia campaign] and we landed in many of the islands all through the South [Pacific]. We went on ... R&R [rest and recreation] to New Zealand, and we stayed in New Zealand for about three months and we were staged to go to New Guinea. I landed in Arundel, New Guinea, where we fought on the Drinumor River [July and December 1944], and at that time I was a captain in the Army. I stayed at New Guinea for a while, and then I received orders that the time had come — I had enough points — to return back to the US, and I was promoted ... major, and I was shipped back to the U.S. That was in 1944 that I arrived back in the state of Rhode Island and spent Thanksgiving and Christmas in Rhode Island, and from there I went to Fort McClellan, Alabama, where I became, again, an instructor of all the infantry replacement troops at Fort McClellan. I stayed at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and they wanted to send me to Europe to fight in the war out there, but I talked them out of that one because there were many, many people back at Fort McClellan who hadn't seen any combat at all, and I explained that to the Commanding Officer of that installation and he allowed me to stay at Fort McClellan in Alabama. When the war was over in Europe ...

PB: I want to ask you a question. During the period when you were in the Pacific, did you have any experiences which at all had to do with your Jewishness?

LH: I did, but at that point in time I had enough brass and enough rank that I felt that nothing more could happen to me than where I was, in combat, and I spoke up. I've had people, a C.O. [Commanding Officer] telling me — a colonel at one time — that he'd seen Jews, but I was outstanding. You know, in the Division I was in, out of the one regiment, out of the five doctors up in the front lines, four of them were Jewish, and they would always send the Jewish doctors up in front. And although they had the capability and were outstanding — some were surgeons — they were just wasting their time. They were like in the battalion aid station, just putting band aids on people. So ...

PB Who were? You're talking about the Jewish doctors?

LH: The Jewish doctors. In fact, we had one doctor, Edelstein, from California, who was an outstanding plastic surgeon. And he did a miraculous operation on a soldier in combat and he wouldn't let that individual be moved to a rear area, and he

operated on this individual in the front lines. And he was so outstanding, he was such an outstanding doctor, that they had to take him out and put him back in the rear lines where he could be of more help, and more assistance, to the American soldiers over there.

PB: In short, in your experience, you had no experience where there was any overt anti-Semitism?

LH: Not to me, not to me. I ...

PB: Did you see it in others?

LH: In others, perhaps, but I was very fortunate to be able to handle myself and get out of those situations without any problem at all.

PB: Were there situations? Did they arise?

LH: There were some situations, but, you see, when you're fighting, and you're in a war, and you're in combat and the bullets are flying, nobody's asking you if you're Jewish, black, white, or green, or yellow. So it's a different situation altogether. I was in a combat area most of the time. So, for me to say that there was anti-Semitism in the units that I was in, I would say no, because I was in the conflict, fighting all the time, so I would not say there was anti-Semitism.

PB: When you were fighting, you were by that time a colonel?

LH: No, no. At that time I was, the highest rank that I had, I think I was a major, I was a major.

PB: Were there men under you?

LH: There certainly were men under me.

PB: How many?

LH: As a major, I was a battalion assistant, maybe over 1,500 people.

PB: Under your command?

LH: Under my command. And before I got out of the service, I mean during the war, when I was a battalion commander, I had as many as a regimental X.O. [Executive Officer] ... over 3,000 people under my command. So I've had a lot of experience with a lot of people, and I've seen more anti-Semitism after I got out of the service. And even as a major general I was at many meetings, and I could go on and talk for hours.

PB: I'm sure you can, but we haven't gotten to the major general part yet. But now, you said you had no instances of overt anti-Semitism in your ...

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LH: In my unit, yes.

PB: And then, can you mention any Jewish experiences? Did you have any services that were very meaningful?

LH: Well, you see, ... during the High Holidays there were just people who had the capability of running services, and it was very, very small, and just a get-together during Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashana and to celebrate the High Holidays. So I mean, there wasn't that much of a preparation for these sort of things because in a situation such as I was in, during that period that I'm talking about, when I was overseas ...

PB: In combat ...

LH: In combat; it's a different story altogether.

PB: Of course. Now you've gotten yourself back to the U.S., you've been teaching, and you're about to be mustered out?

LH: Yes, I was back in Fort McClellan, Alabama, and they tried to make me essential to keep me in the service. And again, I wasn't bashful. I always went up and talked to the commanding general, and I told him that I was in the service over five years and I think it was my opportunity to get out, and he said the next replacement that he got back from overseas, that he would let me go. So actually I did get out of the service — I was out of the service about late 1945, but my ... I had terminal leave that extended until maybe February, 1946. So when I got out, I joined the reserves. I was commanding the 385th infantry regiment. I was promoted to a lieutenant colonel, then I was promoted to a colonel in the reserves.

PB: But you were back in Rhode Island at that time?

LH: I was back in Rhode Island ...

PB: What kind of work did you do?

LH: I was working for my father-in-law in the clothing business when I came back from the service.

PB: So how long did you do that?

LH: I did that for about three years.

PB: And what made you go back into the Army?

LH: When John A. Notte, Jr., in 1960, was elected Governor of the State of Rhode Island, I was appointed the Adjutant General of the State of Rhode Island.

PB: But you were in the Reserves ...

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LH: I was automatically transferred into the National Guard. The National Guard is under the Governors of the State of Rhode Island and also under the President of the United States. We have two missions in the National Guard, the Reserve only has one, only to the President of the US. We have, in the National Guard ... a responsibility to the state and also to the federal government.

PB: Now when you went back, then, you had made up your mind you were going to be an Army man?

LH: Well, when I got back I was appointed by Governor Notte. Governor Notte was not reelected. Representative John A. Chafee became Governor of the State of Rhode Island, and he was a Republican. Now before I was the Adjutant General, before me there were four Adjutant Generals in eight years because [when] the Governors changed, they changed the Adjutant General. But John Chafee called me the night that he was elected .... He found out that he was the Governor of the State of Rhode Island. He called me that evening at 10 o'clock at night and asked me, he would be honored if I would stay on with him, which was a feather in my cap because this was the first time this ever happened.

PB: That a Republican governor invited a Democrat ...

LH: Right. And from then on, I served five governors, I was the senior Adjutant General in the United States. I was the ranking Major General in the United States. I served for twenty-two and a half years, which is unprecedented. I've had many, many experiences during that time — association with the Presidents of the US, being in the Oval Office, having discussions with them; [I] knew all the Secretaries of Defense, Secretaries of the Army; and also had the privilege of being with Her Majesty, the Queen of England, and Prince Philip. In fact, we have an autographed copy of their picture that they sent us after they visited us in 1976 during the Bicentennial.

PB: Was that in Newport?

LH: That was in [Providence], and then we went to Newport. ...

PB: Photographs would be wonderful if you could ...

LH: Yup, when I was wounded and I went into the hospital, I took a picture one time, and I inadvertently lifted up my leg leaning against the outside wall of the hospital, lifting up my leg where they couldn't see the bottom part of my leg. I was leaning up against the building. And [my family] thought that I had lost my leg. They were ready to call Senator Pastore ...

PB: Were you decorated?

LH: I was decorated. ... I have the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, the Combat

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Infantry Award, the Distinguished Service Medal — I have quite a few.

PB: Back to you, General Holland. When you were in the Pacific, and you're a Jew, was it the same, do you think, being in the Pacific, fighting the Japanese, was it ... it couldn't have been the same as a Jew who was fighting in Germany. Did you have the same kind of ...

LH: It was a different type of a war altogether. See, we didn't have civilization over there. We were dealing with ... the jungle ... the elements were a worse enemy than the Japanese, fighting under the conditions that we were fighting under. The fact is, 120, 130 degrees heat, people were dying from Dengue fever, people were dying from all sorts of malaria, all kinds of fevers. And just to stay alive, and during the evenings when you slept in your slit trench and the big land crabs were something that was worse than the Japs.

PB: Land crabs?

LH: Land crabs. They were big like, bigger than a big turtle. They used to come in and they'd get into your foxhole. And we'd have two people sleep in each foxhole, each slit trench. And one would stay up and one would sleep. ... And we couldn't fire at night, that was one of the rules because we didn't want the Japanese to know where our positions were. And the one that was awake would take his bayonet and try to kill the land crab.

PB: Was it a hard shell, like a turtle?

LH: Oh, yeah, yeah. And it had big [tentacles] ... like a lobster ...

PB: And claws?

LH: And claws, and the man that was sleeping would get awake, startled, and he'd see somebody, you know, with a bayonet, and we'd find both of them dead in the foxhole in the morning until we straightened that problem out.

PB: What do you mean?

LH: They were fighting with each other. The fellow would wake up startled and see somebody shooting, uh, stabbing away with a bayonet. And we had many, many incidents like that. We had psychoneuroses, people were going ... from the noises of the different types of birds and the animals that're out in the jungle area. And there was no civilization. You couldn't ... go back ten miles to where there's life, where there's lights. There's none of that. You were in the jungle, and this was where your home was for the time that you were fighting in that area.

PB: And how long did you actually endure that?

LH: About ... a year and a half. And that was a real problem with the American soldier who was fighting in that area. In fact, they sent doctors over to find out just what was wrong, why all these bad things were happening, people were killing each other, people were ... going crazy, and all that sort of thing. And even the doctors had to be shipped back home because they couldn't take it. It was a tough war.

PB: What sent you back?

LH: What sent me back? I was overseas longer than many people in my division. So when the general called me, he told me I ... [they] had this point system set up. And he asked me if I would stay because I was working on the invasion of the Philippine Islands. I was a G-3, which is plans and training. I was working under MacArthur's headquarters, and I was planning the [armored] division landing in the Philippine Islands, and he didn't want to disrupt all the plans that were going on, and he offered to promote me again if I'd stay there. But things happened, and I said "My time is up; I'd like to go home." He was very kind, and he sent [me] up to MacArthur's and got me on a ship to get me home.

PB: Just tell me one or two experiences during your stay in Guadalcanal which are of significance, either happy or sad.

LH: Well, the conditions were very, very bad, as I told you before. And one day we were looking for the enemy, for the Japanese, and we walked through about fifteen or twenty rivers and streams. For about seven or eight days we never had any hot food, we just had the food that we carried on our backs, the C-rations, and we never changed our stockings, never bathed. We just kept going until we met our objective and had completed our mission. And these are the things that we continuously were doing during this time in the jungles. It was very difficult to get along.

So when the fighting was over and we went to the rear, so to speak, to the rear where there was no villages, no towns or anything else, as I said before. I was talking to my men and I said, "Look, if we ever get out of here, and I understand we may go for R&R [rest and relaxation] and we're gonna go to New Zealand." I said, "If we go to New Zealand and if we ever get some money that they get out of the PX [Post Exchange] profits (they usually give to every one of the companies)," I said, "We're going to buy some radios, we're going to buy some shower heads (we didn't have any place to take showers or any of that), we're gonna buy hammers, nails, we're gonna buy screenings for our kitchen."

So as it happened, we were given about \$3,000 for our end of the profits from the Post Exchange that the people were getting from around the country. So we went back to New Zealand, and I told the men they had these options: either I'd give them the money, the \$3,000, they could have the best party they ever had, or if you want to go into town, select a group of you and buy hammers, nails, and whatever



equipment we possibly could need so if we ever have to go back in the jungles that we will have the necessary equipment to be able to live comfortably. Well it so happened they all agreed with me that that's what they were going to do. So they went to New Zealand — Auckland — and they bought hammers, nails, screening, radios for the jeeps — that they could hook up to the jeeps, Coleman lanterns, as I said, and they bought spigots — we used to get these fifty-five gallon drums from the Air Force that was landing there. We'd clean out the gasoline and we'd fill them up with water and we'd hang them up in the air, up on the trees, and put a spigot on for our showers, and we'd catch water in our shelter halves that we'd put so when it rained the water would go into these fifty-five gallon cans.

Well, we got our orders, that we were leaving New Zealand and going to New Guinea. We were going to a place called Aitape in New Guinea, just above Hollandia where MacArthur's headquarters were .... We were fighting at the Drinumor River. I can remember like today. And we landed in Aitape ... the general said he's gonna give us four days to set up our rear area and we're going forward to look for the enemy. So within one day I had my entire company up with tents, the kitchens were screened in, the Coleman lanterns were on, the radios were playing from the jeeps, we put up the spigots on the fifty-five gallon drums, we had water coming in — it rained there for about a half or three-quarters of an hour.

And the commanding general of our division came by — it was like a mirage. Here my company was up and the rest of the companies were on the ground. And here I had lights and everything else and the kitchens, and he couldn't comprehend what had happened. So he came and asked me what transpired, and I told him what exactly happened. And I [chuckles] became one of the most hated officers around, because he called the rest of the company commanders and [said] "Why didn't you people think of something like that." This is some of the things I did to keep the spirits up for the men in the field so that they were associated in this organization.

PB: They were human beings.

LH: And they were human beings and we're taking good care of them.

PB: Now what was the sad thing ... you were telling me of one sad incident?

LH: Oh yes, I was walking up a trail with my sergeant and we were ... see, this is another thing. You have to understand the situation over in the jungles where you can't see in front of you. And here are men who are, who are all civilians so to speak, and who had never seen combat before. And I had never seen combat; I was just as scared as they were. We always sent two men in front, they're called point men, they go up front. I'm behind them and the rest of the company's behind me. And the two men up in front froze. We were getting pretty close to where the enemy outpost was. And they turned around to me and they said, "Lieutenant, we're scared stiff." I was

as scared as they were, but to keep up the spirit of these men and to have faith and confidence in me (and, believe me, my legs were shaking as much as theirs) and I went up in front and I took them through the area, we fought our way through this area. In fact, we took one of the first prisoners, the Japanese prisoners, that were taken in the South Pacific. And from then on I could ask my people anything I could possibly want.

During that incident, my sergeant was walking with me, after we had penetrated the area, and my sergeant was walking with me, and a sniper in a tree took a shot at my sergeant and hit him right in the head and killed him immediately and I kept walking. Now that's the type of thing that you ...

PB: Were exposed to. Maybe he was aiming at you?

LH: Who could tell? I said, why him and not me? And I kept walking ... it wasn't my time to die.





*Temple Shalom, Middletown, R.I.*



## THE "OTHER" CONGREGATION ON AQUIDNECK ISLAND

BY RABBI MARC S. JAGOLINZER

For almost two hundred years, if asked to name a Jewish congregation on Aquidneck Island, or, specifically, in Newport, Rhode Island, the name most universally mentioned would be that of the venerable Touro Synagogue. The small Orthodox synagogue, Ahavis Achim, or the Bull Street Shul, was known only to local residents. It was at Ahavis Achim, however, where the initial effort to meet the needs of the non-Orthodox Jewish community of the Island was born. On May 16, 1961, a meeting of the Jewish community was held at Ahavis Achim to consider the possibility of founding a Conservative congregation. At this pivotal meeting, a committee was formed and charged to study the feasibility of such an undertaking.

At the Muenchinger-King Hotel on July 6, 1961, Dr. Simon Greenberg of the Jewish Theological Seminary addressed a gathering about creating a Conservative congregation, following a favorable report delivered by the feasibility committee. At this meeting, thirty-five families pledged to form such a congregation; thus Temple Shalom was born.

The wheels of progress began to turn quickly. The first meeting of the congregation was held at the Viking Hotel less than two weeks later, on July 17. At that meeting officers were elected and committees established. Although this new congregation was without a name or a place to worship, those involved were ecstatic about their undertaking, and pledged to have their congregation up and functioning by the High Holy Days with both a name and a place to assemble and pray.

On August 7, at Cliff Walk Manor, a most exciting and stimulating meeting was held. Committee reports reflected that sixty families had pledged to support the newly established congregation, that a site had been found for worship, and that a rabbi and a cantor had been hired for the forthcoming holy days. And it was at this meeting that a name was chosen: Temple Shalom, the Conservative Congregation of Newport County.

The Temple charter was quickly filed with the Secretary of State of Rhode Island, with seventy-five individuals and families making up the list of charter members. After almost two hundred years of exclusively Orthodox Judaism on Aquidneck Island, the conservative movement became a presence in the Jewish community.

The first High Holy Day services were held at the John Martin Memorial Center, also known as the Aquidneck Hut, in Newport, conducted by Rabbi Harry W. Katchen, Director of Community Relations at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and by Cantor Murray Pine.

After the exhilaration of its first High Holy Days, the members of Temple Shalom had to confront a problem. The fledgling congregation had little money, not nearly

enough to hire and retain even a part-time rabbi. Fortunately, in those days, the New England Region of the United Synagogue of America had established a "Torah Corps," serviced by rabbis and educators from throughout the region, to aid, guide, and advise developing or struggling congregations. It was from this Corps that Temple Shalom was able to obtain rabbis to conduct weekly Shabbat services and to lecture at an adult education program initiated by the Temple. Classes were held in members' homes on Saturday evenings and proved most successful and much needed. Some of the rabbis who assisted and served the Temple during its first year of existence were Rabbi Joel T. Klein, Temple Meyer-David of Claremont, New Hampshire; Rabbi Samuel Ruderman and Rabbi George Pollock, Temple Beth-El of Fall River, Massachusetts; and Rabbi Eli Bohnen, Temple Emanu-El of Providence, Rhode Island.

During this initial year of operation, services were held at the Grange Hall in Middletown, Cushing Memorial Gallery at the Newport Art Association, and, perhaps the eeriest of all services, in the chapel of Memorial Funeral Home on Memorial Boulevard in Newport, after its sale, but prior to its renovation by Narragansett Clothing Store. On that Shabbat evening at Memorial Funeral Home, midway through the service, the electric power was lost; until the power was restored, the only illumination was provided by the Shabbat candles.

Moving from place to place for services became burdensome and the congregation turned its attention to the search for a permanent home. In 1962, Temple Shalom became the occupant of the second floor of the Horgan Building at 194A Thames Street. It was in this location that the congregation held its first formal installation of officers and board members. At this same meeting, Rabbi Jack Schechter, Director of the New England Region of the United Synagogue of America, presented the Temple with its official charter under the national organization. The meeting concluded with the election of two Jewish Theological Seminary students to serve as student rabbis on alternating weekends. Simon Potok and David Auerbach were the first of many students who were to follow through the years.

In 1963, Rabbi Baruch Levine of Brandeis University was elected as the first rabbi to come for weekends to conduct Sabbath services on a regular and continuing basis. Rabbi Levine served this position well, providing guidance and assistance while he remained in the New England area.

The congregation elected its first full-time resident rabbi the following year. In 1964, Rabbi Stanley Dreifuss, who had recently been discharged from the Chaplain Corps of the United States Army, assumed the spiritual leadership of Temple Shalom, a position he held until 1966.

While the Temple's ritual committee again began the laborious process of finding a rabbi, Rabbi Baruch Levine once again took on the leadership of the congregation

on a bi-weekly basis. On the weekends that he was not in attendance, a seminary student officiated at services.

