

RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL NOTES

VOLUME 5 NOVEMBER, 1968 NUMBER 2

Touro Synagogue, Newport, R. I. The oldest synagogue building in the United States. Dedicated a National Shrine August 31, 1947. Original wood-engraving by Bernard Brussel-Smith for the National Information Bureau for Jewish Life. Courtesy of Melvin L. Zurier.

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RHODE ISLAND JEWISH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

209 ANGELL STREET, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02906

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MYER BENJAMIN AND HIS DESCENDANTS†

A Study in Biographical Method

By MALCOLM H. STERN*

When I received your gracious invitation to address the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association and provide its *Historical Notes* with an article, I sought for a topic which would combine a Rhode Island theme with some original research which had not appeared in print. From my genealogical studies I recalled a colonial Myers family, one of several of that name, which I had traced to a Myer Benjamin of Newport. My knowledge of Myer Benjamin was slight, based on a few scattered references in printed works; so I decided to include some of his descendants to round out the story. My knowledge of them was not extensive either, so I further decided to use my researches as an example of how one goes about writing the biography of people from scattered sources. Thanks to Doctor Jacob R. Marcus and his thorough examination of every available scrap of colonial Jewish data, I subsequently found a good deal about Myer Benjamin in manuscript records which Doctor Marcus had unearthed at the Newport Historical Society. As a consequence I can add flesh and blood to the bare bones of Myer Benjamin's story. As we shall see, he evidently served as both *shammas* [sexton] and *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] for the Newport synagogue between 1761 and his death in 1776. Yet one looks in vain for any trace of him in Rabbi Morris Gutstein's regrettably inadequate books, *The Story of the Jews of Newport* and *To Bigotry No Sanction*.¹

Our basic printed source for his biography is contained in *Reminiscences 1780 to 1814 Including Incidents in the War of 1812-14 . . .* Written by Major Myers, 13th Infantry, U. S. Army, to His Son.² The author of these *Reminiscences* was Mordecai Myers (1776-1871),³ the youngest son of our subject, Myer Benjamin. The family followed the Ashkenazic European tradition: the father, Myer, son of Benjamin, became Myer Benjamin (or sometimes, Benjamin Myers [see below]), while his children took the family name Myers.

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Mordecai Myers never mentions his father's name, and his reminiscences are full of errors. He was not quite six months old when his father died, which would account for some of the mistakes; filiopiety accounts for others. Furthermore, since the *Reminiscences* were published by Mordecai's Christian children, all references to anything Jewish were carefully expunged.

From his tombstone in Touro Cemetery, Newport we learn that Myer Benjamin was born about 1733.⁴ He was a Hungarian, and his wife, Rachel, an Austrian.⁵ She was born about 1745,⁶ and must have married about age 13.⁷ They sailed from Helvoetsluys, near Rotterdam,⁸ and landed in New York probably late in 1758.⁹ December of that year found them at Philipse's Manor [now Yonkers] where their first child, Benjamin, was born on December 14, and circumcised one week later by Abraham I. Abrahams, the *mohel* [ritual circumciser] of New York's Congregation Shearith Israel.¹⁰

By 1761 the family had moved to Newport, for on May 7th of that year Myer purchased from Aaron Lopez "a looking-glass, some screws and China cups."¹¹ Whether these were for family use or for peddling we cannot say. By November of 1761 Myer was already something of a communal servant, for he was serving as steward of America's first Jewish club.¹²

Nothing is known of him during the next three years, but he was evidently engaged in some form of business which proved unsuccessful. The weekly newspaper, *The Newport Mercury*, for March 26, 1764, and for three weeks thereafter, ran the following advertisement:

MYER BENJAMIN of Newport, in Obedience to a vote of the General Assembly held at East Greenwich on the last Monday in February last hereby Notifies all his Creditors to appear at the next Session of said Assembly, to be held at Newport on the first Wednesday of May next and shew cause, if any they have, why a Petition preferred by the said MYER BENJAMIN, to have the Benefit of an Insolvent Act, upon delivering up his whole Estate, should not be granted unto him.¹³

Fortunately for Meyer the Newport community had just dedicated its handsome new synagogue on the preceding December 2nd,¹⁴ and the obvious place for a Jewish bankrupt who had a good knowledge of Hebrew¹⁵ was as *shammash* [sexton] and/or *shochet* of the synagogue. Myer seems to have taken on both assignments, for Aaron Lopez' ledgers keep referring to items sent to Myer or his wife charged to the

Sedaca [literally, the charity fund of the synagogue], as well as to pickled tongues, a by-product of the slaughter house. It is in Lopez' accounts that we find our subject referred to as both Myer Benjamin and Benjamin Myers. It would seem that Lopez started out using Myer Benjamin when he was referring to Myer's personal business, and Benjamin Myers when the matter pertained to the synagogue; but the system grew too clumsy for Lopez' clerks, and they used the names interchangeably.

The Myer Benjamin clan added to their revenue by boarding the congregation's bachelor minister, *Hazan* Isaac Touro, until the latter married in 1773. The house was evidently capacious, for they often took in itinerant Jews, especially for the Jewish Holydays and festivals.¹⁰

Despite these efforts there were too many mouths to feed. In addition to the Yonkers-born Benjamin, there seems to have been a daughter named Polly, a son, Abraham,¹⁷ and the above-mentioned, Mordecai.¹⁸ Altogether at least nine children were born to Myer and Rachel,¹⁹ but we have been unable to ascertain the names of the others. We can readily understand Aaron Lopez' notation of November 23, 1768:

Isaac Touro gets 9 yards diapers delivered to Mrs. Myers.²⁰

We can also understand why Phillip Moses, a visitor from Savannah, in 1773 felt called upon to assist the family.²¹

The account book of Newport's Doctor William Hunter gives us the record of "Myers, a Jew Butcher":²² On March 2nd, 1775 Myer broke his arm. This evidently brought on such complications that the doctor made frequent visits during the next several months. Occasionally he recorded a child "avomit"; once Mrs. Myers was in that unfortunate state.

On November 16, 1776 Myer became seriously ill. Four days later, despite daily visits from the doctor, he died. That was on November 20, 1776.²³ Five days later Doctor Hunter recorded his last visit to the family when he prescribed a tincture for "Mrs. & Ch[ildren]". His total bill, which was probably never paid in full, amounted to £21/19/2.

Two weeks after Myer's death the British occupied Newport,²⁴ and the widow, Rachel, and her brood, like many other Newport Jews,²⁵

remained loyal to the mother country. When the patriots, assisted by the French, drove the British from Newport in 1779, Rachel's twenty-one year old Benjamin appeared on the list of suspected Tories with the notation "gone".²⁶ It is possible that he fled to New York, where he was joined the following year by his mother and siblings.²⁷ New York remained in British hands throughout the war. In April of 1781 Rachel appealed for help for herself and nine children to the British governor, Sir Henry Clinton.²⁸ We do not know what help was forthcoming, but Rachel or Benjamin evidently joined the Associated Loyalists, agreeing to fight the patriots. When the war ended in 1783 and the British evacuated New York, they were entitled to passage to Nova Scotia where they remained until partisan sentiment had cooled.²⁹

In 1787 the family returned to New York, moving into a house owned by Mr. Robert Richard Randall.³⁰ By the end of the year they had prospered sufficiently to make a contribution to the *Sedaca* [charity fund] of Congregation Shearith Israel.³¹

By 1792 Benjamin had moved to Richmond, Virginia, where he was joined by his brothers, Abraham and Mordecai.³² Two years later, at the age of thirty-nine, Benjamin took unto himself a wife. She was Hannah, daughter of Westchester farmer and Revolutionary patriot, David Hays.³³ Somehow the bridal couple found their way to the frontier town of Nashville, Tennessee, where their first child, Sarah, or Sally, was born on December 2, 1795.³⁴ They returned to Richmond until about 1803 or 1804, when Hannah passed away, having borne three more children: Abigail, Myer, and Abraham.³⁵ Needing a mother for these young children, Benjamin logically turned to the older sister of his first wife, a forty-year-old spinster, Rachel Hays. They were married March 25, 1804 and became the parents of Esther, Mordecai, Benjamin F., and Hannah. Benjamin and Rachel settled in New York where he became involved in a variety of business enterprises, broker, merchant, real estate, and auctioneering.³⁶ Benjamin died three days before his 93rd birthday at the Hays family homestead in Pleasantville, N. Y.³⁷

His brothers, Abraham and Mordecai, left Richmond by 1797 and became brokers at their widowed mother's home, 404 Pearl Street, in New York.³⁸ By 1800 they had moved their business to 111 Water Street and were auctioneers as well as brokers.³⁹

On March 30, 1801 their mother, Rachel Myers, passed away at the age of 56 and was buried in Chatham Square cemetery of Congregation Shearith Israel. Five months later her sons Benjamin and Abraham made a contribution to the congregation in her memory.⁴⁰

Within a year Abraham disappeared from the record. He either died or moved away. His youngest brother Mordecai continued as an auctioneer at a variety of locations in New York City.⁴¹ He became active in the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation⁴² and in local politics.⁴³ He also served for six years with an artillery regiment, studied military tactics, and was appointed a captain in the United States Infantry. He was not in service when the War of 1812 broke out, but he applied for and obtained a captain's commission and saw active duty. He was wounded and taken to Plattsburgh, N. Y., where he met and eventually married Charlotte, daughter of Judge William Bailey.⁴⁴ Probably under the assimilating influence of his marriage and subsequent career, Mordecai left the Jewish fold, although there is no indication of his conversion. The remainder of his career was devoted largely to politics. He served for a term in the New York State Legislature between 1831 and 1834. He then moved to Schenectady and, at the age of 75, was elected mayor for a three-year term. He also played an active role in Masonry, turning down the Grand Mastership of the State. He died at the advanced age of 95.⁴⁵

* * * * *

The footnotes to this article demonstrate some of my biographical method, but, for the benefit of any of you who may embark on similar research, let me add the following comments:

1. Use family records with caution. They may provide clues, but human memory is faulty, exaggeration about loved ones comes easily, and tales get twisted.

Examples from Mordecai Myers' *Reminiscences*:

a. He states that his parents arrived in New York in 1750. This means that his mother would have been married and arrived at the age of five.

b. "My father spoke and wrote all the living languages." An itinerant Jew, Tobiah the Levite, who had visited Newport, wrote a thank-you letter to Aaron Lopez in which he sends regards to a number of those who were kind to him. He refers to:

the distinguished scholar⁴⁶ the honor of his name, the honorable Rabbi Meir, may His light shine upon his spouse Mrs. Ritzpah . . .

And Tobiah adds:

Rabbi Meir, if you would give me a letter to Jamaica it would give me great pleasure.⁴⁷

Although Tobiah's intent was obviously to flatter, it is not unlikely that Myer Benjamin trained as a rabbi and was capable of writing and speaking Yiddish and Hebrew. There is no indication that he knew other languages.

c. "[My father] became the friend of Rev. Dr. [Ezra] Styles (*sic!*), afterwards President of Yale College." *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*⁴⁸ published in three volumes, contains many Jewish names and references. Nowhere does he allude to Myer Benjamin. Stiles does make frequent mention of Rev. Isaac Touro, the Newport *Hazzan*, with whom he became friendly. As stated above, Touro boarded with the Myers family, and Mordecai evidently twisted this reminiscence.

2. Any references which are contemporaneous are inclined to prove more accurate than those written long after the event, but even so contemporary a record as a tombstone may prove faulty. An example: Volume 27 of the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* contains the very useful manuscript notes and scrapbooks collected by the Rev. Jacques Judah Lyons, *Hazzan* [Minister] of New York's Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue Shearith Israel from 1839 to 1877. He copied all the epitaphs in Newport's Touro Cemetery. Myer Benjamin's reads:

In Memory of / Mr. Myer Benjamin / who departed this life
ye 20th November / 1776 / aged 43 years.

[and in Hebrew:] Monument of the burial place of Mr. Myer / the
son of Benjamin, liberated on the first / day of the month of
Kislef, and buried on / the second in the year 5527, 43 years. /
May his soul be bound in the bonds of life.⁴⁹

Lyons noticed a discrepancy between the Hebrew and English dates. He decided that the English date had to conform to the Hebrew 5527, and changed 1776 to read 1766. If he had looked a bit farther among his own notes, he would have found in the family Bible of Moses Seixas of Newport⁵⁰ the following notation:

Myer Benjamins Died Wednesday night, 9th Kislef 5537, 20 November, 1776.

Thus it is the Hebrew date on the tombstone, and not the English, which is inaccurate.

3. While American Jewish historiography is constantly being enriched by new books and periodicals (and your own *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* are adding valuable data), there is much that is still in manuscript. The new headquarters of the American Jewish Historical Society at Brandeis University and the American Jewish Archives on the campus of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati can often provide in photocopy form some information not in print. If it is at all possible (and in preparing this paper, it was not), visit the locality where the subject of your biography resided. Check the local historical society, library, or newspaper files for contemporary references to your subject. In preparing this paper I was unable to visit Newport, much as I would have relished it. However, in the New York Historical Society Library I found the complete files of the *Newport Mercury*. And Doctor Jacob Marcus provided me with access to his voluminous notes culled from the Aaron Lopez papers at the Newport Historical Society. In the appendix which follows I have listed all the references to Myer Benjamin or Benjamin Myers and his family recorded by Lopez.

APPENDIX

REFERENCES TO MYER BENJAMIN IN THE AARON LOPEZ ACCOUNT BOOKS⁵¹

NOTE: BM= Benjamin Myers, the name used interchangeably with
MB= Myer Benjamin. AL=Aaron Lopez

- 1761, May 7 MB is in town buying a looking-glass, some screws and china cups.
Oct. 1 BM
Nov. 13 MB
- 1764, Sept. 3 MB buying yard goods. The hazan Touro buys a piece of glass delivered to Mrs. Myers.
- 1765, Mar. 5 Sedaca, a gallon of oil delivered to Polly Myers, £4.
Mar. 26 Sedaca, BM gets £20 cash from AL, charged to sedaca.
May 4 Sedaca, to cash paid BM for lodging on Yontov £40.
May 17 Synagogue, to my order on Thomas George for 1½ cord wood delivered to BM.

- May 31 Sedaca, AL pays out £35 to Mr. Myers' bill of disbursement.
- June 7 Gave MB cash to the amount of £14.15.
- June 18 AL delivers barrel of flour for MB & charges to him.
- June 20 Sedaca, cash delivered to Mr. Myers £24 o[ld] t[enor].
- Dec. 6 BM gets some sugar.
- Dec. 16 AL supplies Mrs. Myers a painted brush for the synagogue charged to J[acob] R[odrigues] Rivera.
- 1766, May 9 MB got shoes.
- May 28 MB secures notions and sundries. He pays off by the Sedaca bills of the family offerings for the third quarter, [signed] Moses Levy, Parnas.
- June 16 MB buying small quantity whale bone.
- Aug. 8 Synagogue, 1 gallon oil delivered to Benjamin.
- Oct. 15 Owing to BM to sundry offerings to this day £29.
- 1767, Jan. 21 MB
- Mar. 23 BM buys thread delivered to his wife.
MB buying yard goods.
- May 1 MB, his son Ben
- July 6 MB buys notions.
- Oct. 7 MB borrows £1. Repaid Oct. 12.
- 1768, Feb. 15 Isaac Touro charged with six yards of cloth delivered to Mr. Myers per verbal order.
- Sept. 9 MB has a son.
- Nov. 23 Isaac Touro gets 9 yards diapers delivered to Mrs. Myers.
- Dec. 16 MB has delivered to AL 20 tongues.
- 1769, Jan. 2 MB — Irish linen delivered to his wife on account of the Sedaca bill to the amount of £26.
- Dec. 11 BM buying black cloth, delivered to his wife.
- 1770, Jan. 30 BM, the samas [sexton], one ounce of indigo.
- Feb. 6 Sedaca, to cash for Myer Benjamin for boarding Abraham Levy 2 weeks and lodging him one week, £44 o[ld] t[enor].
- Feb. 11 MB gets 10 yards sheeting.
- Feb. 15 MB gets yellow buckles, delivered his wife one pair.
- Apr. 20 Sedaca, for Judah Abrahams boarded with MB who bought a yard of ribbon through his wife.

- June 11 Sedaca, paid MB for his charge against the tekun
[building improvement] & flowers for Sebuoth £34
o[ld] t[enor].
- July 6 BM's wife, 6 lbs. sugar and a lb. coffee. Paid Nov. 19.
- Aug. 6 A gallon of oil delivered to BM for Sedaca.
- Aug. 29 Jacob Misqueto is in town and he owes for cash that
was delivered to Mrs. Myers \$6 1/2 £52.
- 1771, Jan. 4 Sedaca, gallon oil delivered BM
- Jan. 9 Hay to BM
- Mar. 1 MB gave AL 18 pickled tongues plus 2 on Purim. AL
sends him two cords of wood.
- Mar. 5 Yard goods to BM's wife.
- Mar. 11 BM buys brown mug delivered to his son.
- May 14 Sedaca, 1 gallon oil delivered to Mr. Myers' son.
- June 7 BM delivers 19 kosher tongues to AL.
- July 5 BM and MB
- Aug. 7 MB in town as is wife.
- 1772, Jan. 21 MB owes for 14 1/2 lb. salmon delivered to his wife.
- Jan. 30 MB buying thread in small quantities.
- Mar. 6 Sedaca, a gallon of oil to Mr. Myer's (sic!) son.
- Apr. 7 BM — milk to Lopezes paid in sundries.
- July 6 Abraham Lopez, Jr. owes AL for cash given MB for
sedaca bill £27.
- Sept. 1 Sedaca, 1 gal. oil delivered to BM.
- Sept. 9 MB buys salt.
- Oct. 27 Cash to BM to buy cordwood.
- Nov. 19 MB cash paid for his wife on account Sedaca \$15, a
quarter at £8 a dollar makes £120 - £480 per year. BM
gets \$60 a year or £480 lawful money.
- 1773, Feb. 1 £4.10 for David Lopez' order in favor of BM.
- Feb. 12 BM delivers 16 tongues.
- Feb. 24 MB — \$8 Phillip Moses ordered me to pay him.
- Mar. 15 Sedaca, 1/2 barrel flour delivered to BM for baking
[matzoh?]
- Mar. 22 Sedaca, MB owes for matzohs which AL paid.
- May 24 J[acob] R[odrigues] Rivera to 1/2 of \$10 paid to MB
for his bill of lodging and board, Abraham Zuzarte and
David de Porto.

- 1773, June 15 Sedaca, MB charged for mending the lock, a broom, horse hire. Charged £8 for tekun and flowers for Sha-buot.
- Aug. 31 Sedaca, 10 pounds sheet lead delivered to BM.
- 1774, May 6 MB credited for 12 smoked tongues @ 60 shillings a tongue o[ld] t[enor].
- May 26 AL owes MB for 12 smoked tongues.
- Dec. 6 MB gets flour and yard goods from AL and turns in one dozen pickled tongues.
MB supplies pickled tongues and sundries.
- 1776, Jan. 15 Sedaca, MB given money to buy oil and paid for 12 smoked tongues in sundries.
MB supplies smoked tongues.
- May 2 MB buys flour charged to Sedaca.
- June 13 BM buys sugar, charged to Sedaca.
- Aug. 22 Sedaca, AL gives a long brush received by Mr. or Mrs. Myers.

NOTES

- 1) Gutstein, Morris A. *The Story of the Jews of Newport . . .* (New York 1936); and, *To Bigotry No Sanction . . .* (New York, 1958).
- 2) Washington, D. C., 1900. Excerpted in: Jacob R. Marcus. *Memoirs of American Jews, 1773-1865*. (Philadelphia, 1955-1956). v. 1, pp. 50-75. [Hereafter abbreviated M]
- 3) see below, p. 137.
- 4) *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* [Hereafter, *PAJHS*], v. 27, p. 198. For comments on this epitaph, see below, p. 139.
- 5) *M*, p. 52.
- 6) Derived from her epitaph in: Pool, David de Sola. *Portraits Etched in Stone . . .* (New York, 1952), p. 285.
- 7) The earliest mention of the family in America dates from December 21, 1758 (see note 9, below). If the information on Rachel's tombstone regarding her age is correct, she would have been 13 in 1758. It would not have been unusual for Myer Benjamin, then age 25, with a good Hebrew education (see below, p. 134), departing for the New World, to have found parents eager to bestow on him the hand of a 13-year-old bride.
- 8) *M*, loc. cit.
- 9) *Ibid.* States 1750, but 1758 is more likely (cf. below, p. 137).
- 10) *PAJHS*, v. 27, p. 151.
- 11) See appendix.
- 12) For the story of "America's First Jewish Club", see: Lee M. Friedman. *Jewish Pioneers and Patriots*. (Philadelphia, 1942), pp. 197-206. On November 25, 1761, the club adopted twelve rules. Number ten reads:
If any of the members happen to be sick or absent, by acquainting Mr. Myer with the same, shall be exempt from paying anything toward the club . . . (*Ibid*, p. 200).

- 13) Derived from photocopy in Library of New York Historical Society.
- 14) Lec M. Friedman. *Pilgrims in a New Land*. (Philadelphia, 1948), p. 129.
- 15) See below, p. 137.
- 16) See the Appendix for references to monies paid for boarding and housing.
- 17) Pool, *loc. cit.*, mentions A. Myers in connection with Benjamin's making a donation in memory of their mother. In the New York City Directories, he was in business with Mordecai as "Abraham."
- 18) Rev. Lyons records, in connection with a visit to Newport in 1872:
Site of yard West of North Baptist Church—There once stood the building residence of Mr. & Mrs. Myers in which Mordecai Myers was born. (*PAJHS*, v. 27, p. 214).
- 19) See: Jacob R. Marcus. *American Jewry, Documents, Eighteenth Century . . .* (Cincinnati, 1959), p. 274.
- 20) See Appendix.
- 21) Phillip Moses (died Charleston, S. C., 1799) was a resident of Savannah in 1773, and wrote from there to Aaron Lopez a business letter in which he stated:
Had it not Been toward Defraying the Expence (*sic!*) of the holy Synagogue & assisting Mr. Myers Family . . .
Cf. Appendix in which Lopez records paying Myer Benjamin \$8 "Phillip Moses ordered me to pay him."
- 22) Photocopy made available to me through the kindness of Dr. Jacob R. Marcus.
- 23) For the confusion regarding this date, see below, p. 138. Dr. Hunter does not mention the death, but November 20, 1776, is the last date on which he mentions attending Myers.
- 24) Article, "Rhode Island" in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1959 ed.), v. 19, p. 254.
- 25) See Marcus, *loc. cit.*
- 26) Friedman. *Jewish Pioneers and Patriots*, p. 147.
- 27) Naphtali Phillips (1773-1870) wrote an Historical Sketch of New York Jewry, in which he states:
From this time [1776] during the revolution, sundry persons filled the office of S[h]ochet & Bodeck [ritual slaughterer and examiner] the only one I know of is Benjamin M. Myers now living in New York aged 80 years, but there is no written account of same among the papers of the Cong. (*PAJHS*, v. 21, p. 213f.)
See also *M. loc. cit.*
- 28) Cf. note 19, above.
- 29) *M, loc. cit.*
- 30) *Ibid.*
- 31) *PAJHS*, v. 27, p. 43. Listed as "Mrs. Myers and sons."
- 32) Ezekiel, Herbert T. and Gaston Lichtenstein. *The History of the Jews of Richmond*. (Richmond, 1917), p. 240, lists Benjamin Myers and Abraham Myers as founders of Richmond Congregation Beth Shalome in 1790 [more likely, 1789]. In the Richmond City Personal Property & Land Books (photocopies in Virginia State Library, Richmond), we found Benjamin Myers in the volumes for 1792, 1793, and 1800; Abraham Myers appears only in 1793. Mordecai evidently lived with one or both of them and is not mentioned separately. (cf. *M, loc. cit.*)
- 33) See Pool, *op. cit.*, p. 328f.
- 34) D.A.R. application of Elaine Grauman (Mrs. Stanley) Myers, of Springfield, Mo.
- 35) Mentioned in will of David Hays, (*PAJHS*, v. 27, p. 323).
- 36) Stern, M. H. *Americans of Jewish Descent* (Cincinnati, 1960), p. 157. New York City Directories, 1805ff.
- 37) Vital Record of Congregation Shearith Israel reads:
5612. *Kislev* 23; 1851. Dec. 17—Died at Pleasantville, West Chester County, Benjamin Myers, aged 96 years, formerly of this city. Interred on the ensuing Friday morning in the *Beth Haim* on Long Island next to the grave of Miss Rachel Costello. [Cypress Hills Cemetery], Plot 1, Grave 3.