A turning point in the history of Temple Shalom occurred in 1967 when the congregation purchased the Birdland Cafe, located at 196-198 Thames Street in Newport. The membership was enthusiastic and delighted to finally have a facility which they could mold into a permanent house of worship. Through the physical labors and financial support of its members, the Birdland Cafe was fashioned into a beautiful sanctuary, social hall, kitchen, and study. The Temple had finally come of age with a home of its own. The new building also brought a new spiritual leader, Rabbi Emanuel Goldsmith of Brandeis University, who served the congregation on weekends for one year. For the next six years, the pulpit was filled by students from the Seminary.

In June, 1974, the Temple called Rabbi Marc S. Jagolinzer as its spiritual leader, a position he still holds today. The congregation rejoiced in its new rabbi and looked forward to building a strong and vibrant membership for the future. However, this joy was to be interrupted as calamity struck early on Sunday morning, October 14, 1974, Columbus Day, when Temple Shalom was completely destroyed by arson. A headline on the front page of the local newspaper, *The Newport Daily News*, states: "Blaze Destroys Synagogue; Jews Mourn Sacred Tablets." This fire devastated not only the members of the Temple, but the entire community of Newport County. At the height of the blaze, the fire was fought by ninety firefighters and eight trucks. For over two hours, those involved fought valiantly to extinguish the flames and prevent them from spreading to adjacent buildings. This tragedy mustered a strong and dedicated membership, who met that evening with more than one hundred local families to plan for the future. After much deliberation and consideration of offers from other houses of worship and civic organizations, it was decided that the congregation would use the facilities of Congregation Ahavis Achim, the site of the birth, and now the re-birth, of Temple Shalom. The members worshiped at Ahavis Achim until 1977. Although Friday night services were conducted independently, the traditional one at sunset and a later evening service (both led by Rabbi Jagolinzer), the two congregations united for Shabbat morning, festival, and High Holy Day worship. A warm and enduring bond was forged between the two groups.

On Sunday, October 20, the Jewish community as well as the general community joined the members of Temple Shalom for a moving and emotional burial of those religious objects destroyed in the fire. Adults and children assembled to mourn the loss of their temple building and their artifacts, and to gain support and strength from one another.

After a period of loss and recovery, the Temple began once again to grow and prosper. The membership rolls began to increase; with new members came the need

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for additional space. Quarters became cramped at Ahavis Achim and parking was at a premium. In 1977, the Temple commissioned the architectural firm of Urban Design to design and supervise the construction of a new building on land purchased by the congregation on Valley Road in Middletown. A design was submitted to and approved by the congregation, and ground was broken in July, 1977, by the Sullivan Construction Company of Newport. Construction continued until August, 1978. The first shabbat service in the new building was held on Friday evening, September 7, 1978, with a standing-room-only crowd in attendance. Rabbi Jagolinzer began the service by reciting the Sheheyanu, and giving thanks for reaching this milestone in the history of Temple Shalom.

The new facility consisted of a sanctuary, a social hall, a combination board room/chapel, a library, a rabbi's study, and a kitchen. A formal weekend of dedication ceremonies was held from Friday evening, October 27, through Sunday afternoon, October 29, 1978. The Friday evening service was conducted by Rabbi Jagolinzer, with Fannie Nemtzow, the oldest female member of the congregation, lighting the candles, and Steven Perry, New England Representative to the National Board of the United Synagogue of America, as the featured guest speaker. On Shabbat morning, an interfaith worship service was held. Participants joining in the celebration included The Reverend Canon Lorne Coyle of Trinity Church, Newport; The Reverend William C. Graham of Middletown Baptist Church; The Reverend Brian Roberge of the United Congregational Church, Middletown; The Reverend Thomas Lindeman of St. Paul's Methodist Church, Newport; and The Reverend H. Nils Berg, Chaplain, Newport Hospital. Torah Aliyot were distributed to past presidents of the congregation, and Harry Nemtzow, the oldest member and a charter member of Temple Shalom, read from the Torah and chanted the haftorah. A kiddush followed the worship, which was attended by Temple and community members who shared in this Shabbat service of dedication.

Sunday afternoon was the highlight of the weekend. A colorful and joyous procession of officers, trustees, past presidents, presidents of Temple affiliates, guests of the congregation, and members of the Building Committee followed Rabbi Marc S. Jagolinzer and President Michael Mendell as they carried the scrolls into the new building up to the holy ark for placement therein. After the Torahs were housed, the eternal light, designed by Professor Walter Feldman of Brown University, was kindled as a prayer was recited. Edward Goldberg, founding president of the Temple, served as master of ceremonies. Rabbi Theodore Lewis of Touro Synagogue offered the invocation. A host of local dignitaries present brought greetings: Mayor Humphrey J. Donnelly, III, Newport; Council President Robert M. Silva, Middletown; Council President Paul Poirier, Portsmouth; The Reverend Gilbert Taverner, Calvary United Methodist Church, Middletown; Captain Hebert Bolles, CHC, USNR, Senior Chaplain, NETC, Newport; The Reverend Robert

Williams, Community Baptist Church, Newport; The Reverend John Theodore, St. Spyridon's Greek Church, Newport; The Reverend Timothy Gillen, St. Lucy's Roman Catholic Church, Middletown; and The Reverend Thomas Lindeman, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Newport. The Dedication Message was delivered by Rabbi Jagolinzer and the Presentation of the Keys by Edward Rose, Chair of the Building Committee. Rabbi Jagolinzer and his wife Barbara led the congregation in the Prayer of Dedication and the Responsive Affirmation. The benediction was delivered by Rabbi Ely Katz of Touro Synagogue. This afternoon of dedication was one of beauty, fellowship, and joy. A collation concluded the ceremonies.

In the years that followed, the Temple enjoyed growth and activity. A Men's Club, Sisterhood, Tree of Life Seniors Group, Couples Club, Adult Education Program, Social Action Group, and a wide variety of services have been offered and supported by the members of the Temple. With Rabbi Jagolinzer as a leader of interfaith activities on Aquidneck Island and surrounding areas, the members of Temple Shalom have participated in a wide variety of programs with members of other faiths.

In 1988, Mrs. Beatrice B. Bazarsky came to visit with Rabbi Jagolinzer to discuss the possibility of building a religious school on the grounds of the Temple, dedicated to the memory of her beloved husband, Samuel Zilman Bazarsky. After a vote by the membership of Temple Shalom, Mrs. Bazarsky erected a brick building adjoining the Temple, with four fully equipped classrooms. The School, open to all students from Newport County and surrounding areas, was formally dedicated in September, 1989, as The Samuel Zilman Bazarsky Religious School, with 39 students enrolled, and a faculty of four.

Through the years, both the Temple and the School have continued to prosper and flourish. The congregational membership has more than doubled since its inception, and the School boasts an enrollment of 75 students.

During its 36 years of existence, Temple Shalom, the Conservative Congregation of Newport County, has become well known for its services and its multifaceted activities. The Temple serves as a beacon of spirituality, collegiality, and education to the Jewish community.

On December 6, the United States Postal Service designated Temple Shalom as the site for the reissue of the Chanukah Stamp. A framed poster of the United States Chanukah Stamp, as well as the same stamp issued in Israel, was presented to Rabbi Jagolinzer at a ceremony attended by a standing-room-only crowd. Second-day covers with the Stamp and the Temple logo were cancelled at that time.

On January 9, 1998, after a long and concerted effort on behalf of Rabbi Jagolinzer and the Temple, a kosher meal site was established at the Temple for the

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seniors of Newport County in partnership with Jewish Family Service and the State of Rhode Island.

Temple Shalom is a strong and growing congregation serving the Jewish community. As the congregation celebrates its 36th anniversary of existence, its double-chai anniversary, the Temple looks to the continuation of a rich spiritual and religious life as a leading congregation in Rhode Island.





## JEWISH STUDIES AT BROWN UNIVERSITY A CENTURY AGO

BY MARTHA MITCHELL

The Brown University catalog for 1897-1898 lists the following courses of instruction under the heading "Biblical Literature in English."

1,2. *History and Literature of the Jewish People*. Three hours. First and second terms. Elective for Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors.

From the Babylonian exile to the Conquest by the Romans.

Professor Kent\*

3. *History of New Testament Times*. Three hours. Third term. Elective for Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors.

*Investigation of political, social and religious conditions in Palestine at the beginning of the Christian era.*

Professor Kent\*

4,5,6. *Hebrew History and Literature*. Three hours. Through the year. Elective for Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors. To be offered in 1898-1899 as the complement of 1,2,3.

These courses were offered to general students as well as those intending special Biblical work or prospective clergymen. They were probably the first courses of this type offered at Brown University.

Professor Kent prepared a voluminous outline for the first course, the cover of which is illustrated here. One of the students in his course (1,2) in 1897 was Mary Prentiss Hill, class of 1900. A sample of her notes is also illustrated. Both are copies of material in the Brown University Archives. Also in the Archives, and reproduced here, is the examination given by Professor Kent for this course.

### JEWISH HISTORY AND LITERATURE 3.

June 3, 1898

1. What books are the chief historical sources for the Persian period?
2. Describe the building of the second temple.
3. What was the nature of the service which Nehemiah performed for his race?
4. Outline briefly the growth of the Jewish Law.
5. What are the important teachings of the Book of Jonah?
6. Indicate the chief effects of the conquests of Alexander upon the Jewish people.
7. Indicate the causes of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes.
8. Describe the origin, tenets and political position of the party of the Sadducees.
9. What were the causes of the decline of the Maccabean power?
10. What special privileges were granted to the Jews in the dispersion?

\*Charles Foster Kent subsequently moved to Yale University and published several books on the history of the Jews.

Martha Mitchell is the Archivist of Brown University.

*Mary Prentiss Hill.*

# OUTLINES

—OF THE—

## History of the Jewish People

FROM

The Fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C., to the Advent of the Romans

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PREPARED BY CHARLES FOSTER KENT, BROWN UNIVERSITY.

*Mary Prentiss Hill's copy of Professor Kent's course outline. Original in Brown University Archives.*

## Part I. Period of the Babylonian Exile.

### I What the Jews carried into the Exile.

*National experience* The exile period was the most important year in the life of the Jewish race, because it was then that they made the most progress in religious development.

*Written prophetic* The Jews carried with them into exile a rich collection of national experience beginning with their deliverance from the power of the Egyptians.

*Historical* Their literature consisted of prophetic the written prophecies of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, besides historical prophetic writings like Judges and Sam and Kings, legal literature, which is contained in the priestly portions of the Pentateuch, legal and historical, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. National and religious poetry of



## HISTORY OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

BY SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D., AND JUDITH WEISS COHEN

While local and regional history has been an active concern of interested groups since the earliest days of the Republic, local ethnic history had a small constituency. Encouragement for such history came from local professional historians such as Clifford C. Monahan and Albert T. Klyberg, former directors of the Rhode Island Historical Society. (Klyberg is presently acting executive director of Heritage Harbor.) They supported the concept enthusiastically, feeling that local historical groups such as the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association could develop significant aspects of local history, adding a dimension and depth to the total picture of local history.

The Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association (RIJHA), founded in 1951, is the oldest local Jewish and oldest local ethnic historical society in continuous operation. It was chartered by the state of Rhode Island for the following purposes: "To procure, collect, and preserve books, records, pamphlets, letters, manuscripts, prints, photographs, paintings, and any other historical material relating to the history of the Jews in Rhode Island; to encourage and promote the study of such history by lectures and otherwise; and to publish and diffuse information as to such history."

The founding father of the Association was the late David C. Adelman, an astute and prominent attorney and a talented amateur historian, who conceived and agitated for establishment of the organization. Other charter members, all now deceased were Beryl Segal, a pharmacist, writer, and Hebrew teacher; Professor Israel J. Kapstein of the English Department at Brown University; Matilda J. Pincus, a librarian; Alter Boyman, a peddler and scholar active in Jewish community affairs; Rabbi William G. Braude of Temple Beth-El; and Arthur J. Levy, an attorney.

The first meeting of the incorporators was held on November 20, 1951, in the historic John Brown House in Providence. An arrangement was made with the Rhode Island Historical Society to use its quarters as a meeting place and mailing address. The first formal meeting, at which Adelman presided, was held on February 12, 1953. The timing was felicitous, though not entirely without forethought, since it enabled the Association to play a significant role in the celebration in 1954 of two anniversaries. It was the centennial of the first Jewish congregation in Providence (Congregation Sons of Israel, which later became Congregation Sons of Israel and David — Temple Beth-El) and the tercentenary of the arrival of Jews in New Amsterdam in what was to become the United States. Four years after their

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This article is adapted from the Fall 1996 Newsletter of the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies.

arrival in North America a small group of Jews in 1658 found their way to Newport.

Adelman's interest in Rhode island Jewish history began with his hobby of collecting Rhode Island Americana, then concentrating on Rhode Island Jewish material. His detailed research, his legal orientation, and his frequent recourse to court records and public documents first enabled him to make corrections in exaggerations and errors in some of the myths that had arisen about the early Jewish migration of Newport. He then came to realize that the great Jewish migrations of the nineteenth century had been largely ignored in relation to Rhode Island history. Similarly, most of the migrations of other ethnic groups to this state have been left out of the teaching of Rhode Island history and the collections of the state's museum, a gap which it is hoped will be remedied with the proposed Heritage Center at the former Narragansett Electric Company power station.)

The chief functions of RIJHA are to engage in research, to publish, to provide a repository for its collections, and to educate and to promote a climate which encourages its work.

RIJHA has grown from 44 members in its first year to more than 700. The Association is supported by membership dues and by donations. It is governed by officers and an executive committee elected at an annual meeting. The executive committee meets four times a year.

RIJHA has three paid part-time staff workers — office manager, librarian-archivist, and editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*. Volunteer workers fill some of the gaps in providing service.

At first the Association records were maintained and Executive Committee meetings were held in a basement room at the Jewish Home for the Aged. The Association was then housed in an old Victorian house on Waterman Street, Providence, which had been converted to doctors' offices. Materials of the Association were kept in the trunk of David Adelman's car. The Association is now housed in the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island building at 130 Sessions Street, Providence, which is connected to the Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island building, 401 Elmgrove Avenue. The Federation, which is the central fund-raising community planning, and community relations arm of the organized Rhode Island Jewish community, provides RIJHA free rent and housekeeping services.

The space consists of two rooms, one room for administration, office equipment including a computer, reference library, archival file cabinets, processing of acquisitions, and modest research space, the other room for archival storage. At present RIJHA also maintains space in a storage locker for artifacts such as plaques and military uniforms.

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RIJHA's archival holdings include photographs, documents, memorabilia, and newspaper clippings gathered from a variety of businesses, synagogues, and organizations, many of them now defunct, and from individuals. While most of the material dates from 1870 to the present, several items date from the 1700s. Most of RIJHA's archival holdings document the Jewish experience in Rhode Island, but a small portion of the collection reflects life in the immigrants' native lands.

#### NOTABLE HOLDINGS

- King David Masonic Lodge, Newport, ledger sheet of expenditures to needy persons, 1700.
- Hand-written letter from David Ben Gurion, first prime minister of Israel, to Ida Silverman of Providence, leader in the Zionist movement.
- Fifty pages of photocopies of an 18th century collection from Touro Synagogue in Newport, dedicated in 1763, the oldest synagogue building in the United States, a National Historic Site, and still the home of an active Orthodox congregation.
- Social welfare records of early Jewish benevolent societies and records of ongoing institutions.
- Personal papers consisting of passports, naturalization records, and marriage and birth certificates documenting early Rhode Island Jewish settlers.
- Papers, scrapbooks, minutes, and newspaper clippings documenting the history of Rhode Island Jewish religious organizations, some of which have merged with other institutions or have discontinued operations.
- Large collection of information on and photographs of early Jewish businesses in Rhode Island.

Files are maintained of local Jewish newspapers. In addition to print material, the collection also contains audio and videotapes of oral history interviews, slides, and an assortment of artifacts such as altar cloths, candlesticks, prayer books, military uniforms, plaques, and statuettes.

Among the comments RIJHA has received praising the collection are: "It is a small collection, but shows consistent growth as the Association pursues an active collection policy" (Mary Beth Nelligan, Northeast Document Conservation Center, General Preservation Survey report, March 16, 1992, Appendix 8). "Your collection is one of the most significant in the State" (Albert T. Klyberg, Executive Director, Rhode Island Historical Society, letter, August 14, 1994).



## TYPICAL USERS OF THE COLLECTION:

- *Individuals*: For a genealogist from Los Angeles, RIJHA sent a copy of a business directory with a charming engraving ad listing his great-grandfather. Provided information on the first Jew in Providence (1883) for a family tree. Found in the records of the now-defunct Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island the date an orphan lived there to help him with his Social Security application. The most unusual request, which we could not answer, was a letter from a man in France asking for information on Jewish women in the United States for possible marriage.
- *Scholars*: A historian from Clark University writing a book on Jewish loan societies relied on several collections of loan records at RIJHA. After an exhaustive search at archives throughout the country, she found at RIJHA the only records of a Hebrew free loan society founded by women to lend money only to women. An anthropologist used RIJHA to enrich her understanding of the Rhode Island Jewish community of the past for a book on life in a nursing home.
- *Authors*: A cookbook author used RIJHA's collection of cookbooks compiled by Jewish organizations.
- *Institutions*: Provided information on Portuguese Sephardic Jews in Rhode Island to the Jewish Museum in New York.

The collection is heavily used. In one year alone there were 119 telephone requests for information, two-thirds of them from out of state. Thirty-five persons visited the collection to do research or to ask for information, and twenty-three mail requests were received.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES OF RIJHA

In addition to work associated with collection and archives, the organization's activities include the following:

- a. *Publications*: RIJHA's chief publication, the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, is a scholarly historical journal issued since 1954 annually. The first issues consisted of 76 pages on slick paper and displayed the excellence of format, careful editing, and professional ambience which were to be its hallmarks through the years. Its contents included a history of Jews in the court records of Providence from 1789 to 1860, naturalization lists from the United States Court for Rhode Island to 1906 and from the State court to 1905, and Jewish names from the Providence and Pawtucket directories of 1878.

In 1961 David Adelman was very ill, and the *Notes* was not published. Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., a Providence surgeon and *Rhode Island Medical*

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*Journal* editor for twenty-seven years, then became editor of the *Notes* and served with distinction for seventeen years. He is now editor-emeritus, chairman of the Association's publications committee, and an active member of the executive committee. The *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* is published every year, with an occasional additional issue. Some issues are as long as 170 pages. Subject matter ranges from Jews in 17th and 18th century Newport, Rhode Island, to the development of Jewish institutions in the wider Rhode Island area up until about 50 years ago and descriptions of early Jewish neighborhoods, businesses, customs, synagogues, families, and individuals. Some recent articles have been "The Portuguese-Rhode Island Jewish Link," "Jewish Farmers in Rhode Island and Nearby Massachusetts," "Jews at Brown," "A Civil War Hero and His Rhode Island Family," and "Passover and the Crypto-Jews." Subscribers to the *Notes* include many libraries and are located east as far as Jerusalem and west as far as Australia.

RIJHA also publishes, three times a year, a newsletter with news about the organization's activities and reports from the president, the editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, and the librarian-archivist. Lists are included of the names of contributors to the organization and the names of the people they honor or memorialize.

- b. *Lectures:* RIJHA holds two meetings a year, one the organization's formal annual meeting, which are open to the public and feature lectures by noted speakers and scholars. In November 1995 the Association's mid-year meeting commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Civil Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. The speakers were two Jews and two Blacks from Rhode Island who had marched in this historic event. The speaker for the 1996 annual meeting in May, a scholar from Brandeis University, spoke on "Jews in Fiction and Film." Between 175 to 200 persons attend each meeting. Exhibits of materials from RIJHA's archives relating to the subjects of the lectures are displayed at the meetings.
- c. *Trips:* The Association sponsors occasional trips to historic Jewish sites. The first was an all-day bus trip to New York City to visit the Jewish Museum, the Tenement Museum, and the old Jewish neighborhood of the Lower East Side. Another trip was to historic Jewish Boston, including the new Holocaust Memorial on the Freedom Trail. A trip covering sites in Providence's North End was held in the fall of 1996.
- d. *Scholarships:* From time to time RIJHA provides scholarships to students in history at local universities. Students from Brown University often serve as interns to the editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*.
- e. *Exhibits:* As part of its mission to diffuse information on Rhode Island history

RIJHA provides archival material for exhibits by other organizations. Recent such exhibits were:

- "Vanishing Rhode Island," Slater Mill Historic Site, Pawtucket, R.I. Photograph and assistance.
  - "Life Cycles" and "Home from the Front," Rhode Island Historical Society.
  - "A Matter of Simple Justice: 100 Years of women's Higher Education in Rhode Island, 1892-1992," Pembroke Center for Teaching at Brown University.
  - "Father Flanagan and Henry Monsky, Men of Vision: the Special Friendship between Boys Town's founder and a great American Jewish leader," co-sponsored by RIJHA and the Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island.
  - RIJHA also has developed and shown a traveling exhibit of photographs, slides, and accompanying narrative on old Jewish businesses.
- f. *Speeches:* RIJHA officers and the librarian-archivist and editor frequently give speeches at meetings of state and local historical associations, synagogues, and other organizations.

#### FUTURE GOALS

The Association currently has a part-time professional librarian working on a project to increase access to and use of records. We have applied for grants and will continue to try to gain funds for arrangement and description of the historical records, including the creation of guides, finding aids, and other access tools, and the development of automated descriptive databases.

We hope to improve access to archival records to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of descriptive information about historical records; the development and use of descriptive standards and the resolution of bibliographic problems that limit access to historical records in original and published form; the removal of barriers to access for users of all types; and the improved distribution of information about historical records.

#### OFFICE HOURS

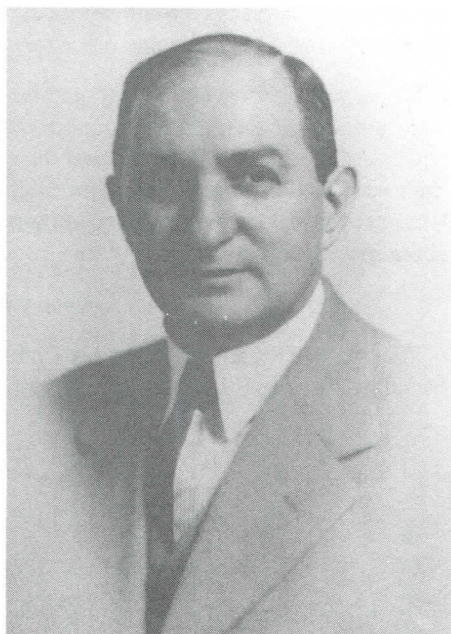
The office of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association is open for research Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and by appointment.

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*Abraham Blackman, 1903-1951.*



*Samuel Gereboff, 1901-1980.*

## EARLY JEWISH ACCOUNTANTS IN RHODE ISLAND

BY ZITA G. BRIER

The existence of Jewish accountants in Rhode Island can be documented back to the early 1900s. By then many Jewish immigrants had earned enough money to start their own businesses. At first bookkeepers could provide adequate support for these businesses, but as they grew they needed the analytical skills of accountants. In 1906 the state enacted legislation which established the State Board of Accountancy. This body gave individuals the authority to practice public accounting based on education and experience. In 1917 the uniform CPA exam became available, but it was not until November 1923 that the Rhode Island Uniform CPA exam was first given. In 1962 passing the exam became mandatory for anyone who wished to be certified as a public accountant.

In 1916 Bryant & Stratton (now Bryant College) was given the power by the State of Rhode Island to confer degrees. One of the degrees was Bachelor of Accounts.<sup>1</sup> At Rhode Island State College (now the University of Rhode Island) a major in Accounting became available in the academic year 1933-34.<sup>2</sup>

BENJAMIN I. ROBINSON

The first Jewish accountant certified by the State Board of Accountancy was Benjamin I. Robinson. He was forty-fifth on the Registry and was certified on July 8, 1923.<sup>3</sup>

Robinson was born on March 16, 1894. According to his daughter, Cynthia Thomas, Benjamin's father died when he was a college student at Brown University and Benjamin (or B.I. as he was also called) took over support of the family by doing bookkeeping in addition to attending college. His major was philosophy. In his senior year he took a course in sociology given by Lester F. Ward, "A Survey of All Knowledge." Cynthia Thomas states that this course influenced her father's entire life. He studied all Ward's books and in later years wrote his own book on Ward, *The Making of Man*.

After graduation from Brown in 1913, Robinson secured a loan from one of his clients to attend Harvard University Business School. He commuted daily from Providence and continued to service his bookkeeping accounts. Because of this demanding schedule he sometimes fell asleep in class. The Dean called him into his office and, upon learning of his hectic schedule, arranged for him to live at Harvard for his senior year. He graduated in 1915.

While a senior at Harvard, he met Lillian Lesser, whom he married soon after graduation. The couple had four children.

Although he was offered a job at IBM by a classmate at Harvard, he preferred to open his own office at 32 Custom House Street in Providence, where he remained all his working years.

Robinson became the accountant for many of his bookkeeping clients. He handled retail stores and manufacturing corporations and became an expert on taxes. He was a dollar-a-year-man for the U.S. Government and served in Washington on tax matters.<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin I. Robinson died on May 9, 1978.

#### LOUIS LIPSON

Louis Lipson, who was born in 1898, had a long and distinguished career as a public accountant. His story parallels that of many others in the early 1900s. It is the story of one whose education was interrupted by the necessity to leave school in order to help support his family. He overcame this obstacle by attending night courses at Bryant & Stratton.

According to his daughter, Janet Friedman, Lipson first worked for Benjamin Robinson. He eventually opened his own office and was one of the first tenants of the Industrial Bank Building. He specialized in tax work, and the majority of his clients were businesses.<sup>5</sup>

Louis Lipson died in 1979. His son, Edward H. Lipson, is a public accountant with an office in Cranston.

#### ABRAHAM BLACKMAN

Abraham Blackman, who died just before his 49th birthday, had a remarkable list of accomplishments. His life began in Bristol, Rhode Island, on January 16, 1903. He attended Colt High School and continued his education at Bryant College. While at college he also worked for Ward Fisher. Graduating in 1923, he decided to take the CPA exam and, according to his family, he had the highest marks of anyone in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts.<sup>6</sup> The records at the State Board of Accountancy reveal that Blackman became a CPA on February 16, 1924.

The first Jewish name to appear on the membership roll of the Rhode Island Society of Certified Public Accountants was that of Blackman, on April 28, 1924. Immediately under his name is the signature of Samuel Gereboff on the same date. Blackman served as president of the society in 1939 and 1940 and later became president of the national society.<sup>7</sup>

As a very young man in his early 20s he started his own accounting practice, renting space in Max Winograd's law offices. Within a couple of years he was able to rent his own space.



Blackman's talent was not confined to accounting. He was an active member of the Repertory Players and also one of the Jewish Community Center's acting group.

Edward Blackman, Abraham's brother, joined the practice, and in 1941 he took over the office because Abraham decided to go into manufacturing. This was with the Seal-sac company, a plastics manufacturer. He enjoyed success in the business environment and never returned to private practice.

#### SAMUEL GEREBOFF

A lifelong resident of Providence, Samuel Gereboff was one of seven children. After graduating from Classical High School, Gereboff continued his studies at Boston University. He received his undergraduate degree in 1922 at the age of 21. Ambitious and studious, Gereboff took and passed the CPA exams in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. According to his sister, he secretly went to New York where he successfully completed the exam for the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.<sup>8</sup> Gereboff became a member of the Rhode Island Society of Certified Public Accountants on April 28, 1924, the same date as Blackman.<sup>9</sup> He served as the president from 1948 to 1949.

While still in college, Gereboff worked in the office of Benjamin Robinson. He continued there after graduation until he opened his own office in the Industrial Bank Building. Much of his work was for Rhode Island manufacturing firms. He was so knowledgeable about taxation that he was often consulted by the head of the Rhode Island Division of Taxation.<sup>10</sup>

Outside of the office Gereboff did pro bono work for several of the Jewish charitable organizations to which he belonged. For recreation Gereboff enjoyed the game of golf.

Samuel Gereboff died on December 25, 1980, survived by his wife, Sadye.

#### JOHN DANNIN

On May 1, 1901, John Dannin was born in Newport. His family moved to Philadelphia, but, after graduating from Temple University, Dannin returned to Rhode Island.

There were very few public accountants in Newport when Dannin opened his accounting firm in 1939. He practiced alone for many years. In 1956 his nephew Joseph came to work at the firm and has continued the practice to this date. The firm's name is Dannin and Dannin and is operated by Joseph and his brother-in-law Michael Mandell.

Professionally, John Dannin belonged to the Rhode Island Society of Public Accountants and the National Society of Public Accountants.

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Dannin was very active in fraternal and civic groups in Newport. After World War II he became involved in the City Council and in 1947 he was elected mayor of Newport. He must have been disappointed with his political experiences because when Joseph joined the firm, his uncle made him promise not to go into politics. An incident which also might have influenced John was the mishap he had while mayor: he fell down the elevator shaft at City Hall, an accident which left him with a permanent limp.

Dannin was an active member of B'Nai B'Rith, including its Anti-Defamation League, both in the United States and the International League. Touro Synagogue was another Jewish interest, and he served a period as its president.<sup>11</sup>

On January 7, 1975, John Dannin died in Newport.

PETER YOSINOFF

Peter Yosinoff was one of the founders of the Rhode Island Association of Public Accountants.<sup>12</sup> He was born on May 13, 1908. He received a B.B.A. degree from Bryant & Stratton with a major in accounting in 1928. At that time the college campus was on Fountain Street in Providence. Additional education was acquired at the University of Rhode Island, New York University, and Community College of Rhode Island.

Peter Yosinoff liked to be involved. A member of the National Society of Public Accountants, he was the State Director from Rhode Island from 1961-1963 and Governor, District I, from 1967 to 1969. He also accepted many committee chairmanships. These included National Affairs, Bank Relations, Rules, Federal Taxation, and Nominating. In the Rhode Island Association, Yosinoff held the office of president from 1959 to 1960 and 1960 to 1961, of vice president from 1949 to 1950 and 1957 to 1959, and was on the Board of Directors for many years. He had the distinction of holding membership certificate Number 1. In the New England Association of Public Accountants, Yosinoff was president 1963-1964, vice president 1959-1963, and was chairman of the New England Regional Tax Conference in 1964. He also assumed the chairmanship for the National Society of Public Accountants Scholarship Foundation 1976-1977.

Marilyn Nalibow, Yosinoff's daughter, related that her father was a perfectionist, very exacting in whatever he did. This quality was reflected in his work, which gave him much pleasure. Public speaking was another source of enjoyment<sup>13</sup> and led him to testify for the National Association of Public Accountants at IRS hearings and for the Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In his non-professional life Yosinoff was an active member of Temple Sinai and Temple Beth Israel and served on the Board of Directors of the Bureau of Jewish

Education. On a Bryant College Alumni questionnaire he listed his hobbies as reading, playing golf, and baseball, football, and basketball spectator.

Peter Yosinoff retired in 1975, 17 years before his death.

#### OTHER JEWISH ACCOUNTANTS

Many public accountants had very successful practices and chose not to take the CPA exam, according to Newton Cohn, CPA.<sup>14</sup> Cohn's first accounting position was in the office of Myer Millman, a popular public accountant. In 1950, Cohn did take the CPA exam and opened his own office on Weybosset Street in Providence. At the present time he is doing consulting work after many satisfying years in the profession.

Past presidents of the Rhode Island Society of Certified Public Accountants have included several Jewish accountants in addition to Abraham Blackman and Samuel Gereboff. They are Edward Blackman, 1956-1957; Elliott Dittelman, 1971-1972; Jack Fradin, 1974-1975; and Martin Dittelman, 1979-1980.

The Rhode Island Association of Public Accountants also lists several Jewish names as past presidents. They are Martin Kaufman, 1948; Max M. Goodman, 1952; and Louis Adler, 1962.

The demands and challenges of accounting continue to attract many Jewish men and women to the profession.



#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Telephone Interview with Tom Magill, March 19, 1996.
  - <sup>2</sup> Vangermeersch, Richard, *A History of the College of Business Administration of URI 1923-1992*, p.226.
  - <sup>3</sup> Records of Rhode Island State Board of Accountancy.
  - <sup>4</sup> Letter from Cynthia Thomas.
  - <sup>5</sup> Telephone interview with Janet Friedman, April 30, 1997.
  - <sup>6</sup> Interview with Martha Blackman Dobrein and Sybil Simon, September 17, 1996.
  - <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>8</sup> Interview with Helen Forman, December 9, 1996.
  - <sup>9</sup> Records of Rhode Island State Board of Accountancy.
  - <sup>10</sup> Forman, *ibid*.
  - <sup>11</sup> Interview with Joseph Dannin, February 7, 1997.
  - <sup>12</sup> Letter from Ralph Sacco, Jr., J.D., Executive Director of Rhode Island Association of Public Accountants, January 13, 1997.
  - <sup>13</sup> Interview with Marilyn Nalibow, March 1, 1997.
  - <sup>14</sup> Interview with Newton Cohn, September 18, 1996.
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*Inside Fogel's Market, Main Street, East Greenwich.*



## JEWS OF EAST GREENWICH

BY ELEANOR F. HORVITZ AND GERALDINE S. FOSTER

The town of East Greenwich, Rhode Island, retains to this day the beauty of its original seaport setting, with four hills rising from the waterfront. The first leads to Main Street and the town business center. The second goes to Peirce Street, the civic center with the town house, library, armory, two churches, the site of the old East Greenwich Academy, and a group of imposing old houses. Residential areas, including the area to the west known as Frenchtown, occupy the other two.<sup>1</sup>

In 1774 the population was recorded as 1,543 whites, 31 Indians, and 69 Negroes.<sup>2</sup> Although his name does not appear in town records, rumors dating from that time suggest that the prominent Jewish pre-Revolutionary trader and businessman Aaron Lopez may have built a house at 294 Main Street in 1767. The fact that a Jew could not then build or register the deed to a house in his own name is offered as explanation for the absence of any official reference. Nevertheless, as the owner of the 30 square riggers engaged both in European and West Indian trade, Lopez may have built a house for one of his traders.<sup>3</sup>

Only fragmentary records exist of Jewish presence in the area around East Greenwich during most of the 19th century. In 1865 Jacob Turek, who lived in Wickford with his wife Anna, applied for a four hundred dollar loan from the Wickford Savings Bank. The only other reference to this businessman is his listing in a Wickford directory as the proprietor of a candy store on Brown Street. At around the same time Hymie Cohen was a cattle dealer in North Kingstown. More detailed documentation exists about the Solomon family, the first Jewish family to settle in East Greenwich upon their arrival there in 1894.

Isaac Solomon's son John wrote of him: "He was born in Balberishuk, Lithuania, a small town near the Polish border. He had lived in England for five years before coming to America and his elementary English schooling stood him in good stead for he was able to keep a set of books in England and retained a slight English accent in his speech."

Isaac had left his homeland in 1874 at age 19 because of its prevalent anti-Semitism. After arriving in America from England, he worked his way from New York to Rhode Island, settling in the tiny village of Hope Valley. There he developed a route as a peddler, which he followed between Hope Valley and East Greenwich. When he and his wife Rose moved to East Greenwich, they opened a men's and boys' clothing store on Main Street.<sup>4</sup>

Eleanor Horvitz is Librarian-Archivist, and Geraldine Foster is a past president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

The story of the East Greenwich Jewish community that began with Isaac and Watermans, Abrams, Reyns, Halsbands, Fogels, Jacobsons, and Narvas were on the scene by 1916. The Spungins arrived in the early 1920s. All these families developed interrelationships of business, marriage, or friendship.

In 1907, Herman Silverman, a young Jewish businessman from Troy, N.Y., opened a shoe store in East Greenwich in half of the Solomons' store at 235 Main Street. By this time, Isaac and Rose had five children: Sadie, Lewis, Jennie, John, and Benjamin. Jennie Solomon married Herman Silverman; his sister Dorothy married Benjamin Solomon.

Herman Silverman was born in Troy in 1883, one of nine children. His parents were Polish immigrants, his father a successful retail clothier. Herman left school after the fifth grade to work for three dollars a week in a collar shop. He later attended night school at Cooper Union in New York City and was a travelling sales representative for two years before becoming a clothing store salesman in Albany. He was twenty-four when, while visiting relatives in East Greenwich, he met the Solomon family and fell in love with Jennie. He married her in 1908.

Soon Silverman added women's and children's apparel to his line of shoes. His growing business continued to occupy space next to his in-laws in the Main Street building. Isaac Solomon had retired from the clothing business in 1906 and had moved back to Providence. Solomon Lane, off Olney Street, was named for him.

The Solomon-Silverman connection continued through the years, the generations, and several changes of location. In 1912 Solomon and Sons (Benjamin and John) advertised as the "reliable clothiers" at 107 Main Street. Benjamin Solomon took over the store in 1918 and it later became the Ben Solomon's Men's Store. Benjamin Solomon, who was a locally well known basketball player and who maintained a lifelong interest in sports, died in 1954. His son Leonard then became the store's proprietor.