- 38) New York City Directories, 1797, 1798.
- 39) *Ibid.*, 1800.
- 40) Her epitaph reads:
 In memory of/ Mrs. Rachel Myers/ who departed this life/on the 30th of
 March 1801/ aged 56 years.
 [and in Hebrew:] Here lies/ the woman of worth the widow/ Rizpah daughter
 of Myer who departed this life/ with a good name on the second night of
 Passover 5561/ May her soul be bound up in the bond of life. (Pool, *op. cit.*, p. 285).
- 41) New York City Directories, 1797 through 1811, 1817 through 1823.
- 42) *PAJHS*, v. 27, pp. 51, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89. In 1806 he was elected a trustee of the Building Fund.
- 43) *M*, passim.
- 44) James, Cassie Mason Myers Julien—, *Biographical Sketches of the Bailey-Myers-Mason Families, 1776-1905*. ([N. Y.], 1903).
- 45) *M*, passim; *PAJHS*, v. 26, p. 174ff.; *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, (N. Y., 1939-1943), p. 72.
- 46) In Hebrew: **הַתּוֹרַנִי הַמּוֹפֵלָא**
- 47) Broches, S. *Jews in New England: Part II: Jewish Merchants in Colonial Rhode Island*. (N. Y., 1942), p. 38f.
- 48) Ed. by Franklin Bowditch Dexter. 3 v. (N. Y., 1901).
- 49) *PAJHS*, v. 27, p. 198.
- 50) *Ibid.*, p. 350.
- 51) Photocopies from Newport Historical Society in possession of Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, Cincinnati (used with his permission).

THE FAMILY OF MAJOR MORDECAI MYERS

The following was extracted from the records of Vale Cemetery in Schenectady, N. Y. by Mrs. C. Luckhurst:

Major Mordecai Myers, born May 1, 1776, died January 20, 1871.

His wife—

Charlotte Bailey, born Oct. 12, 1796, died February 15, 1848.

Daughter of Hon. Wm. Bailey.

William Bailey Myers, May 27, 1817, d. July 3, 1840.

Louisa Myers, June 12, 1826, d. Nov. 7, 1845.

Edward Van Wyck Myers, b. 1832, died 1863.

Charles W. Myers, 1835, 1863.

Catherine Altie Myers, April 2, 1819, Feb. 25, 1903.

Sydney Myers, March 5, 1829, d. Feb. 11, 1883.

Theodore Bailey Myers, Dec. 13, 1821, d. June 16, 1888.

Fanny Myers Jenkins, July 14, 1838, d. Sept. 10, 1879.

Henrietta Myers Hoes, Mar. 26, 1815, July 27, 1889.

EARLY JEWS OF FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS

By RABBI MALCOLM H. STERN*

So far as memory serves, the earliest Jewish family in Fall River were the brothers Charles and Henry Strassman, who arrived there about 1870. Charles Strassman had been in the California Gold Rush of 1849, and it was there that he met Edward Landman (father of Clara).

Edward Landman was born in Borek, Prussian Posen, and came to America in the 1840's. He made two trips to California, one around Cape Horn, and the other by crossing the Isthmus of Panama on foot. On both trips he returned East overland. Not finding gold, either in the ground or in the inflated economy of California, Landman returned to New York, where, in 1864, he was married by Rabbi Morris J. Raphall to Ricka Krauskopf, of Jereshev, Prussian Posen. The couple resided for about a year on Canal Street, where their oldest child, Clara, was born. Easton, Pennsylvania, was a booming community, so Edward opened a dry goods store there, and remained for about five years, taking an active part in the life of the local congregation.

Landman evidently maintained his contact with Charles Strassman, for in 1871, he was induced by Strassman to move his family, which now included a second daughter, Rose, and a son, Isaac, to Fall River. He was subsequently joined there by his brother, Solomon, who had two grown sons, Pincus and Isaac. And in 1872, a cousin of Ricka Krauskopf, Joseph Krauskopf, of Ostrowo, Posen, joined the Landman family as a lad of fourteen.

By 1881, Fall River could boast nearly a minyan of Jewish males but the names of the others have been forgotten. Nearby was Newport, Rhode Island, with its handsome Touro Synagogue, erected in 1763, but closed, except for an occasional summer service, since the 1820's. Newport, in 1881, had one Jewish family. As the Holydays approached, the Jews of Fall River sought permission to use the Newport Synagogue, and were referred to the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue of New York, Shearith Israel, the legal title-holders to the synagogue. These "Sephardic" leaders (their numbers included many Jews of Ashkenazic origin) ruled that the Newport Synagogue might be used

*Recorded from his Grandmother, CLARA LANDMAN BERKOWITZ (born Apr. 8, 1865, still living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.)

According to Rabbi Stern, Clara Berkowitz recalls that it was necessary for her mother to travel to Providence, R. I., 18 miles, to obtain Kosher meat. Ep.

if the Sephardic *minhag* (rite) were involved. Arrangements were made for the ritual to be chanted by Henry S. Morais, son of Philadelphia's Sephardic Rabbi, Sabato Morais.

One exposure to Sephardic ritual seemed enough for the Fall River Jews, accustomed to the Polish *minhag*, so the following year a service was organized in rented quarters in Fall River. Henry Strassman, for reasons of his own, refused to join, and even scoffed at the idea. A few days after Yom Kippur, three of Henry's children were stricken with scarlet fever and died. As the Jews of Fall River watched the unhappy man follow the three plain pine boxes to the railway station for shipment to and burial in New York, they spoke of divine retribution visiting poor Henry. Henry, and subsequently, Charles, moved to New York. Solomon Landman and his sons did likewise.

Joseph Krauskopf, influenced by a Christian lady who was attracted to this bright, young man, had left Fall River in 1875 to join the first class of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise's Hebrew Union College. Ordained in 1883, he married, in October of that year, Rose Berkowitz, sister of his dear friend and classmate, Henry Berkowitz. The marriage took place in the Berkowitz home in Coshocton, Ohio — a double ceremony, performed by Isaac Mayer Wise, for Henry married an orphaned cousin, Flora Brunn, at the same time. Another Berkowitz sibling, Albert, was persuaded by Joseph Krauskopf to visit Fall River to meet his cousin's child, Clara Landman. A match was made, and on March 4, 1884, Clara Landman became the bride of Albert Berkowitz in Fall River. They made their home in Coshocton, which lacked the Fall River refinements of running water and indoor plumbing.

Shortly thereafter, Edward and Ricka Landman moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where Edward continued the dry goods business he had maintained in both Easton and Fall River. He was subsequently the victim of a hold-up man, a Negro who killed him with a blow from an iron pipe.

The Landman home in Fall River was located on Spring Street, over the dry goods store. The property was owned by Andrew Borden, father and supposed victim of the notorious Lizzie.

With the removal of Edward Landman, the story of Fall River's first Jews ends.

THE YEAR 1905 IN RHODE ISLAND*

By BERYL SEGAL

Nineteen hundred and five was a year of infamy for the Czarist government of Russia. It was also a year of tragedy for the Jews of that sad country. Slaughter, burning, looting, and maiming took place in more than seven hundred Jewish communities.

Historian Ismar Elbogen in *A Century of Jewish Life* sums up the period in this manner: "Nine hundred persons killed . . . a number were crippled for life . . . some seven or eight thousand were injured . . . thousands of houses, shops and synagogues destroyed . . ."

What was the story of these events? Russia had declared war on Japan. All over the country soldiers marched to the refrain: "We shall swamp them with our caps." They referred to the small size of Japan and the gigantic manpower-potential of Russia. But the Russians neglected to take into account two factors: 1. Although Japan was a small country, it was highly determined. 2. The Russian army was big, but extremely incompetent. Its commanding officers were pleasure-seeking, and its lines of supply were long and inadequate. The officers in charge of supplies were corrupt; and the large army was ill-fed, ill-clothed, and ill-prepared. The war was highly unpopular in Russia. Its army was dealt blow after blow at sea and on land.

To cover up this defeat the Russian government found the old scape-goat: the Jews. The Jews were revolutionaries who infected the army and who fomented discontent at home. The Jews used all kinds of ruses to stay out of the army. Those who served in the army could not be trusted. They revealed the secrets to the enemy. The Jews supplied their "Blood Kindred" Japanese with moneys to carry on the war and they spied for them so that the enemy knew beforehand what the Russians were planning.

The infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" were newly printed in the imperial press with annotations by the Czar himself. The Minister of the Interior, Vyacheslav K. Plehve, who proved his mettle during the pogroms in Kishenev and elsewhere, was given the authority to fulfill his threat to "choke the revolution in the blood of Jews."

*Dedicated to the memory of the officers of and contributors to the united Jewish relief committee of 1905 who have since finished their earthly course and been gathered to their eternal home. They began a tradition of giving aid to sufferers overseas, a tradition that has continued to this day.

The bloody pogroms of 1905 were the result. As soon as the news of the massacres filtered through to the rest of the world, a united Jewish relief committee was formed in New York to rush aid to the victims of the pogroms. It was organized with Oscar S. Straus as president and Cyrus Sulzberger as secretary. Jacob H. Schiff, treasurer, dispatched telegrams to all Jewish communities in America as follows:

New York, Nov. 9, 1905

On behalf of the national committee for the relief of the sufferers by Russian massacres, of which I have been appointed Treasurer, we urge you and your associates to call a meeting of Jewish community to form branch committee, and collect immediate funds. Necessities very great; conditions appalling.

JACOB H. SCHIFF, 52 Williams Street

As reported in the Providence Journal of November 16, Harry Cutler, at that time a leader of the Jewish community of Providence, received a copy of the telegram. Cutler immediately called a conference of all of the Jewish organizations in the city. It was a test for the 3,500 Jewish families of Rhode Island. Would they be able and willing to come to the aid of their co-religionists in Russia? The Jews who had recently come from eastern Europe were still poor and could not be expected to give much. Besides, these Jews were sending money to relatives whom they had left behind in Russia. Would the Jews from Germany and those from the Sephardic countries respond to the call?

A meeting of forty-six organizations was convened on the evening of November 14 in the rooms of the Providence Workingmen's Beneficial Association at 128 North Main Street. Harry Cutler presided at the conference and was elected permanent chairman; Caesar Misch, George B. Brooks, and M. L. Grant, treasurers; and William Baxt, Jacob Eaton, and Charles Goldstein, secretaries. Each organization was represented by five delegates.

Similar conferences were held in Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and other communities in Rhode Island. Woonsocket was prompt in rushing aid to the national committee. On November 15 a committee was formed at the home of Rabbi Aaron Gorowitz on Diamond Hill Road. Present at the meeting were Albert Terkel, Abraham Colitz, Samuel Schlansky, and H. Yarashevsky. They decided to canvass the Jewish community house to house to raise funds for the great need.

The Providence committee divided the city into wards, each ward to be canvassed house to house for donations large or small. Each delegate pledged the support of his organization. In the meantime they collected several hundred dollars from among those present. It was decided also to call a mass meeting in the near future.

The part played in the campaign by the Providence Journal is worth emphasizing. Were it not for the Journal, the campaign would have been restricted to the small Jewish community and would not have assumed the proportions of an all-city effort. In news stories the Providence Journal urged the community in general to come to the aid of the sufferers and gave the campaign invaluable publicity. Those wishing to help were instructed to send their contributions to the office of the Journal. It published the names of contributors and the amounts of their contributions.

On Saturday, November 18 we find an account of the first results of the campaign. The story was headed as follows: "Collections Made For Russian Jews; Local Committee Already Has Contributions of \$1,037.50; Expect to Raise \$5,000." It explained how the money was collected. The city was divided into 25 districts, with two men assigned to solicit funds from the Jewish residents of each district. The story continued: "Many contributions have been received from people other than Jews in the city, and these are very welcome . . ." The same issue of the Journal carried a full list of the contributors with contributions ranging from 50 dollars to one dollar. Smaller amounts were not listed.

On November 19 the second list of contributions appeared, bringing the total to \$1,123.75. The South Providence Hebrew Congregation (Die Rusishe Shul) on Willard Avenue had conducted a collection among its members, raising 400 dollars.

On November 21 the Journal reported that contributions totalled \$1,826.75. On the 24th we read that "Contributions are Pouring in", amounting in all to \$2,930.26.

It is interesting that the North End district raised \$792.01. This area embraced the oldest and most numerous Jewish settlement in Providence. The Cap Makers Union contributed 15 dollars, Silverman Brothers 25 dollars, and the workers at the Harry Cutler Jewelry Company 55 dollars. J. Samuels & Brother donated 100 dollars, which seems to have been the largest single sum.

But two great undertakings put the campaign over the top. On November 23 the Providence Journal announced a Benefit Concert to be given on Sunday evening, November 26, at Keith's Theater. The full program was carried in the Journal, which also reported the great interest in the concert in the community:

The concert has awakened the enthusiasm of everyone, the worthy cause appealing to all, and aid from every side is being given. Printers, newspapers, musicians, artists, the employes of Edward F. Albee, the proprietor of the theater, donated for the concert, all are cheerfully giving their time and material for the event, and W. B. Chaffee is getting out a special programme for the occasion, the proceeds from the advertisements to be also donated to the fund.

After the concert we read on November 27: "Large Audience Attended Benefit." The story continued: "There were very few vacant seats in the theater by 8 o'clock The audience included a large proportion of those whose race gave them special interest in and sympathy with the sufferers from the recent atrocities in Russia, but it was far from being entirely a Jewish gathering."

In fact two such concerts were held, one in Providence and the other in the Keith Theater in Pawtucket. Harry Cutler reported the returns from these concerts, according to the Journal of the 28th, as follows: Providence House \$899.94; Pawtucket House \$330.55; and Advertising space (W. B. Chaffee) \$70.00. The total collection was now \$4,944.92.

But there was to be still another benefit performance in Providence. On December 3 the Providence Journal announced that a company of Yiddish players would come to Providence for the benefit of the Jewish Relief Fund. The story related how the United Jewish Relief Committee had engaged the Thalia Theater Company of New York for performances on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, December 12 and 13, at the Park Theater in Providence. The Thalia Theater was described by the Providence Journal of Sunday, December 13 in this manner: "For the benefit of the local relief fund for the Jews in Russia, the united Jewish relief committee, of which Harry Cutler of this city is chairman, and which includes every Jewish organization in Providence, has engaged the Thalia Theater Company of New York for performances on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at the Park Theatre. The Company, which is one of the best Jewish dramatic

organizations in the country, is composed of some of the foremost exponents of the Yiddish drama, and occupies the Thalia Theater, formerly the famous old Bowery. Among the players are David Kessler, Morris Moshkowitz and Samuel Tornberg, famous Yiddish actors, who will be supported by what is claimed to be a very competent company.

"Two plays will be given. On Tuesday evening the production will be 'Truth'. On Wednesday night 'God, Man and Devil' will be given."

The reviews were favorable.

On December 12 it was reported that the two plays had brought in \$232.16, which together with the previously announced sum of \$5,177.47 totalled \$5,400.63, as compared to the expected five thousand dollars.

The final chapter of the efforts of the united Jewish relief committee for the Jews in Russia was still to come. We read in the Providence Journal of December 2: "Jews Will Hold Service of Prayer. Jews of the City asked to meet at the Synagogues on Monday." The Service of Prayer was held on Monday, December 4. All businesses, factories, shops, and offices were closed at four o'clock. Every Jew was asked to meet at the synagogue of his choice.

The following communication was sent out by the national committee:

"They break in pieces Thy people and afflict Thine inheritance; they slay the widow and the stranger and murder the fatherless, and therefore it is fitting that the same hour be set aside by all the Jews of our country as a potent, passive protest against these inhumanities, and that, at one and the same time, mourning services be held in loving memory of the thousands of martyrs, who with their blood, have hallowed our Faith.

Accordingly, the united Jewish relief committee, convened in executive session, earnestly requests that all of Jewish faith close their factories, stores and offices on Monday, December 4, 1905, at 4 o'clock p.m., and come together on that day and hour in their houses of worship, for prayer and consolation, and as an expression of their deepfelt sympathy with their sorely afflicted brethren.

On the following day the Providence Journal reported that the synagogues were "largely attended" and that the majority of Jewish business houses were closed for the occasion.

At the Congregation Sons of Zion on Orms Street Harry Cutler, chairman of the united Jewish relief committee of Providence, read the call for the meeting, and Rabbi Israel S. Rubinstein conducted the service. At the Congregation Ahavoth Sholoam (sic) on Howell Street a Union Service was held. The members of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David joined in prayer with the host congregation. Rabbi David Bachrach conducted the service.

Thus the Jewish community in 1905 protested, mourned, and helped the victims of atrocities in Russia. This was, to our knowledge, the first instance of nationwide Jewish communal aid for any purpose or any cause.

SOURCE

Providence Journal, Nov. 8, 1905 *et seq.*

SOME OUTSTANDING JEWISH ATHLETES AND SPORTSMEN IN RHODE ISLAND (1916-1964)

By BENTON H. ROSEN

Six Jewish men, at one time or another residents of Rhode Island, are considered by the writer to have been outstanding in their respective fields of sports activity during the past half-century. They are:

Maurice Billingskoff (Young Montreal)
—boxing
Lou Farber—football
Harry Platt—basketball
Gordon Polofsky—football
Henry Brenner—football
Milton Ernstof—yacht racing

Since all have completed their careers, an historical review of their records would seem to be in order.

YOUNG MONTREAL

Maurice Billingskoff, who was to fight as "Young Montreal" for over two decades, was born in Russia, October 10, 1897. At the age of seven he emigrated to Montreal, Canada with his parents and a year later moved to the North End section of Providence. After a limited amount of formal education, he started to sell papers on a downtown street corner.

His interest in pugilistics was inspired in part by a flair for the "manly art" and by the guidance of one Sam Feinberg, familiarly known as "The Nose". Feinberg, quite conversant with the character and methods of the professional boxing activity in Providence, took the 18-year old aspirant under his wing. After a period of training, the 118-pound, wiry athlete was ready for his debut on February 23, 1916. He was to use the nickname "Young Montreal" right from the start.

The Providence Tribune of February 24 reviewed the Rhode Island Athletic Club bouts of the previous evening at some length. In part it reflected: "The prelims failed to measure up to the standard, substitutions spoiling the card. In the semi-windup Young Bowman

hooked up with Young Montreal of this city, who won the match in a canter, much to the surprise of the crowd.

"Bowman started out to annihilate Montreal in less than a round and a couple of hay-makers shook the little Jew to his toes. The Whaling City lad tried hard for a knockout, but Montreal weathered the storm and came out for the second round with all the confidence of a champ.

"Opening fire with a left stab and swinging his right with fine judgment, Montreal soon took all the fight out of Bowman and from that round to the finish he led by a wide margin. It was a miracle, considering his poor condition, how Montreal went the six rounds, but he did it to the satisfaction of the crowd and earned a place on the bill next week".

Thus began a professional fight career that was to extend over two decades with a high degree of success. It might be said that the pattern of an unimpressive opening round, followed by an exhibition of courage and outstanding skill in succeeding rounds was characteristic of most of his fights.

His second fight took place on March 11 and was reported by the Providence Journal thus: "Young Montreal knocked out Young Moran of Olneyville in three rounds. It was a hot scrap while it lasted, for both were out to win in a knockout. Montreal knew more about fighting than Moran, and the nonchalant newsboy dropped Moran with a left for six in the first round and eight in the second. Each time the bell interrupted the count. Montreal ended the bout in the third round with a left swing that rendered Moran hors de combat."

Clever punching and superb footwork were the hallmarks of Montreal's fistic achievements throughout his career. These characteristics, plus the ability to absorb punishment, carried him to a prominent position in the boxing world. He made appearances in Boston, New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, and in other large boxing centers. His record showed far more wins than losses.

On April 7, 1921 there came to him a qualified opportunity to take the bantamweight title. Joe Lynch, world champion at the time, was encountered in a no-decision bout at Cleveland. This type of contest weighed heavily in favor of a title holder in that a knockout was re-

quired for a win by the challenger. We quote from the Cleveland Plain Dealer write-up of the event:

"... and Montreal is the boy who won the fight. After to-night's contest there can be no queries why Lynch does not want to meet Montreal anywhere in a fight to a decision.

"The Rhode Island contender had one of the most wicked left jabs ever cut loose in a bantam fight ever seen here. He is a sly, slippery rascal and when he wasn't hitting Lynch he was making the champion miss."

A week later Montreal defeated a former bantam champion, Pete Herman, in a ten round contest at the Boston Arena. In a repeat contest with the same Herman on May 27 he again outpointed his adversary. The Providence Journal reported:

"Walking coolly around Pete Herman, Young Montreal shot enough left jabs into Herman's features to muss them and run up a score of points in seven of the ten rounds. There was no doubt as to his being the winner last night at Braves' Field, Boston, before 15,000 persons."

Montreal's career was in some respects a study in frustration. While he mastered his art to a high degree of perfection, the championship always eluded his grasp. His conclusive defeat of Champion Lynch did not transfer the title. Four former champions felt the sting of his superior ability: Pete Herman, Fidel Labarba, Pancho Villa and Bud Taylor.

Many years after Monty's last bout in the mid-Thirties Earl Lofquist of the Providence Journal devoted a column in review of his long record in general and of one great contest in particular: "... Montreal, the 'uncrowned champion,' but conqueror of champions, was very good. He met the best little men of his era, and beat most of them. Against the highly rated he was sheer poison. A good case in point was his win over Bud Taylor.

"On April 10, 1929 going against former bantam champion Taylor, Monty, the battle-scarred veteran was a 4-10 underdog. Five thousand paid their way into the Rhode Island Auditorium although the home town faithful did not give Young Montreal much chance.

"Taylor predicted he would kayo the Providence fighter in three rounds, and in training he looked good enough to do it. He did not cool Monty in three rounds. Far from it, he himself took an awful

lacing. Monty's celebrated left hand was as good as it ever had been and he uncorked a right hand such as he had never displayed in his prime."

Nat Fleischer, editor of Ring Magazine, was able to provide the writer with the Montreal record from 1916 through 1925. For some reason an exact tally of all of his fights is not to be found. From various sources it has been determined that Montreal fought in over two hundred contests and won well over three quarters of them.

LOU FARBER*

Without a doubt the Brown football team of 1926 was the finest ever in the long history of the sport there. Louis Farber of Pawtucket played guard on the Iron Men group of that memorable year. Not only did this team go through ten games without defeat, it earned a tie with Navy as the mythical co-champion of the East.

The outstanding achievement of the 1926 season was the performance of eleven young athletes, who won three tough games played without a single substitution except for the final two minutes of the third contest. They won over Yale 7-0, Dartmouth 10-0 and Harvard 21-0.

After completing Pawtucket High School in 1924, where he was an All-State guard in his senior year, Farber spent a year at Moses Brown School. There, too, he achieved All-State honors. At Brown he was captain of the 1925 Freshman team.