Meanwhile, Silverman's had moved in 1920 to its own building at 191 Main Street. There were further additions to the business, including a separate shoe store. In 1968 Silverman's moved again, to spacious new facilities once again shared with the Solomons, at 500 Main Street. Howard Silverman explained that in spite of their common tenancy, and an interior opening permitting common access to the two family businesses, each remained a separate entity.

Herman Silverman's obituary in the *Providence Journal* of January 14, 1977, referred to him as "Mr. East Greenwich, ... a fixture in town business and civic affairs since the early days of the century."<sup>5</sup> Herman Silverman earned his title with an active involvement in town affairs over the years. In 1913 he led a controversial attempt to appropriate money for the town's first fire engine. In a similar vein,



always standing up for advances he believed necessary, he fought for the town's first modern school building, the Eldridge School on First Avenue. Again he faced strong local opposition, as he did once more in 1940 when he advocated the construction of a United Service Organization (USO) building. He succeeded in spite of the fears of many that a center for sailors would threaten the morals of East Greenwich girls. In fact, more than a dozen marriages resulted from friendships between lonely sailors and young East Greenwich women.

In 1927, Herman Silverman was chairman of an event celebrating the 250th anniversary of the founding of East Greenwich, a momentous occasion which attracted 50,000 visitors.<sup>6</sup> An essay in the souvenir book traced the town's history from the original grant of land in 1677, citing places of historic interest and culminating in a section titled "The East Greenwich of Today." In 1927 there were six churches in the town, but no place of Jewish worship. Herman Silverman's role was recognized and his photograph included along with those of two other Jewish men: Benjamin Silverman, the Athletic Committee Chairman, and Morris Abrams, who served with Herman Silverman on the Executive Committee.

Herman Silverman's important town positions included several years as president of the Chamber of Commerce and 18 years as a trustee of Kent County Memorial Hospital. He was one of the hospital's original trustees. During World War II he was active in the town's disaster group and worked for the erection of the War Memorial Stadium. Explaining the reasons for his lifelong public service, he said, "The town has given me a good living and has helped me raise and educate my family, so the least I could do is give my best to the betterment of my community."

Jennie and Herman Silverman's five children — Benjamin, Arthur, Irving, Howard, and Ruth — followed the example set by their father. Howard Silverman, who became president of Herman Silverman, Inc. at 500 Main Street, and is still active in community affairs, was president of both the class of 1928 at East Greenwich Grammar School and the class of 1932 at East Greenwich Academy. He was also the editor-in-chief of the high school yearbook. Like his father, he has been involved in the Chamber of Commerce. He has also been president of the Rotary Club. His interest in music led to his serving as vice-president of the Clef Club of East Greenwich and to participation in other local musical groups.

Irving Silverman, who died in June, 1997, and who also served as president of the Silvermans' store, was a member of the last class to graduate from the East Greenwich Academy. He had also been president of the Kent County unit of the American Red Cross, and a member of the board of directors of Kent County Memorial Hospital. He was a founder and the first president of REACT, a state organization for the promotion of community theatre, and a charter member and president of the Academy Players.

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We have seen how a marriage between members of two of the earliest Jewish families in East Greenwich led to the arrival of new Jewish residents. During the years before World War I the town's Jewish population continued to increase as one member of a family who discovered East Greenwich as a good place to live and work persuaded relatives to join him.

Among the early 20th Century arrivals was Samuel Cohen, who was there by 1900 and who also opened a shoe store. In 1910 Jacob Kaufman arrived to operate a second hand store and junk yard on Main Street. The families who followed them wove an interconnected pattern of business relationships, marriages, and friendships. The children of these families, living links to the unique history of the East Greenwich Jews, have contributed their memories to create this account.

Louis Reyn was another early 20th Century settler, one who was influential in encouraging other families to follow his example, although his own reasons for leaving his former home in Boston are unknown and his nephew, Hyman Jacobson, could not provide an answer. Louis Reyn sold fresh fruits and vegetables on a route between East Greenwich and Wickford. He was so taken with the opportunities that he persuaded his brother-in-law, Israel Jacobson, to settle in the area.

Israel and Rebecca Ellison Jacobson both came to the United States from Riga, Latvia. He went to a brother in Portland, Me., and she to her sister, Louis Reyn's wife, in Boston. An arranged marriage brought them together. Hyman Jacobson, the youngest of their six children, supplied most of the following information about their family. He remembers living on Marlborough Street, where his family rented one floor of a two family house and the Reyns the other. He told of how remarkable it was that his mother managed on the little they had. The youngest of thirteen children, Rebecca Ellison had come to Boston at age 17. Since she was a skilled seamstress she had no difficulty finding work in this country, but she worked long hours six days a week. After her marriage, however, she gave up working outside the home and sewed only for her family. The Jacobsons settled in East Greenwich in 1904, the second Jewish family to do so. To Rebecca Jacobson, who used to go to the Boston Common Sundays to enjoy the grass, trees, and sunshine, East Greenwich was a paradise.

Israel Jacobson established his business in Wickford. Although a cobbler by trade, he opened a variety store because, as his brother-in-law pointed out, he would have no competition. In addition to the usual stock, he sold fireworks, a major seasonal item at the time. Jacobson also ran the refreshment stand at the movie theatre in Wickford which, according to Hyman Jacobson, showed films once or twice a week. Before each showing, Jacobson loaded his wares on a cart which he pushed from his shop in the center of town to the theatre. After the performance, he reversed the process.



The son was not sure how his father traveled to and from Wickford every day, as the family did not own any kind of conveyance. Apparently Jacobson often walked the seven miles. After 19 years in Wickford, the Jacobsons bought a building in East Greenwich and moved the business there.

Hyman Jacobson stated that his mother was an ambitious woman who wanted "to move up in the world." To supplement their limited income, she received permission from property owners to keep chickens and a cow on land near what is now Love Lane. Some of the chickens she sold to regular customers; others were reserved for family meals. Since she kept a strictly kosher home, her son Frank had the weekly chore of taking the live birds on the street car to a *shochet* in Providence to have them slaughtered properly according to Jewish law.

Mrs. Jacobson also took in boarders, one of whom was Morris Narva. He had come from Westerly to East Greenwich in 1916 and established a haberdashery called The Enterprise. He later married and moved to Arctic, where he opened the first of the shoe stores that became the Morton's chain. When Morris Narva left, his brother Myer took his place as a boarder at the Jacobsons'. Among the other boarders were Jewish itinerants, most of them rabbis seeking donations for various causes. When Hyman Jacobson came home from school for lunch, he never knew who might be eating at their table, or whether he would be sleeping in his own bed that night. In addition to her other responsibilities, Mrs. Jacobson took a personal interest in the Jewish Home for the Aged, then on Orms Street. She frequently traveled by street car to the North End of Providence, carrying shopping bags full of food she donated to the home, and assisted with preparing meals there.

In 1923 Mrs. Jacobson took an ambitious step in her quest to move her family up in the world. Hearing of a building for sale on Main Street that combined living quarters with an investment property of two stores, she decided that it would be the ideal place for them. The Jacobsons did not have the asking price of \$20,000. She therefore went to see Herman Silverman, who served on the board of the Union Trust company, to ask for a loan from the bank. Herman Silverman, who personally guaranteed the loan, was quoted by Hyman Jacobson as saying, "You can't go by the rules. You've got to know the character of the people." In time, the debt was fully repaid.

In 1926 the larger store became the site of Greenwich Hardware, founded by Benjamin Elman soon after his marriage to Celia Jacobson. At that time Elman had sold his interest in Mount Pleasant Hardware, in Providence's North End, to his brother and partner Samuel. Elman liked the prospects offered by East Greenwich. Israel Jacobson, however, could not understand why his son-in-law would leave the big city to open a hardware store in a small town where there was already a well established and thriving one. In fact, he opposed Elman's opening the store in the

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Jacobson's building.

Elman, an innovator with a flair for promotion, prospered in spite of the competition and the Depression of the 1930s. He created interesting window displays. He used advertising circulars and specials to their fullest advantage, and went out of his way to attract business from customers of nearby farms and mills. He was even able to open a second store, Majestic Hardware, in Arctic.

Frank Jacobson, another son of Israel and Rebecca, eventually became a highly respected Providence pediatrician. Since the family could not afford the entire cost of his medical education even with everyone helping, he had to earn money for a portion of his tuition and living expenses. He found the way selling fruit and vegetables to the customers once served by his uncle, Louis Reyn. Because of Reyn's excellent reputation, they willingly became Frank's customers. Each summer he peddled produce from a small truck along a route that took him from East Greenwich to Wickford to North Kingstown. Hyman Jacobson spent his summers helping his brother finance his undergraduate education at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, and his medical studies at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia.

After Louis Reyn died, in 1914 or 1915, his family moved to Ohio. A son, Irving Reyn, returned to Rhode Island 15 years later, but was uncertain as to how he would support himself. Hyman Jacobson suggested that Reyn take over Frank's route, and introduced him to the customers. Thus the summer job evolved into a year round occupation. Every day Reyn drove to East Greenwich from his home in Providence, had breakfast at his aunt's house, and began his day's work. Hyman Jacobson returned to his role as helper during the summers.

Louis Reyn's influence in attracting new Jewish residents to East Greenwich may have included the Abrams family as well as the Jacobsons. Both the Reyns and the Abramses (originally Abromovitz) emigrated from Riga, Latvia, to settle in the Boston area. Most of the Abrams clan lived in Chelsea. After a devastating fire in that town, some of them moved to Newport News, Va., and changed their name to Morovitz. However, four brothers, two sisters, and their spouses came to East Greenwich. Quite possibly Louis Reyn proposed this move to Joseph Abrams who, with his wife Mary, was the first to arrive. They initially settled in Wickford, where, in 1908, Joseph opened a shop to ply his cobbler's trade. Sumner Halsband reports that Joseph urged John Halsband, his sister Frieda's husband, to open a business in East Greenwich where he could make a good living — at least five dollars a week. Following his advice, the Halsbands moved to East Greenwich in 1909.

John had previously delivered telegrams and driven a horse-drawn delivery wagon for a wholesale grocery distributor. His route took him as far as Hope Valley. Perhaps he followed the example of Israel Jacobson's variety store when he opened

a newsstand/tobacconist shop in East Greenwich. Meanwhile, Joseph Abrams decided to explore the opportunities in Newport News. Finding himself unhappy there, he returned with his family to East Greenwich and opened a cobbler/shoe shop in one of Israel Jacobson's stores. Other relatives, Herman and Fannie (Abrams) Fogel, had established a market in East Greenwich in 1912, also on advice of Joseph Abrams.

In his teens, Joseph Abrams' brother Julius sold newspapers and shined shoes to augment the family's income. A visit to the Halsbands led to his decision to move to East Greenwich. He and his wife Rachel came in 1916, two years after their marriage. They were followed by brothers Meyer with his wife Toby, and, several years later, Morris with his wife Gertrude. Their parents, Minnie and Solomon, moved to Howell Street in Providence, where Solomon could conveniently observe his orthodox Jewish practice at Ahavath Shalom Synagogue.

John Halsband and Joseph Abrams purchased a gas station/tire store on Main Street together, but Joseph took no active part in the management. In 1922, with financing arranged by Halsband, they built the Main Street Garage. They extended the partnership to Julius Abrams, whose daughter Helen contributed her memories to the following account of the Abrams' business dealings and family life.

Julius Abrams was gregarious and fun loving, a "people person" and a natural choice to run the business, which began as a Dodge agency and later became a Buick dealership. Though no mechanic, Julius was a born salesman. With every car he sold, he included free driving lessons. "He was a wonderful teacher," Helen said, "with a great deal of patience when teaching customers. He also taught all his children how to drive." At age 16, Helen took over most of the family driving.

The business expanded to include a branch in West Warwick (sold during World War II), one in Apponaug managed by Meyer, and one in Wakefield managed by the youngest brother, Morris. Thus all the brothers eventually became business partners. Morris had graduated from law school with collective family support, but never practiced his profession. Like his brothers, he preferred business.

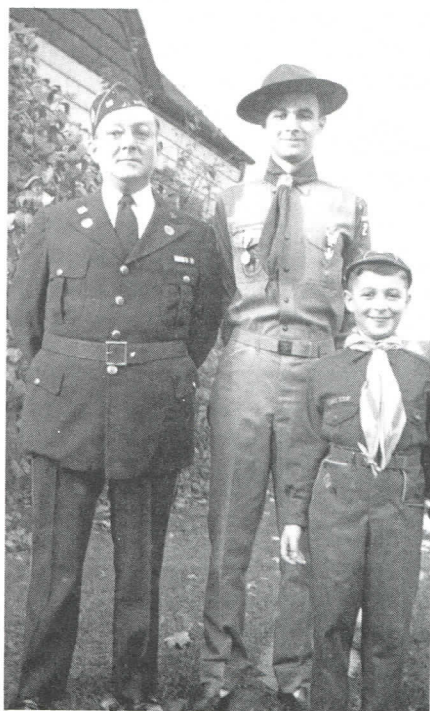
Lillian Fogel Strauss, who married Herman and Fannie's son Joseph Fogel in 1931, added her memories of East Greenwich in the years before World War II to those of Helen Abrams, who had said, "We lived in a very cohesive community. Everyone not only took care of you, but were watching over you. We had a wonderful childhood." Mrs. Strauss described East Greenwich as an entirely different world from that of Providence, where she grew up. She also said, "This was a very clannish family, integrated within themselves." As close in personal relations as they were in business, the Abrams met frequently at each others' houses. Everyone brought food. The children played outside until it was time for the family musicale, when each child who played an instrument performed to great approval

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from the adults. Helen Abrams and her sister played the piano, her brother Jordan the trombone. Later the men played poker or pinochle while the women exchanged patterns and sewed. This routine was altered only on major Jewish holidays, when the Abrams family units separated to visit maternal grandparents.

Helen Abrams also recalled summertime recreation shared with family. "Summer days were nice and quiet at home," she said. "Sumner (Halsband) might come over, maybe another cousin. We would sail. We used to have a lot of fun. The family would go on outings together. We enjoyed going to Rocky Point and Oakland Beach. The Fourth of July was wonderful. There was a big empty lot next to where we lived, and we would set off fireworks there. My father, the biggest kid of them all, got the biggest kick out of them. On Memorial Day we would go to Uncle Joe's and sit on his porch. His family lived on Main Street. That was the best place to watch." Her father marched in the parade and played the trombone. Morris, a member of the American Legion, also marched, as did Celia Jacobson Elman and Joseph Fogel, who belonged to the Kentish Guards.

Helen also mentioned visits to the summer home of the Fogel and Halsband families, who had bought a summer cottage together in Bay Ridge, just outside of Goddard Park. The two sisters decided that their parents should leave the hot city



*Fogels in uniform in 1949. From left, Joseph Fogel, Commander of American Legion Post 15; Bruce Fogel, Boy Scout Troop 2, East Greenwich (later an Eagle Scout); Herbert Fogel, Cub Scout.*



and occupy the beach house during the summer. The families came out every day to visit. On Sundays additional company arrived, usually from Boston. "Relatives in three or four cars would descend on them with all sorts of bundles and pots and pans."

Mrs. Strauss recalled that when she was first married to Joseph Fogel, they lived in a small apartment that was very hot in the summer. The young couple was invited to spend the summer with Mr. and Mrs. Abrams at Bay Ridge, from where Joseph could commute to work. Mrs. Strauss spoke of the loving care bestowed upon her by the older couple. Besides being amply fed, she learned a considerable amount of Yiddish while she was with them.

Rose Waterman Pierce, who still lives in East Greenwich, also remembers it as a wonderful town in which to grow up. Her family was one of those influenced to settle there by Joseph Abrams. Israel Waterman and his wife, Joseph's cousin Annie Abrams, lived in Chelsea, Ma., until the famous "big fire" there. They moved with their daughter, Theresa, to North Kingstown where another daughter, Etta, was born. They then settled at 32 Union Street, East Greenwich, where they lived for twenty-six years. Three more children, Dora, Barney, and the youngest sister, Rose, were born there. They were the only Jewish family on the street. Israel Waterman supported his family as a poultry and cattle dealer. Rose's husband, Paul Pierce, was the son of workers in the large Bostitch and Greenwich mills.

Rose remembers that "Everyone knew each other when I was growing up, the population only being three to four thousand." She recalled wonderful beaches in North Kingstown and Browning's department store in the town center. "It was a real high class store with such diverse stock as clothing, furniture, and all sorts of housewares." Also, "There was a lot of history and warmth in the area, and I remember the beautiful Fletcher farms and one owned by Davol. They were marked by yellow fences. We would pick blueberries on these farms. The neighbors were very friendly on Union Street and in the area where we lived."

Rose's mother was a member of the East Greenwich Jewish Women's Club. As a child Rose helped make baskets that were given out at Thanksgiving to needy families. The club, founded in 1925 as a sewing club, was charitable as well as social.

Unlike the families already discussed, who settled in East Greenwich before World War I, the Spungin family arrived in the early 1920s. At age 13, Abraham Spungin emigrated from Latvia to Boston, where his sister Gertrude was already living. He had been apprenticed to a butcher in Latvia, and was therefore able to find that work in Boston. Nevertheless, he decided to move to East Greenwich for reasons none of his five children could provide with certainty.

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His daughter, Barbara Spungin Fried, pointed out that her father was too ambitious to work for someone else.<sup>7</sup> At the time there were large dairy farms all over New England, including Rhode Island, and far-flung markets for all kinds of livestock: sheep, horses, cattle, and hogs. Working on commission, Spungin went to the Chicago cattle markets to buy livestock needed by the farmers. Mrs. Fried also remembers her father talking about driving cattle on foot from Narragansett to the slaughterhouse in Providence, a two day trip. For personal travel, however, he used a car. In keeping with an apparent custom of recording automobile purchases, a local newspaper reported that, in May, 1927, "Mr. Abraham Spungin was driving a 1927 Sport Chevrolet Cabriolet."<sup>8</sup>

Mrs. Fried said she thinks that her father settled in East Greenwich because its location, between South County and Providence, was central to his business. Also, it was on the main road. When he and Goldie Morrison entered into an arranged marriage in 1923, probably through the services of a Providence marriage broker, they took up residence in East Greenwich where Abraham was already established. Their first home was a second floor apartment in a Main Street building owned by Tom Pappadopoulos. He ran a combination soda fountain, delicatessen, and general store called The Oriole Candy Kitchen on the ground floor and lived with his own family on the third floor. Three of the Spungins' four children were born in that apartment: Barbara in 1924, Marion in 1927, and Charlotte in 1929. In 1930, Spungin bought a house on Pearl Street, where their son Gardner was born in 1935.<sup>9</sup>

Barbara graphically described her father's business career:

Daddy did have an office on Main Street — two small rooms heated by a coal burning pot bellied stove in a little frame building across the street from Morris Abrams' Buick dealership. Since Morris Abrams was married to Daddy's niece Gertrude, he always bought his cars there. He also owned two trucks — a huge Mack truck in which he hauled three or four cows at a time, and a small panel truck in which he transported small animals like calves and sheep. Most of his business came in over the phone, which meant most of the time nobody in the family was allowed to use it much. He had gone into business with some partners and bought property on Narragansett Bay close to East Greenwich and Goddard Park — called Mount View.