His talents won for him a starting berth as a sophomore and kept

*It is of interest that there were in all six Jews on the famed 1926 Brown football squad. In fact there were two other Jews among the eleven Iron Men, David (Dave) Mishel, halfback, and Albert C. (Al) Cornsweet, fullback. The three Jews on the supporting squad were Harry Cornsweet, tackle; Hyman (Hy) Heller, end; and Frank Jay Eisenberg, quarterback, all of whom played in various games during the season. In the Harvard game all three were among those substitutes who surprisingly scored a touchdown in the last few minutes of play. None of the five other than Farber came from Rhode Island or settled there. The Cornsweet brothers, members of the class of 1929, came from Cleveland, Ohio. Al Cornsweet, captain of the '28 football team, was elected to both Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi honor societies, graduated magna cum laude, became a Rhodes scholar, and eventually received a Ph.D. in psychology. Both Cornsweets were also capable wrestlers. Dave Mishel, who came from Lynn, Massachusetts, operates a summer camp in Maine. Hy Heller, class of 1929, was one of five basketball-playing brothers from Willimantic, Connecticut, three of whom went to Brown. The five brothers had a travelling family basketball team which attracted some attention. Hy Heller is now a physician in Webster, Massachusetts, where other brothers practice law in the firm of Heller and Heller. Frank J. Eisenberg, class of 1928 non-graduate, a New Yorker, eventually went into business. As of this writing it is believed that all six men survive. Ed.



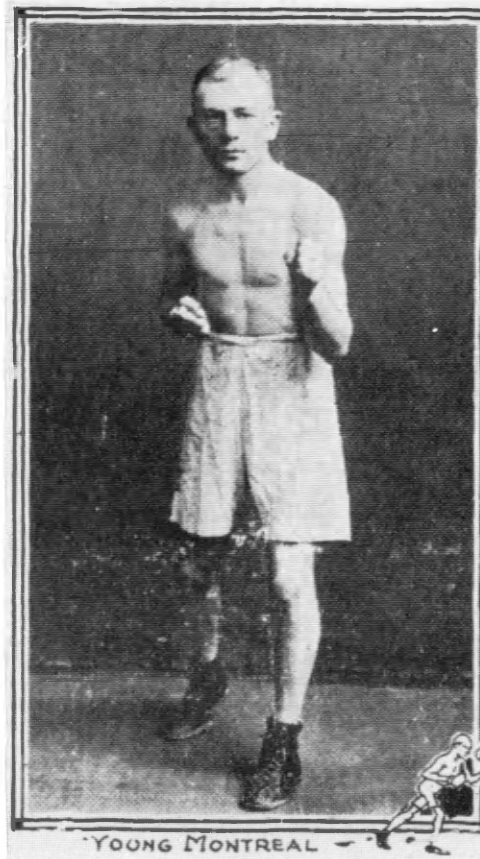
MONTREAL SENT THE CROWD DIPPY WHEN HE SHOT KID MORAN INTO DREAMLAND IN THE THIRD ROUND



WHO SAYS THAT HEBREWS CAN'T FIGHT



MONTREAL AGAIN CAME THROUGH, OF COURSE, BY THE K.O. ROUTE ABE PECK, THE FIDDLING BARBER OF FOX POINT, WAS HIS VICTIM



YOUNG MONTREAL

Courtesy the Providence Journal
Newspaper cartoons from Young Montreal's scrapbook—source not identified



LOUIS FARBER—*Courtesy Brown University Archives*

him in a similar position for three years. The nickname "Tarzan" aptly described his physique and agility.

From the sports pages of *The Evening Bulletin* of Providence of November 8, 1926 we note: "Lou Farber, the Pawtucket sophomore, who has come into the public eye with about as meteoric a career as any of the men, reported to camp late, after a hard summer's work, and immediately caught the coaches' eye for one of the guard berths.

"Smith and Farber are practically perfect in their assignments, and follow the play with dogged determination. Both are quick to size up the situation, both are alert, and both play a hard, smashing game. Neither plays the waiting game, but the kind of game that is always forcing the other team. They have been breaking through with regularity. Both are giants and well able to take care of themselves in any company."

Farber continued his association with the game as head coach at East Providence High School. During the period 1935-49 his teams captured the state championship on three occasions.

HARRY PLATT

Professor Israel J. Kapstein, presently Professor of English at Brown University, recalls his influence upon Harry Platt in the summer of 1936. At that time the Professor was a counselor, and the younger man was a camper at Camp Mohican, located in Palmer, Mass. Platt had graduated from Yonkers, New York, High School in June of that year, and asked his advice about college. In essence Professor Kapstein told him, "Brown would be a good place for you, and you would be good for Brown."

His freshman year at Brown was spent in studying hard, working many hours to help defray the costs of his education, and constant practice at the old Lyman Gymnasium. Rather than try out for the freshman team Platt indulged in pick-up games, basket-shooting and physical conditioning on his own.

Right from the start of the 1937-38 season he was a first-string forward whose ability quickly caught the attention of the press. From the January 20 issue of the *Providence Journal* we quote: "Wes Fesler, the Harvard coach, told Brown coach Art Kahler after their game that Platt was the best forward ever seen by him. Fesler is a graduate of Ohio State, and saw the best in the Big Ten.

"He is 19 years old, stands 6t. 3 inches and weighs 200 pounds. He is one of the fastest big men in basketball but his real strength lies in his uncanny shooting ability."

Joe Nutter, sports columnist of vast experience, in his review of the Brown basketball season, said in his *Evening Bulletin* column:

"Harry Platt, the brilliant Sophomore forward, scored 404 points for an average of 21.2 points per game, a new scoring record in Bruin hoop annals. No other Brown player has even closely approached 400 points. That Platt could accomplish it in an initial varsity campaign, without the build up of extra games stamps him as one of the country's greatest players.

"Platt scored 48 points in the Northeastern game for an all-time high in individual scoring. Those who saw this marvelous exhibition of basket-shooting will probably never forget the sight. It was one of the most amazing demonstrations of individual prowess ever staged by a Bruin player."

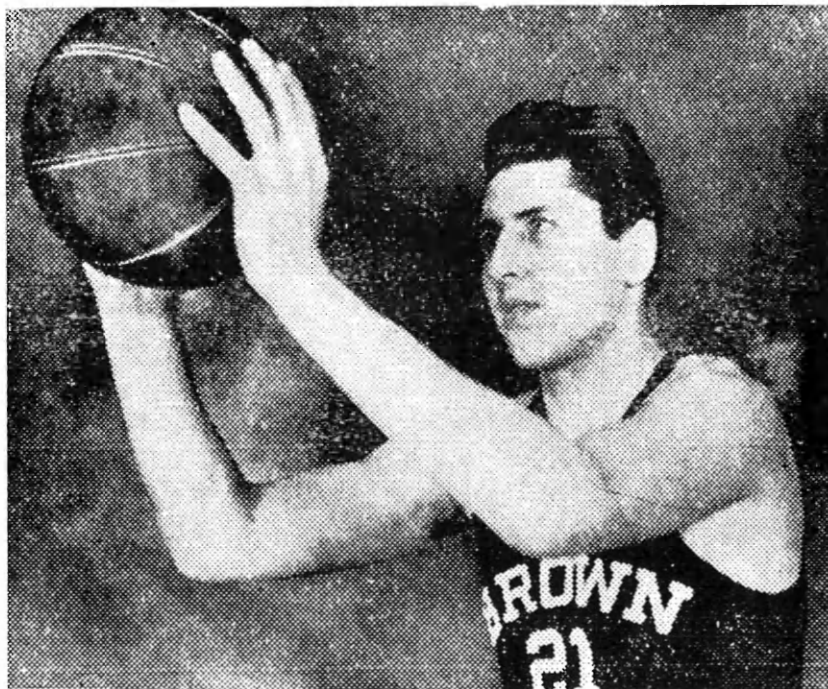
In his junior year Platt's stellar performances played no small part in the success of the team. At the end of the 1939 schedule Brown was selected to compete in the NCAA national tournament. After returning from this tourney the team elected him captain for the 1939-40 campaign.

It is generally agreed that Harry Platt would have been able to participate in professional competition if the National Basketball Association were in existence at the time of his graduation. He had the height, quickness of foot and hand, the ability to sink difficult shots, and a strong desire to win.

GORDON POLOFSKY

The most effective offensive player on the state championship football team at Cranston High School in 1947 was Gordon Polofsky. He was a fast, rugged fullback whose talents earned him All-State honors and athletic scholarship offers from many colleges. Most attractive was the bid from the University of Tennessee, and he entered that school in the Fall of 1948.

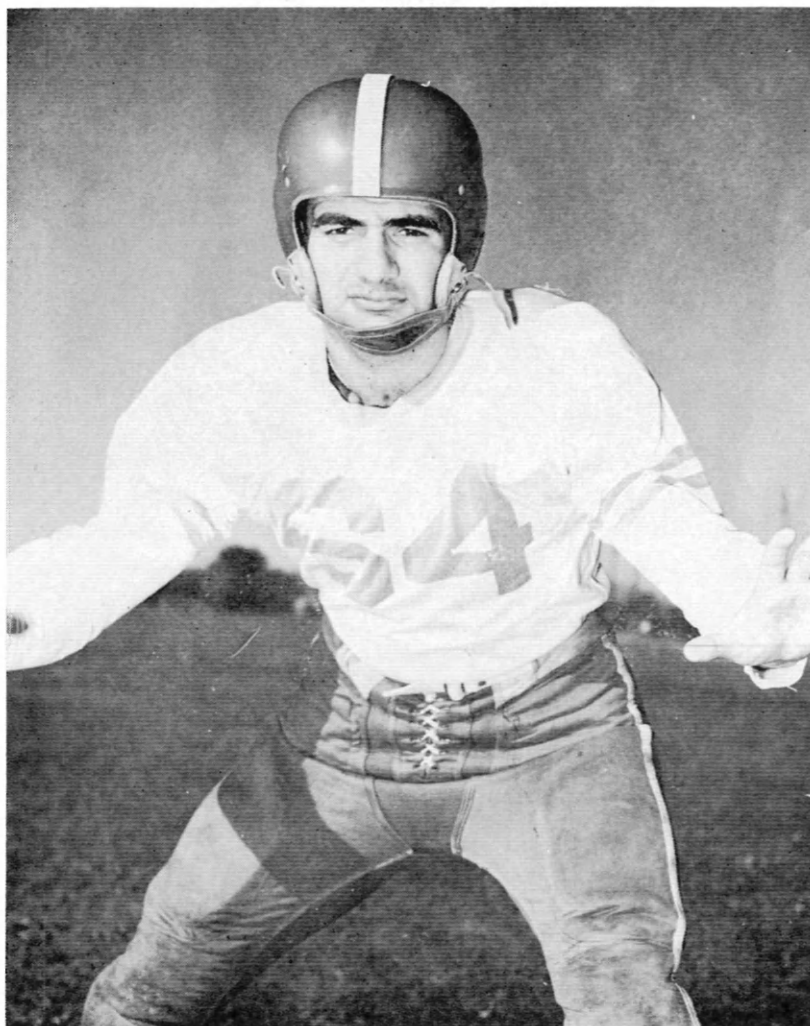
From their Sports Information Director in answer to our inquiry for information on the Polofsky collegiate football career, we learned the following:



HARRY PLATT—*Courtesy the Providence Journal*



GORDON POLOFSKY—*Courtesy University of Tennessee, Department of Athletics*



HENRY BRENNER—*Courtesy University of Rhode Island*



Crew of the Burgoo. Ernstoff is last on right. Next to him is George Levy—
Courtesy of Bermuda News Bureau



THE BURGEO— *Courtesy of Pearson Yachts Division of Grumman Allied Industries, Inc., Portsmouth, R. I.*

"Gordon Polofsky, one of the best athletes ever to attend the University of Tennessee, was a first team line backer on the National Championship team of 1951. He was a really tremendous football player and was with the Chicago Cardinals for about three years as an offensive guard after graduating here.

"He played on two bowl teams—the 1951 Cotton and the 1952 Sugar. In the 1949 season he was a fullback, and switched to linebacker as a junior."

After being drafted by the Los Angeles Rams of the National Football League in 1952, he was traded to the Chicago Cardinals. His professional activities, plagued by a string of injuries, extended over a three-year period. The November 14, 1954 issue of the Providence Journal in an article entitled "For Bread and Butter Glory" covered his career from a human interest angle.

HENRY BRENNER

Henry Brenner, a deaf mute, overcame his handicap sufficiently to become an All-State guard at Woonsocket High School in 1949 and a first-string lineman at the University of Rhode Island in 1951-2-3. He was capable enough to play regularly on the best football squads ever developed at Kingston.

A feature article in the Woonsocket Call, November 17, 1954, relates: "Brenner's story is a saga of sheer grit and determination. Stricken ill with spinal meningitis at the age of two, his voice was stilled and his hearing was reduced to less than twenty-five percent of normal.

"He attended the Rhode Island School for the Deaf where he was taught in a slow, painful process to make sounds. There he learned to read lips."

When he reached his 'teens, he transferred to Woonsocket High School, where his sports career began. He was a mainstay of the football team in 1948 and 1949, a capable basketball player and a fairly good sprinter.

Through the influence of Harold Kopp, most successful football coach ever to serve at Rhode Island, Brenner enrolled as a freshman in 1950. His contribution to the highly successful teams of 1952 and 1953 (combined record: 13 won and 3 lost) was significant.

In April of his senior year a solid silver plaque was presented to him by Boston Sports Lodge of B'nai B'rith for "high principles and

achievements in sports." At the dinner which was attended by over 750 persons he accepted his award with a deliberate, difficultly delivered speech that moved the assemblage.

His coach, Harold Kopp, stated to this writer in an interview: "Henry Brenner is an example of great desire in the field of athletic activity. His record speaks for itself.

"His handicap proved to be something of a boon for the team. Whenever the quarterback of the opposing team could be seen in the huddle, Brenner was able to read his lips. More often than not he was able to indicate by pre-arranged signal what type of play could be expected.

"Even though he couldn't hear the whistle, he could sense whenever play was stopped. By keeping his eye on the ball he knew when play started. All-in-all he was a fine college player."

MILTON ERNSTOF

In the world of sailboat-racing, the most prestigious of all events, with the exception of the America's Cup contests, is the biennial Newport-to-Bermuda race. Milton Ernstof achieved greatness in his chosen field of sports endeavor in the 1964 renewal of this sailing classic.

Following his release from duty in the United States Army in 1946 Ernstof became interested in small boat competition in Narragansett Bay. His rapidly developing skill enabled him to compete quite successfully in the Fifties in the "S" boat class. This boat, designed and built by Herreshoff of Bristol, is a 28-foot craft that attracts the most experienced and capable small-craft sailors in our area. In 1961 his "Argument" was champion of the Narragansett Bay racing organization.

Early in 1962 he purchased from Pearson Corporation of Bristol a yawl of the Invicta Class, which he christened "Burgoo." This was a fiberglass craft, 37 feet 6 inches in length, whose sail bore the number #994. Ernstof entered his boat in the Bermuda race of that year with a friend, James A. Mulcahey, listed as skipper. The owner went along as a member of the crew.

Suffice it to say Burgoo did everything but win the top prize. Out of a fleet of 131 craft starting, she placed second in the important

category of corrected time.* She was a strong first in Class E (boats under 40 feet in length).

The following trophies were garnered:

Edlu Tankard: For second best corrected time in race.

Thomas Fleming Day Trophy: For best corrected time for a yacht under 40 feet over-all length.

Samuel Pepys Trophy: For Class E winner.

Navigator's Trophy: For best navigation performance.

Ernstof was sufficiently inspired by the results of that event to try again. From the August 1964 issue of *Yachting* magazine we quote:

"Many precedents were set in the 24th biennial Bermuda Race which started June 20th from Newport, R. I. in a misty sou'wester—635 sea miles further on, Milton Ernstof's Invicta Class yawl, Burgoo, hailing from Providence ended up the winner. She became the first fiberglass boat to do so, and the first from Narragansett Bay.

"The Burgoo success story is made up of two elements: the weather and the way she was sailed. Both played a large part in her victory.

"Her seven-man crew was made up of six small boat skippers from Narragansett Bay. All of them have been long-time competitors in the S-Class, and they carried their competitive spirit into ocean racing.

"Skipper-owner Ernstof commented in a post-race interview: 'Excellent teamwork by all hands and intense effort paid off. Furthermore, we all like to race hard. We enjoy it.' "

Milton Ernstof, the son of Minnie (Manshell) and Jacob Ernstof, was born in Providence in 1912. After completing his lower education in the public schools, he went on to study at the Rhode Island School of Design. He graduated with the Class of 1934.

His father was a hand-ball player of some repute at the Providence YMCA.

*Winners in the field of ocean yacht racing are based on corrected time. This is determined by subtracting the time allowance, predetermined by the Race Committee, from the elapsed time of passage.

LONGFELLOW AND THE JEWISH CEMETERY AT NEWPORT

By REV. J. K. PACKARD, S.J.

Critics have consistently maintained that the "Jewish Cemetery at Newport" is one of the more memorable of Longfellow's short lyrics. The most recent statement is that of Hyatt H. Waggoner, who feels that while Longfellow viewed Judaism as he did Christianity—that is, as a once grand and beautiful but now sad and meaningless way of life—he nevertheless managed to write a poem "notable for its restrained expression of sympathy for the sufferings of the people it concerns"¹

The poem itself is a familiar one and offers no real difficulty of interpretation. Certain facts involved in the composition of the poem are interesting, however, and one notable critic failed not only to read the available literature on the history of the cemetery, but failed also to read what Longfellow himself said about the cemetery in his *Journal*. This critic is Newton Arvin who says in his generally excellent critical biography of Longfellow that the poem resulted from the poet's visit in 1852, to an old burying ground of the Rhode Island Jews, adjoining a synagogue, and which had at that time fallen into disrepair.² Two things here conflict with the facts. First of all, the cemetery never adjoined the synagogue; it was, and is, located some four or five blocks from the Touro Synagogue. Secondly, the cemetery was not, at the time of Longfellow's visit, in a ruinous state.

The best historical sketch of the cemetery is that of Rabbi Abraham Mendes, written in 1885. In it he notes that the cemetery had indeed fallen into disrepair in the early part of the nineteenth century. By 1820, however, its restoration was begun by Abraham Touro of Boston and completed, in 1842, by his brother, Benjamin Touro of New Orleans, who commissioned Isaiah Rogers of Boston to restore the cemetery in the fashion that still exists today. Thus it would have been the restored cemetery that Longfellow visited in 1852.³

Longfellow himself corroborates these facts. His *Journal* entry for July 9, 1852, describes the cemetery as "a shady nook, with an iron fence and a granite gateway, erected at the expense of Mr. Touro of New Orleans."⁴ This description agrees substantially with that given by Rabbi Mendes. Longfellow's *Journal* entry also describes, accu-

rately, a few of the graves: "low tombstones of marble, with Hebrew inscriptions, and few words added in English or Portuguese. At the foot of each, the letters S.A.D.G."⁵ All these observations indicate that the cemetery was, at the time of Longfellow's visit, in excellent condition.

A sense of immediacy is created in the poem by the insertion of the family names of 'Alvares' and 'Rivera,' but it appears that Longfellow himself was ignorant of the history of the Jews in Newport. In the poem, for example, he speaks of these dead as former dwellers of countless European "Judenstrasse," which implies he did not know the historical distinction between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Furthermore, he implies that the Newport Jews were religious émigrés, driven to America by persecution. This, according to one Jewish historian, is not exactly true. The early Jews of Newport were interested primarily in economic opportunity.⁶

The fifth stanza is comprised of an inscription which the poet reads on one of the tombstones (whether it was an actual inscription or a poetic paraphrase is not certain). Part of this inscription can be read as the orthodox sentiments of any Biblically oriented people, but another part intrigues a student of religious acculturation in America. "Death" not only "is rest and peace," the inscription reads, it also "giveth Life that nevermore shall cease." The inscriptions as they actually exist today are frequently difficult to decipher, but according to Mendes there were many such sentiments inscribed on the tombstones as he deciphered them in 1885. Thus we read of Rachel Lopez (d. Aug. 26, 1789), that she "exchanged the imperfect and evanescent enjoyments of this vale of tears for a Life of Certain and Immortal bliss." Similar sentiments of immortality and the hope of bodily resurrection are: "May her blessed soul enjoy eternal happiness"; "liberated for Paradise."⁷

To the religious historian such sentiments have a decided Christian ring to them, and one wonders whether the Jewish community in Newport, Sephardim and *marranos*, many of them, by descent, and settled more or less amicably in a traditionally Protestant New England town, unconsciously imbibed some Christian phraseology, if not strictly theological concepts, about immortality and the resurrection of the body. The question requires more expert exegesis than is here

permitted, but on the basis of available writings on the subject I think the answer must be in the negative. Phrases like "vale of tears," "liberated for Paradise," may sound Christian, but they are not for that fact non-Jewish. According to Yehezke Kaufman the "Biblical religion/ of Israel/ knows nothing of a judgment of souls in an after-life . . . The realm of the dead in Israelite religion is godless." At the same time, Kaufman states, "Later Judaism did, in fact, reintroduce God in the idea of a judgment in the afterlife."⁸

Similarly, Mordecai Kaplan writes that belief in bodily resurrection is non-Jewish in origin, but it became "accepted by the Jews to meet a spiritual expectation which had arisen during the period of the Second Commonwealth."⁹ Finally, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* records that belief in bodily resurrection was present in both Sephardic and Ashkenazic liturgies well into the nineteenth century, but was constantly a source of confusion. The article further states that "American Reform prayer books changed the formula from belief in resurrection to the hope of immortality of the soul."¹⁰

All these comments tend to discourage any attempt to interpret the inscriptions as clear evidence that the Jews in Newport had, in any significant way, become imbued with Christian sentiments about immortality or the resurrection of the body. Rabbi Mendes was himself apparently unaware of the possibility of any such readings, for he concludes of the inscriptions that they are merely "indications of a faith which recognizes this world as a place of temporary abode to be succeeded by a reunion in another and higher sphere."¹¹

All critics of Longfellow also agree that this poem is free from any taint of anti-Semitism; that, on the contrary, the poem is wholly sympathetic to the sufferings of the Jewish people in history. Edward Wagenknech thought this an important enough virtue in the New England of Longfellow's time to pursue it further, asking whether Longfellow himself, not just the poem, was free from prejudice. Occasionally there appear in his writings the stereotyped image of the Jew. In "Hiawatha," for example, he refers to the Jews as "the tribe accursed," and in the *Tales of the Wayside Inn*, he depicts a Spanish Jew who is learned, romantic, exotic, but slightly luxurious.

Privately, also, Longfellow once described a painting he had seen in Mainz as portraying "a collection of disgusting, fat Jewish faces."

His criticism was directed at the imagination of the artist, however, not at the Jews themselves. On the more positive side, it is recorded that on another tour of Europe, Longfellow, alone of his entourage, stoutly defended a Jewish admirer of his friend, Clara Crowninshield.

The most one can conclude from all this, Wagenknecht feels, is that Longfellow occasionally slipped into that literary anti-Semitism that was for so long a staple in Western literature.¹² Longfellow, himself, despite the rather intense nativism of the New England of his time, was singularly sympathetic to religious beliefs and communities other than his own. One has only to compare "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport" with Cotton Mather's acid remark about the same community—"the common receptacle of the convicts of Jerusalem and the outcasts of the land"—to see how remarkably free Longfellow was from the more unlovely aspects of the New England heritage.

While Longfellow's poem, therefore, is sympathetic to both the sufferings of the Jews and to the general tenets of this belief, still it concludes on a note critical of Judaism as a meaningful religion. Judaism, he says, is but another of "the great traditions of the Past . . ." The "patriarchs and . . . prophets" who in their time "rose sublime," have joined, as the dead do here, "The long, mysterious Exodus of Death." Here, in the cemetery, he reads "The mystic volume of the world" the Jews themselves once read, "Spelling it backward, like a Hebrew book. . . ." Such grandeur, however, cannot be restored:

But ah! what once has been shall be no more!
The groaning earth in travail and in pain
Brings forth its races, but does not restore,
And the dead nations never rise again.