The Spungins owned two houses in Mount View. Mrs. Spungin's two sisters, Etta Morrison Horenstein and Pearl Morrison Borod, also spent summers there, in houses near their sister's. Charlotte Spungin remembered those family summers of the 1930s as periods when "... all the cousins fought and played until it was time to return to school. There was a lot of competition among the cousins, but we enjoyed the three months we spent together."<sup>10</sup>





*Members of the Spungin family. Barbara, Charlotte, Marion, and their mother, Golde.*

Since most of Spungin's business was conducted at his customers' farms, he eventually moved his office to his house. His son Gardner recalled some of his communal activities. He belonged to a fraternal organization called the Royal Arcanum, and to the Greenwich Club, a men's social and card playing group. He also wanted to become a Mason, but was consistently blackballed by the East Greenwich lodge. He was finally able to join the lodge in North Kingstown, where he had many friends.

Abraham Spungin died in 1987 at the age of 101. He was survived by his second wife, Zipora, their son Aaron Roy, and by the four children of his first marriage.

Those four, along with Hyman Jacobson, Sumner Halsband, Rose Waterman Pierce, and Helen Abrams, all attended Eldridge Grammar School and East Greenwich Academy. Jacobson, Halsband, and Abrams all spoke positively about their experiences. They encountered no discrimination, even though each was the only Jewish child in the class. Public schools then participated in a released time program. Children were dismissed from school one afternoon a week to attend religious instruction at their church or synagogue. Since there was no Jewish

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religious education available in East Greenwich, Helen Abrams would remain alone with the teacher in the classroom. She recalls the fun of erasing the blackboards and clapping the erasers. All three cited their youthful friendships with non-Jews and their acceptance within the wider community.

Because there was no public high school in East Greenwich, students had the choice of attending public high school elsewhere in Rhode Island or attending East Greenwich Academy, a private institution founded as Kent Academy in 1802. The school was sold to the Providence Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1841 and renamed East Greenwich Academy in 1884. The town bought the building for a public high school in 1943, and sold it in 1959 when a new public high school was built. The Academy buildings have since been razed.<sup>11</sup> Prior to 1943, the town paid tuition for any local students who chose to go there. A number of Jewish children attended the Academy and commented on its high standard of teaching.

The Spungin siblings' experiences were more varied than those described above. They all attended public elementary and junior high schools. Barbara graduated from East Greenwich Academy; Marion spent two years there, completing her studies at East Greenwich High School; Charlotte went only to East Greenwich High School. Gardner attended Lockwood High School and Munson Academy. They had different experiences both academically and socially. Marion recalls the excellence of her schooling and her many friendships, especially at East Greenwich Academy with its "high caliber" faculty. She never faced anti-Semitism at school, in play, or during extracurricular activities. However, she had no Jewish friends in her neighborhood or at school.<sup>12</sup> Barbara, on the other hand, gave this vivid account:

Being Jewish in an otherwise Catholic and Lutheran community had its problems when I was a child. I'd gone to kindergarten when I was very young. I often skipped grades so that I was in third grade at six years old, which made me a social misfit. Wednesday afternoons they had religious instruction which meant that all the other kids disappeared and I was left alone with the teacher to clap the erasers and sharpen the pencils. Then the other kids came back to school the next day and accused me during recess of having killed Jesus, a man ... I had never heard of. Not easy. And of course the descendants of the original settlers — English mostly, some French Huguenots — were clannish and insular. They didn't like the Italians or the Scandinavians any better than they liked the Jews or the Narragansett Indians, most of whom by then had intermarried with the few blacks who lived in the state.<sup>13</sup>

Charlotte corroborated Barbara's recollections. She, too, remembered the Christian children attending religious instruction while, in the absence of a synagogue, Jewish children stayed in school. She was the only Jewish child in her grade. A number of her classmates made disparaging remarks to her on the playground. It was

not until she reached high school that she realized the children were repeating their parents' words. She felt that there was an "underground" of prejudice in the town.<sup>14</sup>

Gardner reported a similar situation when he attended Eldridge primary school. He recalled that the teachers were good and the school well run, clean, with average size classes. There were no other Jews in his class. He, too, was persecuted for being Jewish by children who attended the Wednesday afternoon religious instruction. However, he was allowed to leave school and go home during the released time. On his way, children would follow him, yelling anti-Semitic insults. This continued until, in later years, he excelled at baseball and basketball, playing on the same teams as those who used to chase him. Although he was then able to fend for himself, the persecution left a permanent mark on him.

The Jewish families of East Greenwich tried in several ways to provide a Jewish education for their children. "We kept our Judaism," Helen Abrams said, "and knew this is the way we wanted to go." She remembers a Mr. Cohen coming from Providence once a week to conduct Hebrew lessons and Bible study. Charlotte Spungin offered similar memories. With no local synagogue, and without transportation to Providence, considerable effort and planning were required. The attempts to hire teachers of Hebrew and Jewish history to come to East Greenwich were short lived. Charlotte Spungin said that their exposure to a Jewish background was limited to sharing Passover with relatives in Providence. However, efforts continued and arrangements were made to get to Providence. Sumner Halsband and Jordan Abrams both attended classes and became Bar Mitzvah at Ahavot Shalom synagogue. Other Abrams family members joined Temple Beth Israel.

Gardner Spungin, who recalls keeping a low profile during Christmas and Easter, became Bar Mitzvah in Providence after receiving religious instruction from a rabbi who came to Cowesett, where the Spungin family then lived. He felt, however, that he never really learned the ritual for his Bar Mitzvah.<sup>15</sup>

The families also tried to observe other Jewish practices, in particular that of keeping a kosher home. To meet the need for kosher meat, John Halsband was delegated to travel to the North End of Providence every Thursday to pick up everyone's meat order, along with dairy products available only in Jewish neighborhoods.

The Depression of the 1930s brought change and struggle to the community, also recorded in the Spungins' memories. Mrs. Fried described those years as a terrible time for her father and the entire East Greenwich community.

Yet another set of experiences derives from the memories of a second Fogel family, completely unrelated to Herman or Joseph. They ran the Updike Hotel, an East Greenwich landmark harking back to the days of the stagecoach lines. Owned

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at one point by the Cady family, it was sold to Adolph Schaller and Jacob Fogel a year or two before Jacob's son Josef was born. Jacob Fogel himself was born in New York, moved to Fall River with his family, and left there to travel throughout the country. He came to East Greenwich from Newport, where he had learned the hotel business. Belle Fogel, his first wife and mother of Josef, worked part-time at the town hall while her husband was involved with the hotel. Josef recalled that her employer, Mr. Loomis, frequently said that if you wanted to see beautiful penmanship, you ought to see what Belle Fogel's looked like. Belle Fogel died in 1921.

The two Fogel families of East Greenwich, while not sharing kinship, did share some given names. Jacob Fogel's son Josef, who provided memories of his parents and of the Updike Hotel, should not be confused with Herman and Fannie Fogel's son Joseph. In addition, Jacob Fogel's second wife, the mother of Marilyn Fogel Schlossberg, was named Lillian — as was Joseph Fogel's wife, Lillian Wine Fogel Strauss.

Both Josef and Marilyn have strong recollections of the hotel. "The Updike," said Marilyn, "was a country hotel. It was not fancy or grand." Josef Fogel remembers two doors, with the main one leading to the lobby, stairway, and dining room. There was a ballroom on the north side of the building, and a bar in back. The hotel was known for its kitchen. Many prominent people frequented it, especially in summer when they were at vacation homes in Narragansett and other South County areas. Josef particularly remembered Charles Davol, who dined there every day, for his perfect table manners.

Both Mrs. Schlossberg and Fogel described their father as a genial, easygoing person, courtly in his manner. He belonged to the Greenwich Club and was a member of the Elks for 50 years.

Fogel worked nights, indulging his love of sports and hiking during the day. "He was," his son said, "a great physical culturist." He walked ten or twelve miles every day, taking advantage of the open space and minimal traffic of his rural town. Several times he walked to New York City, spending nights along the way at prearranged locations where he had left changes of clothing. Mrs. Schlossberg still has his cane, with a number of small nicks still visible on the shaft. "Since it was a rural area, there were snakes. He would clobber them with his cane." She said. "He must have been quite a sight in his knickers, cane in hand, striding along."

During the 1930s, Lillian Fogel spent vacations in the Victorian Hotel and the Massasoit House at Narragansett Pier. She was described as "Queen of the Massasoit," perhaps best thought of as the "Auntie Mame" of her time. Her daughter said that Lillian was a doer, "full of pizzazz," who would get a ride to Wakefield to buy prizes with her own money for various activities she organized. Both she and Mr. Fogel were avid golfers, and she was an ardent tennis player as well.



Their son Josef echoed the sons and daughters of other families, recalling East Greenwich as an idyllic place in which to grow up, with playmates always available. He even cherished the occasional mishap, such as the time his father's car broke down. Although Mr. Fogel had not bought the car from the Abrams dealership, Mr. Abrams obliged with a tow. Summers meant swimming near the boat yard, situated on the bay next to the yacht club. There Josef learned to swim the hard way when a friend pushed him off a cable that the youngsters swung on across the water from the end of the dock. This time the challenge was to sink or swim, and he swam.

World War II brought further changes to East Greenwich and to its Jewish families, signalling an end to the worst of the hard times of the Depression, but creating new problems. In 1940, the Navy arrived in the area and built Quonset. Charlotte Spungin described East Greenwich during the war:

There was a population explosion when Quonset Naval Air Station was being built. Construction workers and their families were imported from other states. This change enhanced the economy of a town that had suffered through the 1930s; the stores were suddenly showing off new Art Deco fronts, more local people were working, and we were practicing air raid drills in schools. When the Navy moved into its expensive headquarters, there was an influx of Navy personnel and their families, who took over the rental units left vacant by the construction workers.

The Spungin house on Pearl Street had a number of bedrooms. Mrs. Spungin moved the children into two of them and rented out the others. The local government had, in fact, requested homeowners to rent rooms to alleviate the housing shortage resulting from the added temporary wartime population. Other families in the Spungins' neighborhood also rented to the newcomers. Mrs. Spungin rented out the family's summer house part of the time as well.

Charlotte and Gardner Spungin both spoke of the excitement of the war years. Charlotte was an adolescent girl. "There were hundreds of sailors in East Greenwich who had been released from boot camp, and most of the protective parents kept their kids close to home. So my teenage years were spent studying, hanging around the library, and listening to classical music in the basement of the library." Not so with Gardner, youngest in the family, and a boy. The construction workers and Navy people who rented the extra bedrooms sometimes took him to the Navy base "to use the gym and enormous pool where they practiced evacuating ships. They had part of a plane that went down a chute into the water so pilots could practice getting out of the cockpit."<sup>16</sup> From the porch of their summer house in Mount View the Spungins could see LST boats and watch maneuvers in a large open field across the street. Soldiers would crawl under barbed wire while machine guns fired overhead. When Gardner was quite young, he accompanied his mother to the United Services Organization (USO), where she worked during the war years.

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Marion's experience was different from that of Charlotte or Gardner. Although she was only 16 and still in high school, she got a job as a parts cataloguer at Quonset. She remembered that her mother volunteered for the Seabees, a unit attached to the Navy. Her father, who owned land in the Quonset area, was able to recoup some of the losses he suffered during the Depression by selling this real estate to the Navy.<sup>17</sup>

The Herman Fogel family found the war years more difficult. Herman had died in 1937, leaving his wife and son to continue the family business, the market Herman opened in the years before World War I. When World War II broke out, Joseph Fogel was eligible for deferment as a married man and the sole support of his widowed mother. However, he chose to join the Navy when called up. He had been a member of the Kentish Guards of the Rhode Island Militia since age 16, the only Jewish person in the unit. Each year, Lillian Fogel Strauss remembered, "He was on duty at the Cranston Street Armory for a week or ten days. In case of a disaster he could be called up, after the National Guard."

When Joseph left, his mother, Fannie, had a difficult time. She did not speak English well, had little business experience, and could not find a competent meat cutter. The men were all either in the service or working in war industries. Although her daughter-in-law helped her, she could not cope and sold the store in 1944.

Along with many others, Lillian Fogel Strauss rented rooms to war workers and families of servicemen after her husband went into the Navy. The income helped to pay the mortgage on their home as well as ease the housing shortage. Helen Abrams noted that her mother rented spare rooms as a patriotic gesture. Initially, there was no problem of space for the family in their four bedroom house. Both Helen and her sister were married to servicemen and living near their bases. When they both returned home to wait for their husbands to come back from overseas, her sister with a child, the situation changed. During the times that they also had a roomer, "My poor mother had a full house."

After the war, the children of East Greenwich's first Jewish generation reorganized their lives and went on to establish or continue their own business and professional careers. Joseph Fogel found his in a tailor and drycleaning shop, next door to the former Fogel market. This shop is still owned and operated by the third Fogel generation, Herbert and Judith Jacobson Fogel. Harold Abrams, who had worked during his college years for his uncle Ben Elman at Greenwich Hardware, married a fellow student before entering the service. Upon his return he chose to continue in his uncle's business rather than his family's Main Street Garage. In 1952 he opened East Greenwich Hardware in partnership with Ben Elman, and a few years later became its sole proprietor. It remained in business for 38 years.

Some of the other family businesses continued for varying periods into the

postwar years. Jacob Fogel had sold his interest in the Updike Hotel and moved out of town in 1935, but when Silverman's was sold upon Howard Silverman's retirement in 1990, it had been in business for 82 years. John Halsband's son, George, who took over the newsstand after his father retired in 1947, sold it when John died. The last of the Main Street Garages was sold in 1975 after the death of Morris, the last surviving Abrams brother.

Members of the Silverman, Waterman, Halsband, and Joseph Fogel families still live in East Greenwich, but others, as with so many families today, have moved to other parts of the country and established their own families and lives. Near or far, they all share memories of the vibrant East Greenwich Jewish community of immigrants who worked, prospered, and gave of themselves to family and to the larger community.

The story of these families is compelling in many ways. They came to a rural town in a strange land as the first of their people to seek opportunity there. They forsook the relatively familiar cities where there were fellow Jews and elements of Jewish life — the synagogue, Jewish education, kosher stores. They developed businesses, often with ingenuity and imagination. Some of them relinquished secure jobs in the city in order to be independent entrepreneurs. At the same time, they clung to their Jewishness and their Judaism. They may not be unique. Other towns in other places reveal similar stories. Undeniably, however, they are remarkable.



#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *The History of East Greenwich, Rhode Island 1677-1960* by Martha R. McPartland, East Greenwich Free Library Association, East Greenwich, R.I., 1960, p. 9.
  - <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.
  - <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.
  - <sup>4</sup> *Rhode Island Jewish Herald*, March 18, 1949, "Historic Ramblings" by John Solomon, Chap. II.
  - <sup>5</sup> Obituary, *Providence Journal*, January 14, 1977, on Herman Silverman.
  - <sup>6</sup> Souvenir Program: *250th Anniversary Celebration of the Founding of East Greenwich, Rhode Island — September 4-8, 1927*.
  - <sup>7</sup> Letter from Barbara Spungin Fried, July 1997.
  - <sup>8</sup> *East Greenwich Packet*, November 1985.
  - <sup>9</sup> Fried, op. cit.
  - <sup>10</sup> Letter from Charlotte Spungin, July 9, 1997.
  - <sup>11</sup> Interview with Helen Abrams, June 16, 1997, and Lillian Fogel Strauss, June 18, 1997.
  - <sup>12</sup> Interview with Charles and Marion Klarkin, August 4, 1997.
  - <sup>13</sup> Fried, op. cit.
  - <sup>14</sup> Charlotte Spungin, op. cit.
  - <sup>15</sup> Letter from Gardner Spungin, August 15, 1997.
  - <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
  - <sup>17</sup> Klarkin, op. cit.
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# נאמנים.

## אנשים דער באאד אף פאליס קאממיונאנערס

161 מאנטען סטריט, פראוידענס, ר. א.

דושיק דען 24טן, 1910

נאכדעם וויא עס איז ערהאלטען געווארען קלאגען אין דיעזען אנשים דיא באאד אף פאליס קאממיונאנערס מאכען דיערמיט אויפגעקומען צו דיא רעגולען פון דעם געזעצן פון סיטי אף פראוידענס וועלכעס פערבייטעט דאס צו-ווארפען פון פערשידענע מיסס; דאס צענדליגע פון וויסס פייפער און דאס צו-הוילען הענדלעך אויף אירגענד וועלכער סטריט אדער לאנד-סטראססע.

בירגער אין אלגעמיין ווערדען ערוואנט מיט צו-וורקען מיט דיא פאליס אום צו האלטען דיא סטריטען פריי פון ראכטיש אונד וויסס פייפער, און דיא פאליציי וועט אריינסטירען יעדען און אלע פערזאנען וועלכע וועללען איבערטרעסען דיא פאלגענדע רעגולען פון דער סיטי אף פראוידענס.

טשאפ. 20. סעק. 9. געמאנד זאלל סראגען אדער פיהרען דורך אדער אין אירגענד וועלכער סטריט, אירגענד וועלכע וויסס פייפער וועלכע איז נישט נישט פערדעקט אדער פראטעקטעט צו פעהרען דאס הערניג-מאללען דיא געמאנטע פייפער אין אירגענד וועלכע סטריט, און געמאנד ווען הערניגלעכען אדער הערניגערענטענדע פון א טיעס אדער אין אנהערען וואגען זאלל צו-ווארפען אדער דערלאזען וועלכע עס איז וויסס פייפער צו ווערען צו-ווארפען אין אירגענד וועלכע סטריט אדער לאנד-סטראססע.

טשאפ. 20. סעק. 20. געמאנד זאלל פערשטויילען אדער פערזאנלעכען צו ווערען פערשטויילט אירגענד וועלכע הענדלעך, סיקקלארס, פראטאס אדער אווערטייזונג-סליפס אין אדער אויף אירגענד וועלכע סטריט אדער סידוואלק אין דיא סיטי.

טשאפ. 20. סעק. 40. געמאנד זאלל ווארפען, אדער אוועקלעגען, אדער פערטורן זאכען צו זיין אוועקגעווארפען אדער אוועקגעלייגט אין אירגענד וועלכער סטריט, לאנד-סטראססע אדער פובליק פלאטץ, אירגענד וועלכע קאהלען מיסס, אשעס, סנדערס, האאר, אפפאלען, מיסס, אויסטער, קלעס אדער לאבסטער שאלען, אדער אירגענד וועלכע בהמה מיסס, יעדעסעיינעלס אדער אירגענד וועלכע געגענטענדע.