Such an attitude, Waggoner remarks, "might offend the feelings of a Jew for whom Judaism is a living religion with meaning for the future."¹³ It should be noted, however, that Longfellow is not critical of Judaism itself, no more than his "In the Cemetery of Cambridge" is critical of Protestantism itself or that his "Bells of San Blas" is critical of Catholicism, though both appear to be so. Longfellow was infected, we know, with an incurable melancholy and genteel scepticism which tempted him to find certainty only in the fact of death. In the history of religion, culture, of life itself, he saw only the image of men walking backward to the grave. In Judaism and in the past splendors of the Jewish people Longfellow saw, as he did for all men,

only "The long-lost ventures of the heart, / That send no answers back again." But despite its melancholy, its slight note of despair, Longfellow managed to immortalize in this short poem a tiny corner of Newport.

THE JEWISH CEMETERY AT NEWPORT

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

The trees are white with dust, that o'er their sleep
Wave their broad curtains in the southwind's breath,
While underneath these leafy tents they keep
The long, mysterious Exodus of Death.

And these sepulchral stones, so old and brown,
That pave with level flags their burial-place,
Seem like the tablets of the Law, thrown down
And broken by Moses at the mountain's base.

The very names recorded here are strange,
Of foreign accent, and of different climes;
Alvares and Rivera interchange
With Abraham and Jacob of old times.

'Blessed by God, for He created Death!'
The mourners said, 'and Death is rest and peace';
Then added, in the certainty of faith,
'And giveth Life that nevermore shall cease.'

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

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

How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,
What persecution, merciless and blind,
Drove o'er the sea—that desert desolate—
These Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind?

They lived in narrow streets and lanes obscure,
Ghetto and Judenstrass, in mirk and mire;
Taught in the school of patience to endure
The life of anguish and the death of fire.

All their lives long, with the unleavened bread
And bitter herbs of exile and its fears,
The wasting famine of the heart they fed,
And slaked its thirst with marah of their tears.

Anathema marantha! was the cry
That rang from town to town, from street to street:
At every gate the accursed Mordecai
Was mocked and jeered, and spurned by Christian feet.

Pride and humiliation hand in hand
Walked with them through the world where'er they went;
Trampled and beaten were they as the sand,
And yet unshaken as the continent.

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

And thus forever with reverted look
The mystic volume of the world they read,
Spelling it backward, like a Hebrew book,
Till life became a Legend of the Dead.

But ah! what once has been shall be no more!
The groaning earth in travail and in pain
Brings forth its races, but does not restore,
And the dead nations never rise again.

NOTES

- 1) Hyatt H. Waggoner, *American Poets: From Puritans to the Present* (Boston, 1968), 52.
- 2) Newton Arvin, *Longfellow: His Life and Work* (Boston, 1962), 187-8.

- 3) Abraham B. Mendes, "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," *RJHM* 2, 6 (October, 1885), 83.
- 4) See Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Boston, 1886), II, 224.
- 5) *Ibid.* Actually the initials were "S.A.G.D.G." Su Alma Goci Divina Gloria, or "May his soul enjoy divine glory." Most likely Longfellow read this on the tombstone of Abraham Rivera (d. July 7, 1765), whose grave was the most elaborate in the cemetery. See Mendes, 87.
- 6) Jacob Rader Marcus, "Background for the History of American Jewry," in *The American Jew*, Oscar Janowsky, ed., (Philadelphia, 1964), 2.
- 7) Mendes, 85, 90.
- 8) Yehezkec Kaufman, *The Religion of Israel* (London, 1961), 314-15.
- 9) Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Greater Judaism in the Making* (New York, 1969), 13.
- 10) *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1905), X: 385.
- 11) Mendes, 104.
- 12) Edward Wagenknecht, *Longfellow* (New York, 1955), 200 ff.
- 13) Waggoner, 52.

In submitting this paper for publication, Father Packard made the following comments:

Here, at last, is an apple of sorts from the vineyard of research. I spent some time, especially in Newport, checking available records, etc.

As to the article, it is certainly not earth-shattering, but I hope it is not without some small merit. As I re-read it, it seems rather hesitant—the unconscious result of an unequipped *goy* venturing into unknown waters.

The acculturation problem I raise in the essay was actually not my own insight. I discussed the inscriptions with some Jewish friends of mine in Fall River and they exclaimed: "This is Christian, not Jewish." This forced me to do some extra reading in Jewish theology, the results of which are recorded in the essay.

Sincerely yours,

J. KEVIN PACKARD

TEMPLE BETH-EL SEEKS A RABBI

In the collections of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El) of Providence, R. I. is the following letter, written in Hebrew. Rabbi William G. Braude has furnished the English translation and also the explanatory footnotes:

August 2, 1915

Dear Mazure:

Last week I wrote you a short note in which I spoke of the post in Brooklyn. Today I learned that Rabbi Levinthal had written to an alumnus of the [Jewish Theological] Seminary that he call on him to counsel with regard to getting him that post. My advice is that you call on Rabbi Levinthal in Philadelphia and get his opinion with regard to the post in Brooklyn.

Now I hasten to write you concerning still another first rate post. No doubt you know that Dr. Nathan Stern resigned from his pulpit in Providence, Rhode Island and is going to New York to assist Dr. Frederick Mendes. Professor Isaacs of New York University told me that Harry Cutler had received a good many applications for the post. Among those who applied are two Rabbis who are alumni of the Seminary and that the Board of Temple Beth-El in Providence had decided not to consider before the High Holidays the letters which had been received, and that the Board will not invite the candidates for trial sermons and will instead choose the one who will provide them with letters of recommendation and similar documents of approbation. In a word, the man will be chosen on the basis of his general knowledge and character.

In my opinion there is no likelihood for an alumnus of the Seminary to get this post since the president of the congregation is one of the officers of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Still with Dr. Cyrus Adler's help, Professor Schechter and his group are laboring to place the alumnus of their school in Providence.

No doubt you know that Dr. Adler and Mr. Harry Cutler are members of the Executive Board of the American Jewish Committee so that Dr. Adler may prevail upon the latter.

In a conversation that I had with Dr. Isaacs who is to preach in Providence during the coming High Holidays, I proposed your name as the proper man to take the post in which Dr. Englander and Dr. Stern had served. My advice is that you at

once see Dr. Philipson and get his advice concerning the post. Don't hesitate to tell him about the attempts of the men of the Seminary to capture Providence for themselves. Should Dr. Philipson wish to help you he can do much in your behalf.

You should know that the post in Providence is very important, being the only Reform pulpit in all of Rhode Island, and the Reform Rabbi of Providence is regarded as the Jewish representative of Rhode Island Jewry.

If I can help you in any way, rest assured that I shall do all you ask of me (The ink is gone from the pen, and so with your permission I shall end the letter with a pencil).

In short, take my advice and do all you can in order to get the post in Providence, and let me know at once what you decide to do.

With good wishes, believe me to be respectfully yours,

JOSHUA BLOCH

Rabbi Abraham J. Karp, Rabbi of Temple Beth-El in Rochester, N. Y., in a communication to Rabbi Braude commented as follows on the significance of the letter:

Many thanks for the Bloch letter. You are right in suggesting that there was a time when lines were not quite so rigid. Passions were often high but congregations had still not become rigidly set within national institutional patterns. It was still the days before Conservative congregations had organized themselves into the United Synagogue.

The only synagogal union was the U.A.H.C. Even within that there were those who remembered that initially the union was to serve all American Jewish congregations. By 1910 the Union was, of course, thoroughly Reform, but which American organization doesn't like to claim for itself universal appeal.

When the United Synagogue was first organized in 1913, there was quite a conflict between the Cyrus Adler forces who wanted the United Synagogue to be a union of all traditional (that is all non-Reform) congregations and the alumni of the Seminary and a leading graduate of the HUC, Dr. Judah Magnes, who then considered himself in the camp of Conservative Judaism, to have the United Synagogue considered an organization of Conservative congregations (see my history of the United Synagogue).

NOTES

Maurice Maxwell Mazure, a graduate of the Hebrew Union College in the Class of 1912, was Rabbi in Sioux City, Iowa in 1915. In 1931, succeeding Jacob Son-

derling, he became Rabbi of Temple Beth Israel in Providence where he served till 1933. He died in 1951 while serving as Rabbi in Greenville, S. C. (See CCAR Yearbook 1953, pp. 324-25.)

Joshua Bloch, served for many years as head of the Jewish section of the New York Public Library. He attended the Hebrew Union College but left before he was ordained. Because he served as a chaplain in the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene, he was a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis until 1957, the year of his death. (See CCAR Yearbook, 1958, pp. 231-32.)

Nathan Stern (Hebrew Union College 1904) served at Temple Beth-El from 1910 to 1915. In 1916 he came to the West End Synagogue in New York which he served until his death in 1945. (See CCAR Yearbook 1945, pp. 210-11.)

Frederick de Sola Mendes, a native of Montego Bay, Jamaica, West Indies was Rabbi of Congregation Shaaray Tefila (West End Synagogue) until 1927. (See CCAR Yearbook 1928, pp. 241-43.)

Abram Samuel Isaacs, born New York City 1852, died Paterson, N. J. 1920. (See Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 5, 595.)

Rabbi Bernard Levinthal, dean of Orthodox American rabbis, was born in Vilna, Russia in 1865 and died in Atlantic City, N. J. in 1952.

THE STORY OF
AHAVATH SHALOM IN WEST WARWICK,
RHODE ISLAND*

By PAUL W. STREICKER

Ahavath Shalom is quiet Friday evening. The unimposing yellow brick building sits back from Main Street, West Warwick, bordered by grass that may be a little too high, unmarked by any sign.

Only the sun streaming through the stained glass windows, making the Stars of David shine, identifies it as a synagogue.

"I no see anybody for quite some time—since last fall, I think," an old man across the street says. "Used to be quite a few there, some time ago."

Ahavath Shalom is a small Orthodox synagogue founded by a Jewish community of perhaps 30 families almost a half century ago. Today the practicing Jewish population of West Warwick has dwindled to six or seven families, and the future of the house of worship is unclear. It is open only on the High Holy Days in the fall, occasionally on the other Jewish holidays, and sometimes for a memorial service or, rarely, a wedding.

It would be open regularly for Sabbath services, children's holidays, and other holy or festive events, but the membership usually cannot raise a minyan, the 10 men needed to hold a religious service. Boys over 13, who have gone through the barmitzvah ritual, are eligible to be part of a minyan.

"Most of the Jewish population was in the retail industry in West Warwick, but there is no future there for the children," said Frederick Kafrissen, who took his family to Cranston about 15 years ago. "The small town was just too small."

Irving Lisnoff, proprietor of Jerry's Spa on Washington Street, still lives in West Warwick, and counts the congregation on his fingers. Three died last year; besides himself there is Max Margolis, owner of

*Reprinted from the *Providence Sunday Journal* of June 2, 1968 with the permission of the publisher. It appeared under the heading "Synagogue Termed at 'Low Ebb'" with the following comment "Today is the first day of Shabuoth, the Jewish holiday commemorating Moses' return from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments".

Maxine's, his two brothers, an insurance man, a grocer, a retired manufacturer, a retired gas station proprietor and his son.

But one is away, another too old to walk to the synagogue (Orthodox Jews do not drive or ride on the Sabbath), another too sick to come. "Some business people attend to help out, but so many moved to Cranston and Warwick. They work in the cities, there is more activity there, land, housing, roads. There's nothing to keep them," Mr. Lisnoff said.

Abraham Sternbach, the 81-year-old patriarch of the synagogue, said succinctly, "The young people moved out and the old people died out, so there is nobody left.

"For the last few years they go to Providence. Here the synagogue is left alone. What is going to be . . .?" He leaves the question in the air.

Max Margolis, who is president of the synagogue, is more optimistic. "People have been fatalistic about West Warwick, too. I never look at it this way. Wherever there is a church or synagogue, you will find people will patronize them. Nice people never go out of style."

He calls this a "low ebb" in the synagogue's history. It serves a purpose, he said, noting that in addition to the local community, strangers and newcomers find a welcome at Ahavath Shalom on the High Holy Days, when the larger temples in the cities are full. Some families in the cities return on these special days, and the building is packed with 100 or 125 worshippers.