צײַא אדער אף דיא באאד.

סעמועל דושיק

סערקעסער

## A YIDDISH BROADSIDE, PROVIDENCE 1910

### NOTICE

Office of the Board of Police Commissioners  
161 Fountain Street, Providence, RI  
June 24, 1910

After having received complaints in this office the Board of Police Commissioners hereby call attention to the regulations of the laws of the City of Providence, which forbid scattering various kinds of rubbish: spreading waste paper and distributing handbills whether on street or land-strasse [alleys].

The general citizenry are urged to work with the police to keep the streets free of rubbish and waste paper, and the police will arrest each and every person who oversteps the lawful regulations of the City of Providence.

Chapter 20 section 9 — no one shall carry or drive through a thoroughfare or street with waste paper which is not well covered or protected to keep the paper from falling out in any street, and no one whether loading or unloading a team, etc. shall scatter or let waste paper be spread in either the street or sidewalk.

Chapter 20 section 40 — no one shall throw or drop or throw away or put down in any street, land-strasse [alleyway] or public place: coal dust, ashes, cinders, hair, droppings, dust; oyster, clam, or lobster shells; or any animal waste, vegetables or any such gegenstende [objects].

By order of the Board,  
Samuel Joy, Secretary

The Yiddish broadside was displayed in public places. The notice, though written in the Yiddish alphabet, was transliterated from English.

## JEWISH LEADERSHIP OF THE MUSEUM OF ART, RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

BY GEORGE M. GOODWIN

The Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), is one of our state's cultural treasures. Resembling sister museums in Hartford and Worcester, the RISD Museum has a collection of considerable breadth and depth. Yet, all three regional museums tend to be overshadowed by the world-class Museum of Fine Arts in Boston as well as the great university art museums in Cambridge and New Haven.

The prominence of the RISD Museum may also be blurred by its relationship with its parent institution. Does the Museum or the School merit great acclaim and support? The leading art museums in Boston and Chicago, for example, are known far beyond their own impressive art schools.

### FOUNDERS

Established in 1877 in the afterglow of Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition, RISD was an industrial arts school geared to such local businesses as textiles, heavy machinery, metals, and jewelry.<sup>1</sup> Architecture, photography, and graphic design later entered its curriculum. RISD never developed a strong ideology, as did Germany's Bauhaus, which aspired to integrate the avant-garde with mass-production. Indeed, as manufacturing declined in Rhode Island, its School of Design became better known for the training of "fine" artists.

The Museum of Art was always intended as a resource for teaching; especially its own students, but also school children and the public at large. If masterpieces of painting and sculpture were not (and will never become) affordable, then good examples of craftsmanship would suffice. Offering an overview of European and Asian traditions, the collection allowed students and teachers to view their accomplishments within a historical context and, ideally, to provide inspiration and moral uplift.

The RISD Museum was one of the first in the country to establish a department of American art. When displayed in Pendleton House, a neo-Georgian structure erected in 1906, paintings, sculptures, furniture, and decorative arts took their rightful place within the 18th century ambience of Benefit Street and College Hill.

For most of its history, RISD and its Museum have been led and supported by a tiny inner circle. Not merely friends and neighbors, the founders represented a

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powerful elite. Women have played influential roles.<sup>2</sup>

Until her death at the turn of the century, Helen (Mrs. Jesse) Metcalf was RISD's guiding light. She served as the School's director and began to assemble the Museum's collection. While several Metcalf children made gifts of funds and property, Mrs. Metcalf's daughter, Eliza (Mrs. Gustav) Radeke, became the next major benefactress of works of art.<sup>3</sup> Fascinated by classical antiquities, she also helped establish strength in 19th century French paintings and drawings. This area, by which the Museum of Art has become best known, was further developed by Mrs. Metcalf's granddaughter, Helen (Mrs. Murray) Danforth, who was also attracted to Asian art. A further family link was provided by Mrs. Danforth's son, Murray, Jr., who served as RISD's professional treasurer and vice-president for more than 30 years. Presently, there are three Metcalf great-grandchildren, including two women, who serve on RISD and Museum committees.

During the 1920s and '30s, boom years for art collecting, the RISD Museum was enriched by a gift of 623 Japanese color woodblock prints from Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (Mrs. John D., Jr.), a Rhode Island native who was also a force behind the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>4</sup> Her sister, Miss Lucy Truman Aldrich, an adventurous traveler, gave an extraordinary collection of Japanese robes and costumes.<sup>5</sup> A third Aldrich sibling, William, an architect in Boston, designed the Museum's permanent structure on Benefit Street, which opened in 1926. In the 1970s, Abby's daughter, Abby Rockefeller Mauze, left the Museum a major collection of European ceramics.

The Museum of Art has been shaped by many of its directors. Not least was L. Earle Rowe, the longest-serving (1912-1937). Not surprisingly, Rowe, a Providence native educated at Brown, was a member of the extended Metcalf family. During more than half of his career at RISD, he was also director of the School.

Well into the 20th century, while still small and not yet a degree-granting institution, RISD was self-supporting. There was little opportunity for involvement by such outsiders as Jews. Even the handful of Jewish families who acquired wealth in retailing and jewelry manufacturing were not encouraged to participate. For that matter, Italian-Americans and Portuguese, despite their considerable numbers, would also wait decades to advance to positions of leadership.

#### REFUGEES

With the Nazis' rise to power, a number of refugees found their way to Narragansett Bay. Among the most distinguished were two Jewish mathematicians, Otto Neugebauer and William Prager, who were brought to Brown.<sup>6</sup>

Alexander Dorner (1893-1957), a Gentile, was a leading German art museum

director, who followed Earle Rowe at the RISD Museum.<sup>7</sup> Having earned his doctorate under the eminent Jewish scholar, Adolf Goldschmidt, at the University of Berlin, he subsequently served as director of Hannover's Landes Museum and was supervisor of 25 museums in northeastern Germany. While familiar with all aspects of European art, he was devoted to the emerging avant-garde. In the early 1930s, having established a special "Room of Our Own Time" within the Landes Museum, Dörner became acquainted with many adventurous American art collectors, including Albert Barnes and Katherine Dreier. Another contact was Alfred Barr, the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, to whom Dörner appealed for help after the Nazis began to purge his collection. Fleeing from Paris to New York and then reentering the United States as a legal immigrant from Cuba, Dörner was greeted in Manhattan by Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, the great German architects.

John Nicholas Brown (1900-1979), who resided in the magnificent Nightingale-Brown mansion on Benefit Street — only a stroll from RISD — agreed to sponsor Dörner in Providence. Brown was the ideal person. A trustee of the Modern, he was a friend of Barr and the Rockefellers. (John D. Rockefeller, Jr., namesake of the university library, was a Brown alumnus.) Brown was also a major patron of the Austrian-Jewish architect, Richard Neutra, who, based on his success in America, was included in the Modern's legendary exhibition of the International style in 1932.<sup>8</sup> As a collector of old master drawings, moreover, Brown was cultivated by RISD Museum leaders.

Unfortunately, Dörner's directorship at RISD lasted only briefly, from 1938 to 1941. A disciple of John Dewey, who sought to evoke the spirit of each culture through visual and audio effects, he envisioned an entire redesign of the Museum's permanent galleries. His acquisitions ranged from an Egyptian mummy to contemporary German watercolors. He also began a publication series and reorganized educational programs.

The precise reasons for Dörner's dismissal are not known, however. That Dörner's wife, Lydia Gundlach, was probably Jewish could not have been a factor. Surprisingly, there was some confusion about the director's loyalties, for he was falsely accused of being a Nazi spy.<sup>9</sup> More likely, his ideas about art seemed radical within a provincial milieu. Perhaps Dörner moved too quickly, antagonizing colleagues and donors.

Offended by the trustees' decision not to renew Dörner's contract, John Nicholas Brown resigned from the RISD board. He was estranged from the Museum for two decades. Dörner, however, was invited to lecture at Brown University, where he remained in a state of limbo for seven years.<sup>10</sup> Though he never found another museum position, he later served as a professor of art history and aesthetics at

Bennington College. Several pieces from the Dorner collection of avant-garde art were bequeathed by his widow to Harvard.<sup>11</sup>

Dorner was followed to RISD by three Jewish refugees. Dr. Heinrich Schwarz, formerly a curator of the Austrian State Gallery in Vienna's Belvedere Palace, came to Providence in 1942 with the next Museum director, Gordon Washburn, who had led the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo. Remaining a dozen years, Schwarz helped catalogue the permanent collection while overseeing prints and drawings. He later enjoyed considerable professional success at Wesleyan University, where he helped establish the Davison Art Center and mentored several aspiring museum professionals.

Washburn also brought Dr. Rudolf Berliner to RISD. Berliner had been a curator of decorative arts at the Bavarian State Museum in Munich and then affiliated with New York's Cooper Union. He focused on the decorative arts.

A third Jewish refugee was a Viennese architect, Ernst Lichtblau (1883-1963), a diminutive but dashing figure, who championed the Bauhaus aesthetic in his courses on interior design. Though not a practicing Jew, Lichtblau was probably the first Jewish member of the RISD faculty. In the spring of 1994, the Museum held an exhibition and a symposium about Lichtblau, attended by many of his former students. An official of the Austrian consulate in New York City noted, apologetically, that Lichtblau was part of the exodus of Austrian-Jewish architects that included Neutra, Rudolph Schindler, Frederick Keisler, and Victor Gruen.

#### NEW LEADERSHIP

In the post-War decades, the RISD Museum attracted several prominent directors. They tended to be young men who were able to use Providence as a stepping-stone to richer and loftier institutions. In 1954, under the directorship of John Maxon, the Museum organized an exhibition of Jewish ceremonial art that coincided with the American-Jewish tercentenary. After Providence, he became curator of modern painting at the Art Institute of Chicago. RISD's next director, David Carter, subsequently led the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Daniel Robbins, though he stayed in Providence for only six years (1965-1971), was among RISD's most influential and popular directors. He was also RISD's first Jewish director and one of a few in the entire country. As a non-practicing Jew, married to a Gentile, Robbins did not perceive or portray himself as a trailblazer, however.<sup>12</sup>

A New Yorker, Robbins was exposed to the visual arts in Saturday classes at the Museum of Modern Art. At 16 years of age, he entered the University of Chicago, where he began writing art reviews. Considering a career as an artist, he studied



painting but soon transferred to graduate studies in art history at Yale.<sup>13</sup> For doctoral studies he moved on to the prestigious Institute of Fine Arts, at New York University, where he worked under Robert Goldwater, a specialist in modern and tribal art. Robbins also earned a certificate in museum studies through a new program offered jointly by the Institute and the Metropolitan Museum. He won French and American fellowships for research in France, where he developed his lifelong fascination with the origins of Cubism. Returning to America, he served on the curatorial staffs of the National Gallery and the Guggenheim Museum.

When only 32 years of age — but brimming with energy, ideas, and self-confidence — “Danny” came to Providence to champion modern and contemporary art. Indeed, the director appeared as youthful as any graduate student. While teaching part-time at Brown, he saw the entire community as his classroom. Proselytizing for his passions, he hoped to enliven Providence and make it slightly glamorous and “hip.”

Regrettably, for almost half a century, Rhode Island, despite the stature of its School of Design, had ignored the work of emerging and offbeat artists.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, Robbins’ mandate was not merely to recognize existing collections that had been routinely neglected. Instead, he accepted an even greater challenge: creating a new climate for collecting. Indeed, one of his important successes was launching a series of annual exhibitions, “Art for Your Collection,” which temporarily transformed the Museum into a commercial gallery.

Beyond some notable purchases, including a large Rodin bronze acquired through public subscription, Robbins made two enduring contributions to the Museum’s permanent collection. Two collections were built from scratch. In the first instance, Robbins rejected an existing collection of Latin American art to start a new one with funds donated in memory of Nancy Sayles Day, a Providence native. Informed by visits to Central and South America, Robbins quickly assembled an impressive nucleus of paintings, drawings, and prints. Before “political correctness” became de rigueur in museums, Robbins hoped to educate all patrons and visitors as to the wonders of Botero, Lam, Matta, Orozco, and Rivera.

Building on a Jackson Pollock “poured” painting of 1947 (donated by Peggy Guggenheim), Robbins also formed, through purchase, RISD’s first important collection of 20th century North American art. Not surprisingly, he turned to a Jewish patron, for modern and contemporary art are areas where Jewish collectors, in America and Europe, have excelled. Personally weighing the merits of each object presented to her, Selma Fain Pilavin purchased fine examples of abstract and pop art in memory of her husband, Albert, a successful industrialist and an amateur painter. Mrs. Pilavin was elected a RISD trustee and was later awarded an honorary degree.

Active in numerous other philanthropies, including the United Way, Mrs. Pilavin also contributed funds for the purchase of books in Brown's new program in Judaic studies. She was the first of three women from Rhode Island who served as national chairs of the Women's Division of United Jewish Appeal.<sup>15</sup> Israeli leaders David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir were her friends.

Robbins' belief in the art of his time was further demonstrated by inviting Andy Warhol (represented by *Race Riot* in the Pilavin Collection) to select an exhibition, "Raid the Icebox 1," drawn from RISD's reserves. This was one of the first instances nationally or internationally of an artist being given curatorial powers to create a wry educational effect. In an additional effort to showcase American art of the '60s, Robbins organized an exchange exhibition with the new Rose Art Museum of Brandeis University. Bringing works by Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, and Wesselman to Providence, he sent a core group of French paintings and drawings to Waltham.

Robbins organized several other important exhibitions. These included contemporary art from Richard Brown Baker, a Metcalf relative living in New York, who eventually pledged the bulk of his enormous collection to Yale. Another exhibition featured 20th century art from Roy Neuberger, whose collection formed the Neuberger Museum at the new Purchase campus of the State University of New York.<sup>16</sup> Still another exhibition was the distinguished modern collection of Maurice Wertheim, which had been pledged to Harvard's Fogg Museum.<sup>17</sup>

Robbins' directorship coincided with the emergence of a dynamic art "scene" in Rhode Island and beyond. Barnett "Bunny" Fain, a younger cousin of Selma Pilavin, helped create a lively Providence arts festival. A number of Jewish supporters enabled the iconoclastic director, Adrian Hall, to launch Trinity Repertory Company as a major regional theatre.<sup>18</sup> (The Company's Lederer Theatre was named in honor of a Jewish family originally from Providence.) Indeed, Senator Claiborne Pell and Representative John Fogarty were instrumental in establishing the National Endowments. Brown University's president, Barnaby Keeney, became the first director of the National Endowment for the Humanities. RISD's president, Albert Bush-Brown, served on the advisory council of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Having gained recognition as a trendsetter — a charming enfant terrible — Robbins was soon presented with an agonizing choice: the directorship of the Brooklyn Museum, the Yale Art Gallery, or Harvard's Fogg Museum. He reasoned that, because of its conservatism, the Fogg presented the greatest challenge. He also saw himself, within a Harvard tradition, as a mentor to a new generation of museum directors. When he departed from RISD, a group of admirers purchased a haunting red painting by Rothko for the museum's permanent collection. It was a fitting tribute, for Milton Avery's portrait of Rothko was the first painting purchased for the Pilavin Collection.

Though Robbins was initially encouraged by Harvard's new president, Derek Bok, he encountered strong opposition from the conservative art history faculty, which, by this time, included a half-dozen Jews. One supporter at the Fogg was Henri Zerner, a young professor of art history. Robbins had met Zerner in France and brought him to Providence to teach at Brown and serve as a visiting curator at RISD. Robbins stayed at Harvard for only three years.

Despite its extraordinary promise, Robbins' career as a museum director was never fulfilled. Though he remained devoted to museums — and served as an adviser to Phyllis Bronfman Lambert (a Fogg benefactor) in planning her Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal — he also tired of the unrelenting social obligations imposed on his wife and their two daughters. Consequently, Robbins returned to teaching, one of his early pursuits at Indiana and Hofstra universities. While a visiting professor at Dartmouth for five years, he also lectured at Yale, Williams, Hunter, and Iowa. In 1980, he accepted the May I. C. Baker Professorship of the Arts at Schenectady's Union College.

When Robbins died of cancer at age 64, some of the vitality of his era perished with him. He is still remembered fondly in Providence, where several gifts by friends and admirers were presented to the RISD Museum in his memory.

Stephen Ostrow, another New Yorker with a doctorate from New York University, had been brought to RISD in 1967 as Robbins' chief curator. His predilection was for the old masters, particularly the Italian Baroque. Ostrow, who became the Museum's next director in 1971, was a member of Temple Beth-El. His official residence was only a few block away on Wayland Avenue. A former president of this congregation was Irving Fain, Selma Pilavin's brother. Another leader and former chairman of its building committee was her younger brother, Norman. A prominent industrialist and philanthropist, he became in 1966 one of the first Jews invited to serve on either the RISD board or the board of the Rhode Island Foundation.<sup>19</sup>

Focusing on the scholarly publication of RISD's permanent collection, Ostrow was responsible for catalogues of American drawings and watercolors, British watercolors and drawings, and American oils. He also made several key appointments to the curatorial staff. Overseeing renovations to the warren of galleries was another important and time-consuming accomplishment.

Ostrow left Providence in 1978 to become dean of fine arts at the University of Southern California, where he introduced a museum studies program at the graduate level. He was later director of Oregon's Portland Museum of Art and currently serves as chief of the prints and photographs division of the Library of Congress.

Following Ostrow's departure, the RISD Museum had an acting director, Diana



Johnson, a specialist in prints, drawings, and photographs. Hired by Robbins in 1969, she developed a print room for study and storage, organized a number of impressive exhibitions, and served as Ostrow's chief curator. Johnson, too, was Jewish. After leaving RISD she pursued other interests, but she returned to museum work as director of Brown University's Bell Gallery.

Diana Johnson is not to be confused with Deborah Johnson, a later curator of prints and drawings at RISD and, eventually, a professor of art history at Providence College. Deborah Johnson, also a talented musician, is active in the leadership of Temple Beth-El.

In 1979, the appointment of RISD's next director selected under a committee chaired by Barnet Fain, meant a homecoming for Franklin W. Robinson.<sup>20</sup> A son of Charles Robinson, Jr., Brown's legendary professor of classics, he grew up on College Hill.<sup>21</sup> (Robinson and Providence Mayor Vincent "Buddy" Cianci were classmates at Moses Brown.) As a youngster, the budding scholar-athlete loved Providence — as much for its movie palaces as its Museum. On one of several family trips to Europe, he was introduced to the famous, Jewish-born art historian, Bernard Berenson. Robinson was educated at Harvard, which made perfect sense for a grandson of Paul Sachs.

Sachs (1878-1965), a scion of the New York banking family, was one of the most influential museum administrators of any era.<sup>22</sup> Though he never earned a graduate degree, he was affiliated with Harvard, his alma mater, for his entire professional career. In addition to serving as Fogg's associate director, Sachs was a professor of art history and chaired the fine arts department. As the first to teach museum studies anywhere in America, he enjoyed enormous power placing Harvard graduates in key positions throughout the country.

As a collector of art collectors, Sachs also played an extraordinary role in obtaining gifts, particularly from alumni, for the Fogg Museum. One of the greatest bequests, however, was his own, which included more than 3,000 treasures, particularly prints and drawings by old and modern masters.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, as an undergraduate, Robinson often visited the Sachs's Cambridge apartment, where he felt the power and glow of exquisite drawings — by Tiepolo, Goya, Degas, and Orozco — hung in every room.

Paul Sachs had no interest in Judaism — either personally, at Harvard, in Cambridge, or beyond. Not surprisingly, Robinson had little religious education, and he ultimately rejected his exposure to Congregationalism. As with most art historians, his pursuit of beauty became as intense and joyful as any rabbi's expression of faith or devotion to communal service.

Though a specialist in 17th century Dutch art (also prints and drawings),

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Robinson, who previously taught at Dartmouth and Williams (and was director of the Williams College Museum), felt at home throughout the RISD collection. Dedicated to and awed by scholarship, he was responsible for the publication of the Museum's *Handbook*, expanded and stylish annual reports, and exhibition catalogues on scores of topics, including a "mini" blockbuster on the Copts of Egypt, which was organized by his curator of ancient art, Florence Friedman.

Under Robinson's leadership, the Museum acquired several major collections, including the Fazzano Brothers Collection of prints and drawings, the Gorham Collection of silver, and the Crawford Collection of Asian art. Gifts to RISD were made by several Jewish collectors, including Dr. Joseph and Helene Chazan, Barnet and Jean Fain, Leonard and Paula Granoff, and Ernest and Pearl Nathan. To honor the prominent photographer and RISD teacher, an Aaron Siskind Study Center was established within the department of prints, drawings, and photographs. The School also received funds from Sol Koffler, the major Jewish philanthropist, to establish a Koffler Gallery in a Main Street building, housing classrooms and studios.

With his booming voice, outgoing manner, and grasp of names, Robinson was a tireless promoter of public involvement in the RISD Museum. (Hoping to extend interest in the Museum beyond Rhode Island, he presented highlights of the collection at the IBM Gallery in midtown Manhattan.) Robinson's promotional efforts culminated in the construction of a new wing, the first on Benefit Street since the 1920s. Devoted primarily to the display of contemporary art, it also contains a foyer, a seminar room, and much needed storage space.

The wing, costing \$2.5 million and completed in 1993, was named in honor of Daphne Farago, whose gift was one million dollars. A leading collector of American folk art and contemporary crafts, she was a Jew reared in South Africa. Her husband, Peter, a RISD alumnus, was previously a board member.

The restrained Farago addition, designed by Tony Atkin of Philadelphia, can be seen in a larger architectural and philanthropic context. Brown University's nearby art building, designed by Philip Johnson, is perhaps the boldest structure on campus. Dedicated in 1971, it was a gift of Albert and Vera List. Natives of Fall River, the Lists have been major patrons of numerous institutions, including synagogues, New York's Jewish Museum, and M.I.T., whose Art Center was named in their honor.

After a dozen years of impressive achievements in Providence, Robinson felt ready for a new challenge. By virtue of his training and experience, he seemed poised for a major directorship. In keeping with his own scholarly objectives, however, Robinson departed for Cornell University in 1992. In Ithaca, he was named the first Richard J. Schwartz Director of the Herbert F. Johnson Art Museum (one of I. M. Pei's most notable successes). In an ironic turn of events, Robinson's predecessor at Cornell, Thomas Leavitt, another Harvard Ph.D. and a former

director of both the Pasadena and Santa Barbara art museums, came out of retirement in Rhode Island to serve for a year as RISD's acting director.<sup>24</sup>

Robinson's staff at RISD included a number of Jews. Ronnie Zakon served four years as curator of education. For a longer period, Daniel Rosenfeld was curator of paintings and sculpture. A specialist in 19th century French art, he authored a catalogue of RISD's painting collection. Though not a candidate for Robinson's position, he later assumed the directorship of the Pennsylvania Academy's Museum of Art in Philadelphia, his native city.

In 1992, following Robinson's resignation, Thomas Schutte also resigned from the presidency of RISD. Some observers speculated that Robinson, capable of providing intellectual, administrative, and charismatic leadership, might return as president. The School's board of trustees, chaired by Sidney Greenwald, considered other possibilities, however. As it turned out, developments beyond Rhode Island had a significant impact.

#### THE NEXT CYCLE OF LEADERSHIP

J. Carter Brown, son of John Nicholas Brown, was retiring as director of the National Gallery. (Carter's brother, Nicholas, was director of the National Aquarium in Baltimore.) Perhaps the most debonair, savvy, and successful art museum director of his generation, Carter was an alumnus both of Harvard College and the Business School. Additionally, he had studied briefly with Berenson in Italy and earned a master's in art history at New York University.<sup>25</sup>

Brown spent his entire museum career — nearly three decades — in Washington, working closely with Paul Mellon, the Gallery's president and a relative by marriage. Their crowning achievement was the opening of the East Wing, designed by I. M. Pei, in 1978. Daniel Robbins and Brown had been close friends at the National Gallery, and no doubt Carter's recommendation was well received in Providence.

Brown's deputy director was Roger Mandle, a rising star among museum directors who had previously led the distinguished Toledo Museum of Art. The tall and courtly Mandle was passed over in favor of another Brown protege, Earl A. Powell, III, who was a graduate of Providence Country Day School, Williams College, and had earned a Ph.D. at Harvard. "Rusty" Powell, a specialist in American art, had been considered for the RISD directorship that went to Robinson. Powell was later tapped as director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where, as a stellar fundraiser during the 1980s, he was able to vastly expand its physical plant. Mandle, deciding not to remain in Washington as Powell's deputy, was hired as president of RISD.

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Through his vast contacts in the museum world, Mandle, in turn, recruited Robinson's successor. Was it time for a woman director or merely an Americanist? RISD never had a specialist in Latin American art, but it recently had a woman president, Lee Hall. Doreen Bolger, 43, a curator at Fort Worth's Amon Carter Museum, was hired. A Ph.D. graduate of City College of New York and a former curator at the Metropolitan, she is a specialist in 19th century American painting, devoted to Eakins, and enthusiastic about women artists.

Mandle and Bolger worked with a new chairman of the RISD board, Barnet Fain, who had served as vice-chairman and as a trustee for two decades. A collector of contemporary drawings, photographs, and pre-Columbian art, he has chaired the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and Brown's Haffenreffer Museum (of Anthropology). No stranger to the Jewish community, Fain was also a president of Temple Habonim in Barrington and, like Norman Fain, a president of The Miriam Hospital. A native of Providence, he owes his considerable interest in art to his wife, Jean, a painter, and a deep friendship with Daniel Robbins.<sup>26</sup>

The search for foundation and corporate support has recently taken RISD leaders far from local and regional board rooms. Indeed, fundraising efforts now extend as far as Europe and Asia. Once again, officials view RISD's future in terms of its usefulness to industry, especially high technology, and its impact on rebuilding Providence.

Jews are being invited to play increasingly important roles. Dr. Joseph Chazan, for example, a generous Museum supporter and a president of Temple Beth-El, has become a new RISD trustee.

The Museum's most impressive example of Jewish philanthropy was only recently unveiled. Paula and Leonard Granoff (daughter and son-in-law of Sol Koffler) pledged \$1.5 million for the redesign and reinstallation of galleries housing the Museum's permanent collection of European art from the Renaissance to the early 19th century. When opened in the fall of 1997, these stunning new chambers were named in honor of the Granoff family.

Only a few weeks later, Rhode Islanders were surprised to learn that Bolger, after only three years at RISD, had accepted a new position. Early in 1998, she became director of the Baltimore Museum of Art, a general museum known internationally for its staggering collection of Matisse and Picassos, which were bequeathed by two sisters, Dr. Etta and Claribel Cone.<sup>27</sup> Bolger follows two highly successful directors, Tom Freudenheim and Arnold Lehman, both of whom are Jews. She will be neither the first Americanist nor first woman director, for Adelyn Breeskin, a specialist on Cassatt, enjoyed this distinction.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Lehman's assistant director and chief curator was a woman.

The time may come when either the president of RISD or the director of its wonderful museum is both an accomplished professional and a proud Jewish leader. In the near future, more Jews — men and women alike — will probably enjoy greater opportunities in American art museums. Given its traditions of religious tolerance and Jewish generosity, Rhode Island is a more likely place than many where such a hopeful development may occur.



#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Carla M. Woodward, "Acquisition, Preservation, and Education: A History of the Museum," in Woodward and Franklin W. Robinson, eds., *A Handbook of The Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design*, RISD, 1985.
- <sup>2</sup> See: Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture and Art: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930*, University of Chicago Press, 1991. Given the chronological limitations of her study and her eagerness to accept women as a homogenous group, McCarthy unfortunately diminished the importance of Jewish women.
- <sup>3</sup> A Metcalf family tree is found in Elsie S. Bronson, "The Rhode Island School of Design: A Half-Century Record (1878-1927)," an unpublished manuscript in the RISD Library.
- <sup>4</sup> See: Neil Harris, "Abby Greene Aldrich Rockefeller," in *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. III, Edward T. James, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 186-187; Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Rockefellers*, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976; Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of The Museum of Modern Art*, N.Y.: Atheneum, 1973.
- <sup>5</sup> When she died in 1955, Lucy Truman Aldrich left her home to the Rhode Island Historical Society. Used as the Society's museum, it is known as Aldrich House. For an insightful study by Abby and Lucy's grandnephew, see: Nelson W. Aldrich, Jr., *Old Money: The Mythology of America's Upper Class*, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1989.
- <sup>6</sup> See: Laura Fermi, *Illustrious Immigrants: The Intellectual Migration from Europe, 1930-1941*, University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp. 295-296; also: Martha Mitchell, *Encyclopedia Brunonia*, Brown University, 1993, p. 445; and Jay Berry, *Gentlemen Under the Elms*, Brown University, 1982.
- <sup>7</sup> For background on Dorner, see: Samuel Cauman, *The Living Museum: Experiences of an Art Historian and Museum Director*, New York University Press, 1958.
- <sup>8</sup> "Windshield," the Brown family's vacation home on Fishers Island, New York (offshore Connecticut) was built by Neutra in 1938. Severely damaged by the great hurricane of that year, it was immediately rebuilt but ultimately destroyed by fire. See: Thomas S. Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture: A Biography and History*, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1982. Documentation regarding the Neutra commission is found in the John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization on Benefit Street. A few drawings, from Neutra's office, belong to the RISD Museum.
- <sup>9</sup> An article in the *Boston Herald* of September 5, 1941, alluded to an FBI investigation of Dorner and mentioned that his brother was a pilot in the Luftwaffe. An article on September 18 indicated that Dorner had been cleared of any charges. A headline in the September 10, 1941, issue of the *Providence Journal* stated: "Dr. Dorner Found Nazi Regime Foe."

- <sup>10</sup> In his employment application of 1942, when asked to state his "religious preference," Dorner indicated "Protestant." See: Dorner file, University Archives, John Carter Brown Library.
- <sup>11</sup> Kristin A. Mortimer, *Harvard University Art Museum: A Guide to the Collections*, Harvard University Press and N.Y.: Abbeville Press, 1985, pp. 300 and 329.
- <sup>12</sup> On March 7, 1995, during an afternoon of reminiscences at the RISD Museum, there was no mention of Robbins' Jewish background. The most telling remark was made by the designer, Malcolm Grear, who observed: "His religion was people: openminded, intelligent people." See: "A Tribute from his Friends: In Memoriam: Daniel J. Robbins, 1932-1995," *Rhode Island School of Design: Museum Notes*, LXXXIII, June 1996, p. 11.
- <sup>13</sup> Much information about Robbins was provided by his widow, Eugenia, in a telephone interview recorded by the author on July 16, 1995.
- <sup>14</sup> Two important exceptions to this rule were found in synagogues. Percival Goodman's modern design of Temple Beth-El in Providence, completed in 1954, included commissions by such New York sculptors as Adolph Gottlieb, David Hare, and Ibram Lassaw. Samuel Glasner's modern design of B'nai Israel in Woonsocket, completed in 1961, included stained glass windows by the Israeli artist Avigdor Arikha and textiles by the German emigre weaver Anni Albers.
- <sup>15</sup> The other chairs were Sylvia Hassenfeld and Roberta Holland. Interview with Mrs. Robinson, recorded by the author on June 27, 1989, in Providence.
- <sup>16</sup> For a profile of Neuberger, see Robbins' chapter in: Jean Lipman, ed., *The Collector in America*, N.Y.: Viking Press, 1970, pp. 148-159. At the time of his death, Robbins was completing a biography of Neuberger, who is still living.
- <sup>17</sup> See: John O'Brian, *Degas to Matisse: The Maurice Wertheim Collection*, N.Y.: Harry N. Abrams, and Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- <sup>18</sup> Milton Stanzler, an attorney and a founder of the Rhode Island chapter of the ACLU, led the Trinity Rep board. Barbara Orson, an actress, was also a founder of the company. Marion Simon was Hall's chief assistant for twenty years. See: Milton Stanzler, "Trinity Repertory: Creating a Professional Theater in Providence," *Rhode Island History*, LIII, February 1995, pp. 19-36; and George M. Goodwin, *A Guide to the Archival Collections: Trinity Repertory Company, Providence, Rhode Island*, Trinity Repertory, 1992.
- <sup>19</sup> The first Jew elected to the RISD board, in 1961, was Joseph Ress. Two alumni, William Levy and Robert Soforenko, were elected in 1962 and 1964, respectively.
- <sup>20</sup> Interviews with Robinson recorded by the author on January 28, January 31, February 10, and February 26, 1992, in Providence. Copies of the tapes and a summary of their contents are available through the RISD Archives and the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- <sup>21</sup> For a portrait of Charles Robinson, see Barry, *ibid.*, pp. 63-77.
- <sup>22</sup> See: "Dr. Paul J. Sachs Dead at 86; Art Expert Led Fogg Museum," *New York Times*, February 19, 1965, p. 35; and "Paul Joseph Sachs," *Harvard University Gazette*, January 14, 1967.
- <sup>23</sup> See: Agnes Mongan, ed., *Memorial Exhibition: Works of Art from the Collection of Paul J. Sachs (1878-1965): Given and Bequeathed to the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts*, Harvard University Press, 1965; and James Cuno, et. al., *Harvard's Art Museums: 100 Years of Collecting*, Harvard University Art Museums, 1996.
- <sup>24</sup> Interview with Leavitt recorded by the author on March 9, 1993, in Providence.
- <sup>25</sup> See: Calvin Tomkins, "For the Nation," *New Yorker*, September 3, 1990, pp. 48-90; and Michael



Kimmelman, "J. Carter Brown ... and Beyond," *New York Times*, February 23, 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Fain recorded by the author on August 9, 1995, in Providence.

<sup>27</sup> See: Brenda Richardson, *Dr. Claribel & Miss Etta: The Cone Collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art*, Museum of Art, 1985.

<sup>28</sup> Having joined Baltimore's curatorial staff in 1930, Breeskin served as director from 1942 until 1962. One of her curators was a German refugee, Gertrude Rosenthal, who also helped secure the Cone bequest.

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SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY, M.D.  
1907-1997

Seebert Goldowsky's name first appeared in the *Notes* in the December 1954 issue, Volume 1, Number 2, where he was listed as an "Active Member." In the December 1955 issue, Editor David C. Adelman made reference to a paper by Seebert appearing in the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* entitled "The Beginning of Medical Education in Rhode Island." Mr. Adelman called it "scholarly, interesting and instructive."

In the December 1957 issue, Seebert was first listed as a member of the Executive Committee. His lead article in that issue was aptly entitled, "Jews in Medicine in Rhode Island." Since then, there has not been a single issue that did not bear his name or his work — as Editor, from 1962 to 1978, as President, 1982-1984, as Honorary Trustee, or as a frequent contributor. Much more significantly, as cited in the presentation to Seebert of the first Founders' Day award by the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue this past July, he was the conscience of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and the voice of Rhode Island Jewish history.

Seebert's Curriculum Vitae mentions that he published some 60 learned articles and book reviews on medical and historical subjects. During the last 40 years, his interest and work focused on Rhode Island. His two books, a biography of surgeon Usher Parsons and a history of Temple Beth-El, represented a huge expenditure of study and writing.

Seebert served for over 27 years as Editor in Chief of the Rhode Island Medical Society Journal. He was active in numerous organizations that involved Rhode Island and Jewish history — president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, the Society of the Friends of Touro Synagogue, the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies, National Trustee of the American Jewish Historical Society, Board Member of the Rhode Island Historical Society — and on and on. Beyond that, were it not for his efforts and those of his devoted wife Bonnie, whom he adored, it is not unlikely that the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association would have gone out of existence years ago.

Future generations, not only of scholars but also of ordinary Rhode Islanders, and particularly Jews, will be indebted to Seebert for his dedication. As we now plan for the next century of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association as the recognized chronicler and depository of our state's archives of its proud Jewish history (with hope in the setting of Heritage Harbor), we note our everlasting affection, respect for and gratitude to Seebert J. Goldowsky.

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Remarks of Melvin L. Zurier at the Mid-Winter Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, November 9, 1997.

## JUDITH WEISS COHEN

1923-1997

In "Notes on the *Notes*, the editor's preface to Volume 11, Number 1 of the publication, Judith Weiss Cohen wrote: "One of the pleasures of being editor of *Notes* is getting to know so many more people in our community, both of the present and the past."

Her words referred to her experience as editor of *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, but to those of us who knew her, they were emblematic of Judy herself. She truly enjoyed meeting people, people from all walks of life, and getting to know them. Her engaging smile and open manner drew others to her, and once befriended, they became part of her ever-widening network.

She took great pleasure in discovering the facts and facets of the Jewish experience in Rhode Island: about people, the leaders and the lesser known; and events, the great and the almost forgotten, that are part of our history here. She enjoyed the study for its own sake, quite apart from the demands of her position, for at heart she was a perpetual student.

Judy likened her work as editor to that of a detective who solves mysteries by following clues and digging for information. In her case it meant tracking down or verifying an elusive name or place or date. She relished the challenge and the research, and she was meticulous in her work. Ambiguities did not survive her scrutiny.

Judy came to us as editor 10 years ago. We were in need of someone to take charge of *Notes*, and she had recently resigned a position where she had served with distinction, as she had throughout many careers. It was our great good fortune that she accepted our offer. During her tenure Judy brought a new lustre to our publication by setting high standards for herself and demanding the same from those who submitted papers.