Mr. Sternbach recalls the better and harder times in the synagogue's history. In 1912, as a men's suit presser, he brought his wife, Minnie, and their infant son from New York, looking for a better living. He bought a horse and wagon and peddled junk for seven years, trading in anything from cows to sacks.

There were 13 Jewish junk peddlers in West Warwick then, each with roughly the same background: immigration from Eastern Europe and poverty. West Warwick was not far from Providence, and the relatively large milltown population offered a possible source of livelihood. Some came on the recommendation of a relative who lived in the town. Others were transient, boarding in different places, trying to earn enough money to bring their families from Europe.

There were about 30 Jewish families in West Warwick then. Having no synagogue, they rented a hall for holidays and borrowed a torah or scroll with the five books of Moses, from Providence. The Sternbach's held regular Sabbath services at their home for six years.

When prohibition came into effect in 1920, the Jewish community raised \$6,000 and bought a saloon at 1118 Main St. The members converted it into a schul, the Yiddish word for synagogue, held services downstairs, and hired an old Russian teacher to give Hebrew lessons to the children upstairs.

The number of Jewish families in the area remained about the same. Jews from East Greenwich and Warwick added to the congregation.

In 1938, the building was reconstructed in the traditional style, with an altar in the center of the little room so the reader could face the ark holding the sacred readings and still be heard by the worshippers. Pews lined the walls and a crystal chandelier filled the room with light. The cellar was provided with kitchen utilities for receptions.

A chapter of B'nai B'rith, a Jewish service organization, was established.

With the outbreak of World War II some of the young men went away, and the decline began. No rabbi has given the children Hebrew lessons for 15 or 20 years.

"What's going to happen? We don't know. That's the point," Mr. Sternbach said. "In Newport they closed for 60 years. Maybe someday this West Warwick—you never know—could grow like Newport."

"Take every day as it comes, and try to do your best," Mr. Margolis said. "Those brought up in the Jewish tradition have a background they never lose." Does he think the synagogue might someday be empty? "I certainly don't."

But now the little yellow brick building is sure to be full only on the High Holy Days, and may be open today, the anniversary of Moses handing down the Ten Commandments, only if 10 men can be found to conduct the service.

OPPOSITE PAGE—Elders of Ahavath Shalom Synagogue: Abraham Sternbach, 81, Patriarch (at left) and Max Margolis, President of the Synagogue.—*Photo, Courtesy of Journal-Bulletin.*



JOTTINGS FOR FUTURE HISTORIANS

BIBLICAL GARDEN

In the October 1968 issue of Yankee magazine is an illustrated story titled "Rhode Island's Biblical Garden", describing the symbolic horticultural retreat designed and created at Temple Beth-El in Providence by Mrs. David C. Adelman, widow of the founder of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. It quotes Mrs. Adelman as humbly hoping "to make the Bible a living thing, and of God's wonders and His power and glory something brought out beyond the doors of the synagogue and church."

* * * * *

ROUND TOP

The May 1968 issue (Vol. 22, No. 1) of Round Topics, the news organ of Beneficent (Congregational) Church of Providence, R. I. (familiarily known as Round Top Church), carried the story of the installation on April 28 of its new minister, Rev. E. King Hempel, in which Rabbi William G. Braude of Temple Beth-El of Providence participated. "With the charisma which is uniquely Bill Braude", the account went on, "he reminded us that Israel's history was focused to a significant extent on mountain tops For we too, symbolized in the very dome of our Meeting House, have a mountain top. Our vistas in these days are endless."

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

By GERTRUDE NISSON GOLDOWSKY

A Recent Acquisition in the Library of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association with a Listing of References to Rhode Island.

The Lee Max Friedman Collection of American Jewish Colonial Correspondence, Letters of the Franks Family (1733-1748). Studies in American Jewish History, Number 5. Leo Hershkowitz and Isidore S. Meyer (eds.). Published by the American Jewish Historical Society. Waltham, Massachusetts, 1968. 171pp.

Hart, Solomon. 67n.

Levy, Moses. 94n.

Newport, R. I. 41n.

Pachelbel, Charles Theodore (1690-1750). 41n.

Rhode Island. 67n., 69n.

There may be other Rhode Island references, but because of the close relationship between the New York and Newport communities in the eighteenth century, they are not readily identifiable from the text.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association was held on Sunday, May 26, 1968 at the John Brown House, 52 Power Street, Providence. The meeting, unlike in past years, was held in the afternoon and was called to order at 2:25 by the President, Mr. Bernard Segal. Mr. Segal recognized the death of Mr. David C. Adelman, founder of the Association, by reading from the latter's works. He asked for a moment of silence after reading Mr. Adelman's necrology as published in the first issue of Volume 5 of the *Notes*, dedicated to the memory of Mr. Adelman.

The Annual Reports of the Secretary, Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky, and Treasurer, Mrs. Louis I. Sweet, were read. Mr. Sweet, in his Finance Report, announced a deficit of \$615.00 in the budget for the ensuing year.

Dr. Seebert J. Goldowsky, Editor, stated that his purpose was to publish no less than one issue a year of the *Notes*, and to this end he was hopeful of catching up this year by issuing November, 1968 (Volume 5, Number 2) before the end of the calendar year.

A letter (see following page) from Mrs. David C. Adelman, brought by her son, Morris, was read by Secretary. Lauding the work in the Association of the successors of her late husband, she expressed her gratitude individually to those who were carrying forward the work, so arduously and with such devotion begun by Mr. Adelman.

Mr. John Kirk, new Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, welcomed warmly the membership to John Brown House.

In the absence of Mr. Melvin L. Zurier, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, the Secretary read the Report of the Committee. The slate as follows was accepted, and Rabbi William G. Braude inducted the new officers in a very brief installation: President, Mr. Bernard Segal; Vice President, Jerome B. Spunt, Esq.; Secretary, Mrs. Seebert J. Goldowsky; Treasurer, Mrs. Louis I. Sweet. Rabbi Braude introduced the speaker of the afternoon, Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern, Genealogist for the American Jewish Archives and Director of Placement of the Rabbinical Placement Commission. After commending the Association for the excellence of its *Notes* by quoting Dr. Bertram Korn's statement that it is the best publication of any of the local Jewish historical societies, Dr. Stern gave a highly informative and scholarly talk on "Myer Benjamin, Newport Interpreter, and his Children—A Study in Biographical Method."

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 and was followed by a collation under the direction of Mesdames Goldowsky, Segal and Sweet as hostesses.

* * * * *

MRS. DAVID C. ADELMAN

41 Lorraine Avenue

Providence, R. I. 02906

May 25, 1968

To the officers and members of the R. I. Jewish Historical Ass'n.:

I deeply regret my absence from this particular meeting. Only the fact that I am just out of hospital would keep me from it.

Our son, Morris David Adelman, is present, representing both his father and me in spirit, and interest and concern.

We are deeply grateful to Dr. Seebert Goldowsky for his devoted and meticulous care and contributions to the Historical Notes publications. He not only kept them alive but with no gap in their continuation during my husband's last illness.

Having lived with the founding editor, I know this is no small achievement. The standard has never deviated from its first award winning heights. Transitions are difficult.

To Mrs. Goldowsky as a most efficient Secretary of the Ass'n., right hand to her husband during these last transient years of David's illness, and capable co-hostess at the meetings, we say a big "Thank you!"

To your President, Mr. Beryl Segal, we are very proud of him, and his editorial memory of David and other works. He is a good friend and humanitarian and he stands at the top in our estimation, as does his warm and friendly wife, Irene. She too co-hostessed on many occasions.

To Mr. Louis I. Sweet, who has given generously of his time, efforts, and concern, and his wife, Jean, who also co-hostessed many meetings and worked many years for the Ass'n., go our heartfelt thanks.

Last, but by no means least, we thank heartily, Mr. Jerome B. Spunt, Esq., for his accurate and well written obituary page in the current issue memorializing my husband, David C. Adelman, Founder, first President, and original Editor of the R. I. Historical Notes.

For all these wonderful people who worked with my husband, but took up where he was compelled to leave off, and have kept this Ass'n. alive, and one to be counted amongst the top, I ask God's blessing for their good health, wisdom, and ability to keep alive this important mission of history.

Sincerely,

LOUISE Z. ADELMAN
(Mrs. David C. Adelman)

NECROLOGY

HAROLD RATUSH, born in New York December 28, 1922, the son of Morris and Fannie (Weisbard) Ratush. A graduate of Classical High School, Providence, in 1939 and Brown University in 1943, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He served as a First Lieutenant in the Army during World War II.

His occupation was financial consultant and Treasurer of Factron, Inc. of Providence, a finance company. He was Treasurer of Temple Beth Torah; a past member of the Board of Directors of that temple and of the Hebrew Free Loan Association; and was also, at one time, a member of the Board of Directors of the General Jewish Committee of Providence and of the Jewish Home for the Aged.

Died in Providence, August 22, 1968.

LEO COHEN, born February 27, 1889 in Russia, the son of Israel and Ida (Silverman) Cohen, and a resident of Providence from early childhood. Attended Brown University with the Class of 1912, and graduated from Tufts Medical School in 1917.

He was a practicing physician in general practice in Providence for fifty years. He was a member of the staff of The Miriam Hospital and the Roger Williams General Hospital, and a member of the Rhode Island Medical Society and the New England Pediatric Society. He was also a member of the Roosevelt Lodge, A.F.&A.M. and of the Touro Fraternal Association.

Died in East Providence, April 1, 1968.

JACOB E. GREENSTEIN, born in Providence May 4, 1902, the son of Bernard and Dora (Greenberg) Greenstein. A graduate of Classical High School in 1919, Brown University in 1922, and the Cornell University Medical School in 1926.

He was a practicing physician in Providence from 1927 until the year of his death. During World War II he was an examining physician for the Selective Service System. From 1948 to 1956, he was Chief of Medicine at Memorial Hospital in Pawtucket; and he was also on the consulting staff at The Miriam Hospital, and Medical Consultant at Charles V. Chapin Hospital.

He was a member of the American College of Physicians and the American Society of Internal Medicine, and he contributed articles to the Rhode Island Medical Journal.

Died in Pawtucket, July 24, 1968.

The souvenir programs illustrated on the inside and outside back cover were a gift to the Association by Professor William G. McLoughlin of Brown University. The information on an additional program in the collection and a typical example or order of dances follows:

Programme	
1. _____ QUADRILLE	6. _____ WALTZ
2. _____ POLKA	7. _____ QUADRILLE
3. _____ WALTZ	8. _____ MINUET
4. _____ WALTZ	9. _____ POLKA
5. _____ MINUET	10. _____ WALTZ
INTERMISSION	

Committee of Arrangements.

S. IAHN,
I SOLOMON,
JOHN H. SPITZ,
D. FRANK,
L. HARTMAN,
N. PINCUS.

Floor Director.

ISAAC IAHN.
ASSISTANTS.

HIRSCH,
M. M. STERN,
F. HARTMAN,
A. STRAUSS,
H. SOLOMON,
A. GOMPERTS.

Music.

G. L. HERRICK'S BAND.

E. K. Aldrich, Printer, 217 Westchester St.

Floor Director :

MAJ. A. STRAUSS.

Reads :

N. PINCUS,
A. L. JACKSON,
A. L. HARTMAN,
SOL. COHEN,
HARRY GREEN,
A. L. DIMOND,
J. ROSENFELD.

Music by

WHITE'S ORCHESTRA,
F. Von Olker, Leader.

"Merry Parim" 5647
1887

Committee of Arrangements.

A. STRAUSS,
S. LEVY,
J. H. SPITZ,
L. FRANK,
H. SOLOMON.

MUSIC, HERRICK'S BAND.

Floor Managers.
N. Pincus,
W. J. Newman,
L. Frank.

Committee Arrangements.

Joseph Schwarz,
Louis Rosenfield,
Leopold Hartman,
David Frank,
Louis Greene.

Floor Director,

N. Pincus.
J. H. Spitz,
D. Rosenfield,
H. Solomon,
A. Gomperts.

MUSIC BY

Herrick's Quadrille Band.

Nickerson & Sibley, Dist.