I shall miss those phone calls that began, "I have a question for you ..." and the chatting and the last lunch that we never did do. She inspired us with her courage and enlarged us by her example. She, like Seebert Goldowsky, has left a void in our organization and in our hearts.

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By Geraldine Foster, a past-president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and a regular contributor to the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*.

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*Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Vol. 12, No. 3, November, 1997

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## SEEBERT J. GOLDOWSKY HONORED

Seebert J. Goldowsky, M. D., former editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, was honored by the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association at its meeting in the Jewish Community Center on Tuesday, June 3, 1997, with a birthday cake and passage of the following resolution:

**Whereas**, Seebert Jay Goldowsky, eminent physician, editor, author, and historian, will celebrate his ninetieth birthday on the sixth day of June, nineteen hundred and ninety-seven; and

**Whereas**, Said Dr. Goldowsky has been a valued member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association since 1952 and prominent member of the Executive Committee since 1957; and

**Whereas**, While capably tending to his medical responsibilities, he devoted countless hours to furthering interest in the history of the Jews in Rhode Island and the history of Rhode Island in general through his membership in the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and his service as our seventh President, participation in the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies as delegate and as President, and through a term as President of the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue National Historical Shrine, Inc., and Past President, membership in and service on the Governing Boards of the Rhode Island Historical Society and American Jewish Historical Society; and

**Whereas**, He brought great distinction to the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, which he edited for eighteen years, as with *The Rhode Island Medical Journal*, of which he was Editor-in-Chief for twenty-seven years, by maintaining the highest standards of excellence and scholarship; and

**Whereas**, He has generously shared his knowledge and expertise as mentor to succeeding editors of the *Notes* and as Chairman of the publications committee; and

**Whereas**, He has done extensive research and written important articles regarding facets of the history of the Jews in Rhode Island, and has gained recognition for his scholarly volumes *Yankee Surgeon; the Life and Times of Usher Parsons 1788-1868* and *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership; The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El)*; and

**Whereas**, His excellence as physician, editor, author, and historian is widely recognized and his advice and counsel is always welcomed and appreciated; therefore be it

**Resolved**, That the Officers, Executive Committee, and the Membership of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association extend felicitations to Seebert Jay Goldowsky on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, best wishes for his good health, and gratitude for his dedication and wisdom.

**Executed** on the third day of June, nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, by the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.



Editor's Note: Dr. Goldowsky was honored as Member-of-the-Year by the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue at its annual meeting, July 20, 1997.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BY LOIS ATWOOD

Recent acquisitions in the library of the R.I. Jewish Historical Association by local authors or containing items of Rhode Island interest:

*American Jewish Archives*, vol. XLVIII, #1, Spring-Summer 1996, pub. by American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, 131 pages.

Goodwin, George, book review of *The Synagogues of Kentucky's Past*, by Lee Shai Weissbach, pp. 83-86.

*The Fine Farm Cookbook*, by Ruth Fine Handy, pub. by Fine Farms, Attleboro, Mass., n.d., 248 pages.

Looseleaf all-purpose cookbook; author is third generation of Fine family on Attleboro farm. Eight pages of family and farm photographs.

*Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, vol. 50, #2, April 1995, printed by Stinehour Press, Lunenburg, Vermont, 309 pages.

"More on Usher Parsons," by Seebert J. Goldowsky, pp. 274-79.

*Lithuanian Jewry, 1993: A Demographic and Sociocultural Profile*, by Sidney and Alice Goldstein, *Jewish Population Studies* 28, pub. by Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997, 115 pages.

This study by two distinguished scholars is fundamentally the first example of a thorough analysis of a countrywide Jewish population within the boundaries of the former Soviet Union, according to Sergio DellaPergola, chairperson, A. Harman Institute.

*Poppa: A Tribute to My Father*, by Bunny Horvitz, pub. by Herald Publishing, Houston, Texas, 1992, 53 pages.

A loving memoir of a remarkable man. Author was born in Providence, wife of David Horvitz's brother Leo.

Cover and drawings by Ira S. Horvitz.

Family photographs, pp. 26 ff.



RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
FORTY-THIRD ANNUAL MEETING  
APRIL 27, 1997

The Forty-third Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was called to order at 2:05 p.m. by Mel Topf, chairperson for the day. After a few words of greeting, he called on President Aaron Cohen to conduct a short business meeting.

A motion to waive the reading of the minutes of the last meeting was seconded and passed. President Cohen then thanked the staff of the Association, as well as the volunteers, for their devotion to this organization. He particularly singled out Eleanor Horvitz, librarian/archivist; Anne Sherman, office manager; Judith Weiss Cohen, editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*; and volunteers Maurice Cohen, Lynn Stepak, and Anita Fine.

He briefly reviewed the highlights of the past year, starting with the Association's participation in the successful America's Smithsonian exhibit at the Rhode Island Convention Center in August of 1996. October's event was a bus tour of the North End of Providence and a visit to the 100-year-old Sons of Jacob Synagogue. Melvin Zurier and Julius Michaelson were knowledgeable and entertaining tour guides. On November 17 the mid-winter meeting was held. Ellen Smith, curator of the American Jewish Historical Society and co-editor of *The Jews of Boston*, gave a spellbinding history of the Jews of Rhode Island.

President Cohen reported that Abby Davis has been hired on a part-time basis, to work on a computer database for the archives. The second Cumulative Index for the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* was issued this year. It was funded by The Rhode Island Foundation, Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, The ADDED Fund of the Leonard and Esteruth Rumpler Fund in Honor of Alexander and Celia Rumpler in the endowment program of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, and seven generous gifts from members of RIJHA. Cohen concluded with a comprehensive report on the progress of Heritage Harbor. He described the tentative plans, projected time-frame, and required funding. His complete report is on file.\*

Jack Fradin, treasurer, reported that the Association is in good shape financially. Cash assets total \$99,698 in a checking account, the Fidelity-Spartan Fund, and the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island Endowment Fund. Receipts were \$210 over disbursements. The complete report is on file.

Eleanor Horvitz, librarian/archivist, reported that the Association successfully provides services to the community, despite the small and crowded headquarters,

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\*Heritage Harbor is a consortium of historical and cultural organizations, including RIJHA, which is planning a major historical museum at the site of the old Narragansett Electric Company South Street Power Station in Providence. It will also house all the partners.

by being creative and adaptable. She decried the fact that the Association lacks a FAX machine and access to email, and has an inadequately small copy machine. Despite these limitations, she described RIJHA's business as "thriving." The Association assisted three publishers this year: one for a history of Jewish women, another verifying information on Colonial Jews, and a third publishing a fifteen-volume encyclopedia on the history of religion. The librarian daily receives requests by telephone and mail for genealogical information. Photographs and artifacts have been lent to the Providence Public Library, the Rhode Island Historical Society, the Jewish Community Center, and The Miriam Hospital. She noted that donations of materials to the Association and speakers provided for other organizations are listed in the Newsletter. Mrs. Horvitz's complete report is on file.

Judith Weiss Cohen, editor of the *Notes*, reported that this has been an extremely busy year with the publication of the annual *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* and the second Cumulative Index for Volumes 8 through 11. Plans for the 1997 issue of the *Notes* are under way. She reported that Arcadia Publishers, an international press that publishes historical illustrated books called "Images of America," has asked us to produce a book, *Jewish History in Rhode Island*. Geraldine Foster, Eleanor Horvitz, and Judith Weiss Cohen will be the authors. They have generously volunteered to donate all royalties to RIJHA. Mrs. Cohen asked members to donate interesting photos of Jews and Jewish neighborhoods suitable for the project.

President Cohen called for the report of the nominating committee from chairman Eugene Weinberg. The following officers were nominated for 1997-98: President, Aaron Cohen; 1st Vice-president, Eugene Weinberg; 2nd Vice-president, Robert Berkelhammer; Secretary, Sylvia Factor; Treasurer, Jack Fradin; members of the Executive Committee for a two-year term: Dr. Sidney Goldstein, Dr. Calvin Goldscheider, Rita Michaelson, Milton Stanzler, Mel Topf, and Dr. Jay Orson. There being no counter-nominations, the secretary cast one ballot, and the nominees were duly elected. President Cohen appointed Dr. Herbert Iventash to the Executive Committee and Lillian Schwartz to serve as assistant secretary and Herbert Rosen, assistant treasurer.

He then turned the meeting back to Mel Topf, who introduced the speaker, Dr. Leon A. Jick, Professor Emeritus and former Chairman of the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department at Brandeis University. Dr. Jick presented a fascinating and informative lecture about the first three rabbis in America. An equally interesting question and answer period followed his talk. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. and was followed by a delicious Passover collation chaired by Phyllis Berry, assisted by Anita Fine and Anne Sherman.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sylvia Factor

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NECROLOGY - December 1, 1996 - November 30, 1997

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COHEN, JUDITH WEISS, born in Passaic, New Jersey, daughter of the late Abraham and Rose (Fineglass) Weiss. She was a magna cum laude graduate of Brown University and also received her master's degree in political science from Brown.

She was editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, a free lance writer and consultant, the associate director for fiscal operations for the Blackstone Valley Community Action Program, and former interfaith coordinator for the National Conference of Christians and Jews in Rhode Island.

For 14 years, Mrs. Cohen was in charge of information services at the U.S. Bureau of Census in Boston. During World War II, she served in the Womens' Army Corps and worked in public relations for the New York Port of Embarkation as assistant editor of the port's weekly Army newspaper.

She was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and an active member of many organizations, including Temple Beth-El, the National Council of Jewish Women, The Miriam Hospital Women's Association, the Pembroke Club, the Rhode Island Historical Society, and the Brown University Friends of the Library.

Died in Providence on November 17, 1997, at age 74.

ENGLE, JOAN, born in Providence, daughter of the late Henry and Marion (Frank) Hassenfeld. A lifelong Providence resident, she also spent many years in Kennebunkport, Maine.

Mrs. Engle attended the University of Rhode Island and was a 1951 graduate of Boston University.

She was a member of Temple Emanu-El, The Miriam Hospital Women's Association, and the Jewish Home for the Aged. A member of the Jewish Federation and Ledgemont Country Club, she was an active supporter of Hasbro Children's Hospital.

Died in Atlantis, Florida on May 6, 1997, at age 67.

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GLECKMAN, MORTON A., born in Pawtucket, a son of the late Louis and Bessie (Feital) Gleckman.

Mr. Gleckman was an Army Air Force veteran and served in England during the Korean War. He was an industrial salesman for the RNB Supply Co. of Providence.

A former commander of the Jewish War Veterans, Reback-Winston Post, he was a 32nd degree Mason, a member of the Scottish Rite, and a member of Temple Torat Yisrael.

Died in Providence on April 27, 1997, at age 66.

GOLDOWSKY, DR. SEEBERT J., born in Providence, a son of the late Bernard M. and Antoinette (Lotary) Goldowsky.

He was a 1928 graduate of Brown University and a 1932 graduate of Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Goldowsky was chief of the department of surgery at The Miriam Hospital. He was also on the staff of Rhode Island Hospital, Charles V. Chapin, and Roger Williams Hospitals. He was the first full-time medical director of Blue Cross-Blue Shield of RI. During World War II, he served as a surgeon in the southwest Pacific.

A distinguished author, scholar, and historian, Dr. Goldowsky was editor-in-chief of the Rhode Island Medical Society Journal for 27 years. He also was a trustee of the American Jewish Historical Society, past president of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, and editor of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* for 17 years.

Dr. Goldowsky served a president of the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue and was a member of Temple Beth-El.

He received the Recognition Award from Brown University School of Medicine and the Williams Award from the Brown University Library. He published more than sixty articles for scientific journals and periodicals and was the author two scholarly books.

Died in Providence on November 5, 1997, at age 90.

GOLDSTEIN, SIDNEY, born in Providence, a son of the late Charles and Dora (Silverstein) Goldstein.

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Mr. Goldstein was a newspaper distributor for Max Silverstein Co.

He was a member of Temple Emanu-El, the former Jewish Home for the Aged, Jewish Family Service, and a Life Member of the Hebrew Free Loan Association.

Died in Providence on December 10, 1996, at age 90.

KAY, HOWARD N., born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, son of the late Benn and Rose (Stenbuck) Kay. A graduate of the United States Naval Academy in 1948, Captain Kay was a veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars and served 27 years in the armed forces before his final assignment in Newport.

His leadership in the 1970s transformed the Naval Education and Training Center into the Navy's premier educational facility.

Captain Kay served on the Newport School Committee, was president of the Rhode Island Alliance Against Casino Gambling, and from 1984 to 1990 was an associate vice president at Bryant College. He was a director and trustee of the Providence Performing Arts Center and a member of the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue.

Died in Newport on January 9, 1997, at age 71.

LEACH, MAX, son of the late Harry and Pauline (Greenberg) Leach, was a lifelong Providence resident.

He was vice president of the former H. Leach Machinery Company and president of Main Machinery Company and the Industrial Machinery Appraisal Company. He was a founder and member of the Machinery Dealers National Association and a member of the Manufacturing Jewelers and Silversmiths Association.

Mr. Leach was a member of Ledgemont Country Club, the Aurora Civic Association, the Elks, and the Bishops Council. He was an active member of Jewish Family Service, The Miriam Hospital, Touro Fraternal Association, the Zionist Organization of America, B'Nai Brith, and Temple Emanu-El.

Died in Providence on May 30, 1997, at age 88.

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LONG, SIDNEY D., born in Cranston, a son of the late Gabriel and Rose (Brown) Long, he was a lifelong resident of Providence.

Mr. Long was an Army veteran of World War II and served as a Lieutenant Colonel. He was a teacher at Hugh B. Bain Junior High School in Cranston for thirty years.

He was a member of the Jewish War Veterans, the Jewish Community Center, and Temple Beth El. He was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.

Died in Providence on November 3, 1997, at age 83.

SOFORENKO, EDWIN S., born in Providence, a son of the late Samuel and Jennie (Persky) Soforenko, he lived most of his life in Providence.

He was founder and Chairman of the Board of Insurance Underwriters Inc. since 1936. He was a graduate of Brown University, a member of Temple Emanu-El, and an honorary vice president of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island.

Through the Edwin Soforenko Foundation, he was a major contributor to the Providence Hebrew Day School, the former Jewish Home for the Aged, The Miriam Hospital, Camp JORI, Jewish Family Service, and the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island.

Died in Longboat Key, Florida on December 24, 1996, at age 81.

ZURIER, SYDNEY S., born in Providence, a son of the late Abraham and Rebecca (Sincoff) Zurier.

Mr. Zurier lived in West Palm Beach, Florida for the last 20 years, previously residing in New Haven, Connecticut, where he was the proprietor of the former Woman's Shop.

An Army Veteran of World War II, he was awarded two Bronze Stars for combat in North Africa, Italy, and Romania.

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

Died in Palm Beach, Florida on April 2, 1997, at age 90.

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## FROM THE EDITOR NOTES ON THE *NOTES*

It is a humbling experience for your editor to look back at early issues of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, especially the first issue, published in 1954 when the total membership of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association consisted of forty-two men, one organization, and one woman. (Even that fact starts your editor's mind thinking of future issues. Can I find writers for articles on that one organization, the Touro Fraternal Association, and that one woman, Matilda J. Pincus?) I am awed by the research done by the first president and editor, David C. Adelman, and hope that the present issues of the *Notes* carry out his quote from another historian that "There is no good reason why history should become a series of myths when the truth is accessible."

The words of the first vice-president and charter member of our Association, Beryl Segal, are also worth pondering:

The task of gathering material for a history of our community is not always as exciting as it may seem. It involves hard labor and painstaking searching. It may take hours of reading, long distance correspondence, and months of waiting to establish one minute detail that will take up no more than a single phrase in the history of an organization, an institution, a personality, or an event that took place in our city.

Fortunately, your editor is assisted in the publication of the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* by excellent volunteer writers and by many other people. People who contributed in some way for this issue were Judith Aaron, Aaron Cohen, Maurice B. Cohen, Richard Alan Dow, Anita Fine, Geraldine Foster, Bonnie and Seebert Goldowsky, Rosalind Gorin, Eleanor F. Horvitz, Betty Jaffe, Barbara Levine, Joseph Puleo, Natalie Robinson, Herbert L. Rosen, Toby Rossner, Noel Rubinton, Lillian Schwartz, Anne Sherman, Alene Silver, and Lynn and Samuel Stepak, and Major Jeannine E. Vachon, R.I. National Guard Equal Employment Manager and National Guard Historian.

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My friend, mentor, and advisor Seebert J. Goldowsky, M.D., died the other day. He was a pillar of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and its Editor Emeritus. When I was selected to be Editor, I immediately went to see him to ask for his advice and guidance, which he gave freely and warmly. He was a stern taskmaster, never satisfied with anything less than perfection. Aaron and I extend deepest sympathy to his beloved wife, Bonnie.

Editing the *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* for the past eleven years has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional life. Now it is time to relinquish a benevolent responsibility. This will be my last issue of the *Notes*. The

Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma I have been battling for fourteen years has reached a most virulent form. I pray that the remainder of my life will be lived with meaning and dignity. I have had a wonderful life.

Judith Weiss Cohen  
Editor

Judith Weiss Cohen died on November 17, 1997. The Association has established a memorial fund in her name.

## ERRATA AND ADDENDA

### SECOND CUMULATIVE INDEX

Page 100, line 2, should read "David Emmet 10:121."

Page 100, line 3, should read "Schaffer, David, and Dora (Feldman) 11:404."

### VOLUME 12, NUMBER 2

Front cover caption should read "Congregation Sons of Jacob Synagogue, interior."

#### *"Keynote Address"*

Page 185, title should read "Keynote Address — 1996 Annual George Washington Letter Ceremony."

#### *"Kosher Food at Brown University"*

Page 262, third paragraph, line 6, add "(Rabbi Jacobowitz later became Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, received Life Peerage in 1991, and is a member of the House of Lords.)"

#### *"Necrology"*

Page 301, second section, line 5, add "Bessie Sholes Lipson was a Life Member of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association."

Page 302, second section, line 2, should read "Dora (Shindler) Finkler."

Page 302, third section, lines 1 and 2, should read "Low, Cecile Siden, born in Malden, Mass., a daughter of the late Harry and Sophie (Waldman) Siden."

Page 303, second section, line 1, should read "Pforzheim, Germany."

#### *"Errata and Addenda"*

Page 307, move "Volume 12, Number 1, Part B" above "Women Ahead of Their Time."





# FUNDS AND BEQUESTS OF THE RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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ARNOLD T. AND ALICE AXELROD GALKIN

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IRA S. AND ANNA GALKIN

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*Research Scholarship Fund*

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 MRS. SYDNEY ZURIER





*Halsband's Store, East Greenwich, Rhode Island, 1920. John Halsband, the owner, is standing in front of the store.*